

A COMPLEX WORK OF MIGRATION

Knowing, working and migrating in the Southwest of England



Huw Vasey

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A Complex Work of Migration:  
Knowing, working and migrating in the Southwest of England.

Submitted by David Huw Vasey to the University of Exeter

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I certified that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has been previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University

Signed..... (David Huw Vasey)

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## Abstract

This is a thesis about knowing, working and migrating in a complex and fluid world. Through an analysis of biographic-narrative interviews with migrants working in ‘knowledge intensive’ roles, as well as with those employed in jobs normally considered ‘low-skilled’, arguments about knowing, working and migrating in the ‘new knowledge economy’ are developed.

Foregrounding an active and embodied understanding of knowing as a socially embedded and fluid phenomenon allows for a reconceptualisation of the relationships between knowing, migrating and working, raising questions about our normative understandings of both the ‘knowledge’ economy and divisions of migrant labour. This thesis seeks to illustrate how everyday practice and the interaction of complex (and often competing) ‘forces’ have acted to produce powerful ideas about what kind of jobs are suitable for which types of migrants, and how these ideas become accepted as normal – as ‘common sense’ assumptions. Furthermore, such productions of knowledge about migrants, also impacts on *how, what* and *where* we know. That is, the processes and performances of knowing are both constitutive of, and constituted by, the structures of power which shape our lives. Thus the ‘power to know’ is contextual, fluid and yet fundamental to the constitution of our everyday lives.

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## Table of Abbreviations:

A2	'Accession 2' – refers to the two states, Bulgaria and Romania, which acceded to the EU on 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2007
A8	'Accession 8' – refers to the eight states – Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia – that acceded to the EU on 1 <sup>st</sup> May 2004 and whose citizens were required to register with the WRS if they wished to work in the UK
APS	Annual Population Survey
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis
CASE	Collaborative Award in Science & Engineering
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EU	European Union
GOR	Government Office Region
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Association
NESS	National Employers Skills Survey
NINo	National Insurance Number
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office for National Statistics
SWRDA/ South West RDA	South West Regional Development Agency
TNC	Trans-National Corporation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WRS	Workers' Registration Scheme

*Chapter 1*

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**Setting the scene:**

Structure, style and background

*Writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand.*

- George Orwell, extract from *Why I Write*, 1947.

The origins of this research may not yet be lost in the dim and distant past, but it does take us some way from where we will conclude. Therefore, it is useful, before we dive into the work at hand, for me to reflect on where those origins lay, what aims I set out to meet and how the thesis is structured and styled. If one believes, as you will come to find I do, that we must understand research as a gradual accretion of contextual knowledge, each previous stratum influencing the next, then it becomes necessary to uncover the first if we are to understand the last.

In my case, that first layer came when I successfully applied for an ESRC CASE PhD award at the then Department (now School) of Geography at the University of Exeter in the summer of 2006. This was a somewhat unexpected occurrence for me, for I was neither trained in Geography, nor a recent graduate. My academic background had been in Social Anthropology, a subject I had studied up to Master's level, but one which, barring a financially ill-conceived attempt to start a DPhil at one of my *alma mater*, I hadn't studied for over 5 years. Thus, whilst excited to be called to interview, I did not expect too much. I had, however, worked both as a researcher in the South-West region and as an advisor to migrant workers. Given the subject matter of the CASE award – 'International migration, knowledge transfer and the regional skills gap in South-West England' – these were somewhat advantageous experiences (though, hopefully, my academic ability played some role as well). Thus I found myself an 'official' PhD candidate, complete with ready-made research project, in a subject, department and University which were largely unfamiliar to me. Indeed, these were not the only unfamiliar aspects of the project. The title of the research – though it was

always made clear to me it was only a working title – required some decryption. Exactly why was it being asked and what did they hope for me to find out? This is one of the relatively novel elements of CASE awards – rather than following your own logic to create a workable research project and then attempting to get it funded – you find yourself with an ‘oven-ready’ project, complete with CASE partner – the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA, or South West RDA) in this case – the development of which you have not been involved in. It is therefore always necessary to begin by uncovering the background to the project, before you can begin to make it your own.

The academic seeds of this research can be found in the British Academy readership undertaken by Professor Allan Williams, who would become one of my PhD supervisors. Allan had, over the course of this readership, begun to explore the interrelationships between international migration and knowledge, particularly in regards to labour migration and the knowledge economy (see, e.g. Williams 2006, 2007, 2007). At the same time, there was an increasing concern that a better understanding of the relationships between international migration to the region, work and the regional skills gap was needed, particularly in light of the accession of 10 states to the EU in 2004 and the resultant increase in migration to the South West, particularly from Poland. There appeared to be a sense that the existing ‘skills gap’ in the region may be met by these clever young new EU migrants. My ‘job’ was to somehow marry these disparate elements into a coherent research project. How I actually approached this, however, would alter as my understanding of the subject under consideration changed and developed. Indeed, where I ended up, as implied above, was a long way from where I originally began – both in terms of understanding and in approach.

#### **PARTIAL AIMS AND EMERGENT OBJECTIVES:**

Just how and why this changed – and the resulting way I wrote about it – is of fundamental importance to understanding this thesis. This was a gradual process, rather than one of Damascene proportions; there was no particular time in which I ‘saw the light’ and changed my approach. It was instead a series of iterative and minute course alterations. This, however, makes it difficult to present a singular set of aims and objectives for this thesis or, indeed, a satisfying narrative of change.

Equally, however, it is important that I present the reader with some semblance of an outline of what I am trying to achieve in this thesis – in essence, to present my aims and objectives. Therefore, I take this opportunity to sketch out not my ultimate thesis, but rather what I wished to uncover and how and why I set about doing it in the way I did. Whilst I write this, I am all too aware that such presentations often act to give the impression of a certainty and consistency of purpose emanating from an omniscient author-researcher; an idea that is fundamentally undermined by the actual process of carrying out research and presenting one's findings. That is, such a practice is *always* characterised by a developing and iterative understanding of the subject under study, rather than by a linear movement towards an unalterable truth (see, e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986; Mol and Law 2002). Therefore, presenting a set of aims and objectives at the beginning of a thesis (as with any other research monograph) actually tells the reader more about the researcher's aspirations at the *end* of the cycle, than it necessarily does about their motivations at the beginning or middle. Given this argument, it becomes imperative to expand on how my plans and aspirations for this research evolved throughout the life of the project, prior to setting out my ultimate aims and objectives in this thesis.

As I have already made clear, embarking on an ESRC CASE PhD project meant that I already had a research title. However, as I also stated, this required a certain amount of decoding of what this *meant* in terms of aims and objectives, for the title itself could be interpreted in a number of different ways. At this stage, having read Allan Williams (2006, 2007, 2007) papers on the subject, I already had some idea that the movement of highly-skilled workers between countries and firms was seen as a potential avenue for the spread of both tacit and explicit knowledge and skills. Equally, I was familiar with the idea of a regional skills gap, as well as with the notion that one way of filling it was by drawing in 'talent' from abroad. This understanding seemed to indicate that the aim of the project should be to test whether the migration of highly skilled 'knowledge' workers to the south west of England would (or, perhaps, could) lead to a) the successful transfer of their knowledge and b) to plug holes in the regional skills gap. Whilst this seemed to me to be the most coherent response to what the research title indicated, I already harboured serious doubts about whether this was ultimately the question I wanted to answer. Firstly, I was aware that the vast

majority of international migrants to the UK did not work in high-wage occupations<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, I was taken by a quote Allan Williams had drawn my attention to – that, ‘*all* workers and *all* organizations, not just so-called ‘knowledge workers’, or ‘knowledge organizations’, are knowledgeable’ (Blackler 1995: 1026). Therefore, why study just those in conventionally defined ‘knowledge work’ to the cost of comprehending the vast majority of international labour migrants to the south west region? Furthermore, my training as an anthropologist encouraged a holistic approach to understanding societies; simply studying the ‘top’ of a society in isolation ran the risk of presenting this elite as a self-contained driver of the economy and failing to address just how substantially it relied on the rest of the society in which it was undoubtedly embedded.

A further blow to the original incarnation of my aims and objectives came when I began to undertake my literature review. Exploring in depth the literature regarding both the regional skills gap and knowledge transfer provided two further problems for this version of the research.

In terms of the regional skills gap the issue was that it became increasingly clear that this was a notion based on very shaky foundations. I found it very difficult to find a convincing way to gauge such a gap, and measurements of relative skill were either driven by conflating levels of paper qualification with the ability to do certain jobs, or by the opinions of employers as to the ‘soft skills’ of their employees. Critiques of such approaches were both substantial and convincing (see, esp. Keep and Mayhew 1999; Payne 2004) and, furthermore, such measures indicated that the South West struggled to fill many more gaps at the lower end of the labour market than at the top (BMG Research 2006). Whilst the SWRDA region undoubtedly struggled with certain issues which may be viewed through the lens of a skills gap – such as the net out-migration of those in their early adult life (see, e.g. Fielding 1992) – this seemed an alarming flimsy basis on which to build a research objective.

Even more profoundly, as I read through the rather dry and uninspiring literature on knowledge transfer and international migration, a nagging feeling that these arguments were missing something quite basic kept recurring. It was not until I began reading the more philosophically informed work of Frank Blackler (1995) and Alexander Styhre (2004) that I came to the realisation that what was missing was a convincing concept of what knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> For example, 94% of those registering on the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) earned less than £8 per hour.

was. At best the work of Michael Polanyi (1958, 1967) was referenced, but rarely did it go further than that. Intrigued, I turned to philosophy and cognitive science to try and find some more convincing answers. In doing so, it became clear that the nature of knowledge was one of the most elusive concepts in the history of human understanding. Thousands of years of study by the greatest minds and a half-century of advances in brain-scanning technology still left huge gaps in our comprehension of exactly what knowledge was or how it worked. Furthermore, it appeared that, whatever it was, knowledge was not something that existed outside of human engagements fundamentally immersed in the world around them. Therefore, the presentation of 'knowledge transfer' as something that could be managed through relatively straightforward processes seemed nonsensical. What we know is contextual and subject to change and development, rather than a *thing* to be moved from point to point.

The impacts of these reflections on what answers my research should (and even could) give were substantial. Whilst abandoning the notion of the regional skills gap as a useful tool for this research would not have been of huge significance to my work on its own, my reconsideration of how to understand processes of knowing appeared to bring with it implications of vast proportions. Not only did it raise questions about the nature of 'knowledge transfer', but it also caused me to reflect deeply on the development and communication of the process of knowing implicit in creating a thesis. The iterative, fluid and never-quite-complete nature of which I came to understand, after Georg Hegel, as a 'coming-to-be of knowledge' (1997[1807]: 15). In essence, the nature of researching and writing up a thesis is an on-going process of coming-to-know the subject at hand. This means that the subject (and objectives) of the work is never fixed but is in constant iterative evolution throughout the process of creation. Therefore, what I now present as my aim for this thesis has been subject to these on-going iterations and alterations throughout the research and writing process.

Ultimately, my aim in this thesis has been to explore the relationships between international migration and the 'knowledge economy' in the south west of England. As I outlined above, this subject implies not only an analysis of the elite, but of researching the issue more broadly, opening up the 'knowledge economy' to include the vast majority of international labour migrants who do not work in high-wage roles. Therefore, I interviewed both those engaged in high-skill 'knowledge work' (in this case, University academics) and those

employed in low-wage, 'low-skill' roles (mainly Polish migrants in routine roles in food processing and associated industries).

This primary objective necessitated an additional focus on several secondary themes. Firstly, it was necessary to understand the interrelationships between international migration, knowledge and skills – specifically in southwest England, but more broadly as well – with a focus on labour market aspects (including what jobs people do, how they get them and what skills and knowledge they utilise carrying them out). This was achieved through a critical examination of secondary data sources and in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with international migrants working in a variety of roles. Additionally, questions are raised about both the utilisation of the knowledge and skills of international migrants in a variety of roles and exactly what we mean when we speak of knowledge and/or skill in the labour market. Finally, the interplay of these various forces on the everyday practice of work and migration in the southwest of England is explored through the analysis of in-depth interviews with international labour migrants to the region working in a variety of roles.

### **OUTLINE OF THE THESIS:**

I have tried throughout this thesis to keep some sense of this research as an emergent and iterative process. My original intention was to structure it in such a way that it reflected to some extent my own 'coming-to-be of knowledge'. However, such an approach did not always lend itself to a sense of coherence or a clarity of objective. Therefore, the following chapters are structured in such a way as to retain some sense of the fluidity of the research process, whilst ensuring the thread of a developing thesis runs clearly throughout each section.

**Chapter 2** deals with the background literature and is divided into three sections exploring, international migration, work and migrant labour markets, and knowledge and knowing.

**Chapter 3** covers 'the local context', looking in more detail at the specific issues of work and migration within the SWRDA region and raising questions about the nature of both skills and knowledge, and scale and locality.

**Chapter 4** is concerned with the research methods utilised during the project, and with providing the background rationale as to why those methods were chosen and what impacts



they had on the outcome of the project. This chapter also includes critical reflections on ethics, access and context in social research, as well as a consideration of the analysis and communication of qualitative findings through the writing process.

**Chapter 5** – the first of three substantive chapters – is concerned with a discussion of the ‘journeys’ of research participants, outlining how they came to be in their current situation and drawing out the impact of various trajectories of migration both in the academy and in ‘low-skill’ roles.

**Chapter 6** covers a discussion of the work experiences of research participants and includes a further critical appraisal of labour segmentation theory (first covered in Chapter 2) and an initial formulation of an approach to conceptualising the complex work of migration.

**Chapter 7** focuses on research participants’ experiences of utilising their knowledge and skills both at work and elsewhere, leading to a discussion of how knowledge and skills have been differently conceptualised by theorists writing about high- and low-skill work in recent years. The chapter concludes with an exploration of how we might begin to think about knowledge, work and migration more holistically and critically, drawing together arguments outlined in previous chapters.

**Chapter 8** provides a critical discussion of the thesis as a whole and a recap of what has been argued, reflecting on some additional issues not covered in the thesis, the impact of the methods used and outlining some emerging research themes. Finally, the partial and on-going nature of this type of research is considered.

## **Conceptualising knowledge, work and migration**

Because this thesis is about knowing and migrating, it is unavoidably concerned with movement, change and adaptation to novel circumstances. Both international migration and knowledge presuppose a certain level of each of these as both are, in essence, active processes. Even work, a concept which can at times seem invariable, still and rooted, is an entity which is subject to change and alteration when combine with fluid processes of knowing and migrating. In a sense then, these are stories about journeys, both physical and mental. Indeed, the metaphor of a journey can equally be applied to the process of creating a thesis; the project that informs it – in this case my PhD research – moves us far from where we began. Equally, this process is in itself informative. We learn by moving – by actively engaging with our subject – and in doing so, we change the subject – we perform the research. Of course, such statements are yet to be supported. That is the job of the rest of the thesis. However, prior to starting this project, I think it is useful to make a few supplementary notes on how this chapter – and, indeed, the rest of the thesis – is structured in light of what I have already said.

It is, perhaps, conventional in the first few pages of a thesis such as this to outline the aims and objectives of the research and how I set about meeting them – through reading, researching and so on. However, this is not always – especially in regards to research undertaken for a PhD – an entirely honest approach. If we take on board the point made above that a research project is a journey in itself, then to provide a map for where this research takes us at its very beginning is somewhat misleading. For, like many journeys I make, where I ended up was not necessarily the place I set out to visit. In fact, I did not know exactly where I wanted to end up when I began. To do so would be to presuppose the results of my investigation, my journey, and I did not wish to do this. This point is fundamental to this research and impacts on every aspect of this thesis, but it also provides me with something of an authorial dilemma. If the research was a journey, a coming to be of knowledge, then how should I present this? The apparent solution would be to present

the thesis, as much as possible, as a reflection of that journey. But this in itself means that providing an exact guide to the thesis at its inception would be to undercut this literary device. So I haven't. Instead, I ask you, the reader, to understand that this is to allow the research to be revealed to you in a way similar to how it developed in my mind. This is not an easy task – though communicating research in any medium, in any style, is never straightforward – and is one which, at times, perhaps requires more work from the reader than if I had chosen another form of presentation. But, as I hope will be made clear as you move through the thesis, it is a way in which I can mimic the 'coming to be' of this research project and thus illustrate the 'logic' of where we shall finish.

I have, therefore attempted to provide a document illustrating how I came to understand the 'subject' of the research as I did. In this way, my intention in this chapter is to provide an illustration of where I began – in essence, the foundational literature review I carried out in my first year of research. I haven't quite managed to do this. Instead, part of that has been moved into the next chapter – concerned with contextualising and 'siting' the research. This chapter has, in turn, become more focused on the original conceptual basis of the research and where this was situated in terms of existing scholarship. However, in retrospect, this provides a more accurate reflection of how I actually began to understand the subject under study – an engagement with the theoretical grounds of the research predated an effective immersion in its local context. That is, I felt I needed to understand the broad logic of what I was researching before I could understand how such processes played out in a specific site. Just as with Vygotsky's (1978: 56) spirals of learning, it is important to begin broadly before narrowing our focus down to the specifics. An investigation of the pertinent literatures in these areas thus provided part of my own sense-making journey in regards to this subject, but also allowed me to begin to frame the thesis in terms of the pre-existing literature. The reasons I begin with a focus on the literatures concerned with international migration and 'knowledge' work was that this was where the original rationale of the thesis had their basis, both in Allan Williams British Academy readership which predated this research project, and the original thesis title. The third aspect of that title – the regional skills gap – turned out to be more problematic and is dealt with in the following chapter. Before we begin, though, it is useful to provide a quick note of this original rationale and how it framed what follows.

The original concern of this research – as contained in the ESRC CASE studentship title –

was the intersection of international migration, knowledge transfer and the regional skills gap in South West England<sup>2</sup>. The broad rationale underpinning this focus was as follows: in recent years we have seen an apparent sharp increase in international migration to the South West<sup>3</sup>, particularly from ‘new’ European Union (EU) ‘accession states’, such as Poland, Lithuania and the Czech Republic<sup>4</sup>. Alongside this there has been an increasing concern with economies of knowledge, its transfer and management. However, the relationships between the two have rarely been researched. Additionally, the existence of a regional skills gap, which has not, so far, been filled through endogenous strategies and the training of local workers, appeared to suggest that there might be an opportunity for international migrants to move into these positions. The research sought to explore the ways in which international migration, knowledge and skills interacted in the South West labour market and what this could tell us about processes of migration, work and knowing in a world that appeared to be becoming both increasingly inter-connected and reliant on knowledge.

To a significant degree, my ultimate goals would remain the same throughout the research process – I retain a concern with the interconnections between international migration, knowledge and work – the changes tended to be a matter of emphasis. How such changes occurred (and the impact they had on the project) shall be revealed as we move through the thesis. First though, we must turn to how this all relates to prior research, specifically the ways academics have approached international migration, work and knowledge.

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this research, the ‘South West of England’ is defined as the geographic area of responsibility of the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA). The site of the research is explored in more detail in following chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Definitive international migration figures for the U.K. and its regions are not currently available. However, National Insurance Number (NINo) registrations from non-U.K. nationals in the South West rose from 15, 650 in 2002/3 to 41, 230 in 2006/7 (Department for Work and Pensions 2009: 13). Fuller information is provided in the following chapter.

<sup>4</sup> The eight states which acceded to the E.U. in 2004 and whose residents are required to register with the Worker’s Registration Scheme (WRS) are as follows; the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Collectively these countries are referred to as the ‘A8’ in the text. In 2007, Bulgaria and Romania (the ‘A2’) also joined the EU. However, nationals from these countries were subject to more stringent restrictions on employment in the UK than A8 nationals. ‘A8+2’ refers to both groups.

## **INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION:**

In this section I explore recent academic positions taken in relation to international migration. A focus on the economic elements of these theories aims to concentrate attention on how the process and action of migrating fits into our understanding of global, national, local and individual economics. However, as this review reveals, the economic elements of migration cannot be easily separated out from the whole.

There has been much written on (or around) this subject but we can broadly divide the work into general theory groups, based on their underlying assumptions about the world. Though this structure may negate some of the heterogeneity and complexity of these theories, it is necessary in order to give a clear overview of the subject area.

### *Rational mobilities – Neo-classical economics and human capital theory:*

Neo-classical economics conventionally traces its roots to the philosophy of Adam Smith and the writings of David Ricardo and others. It attempts to provide scientific models of human economic behaviour based on what are essentially mechanical laws of nature which can be accurately mathematically modelled. This approach has had a huge influence on governments and politicians, particularly in the ‘West’, with elements of neo-classical economics and the assumptions of Smith and Ricardo found, to varying degrees, in almost all mainstream political parties in industrialised nations. There are two main strands emanating from this area that I feel are important to how migration has been understood in relation to economics. The first is ‘rational choice’ theory, epitomised here by George Borjas, which takes a strongly econometric stance on migration, whilst the second, ‘human capital’ theory (represented by Larry Sjaastad), attempts to take a longer-term view of the concept of value maximisation.

### *Rational choices and the economic imperatives of migration:*

Borjas’ starting point is based on a neo-classical premise; ‘... that individuals migrate because

it is in their benefit (either in terms of psychic satisfaction or income) to do so' (1989: 457). This statement is based on the notion that humans act as rational economic beings when considering whether to migrate; a conceptualisation that is key to Borjas' understanding of migration.

The second key element in this thesis is drawn from 'international trade theory' and conceives of an 'immigration market' where potential migrants in 'source' countries consider '...the possibility of remaining there or of migrating to a number of potential host countries' in order to 'maximize their well being' (ibid: 460). Meanwhile, 'host' countries alter their policies in order to sway different types of migrants – encouraging some and discouraging others. In this way, countries make 'migration offers' based on the observable and unobservable characteristics of those seeking to move; the former referring to demographic traits, such as, level of education or age, whilst the latter concerns immeasurable qualities; for example, skill, luck or ambition.

Furthermore, Borjas argues that if we simplify our assumption that people migrate to improve their overall well-being and, instead, consider that migrants are solely looking to maximise their income, such an immigration market can be statistically modelled. Borjas notes that, although such a model may provide a good indicator of gross flows of migration, understanding how migrants might fare in the 'host' country requires some further work. He posits that these can be modelled if differences in political and economic conditions in source and host countries at the time of migration are taken into account (ibid: 477).

Additionally, the negative or positive effects of larger numbers of migrant workers in a labour market depend on the degree to which these new employees replicate or compliment the skills of a pre-existing 'native' labour force. If the two groups have similar skill sets and are, therefore, able to substitute for one another, then increasing numbers of immigrant workers lead to a decrease in wages for both groups as labour supply effectively begins to outstrip demand. If, however, the situation is reversed, and 'migrant' and 'native' have skill sets which compliment each other, then the model suggests that wages and employment increase for both groups as immigration flows into the labour market go up. Intriguingly though, the empirical studies included appear to show that a growth in migrant labour tends

to affect the migrants themselves far more than the ‘native’ workforce (ibid: 481)<sup>5</sup>.

*Migration as investment – human capital theory:*

'Human capital' theory (see, e.g. Becker 1975; Mincer 1974) can be broadly characterised by the assertion that, ‘... other things being equal, personal incomes vary according to the amount of investment in human capital’ (Marshall 1998: 286). These investments can take the form of education or training (either ‘on-’ or ‘off-the-job’), or, as Larry Sjaastad (1962) illustrates, through other indirect investments such as migration.

However, despite this interest in apparently non-economic factors in the labour market, we should not be fooled into thinking this is radically different to neo-classical models of migration. Education, training and migration are corralled into the economic field and rationalised as *investments* in human *capital* which pay *dividends* in the long-term. Central to the human-capital approach in economics is the idea that individuals making *rational* choices about investments in themselves lead to long-term benefits to the economy, as an army of highly skilled, educated and mobile workers increase efficiency, flexibility and earnings in the labour market. Therefore, much of what Sjaastad argues about migration ties in with Borjas’ theorising – that humans can be modelled using an essentially neo-classical economic premise.

*Commentary – 'Free' markets and rational economies:*

One observation we can make when studying neo-classical or human-capital approaches to migration and regional economies is that they tend to be focused on the functioning on the system, rather than the system itself. Both authors discussed above (and many other researchers applying broadly neo-classical economic principles to migration) suggest that migration is caused by disequilibrium between countries and regions, and that this lack of balance encourages people to move towards the more ‘successful’ area through what we can characterise as ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. Over time, they imply, migration acts as a force to equalise difference between areas and to encourage equilibrium. In this sense, both Borjas

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<sup>5</sup> This suggests that, on the whole, immigrants are not competing with the native population in the labour market. Rather, these results indicate what many qualitative studies have shown; that many migrants work in labour market niches but do not generally have access to the wider ‘native’ labour market.

and Sjaastad are modelling a laissez-faire capitalist system, whereby free-market capitalism is in a constant state of what we can describe as maximum entropy; that is, the 'natural' state of the system is one of order and equilibrium. Therefore, migration, left to its own devices, will act as a release valve when differences between regions become too extreme and threaten the functioning of the system itself (see also Galbraith 1993). This is supposed to happen through a process neo-classical economists call 'factor price equalisation':

*Goods, people, and capital moving across national borders should tend to equalize prices between countries. Labor should travel from low-wage to high-wage economies and capital should move in the other direction. This would tend to depress wages in the migrant-destination countries while raising them in the sending countries. Eventually, some kind of equilibrium should be reached when the remaining wage gap represents just the cost of migration between the two countries. As a result, migration should stop.*

(Stalker 2000: 11)

As Stalker goes on to illustrate, this may have happened for some countries within Europe, and between Europe and the U.S., but it certainly has not happened on a global scale. In fact, using data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Reports*, Stalker (ibid: 17) makes it quite clear that global wage disparity has increased, rather than decreased as neo-classical economics suggest it should. But why is this so? One reason may be found in the assumptions these theorists make about how the world works. The theories fail to take into account the differences between their laissez-faire economic models and the global political economy in which migration takes place. For example, can we really claim that the global economy truly lacks borders? Can capital and labour flow from areas of excess to areas of need without inhibition? Do governments in the rich countries actually want there to be a convergence between their economies and those of poorer 'sending' societies? Unfortunately, I believe it is clear that the answer to these three questions is a resounding 'no'. Capital does not flow freely throughout the world, despite what the neo-liberal economic orthodoxy might suggest. Yes, there are free-trade associations, such as the European Union (EU) or North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which impose minimum taxes on goods and capital moving between them, but they are often highly protectionist toward imports arriving from *outside* the free trade area. Equally, international



donor organisations, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and US Aid may make the imposition of trade liberalisation policies central to their 'aid' giving in order to 'free up' the client countries economy in line with neo-classical maxims. Yet neither of these factors makes the global economy entirely free; the first makes the movement of goods and capital between *some* countries in *some* parts of the world easier, whilst still retaining many protectionist tariffs against goods from the rest of the world; whilst the second allows unfettered access to the markets of client countries but does nothing to encourage the reverse. The situation regarding uninhibited labour movement across the globe is even less laissez-faire. All rich countries (i.e. the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations) impose restrictions on immigration. Whilst some theorists suggest that there are purely economic and labour market motives to border control – basically 'cherry picking' the migrants whose skills or trades the country is lacking – others would argue that there is an inherent xenophobia underlying restrictions on immigration. Either way, we can safely say that most people in the world do not enjoy access to a free-market in migration (see, e.g. Moses 2006).

But this isn't the only criticism we can level against the neo-classical approach to migration; there is also the question of how humans make economic choices, a question that goes straight to the heart of how we understand migration. To understand this criticism we must first analyse the concept of rationality in economic choice, as originally posited by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), developed by David Ricardo and adopted by modern neo-classical economists as the foundation stone of their discipline. Smith argued that human individuals all act in essentially the same way when it comes to economic decisions because we all share a 'natural' urge to get the best return for our labour (the ultimate source of 'value') by selling it at the highest price. If people are *educated* to act in a rational way, then this impulse is of great benefit to the nation. The notion of rational economic choice only becomes to be seen as a 'natural' state of being under the influence of David Ricardo, where it takes on the form of a mechanical law – 'humans always maximise utility', rather than 'humans can be taught to always maximise utility'. But do we always act rationally when making economic decisions? The work of Amos Tversky (1981) and Herbert Simon (1987), amongst others, suggests that we don't, instead constructing our decisions from a rag-tag assortment of 'perceptions, imperfect knowledge, and subjective

feelings' (Wilk 1996: 65) which may change over time and between individuals<sup>6</sup>. The very notion, therefore, of modelling a type of behaviour which appears not to exist in 'reality' seems a strange basis for an apparently scientific discipline. But how then to understand human decision-making processes, which seem central to our understanding of migration? I certainly *try* to make rational economic decisions some of the time, especially for really 'big' choices (and I think migrating would fall into the category of a 'big' choice). The problem is that individuals are rarely in possession of all the necessary information and are rarely unconstrained in the choices they can make. Perhaps some notion of power dynamics would help to explain both the information asymmetry and the choice constraints we face in trying to make 'rational decisions'.

*Power and dependence – World systems and the political economy of migration:*

For many theorists the radicalism of the 1960s and '70s, allied to the civil rights movement, Vietnam and increasing immigration into industrialised societies from poorer areas of the World, brought these issues into stark relief. Academics began to see that people were highly constrained in the decisions they could make and the information they were allowed access to. The result was the growth in popularity and influence of more overtly political models, many with their roots in Marxist and neo-Marxist theories.

*World Systems Theory:*

For Dependency theorists (see, e.g. Frank 1969) and World-Systems theorists (such as Immanuel Wallerstein) migration was not a value-free act, rather it fitted into a powerful and over-arching global structure which conditioned peoples' choices and acted to reinforce inequality between individuals, countries and regions. Immanuel Wallerstein's theory of the global capitalist system, presented in his epic three volume work, *The Modern World System*

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<sup>6</sup> Many authors now give significant room to the social and cultural elements of economics; for example Ng and Tseng (2008) have recently written on the increasing convergence between economic and social characterisations of human action, whilst both the 'new economic geography' (see, e.g. Krugman 2000) and 'cultural economies' (see, e.g. du Gay and Pryke 2002; Thrift 2000) approaches have moved far from such simplistic models of the role of the 'economy'.

(1974, 1980, 1989)<sup>7</sup>, explores these themes in depth. For Wallerstein, the ‘modern’ epoch has been characterised by the gradual extension of the power of the capitalist system, firstly over European nation-states and later, through global expansions, technological advancements and colonialism, the entire world. Therefore, we have an international capitalist system, but this system is very different to the self-regulating capitalist system of neo-classical economics. Instead of being an essentially ‘fair’ system with a tendency towards order, equilibrium and convergent economies, Wallerstein’s capitalist world system is characterised by unequal concentric relations of power and influence, whereby the powerful subjugate the powerless to serve their needs. This is a system of hierarchical interdependence enabled by the entwined growth of colonialism and capitalism in which,

*... free trade (and the theory of competitive advantage) was favourable to the industrial economies because the difference between their structure and that of the dominated economies led to unequal exchange, and in addition the terms of trade worsened over time for the countries of the South. This set of characteristics allowed one to define relations between the two according to the model of centre and periphery.*

(Rist 1997: 115)

The centre, or core, can be characterised by high-tech and capital-intensive means of production, whilst the periphery is defined by low-tech and labour intensive means. In this way, the global system effectively apes the division between rich capitalist and poor proletariat in ‘traditional’ Marxist thinking. Indeed, this division between ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ is reproduced within each country to some degree, with repressed, ethnically-segmented, industrial under-classes representing the periphery within the core, and ‘tributary elites’ (see, e.g. Shepherd 1987) representing the interests of the core within the borders of peripheral states. In this way, relations of power and domination are played out both globally (internationally) and locally (*intranationally*).

International migration fits well into this model<sup>8</sup> as the global capitalist system is seen to

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<sup>7</sup> A more immediately accessible overview of Wallerstein’s concept of the world-system can be found in his 1982 article, ‘World systems analysis: theoretical and interpretative issues’.

<sup>8</sup> However, it is strangely under-explored as a phenomenon in itself by world systems theorists who appear to prefer to concentrate on inequalities faced by migrants in the ‘core’ *after* they had migrated (see Miles & Satzewich (1990) for an overview).

affect the dominion of the rich 'North' over the poor 'South', enticing workers from the periphery to migrate to the core or semi-periphery in search of employment and money (see, e.g. Castles and Kosack 1973). Equally, the effects of global capitalism on 'sending' societies are seen to encourage migratory flows, both within the nation (i.e. rural to urban migration) and between nations (periphery to core). These changes essentially ape classic Marxist analyses of the move from 'peasant' to 'capitalist' economies; that is, changes in land tenure and inheritance, along with new modes of production, affect huge social changes and produce a massive 'reserve army' of labour, which is 'naturally' drawn to areas where they can find work. This may be found in industrialised areas within the periphery or semi-periphery, which are controlled by trans-national companies or 'tributary elites', or in the remaining industrial centres of the core. Once there, though earning more than 'at home', they are nevertheless marginalised and exploited; conflicts occasionally arising with the local proletariat as they compete for work outside the areas that have been set aside for them (Castles, Booth, and Wallace 1984).

The concept of 'global cities' (see, e.g. Castells 1989, 1996; Sassen 2001) takes elements of this form of analysis and applies it to the small number of urban centres where powerful trans-national organisations are based (e.g. New York, London, Tokyo or Sydney). In this type of analysis, further changes in the labour market have produced a situation where 'global cities' require 'elite' employees at the top (e.g. bankers, advertising executives, web designers or CEOs of trans-national organisations) and unskilled workers at the bottom (e.g. cleaners, waiters, gardeners and domestic servants) but an ever-diminishing 'middle' level (i.e. 'semi-skilled' or 'skilled trade' workers, generally from the 'native' population) as much heavy industry, manufacturing and raw material production has moved to the periphery to take advantage of lower wages and laxer regulation. This creates what Massey et al. (Massey et al. 1993: 447) describe as a 'bifurcated' labour market structure, which reinforces relations between the 'core' (highly skilled and educated, rich, powerful) and the 'periphery' (low skill and education levels, poor, powerless) and acts to deepen division and produce a divergent global economy, where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer (see, e.g. Heisler 1992: 627).

So is international migration merely a product of competitive capitalism's extension onto a global scale? Are migrants being propelled across the world due to the restructuring of the

international economy?

*Commentary - Powerful systems, powerless subjects:*

The answer to the first two questions cannot simply be proved or disproved with recourse to the statistical flows of migrants because they do not tell us definitively *why* people have moved. Instead, what is at stake are concepts of a much more immeasurable quality; namely ideas about the nature of *structures* or *systems*<sup>9</sup> and how they affect the ability of individuals (or small groups) to act independently. For example, if we accept one of Wallerstein's central tenets (as I believe almost all current social theorists would) - that a economic system and mode of production we could broadly call 'capitalist' has become pre-dominant in the organisation of trade and labour throughout the vast majority of the world – then we must ask ourselves to what degree this implies humans have agency, or that their actions are *determined* by the prevailing economic system<sup>10</sup>. Simply returning to a more neo-classical approach does not assist us here – that would mean replacing the notion that humans are impelled to act by an all-powerful world-system with the idea that humans all act in predictable and measurable ways; replacing the tyranny of the world-system with the totalitarianism of a universal human rationality.

World-systems theory and other neo-Marxist approaches to the global political economy have allowed for an analysis of international migration whereby the structural inequalities of the world could be laid bare and made central to an understanding of how the capitalist system worked. However, this revolutionary potential is constantly undermined by the disempowerment of its subjects; if the world system was simply about structures of power and dominance, then what possible agency could the 'weak' have? Some theorists attempted to rebalance the argument by adapting and critiquing existing neo-Marxist theories<sup>11</sup>, but the

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<sup>9</sup> Perhaps we can best understand these terms by quoting Raymond Firth: 'social structure is an analytical tool, designed to serve us in understanding how men behave in their social life. The essence of this concept is those social relations which seem to be of critical importance for the behaviour of members of the society, so that if such relations were not in operation, the society could not be generally agreed to exist in that form' (c. Marshall 1998: 649). See also (Williams 1984: 301 - 8).

<sup>10</sup> This is essentially an ontological question; if human action is determined (to any degree) by social structures (such as Wallerstein's world-system) then what does this say about the ability of humans to make individual choices and how did these immaterial systems come to exist in the first place, indeed how do they go on existing?

<sup>11</sup> Eric Wolf's seminal thesis, *Europe and the People Without History* (1982), and James C. Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) are excellent examples.

internal inconsistencies of adding functional agency to approaches with apparently inbuilt structuralist biases failed to convince many critics and they began to look for other ways to understand human actions on a global scale. In doing so, they were not driven by any statistical disproving of world-systems theory and its ilk, but rather by a philosophic idea that humans must have agency; we cannot simply be automatons acting as cogs in a system out of our control.

*Integrating structure and function – Structuration theory and international migration:*

The major problem, then, with world-systems theory and other neo-Marxist conceptualisations of international migration, is that they fail to give enough credit to the role of the human social agent; human beings are, in Katy Gardner's vivid phrase, 'propelled across the world by the workings of the world system' (1995: 12). However, the human agent as a predictable rational economic being, as portrayed in neo-classical economics, seems equally absurd; lacking any notion of wider relations of power and dominance, these approaches seem wilfully naïve and blinkered. Such was the *ideological* division between the two positions, though, that, for many years, it appeared impossible to bridge the divide between them. However, as fractures began to show in the Iron Curtain, theorists began to think about taking other courses than simply 'left' or 'right'; instead another route was seen as possible, a 'third way' perhaps?

The most (in)famous of these attempts to integrate structure with function, agency with determination, local with global, is Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration. There are other ways to approach these problems,<sup>12</sup> but it is here we find the most philosophically direct attempt to deal with the 'structure-agency problematic'. Giddens is interested in

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<sup>12</sup> For an overview of alternative 'integrative' approaches to studying migration, see Massey et al. (1993), particularly pages 448 – 454. A number of post-structuralist authors have also made important critiques of how we approach the study of society, among them Michel Foucault, who added an ominous depth to Giddens work; arguing that, though the structures, or institutions, of migration, are essentially arbitrary and relative, in the 'act of becoming' they take on meaning and are treated as 'real', and therefore are imbued with power. However, in Foucault's view this tendency is entwined with a Nietzschean 'will to power' whereby structures, however 'imagined', become the conduit for mechanisms of governmentality and bio-power as well as the site (or 'locale' in Giddens-speak) of power battles to control those mechanisms (see, esp. Foucault 1972, 1991, 1991).

breaking down the conceptual barriers between overarching macro-structures and particular micro-level agents. He does this by arguing that the two are inseparable; structures are not ethereal concepts, like the laissez-faire global economy in neo-classical economics, nor are they ‘forces which inexorably impel individual actions’ (Goss and Lindquist 1995: 331) as presented in Marxist models of migration. Instead they are viewed as ‘rules and resources’ that are dynamically used and (re)created by social actors in their everyday lives (see, e.g. Giddens 1989: 253); in turn these rules and resources enable and constrain individual actions.

It is also useful to note two other elements of the theory; a) that knowledge of many structures (i.e. rules and resources) is often hierarchically stratified, producing a situation of information asymmetry, where knowledge can literally be equated with power, and b) that, by using and/or manipulating these rules and resources, social actors are reproducing and transforming the very structures which make certain actions more or less difficult to enact. Structures do not, therefore, exist on their own but are created and changed by the actions of social agents. However, once they have come into being they begin to exert some level of control over the group and the individual, reflecting Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s famous quote from *The Social Contract*:

*Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains. Those who think themselves master of others are indeed greater slaves than they.*

(1968: 49)

Despite this, all individuals, however weak their position, have some ability to control their situation: ‘... the most seemingly ‘powerless’ individuals are able to mobilise resources whereby they carve out ‘spaces of control’ (Giddens 1982: 197)<sup>13</sup>. Additionally, Giddens sketches out the concept of ‘locales’ as arenas of interaction and containers of power where ‘the individual literally faces the institution’ (Goss and Lindquist 1995: 333). These exist at all levels of society and our power and influence in, and knowledge of, different locales may

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<sup>13</sup> In this way, structures do not become all-powerful arbiters of human action, as has been the tendency in neo-Marxist approaches.

vary dramatically. Equally, these exist within time, conceptually divided into three parts; the everyday (*duree*), the life span (*dasien*) and the inter-generational time of institutions (*long duree*) which affect decision-making processes.

These ideas have been used to illustrate how migration is not solely determined by either structure or agency but rather, through the creation of migrant institutions, an ever-evolving combination of the two:

*Individual interests and actions are not determined by institutions, but individuals draw selectively on institutional rules and resources in pursuit of their interests and inevitably reproduce the social system.*

(*ibid*: 345)

In this way, it is possible to retain some of the agency of ‘rational economic man’ found in neo-classical approaches to migration, whilst considering the how human action is restrained by structures, institutions and other ‘power containers’ of our own making.

*Commentary - Structure, agency and migration:*

On one level, this should mean that the battle between structure and agency, neo-Marxist and neo-classicist, should be finished; agency makes structure, which in turn limits agency and reproduces structure. Researchers of migration should be able to settle down and explain the nuances of their topic, helping to elucidate and predict the logic of global population movements. The problem in this, however, is two-fold; firstly, structuration theory may be an ontologically coherent world view, but it does little to give us practical answers about migrant movements; rather it implies that migration must be a complex nexus of institutions, rules, resources and agents that requires careful and painstaking picking apart. Secondly, Giddens does not supply any methodological instructions as to how his theory should relate to ‘the concrete reality of the modern capitalist and patriarchal social world...’ (Gregson 1989: 247). What Giddens does, however, is to give an indication that migration (and social life in general) must be viewed holistically and not as lots of separate rational economic beings making individual, independent, universally coherent choices which add up to create migrant ebbs and flows, nor as the workings of reified global structures, in which



humans merely act as unknowing cogs. What he does not do is provide a ‘grand unified theory’ of social life; whilst Giddens *implies* that humans share some elements of a common humanity which affect how we produce rules and resources, he appears to suggest that the forms these institutions take are essentially arbitrary – it is only in the significance given to them by human societies that they become meaningful. In this way, Giddens can be seen as providing an ontology of social life, rather than a theory of society – he outlines what things can exist and be studied in human social interactions, rather than telling us *why* these things exist or how we could study them<sup>14</sup>.

This move away from grand theorising towards more relativistic or hermeneutic approaches to social life has been commonplace in the social sciences for at least twenty years now. The idea of postmodernity, combined with the intellectual critique of previous ‘grand’ theories posed by poststructuralist writers, gave rise to new ways of approaching the study of migration. These often stress the complex and multi-dimensional aspects of global movements, rejecting determinism in favour of more relativist positions and highlighting the social and cultural factors in the on-going project of migration.

### *Beyond grand theory – Conceptualising migration in a globalised world:*

The concept of globalisation has become a popular term, amongst both academics and the public at large, and is closely allied to notions of postmodernity<sup>15</sup>, with which it shares a tendency to be used for a variety of processes and ideas; an over-used ‘catch-all’ phrase for

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<sup>14</sup> There is a notable similarity here with John Law’s (2008) discussion of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) – that it is not an over-arching social theory as such, rather it is a way of approaching the material world.

<sup>15</sup> The concept of the post-modern epoch is actually strongly linked to ideas found in grand theories, such as Marxism, which were predicated on the grounds that the world was in a ‘modern’ period of development; i.e. that science and industry would produce ‘new’ forms of labour, consumption, social structures or ‘developments’, or that the ‘modern’ modes of production created forms of class relations that would inevitably lead to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the resurgent proletariat. ‘Modernity’ could also be characterised in numerous other ways, such as the belief in the primordial nation-state as a bordered power-container linked by ‘... common glories in the past, a common will in the present’ (Renan 1994[1882]: 17); conceptualisations of separate, hierarchically ordered, ‘races’ of man (Stocking 1982); by a belief in the redemptive potential of science, or in the teleological ordering of history as an inevitable development towards progressively more ‘advanced’ (i.e. inherently ‘better’) forms of society. Post-modernism grew out of a rejection of these old certainties and the realisation that the world was no longer structured in the same way; in this sense, post-modernism was both an intellectual and an empirical rejection of ‘modernity’. Key texts on post-modernism include Baumann (1992), Jameson (1991) and Lyotard (1984).

contemporary society. However, these ideas do contain a handful of useful ideas for the study of international migration. Firstly, it can be used to refer to the reconfiguration of the means of production on a global scale – production becomes spatially flexible (i.e. it can occur almost anywhere), capital becomes mobile, virtual and denationalised, whilst goods and information are freed from spatial constraints by newly available global technologies (e.g. aeroplanes, the internet, satellite TV). Secondly, it refers to the social and cultural changes these have triggered – culture has become deterritorialised, separate from a physical ‘site’ of culture<sup>16</sup>, whilst global media and commercial products are consumed worldwide (see, e.g. Hannerz 1996). The combination of these factors mean that contemporary migrations cannot simply be explained with recourse to economic ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, or global structures of domination and subordination. Instead, migrants are embedded in a world of international flows and interconnections, where time-space has been compressed by air travel, international telephone calls and the global media.

One effect of these changes is that both industrial production and culture have become deterritorialised. In terms of manufacturing, this can be represented by a pair of shoes made with raw materials produced in a number of ‘peripheral’ states, put together in Bangladesh or China, with added hand stitching in Italy, marketed from a Parisian office and financed by a US registered company with offices in New York, Sydney, Tokyo and London, whose CEO is based in Monaco or the Cayman Islands for tax purposes. These alterations effectively produce transnational companies (TNCs) which move beyond the control of national governments as they amass huge amounts of capital and relocate to new environs with less stringent legislation if local conditions are not favourable. Deterritorialisation also refers to the way in which culture is no longer viewed as synonymous with autonomous, bounded spaces. Instead, it can be shared between people in various sites separated by thousands of miles and numerous national borders. These cultural networks, or diasporas, are constantly reinforced through social, religious and economic relations, and are seen by many theorists as central to understanding contemporary migrations. These changes have also triggered discussions about hybridity; referring to the ways in which migrants, and particularly their children, are placed in more than one cultural idiom. Therefore, the migrant must form ways

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<sup>16</sup> Despite this, the conceptual link between physical sites and cultural belonging are still strong in many transmigrant groups (see, e.g. Gardner 2002: 204 - 8; Olwig 1997)

of being in more than one cultural space, or create hybrid identities which combine elements of both, whilst retaining an ‘illusion of wholeness’ (Ewing 1990) to protect themselves from the inconsistencies and incoherence of moving from one world into another<sup>17</sup>:

*We are migrant animals in the labyrinth of the world metropolises; in reality or in the imagination, we participate in an infinity of worlds. And each of these worlds has a culture, a language and a set of roles and rules that we must adapt to whenever we migrate from one to another. Thus we are subjected to mounting pressure to change, to transfer, to translate what we were just a moment ago into new codes and new forms of relation.*

(Melucci 1997: 61)

Melucci’s notion of participating in ‘an infinity of worlds’ perhaps summarised what is referred to as hybridity; it is in the spaces between these worlds that the cosmopolitan hybrid emerges<sup>18</sup>. But cultural forms are not merely broken down and reformed as hybrid entities; they can also be reinforced through these meetings and the continuation of links with a home ‘site’. Previous mechanistic theories of migration tended towards the idea that incoming groups would eventually be assimilated or incorporated into the larger whole, either by losing their cultural identity, or by taking an accepted position in an ethnically-segmented labour market. However, migrant groups have proved considerably more resilient than this; a core reason for which has been the continuation of links with ‘home’ through diasporic networks, as well as through what is described as trans-nationalism. This refers to the way in which migration is not simply about moving from *A* to *B*, rather transmigration can be seen as never really leaving *A* and never entirely arriving in *B*. Instead, transmigrants live partially in both; this can be physically<sup>19</sup>, or metaphorically true<sup>20</sup>, with social and

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<sup>17</sup> See Vasey (2001: 80 - 6) for a more detailed analysis of these concepts.

<sup>18</sup> Like Asian Dub Foundation and Trans-global Underground mixing bhangra and other South Asian musical forms with ultra-contemporary electronica and radical politics (see Kaur and Kalra 1996), or Ojos de Brujo and the Gotan Project mixing flamenco and tango with hip-hop and other ‘modern’ musical forms.

<sup>19</sup> As with international commuters, or temporary migrations to the Gulf states from Bangladesh or the Philippines.

<sup>20</sup> As with diaspora politics regarding Kashmiri separatism, Hindu nationalism in Gujarat (see, e.g. Werbner 2002), or migrants in Britain, the US or the Gulf building expensive houses in Sylhet in Bangladesh (Gardner 2002), Mirpur in Pakistan (Ballard 2001) or Kerala in India (Osella and Osella 2000)

economic capital being transferred between the two – financially, in terms of remittances<sup>21</sup>, formal and informal business links, and socially through the raised social, religious or political position of the migrant (see, e.g. Gardner 1995, 1999; Goss and Lindquist 1995; Osella and Osella 2000).

*Commentary:*

Migrants occupy a special place for many current social theorists; they appear to embody the very paradoxes of modernity – they are global travellers immersed in local relations, the ultimate cosmopolitans engaged in parochial politics, hybrid wholes made up of dogmatic parts. The globalised world of contemporary social sciences constantly throws up these inconsistencies and contradictions alongside apparently coherent transnational links and flows. The world is in a state of permanent flux, nothing stays the same for long and human actors constantly have to reinvent themselves and their world to produce an appearance, an illusion, of wholeness, of sense and sensibility. In terms of local labour market practices the effects can be equally contradictory; TNCs and their brands seek to conquer every corner of the globe, at the same time as transnational migrants and diasporic communities build up business links from the ground up, drawing on hybridised resources of ‘home’ and ‘away’ to create entrepreneurial openings in both sites<sup>22</sup>. Migrants are both drawn to regions because they are led to believe there are jobs or opportunities available (either through direct recruitment, ‘chain migration’ or other means, such as people smuggling), and produce jobs and opportunities once they arrive<sup>23</sup>. So we are left with a combination of structural and individual motivations in migration, as well as a mixture of constraints and opportunities in terms of employment once the migrant has arrived. Predicting the effect international

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<sup>21</sup> The World Bank is reported to put the global figure for migrant remittances at a minimum of \$200 billion and conservatively estimate the real figure as nearer to \$300 billion (‘Migrants send £105bn back home to relatives’, Phillip Thornton, *The Independent*, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Much of value has been written on the links between migration and entrepreneurship (Basu and Altinay 2002; Kloosterman and Rath 2001, 2003; McCabe, Harlaftis, and Minoglou 2005; Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2001), as well as the relationship between ‘peasant values’, migration and running independent businesses (Ballard 2001).

<sup>23</sup> For example, migrants from the Sylhet region of NE Bangladesh originally came to Britain as *lascars* working on merchant or naval ships, before these pioneers began to be employed in the heavy industries of the North of England, and recruiting their friends and kinsmen from ‘home’. With the decline of industry in these areas, many Sylhetis moved south to east London, working first in the ‘rag’ trade, before coming to dominate ‘Indian’ restaurants in Spitalfields and beyond (see Adams 1987 for a full description; or Gardner 1995: 35 - 64 for a brief overview).

migration will have on the local level is therefore a complex matter, dependent on a huge number of ever shifting variables.

***Conclusions – Local sites, global migrants:***

When we talk about international migration, it is difficult to separate out the particular economic elements of this process; attempts to do this generally lose something in the process, tending to restrict the motivation to migrate to individual or household income maximisation. Equally, structural theories of migration as part of the global political economy lack a notion of human agency, whilst both suffer from seeing migration as a mechanistic process:

*A machine can function only according to the limits of its design, use and maintenance. The limits of the natural and social order are not prefigured by such design and use principles. Structures evolve and mutate, transform and differentiate from each other in ways that no machine can.*

(Papastergiadis 2004: 101)

Viewing migration as a predictable, machine-like, process does not give an accurate picture of *why* people migrate and how this might affect regional economies. It is certainly possible to model how well migrant groups perform in an economy in a quantitative sense – e.g. migrant group  $x$  earns  $y\%$  of the average yearly income of the total population – but it is much harder to explain why this is happening, or whether it is applicable to other migrant groups at other times. Equally, it is possible to explain away migrants and their position in the labour market with reference to structures of domination and control but, again, these accounts are extremely bad at predicting anything. Contemporary studies of migration indicate that, because migration is such a complex and evolving process, predictions of this kind are impossible; human actions are unpredictable, whilst structures, flows and links grow, contract and disappear in a way unrelated to any known laws of nature. Instead, we are left with a process that has been likened to turbulence (Papastergiadis 2004) and referred to as a chaotic order, or ‘chaorder’ (Werbner 2002); a complex system which cannot be easily

modelled or predicted.

There is, therefore, no simple answer as to how international migration affects regional economies, nor can we hope to exactly predict what these effects may be. However, this does not mean we are unable to say anything about the relationships between local sites and international migration, rather it implies that there is no single grand theory to explain all the economic ‘laws’ of international migration. Equally, we needn’t be blinded by what Ian Hacking describes as the ‘miasma’ of relativity (2000) and retreat into the hermeneutic enclave of identity politics. It is important, though, to bear in mind the fluidity and flux of social relations, the positioning of the author and the fact that we are not producing definitive scientific facts but an interpretation of an ever changing reality (see, e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986).

### **LABOUR MIGRATION AND WORK – THEORISING MIGRANT LABOUR MARKETS:**

But what of understanding the *work* of migrants? There is considerable evidence (explored in depth throughout the thesis) that international migrants work in particular niches in the wider labour market. Arguing that overly structural or economistic approaches tend to negate the fluidity of what work migrants do and the social context in which they do it, is not to deny that such divisions occur. Furthermore, it will become clear throughout this thesis that there are substantial differences and divisions between the type of work different migrants do. In this section I critically explore some key ways of theorising migrant labour markets, in particular focusing on the influential concepts of the dual labour market and the global city and how these theories have come to shape contemporary approaches to migrant labour markets in the UK.

A ‘classic’ approach to conceptualising labour markets as a single entity is, perhaps ironically, to invoke their duality. Since the early 1970s sociologists, economists and other labour market researchers have developed a concept of the dual, bifurcated or ‘balkanised’ labour market. In its simplest form the argument runs that the labour market has been divided into a primary sector – incorporating higher status job roles, secure employment contracts, higher wages and so forth – and a secondary labour market – which refers to lower status jobs, with more precarious employment and lower wages (see, e.g. Doeringer and Piore 1971).

Furthermore, deregularisation of the labour market, particularly in 'service' roles and some former 'white collar' professions, has seen many job roles take on more and more characteristics of the secondary labour market. Importantly, this approach to the labour market also emphasised the relative lack of movement between the two broad sectors, a phenomena for which there are strong indications of replication in this study. To argue that the labour market is segmented is, however, so commonplace in contemporary economic sociologies and geographies as to be considered part of the normative framework of understanding for these subjects. This is not to say that there is not a considerable amount of debate on how, why and to what effect labour markets are divided, but rather that the idea of a dual labour market is almost unquestioned.

One effect of this is the tendency not to redress the continuing reproduction of this duality, rendering segmented labour markets as 'quasi-natural' phenomena. However, there is nothing natural about segmented labour markets; they are, as one of the founders of this approach, Michael Piore (2001, 2002), makes clear, products not only of legal, bureaucratic and economic structures, but of complex and embedded social processes and assumptions about normal behaviour. They are as much about the interactions between social actors, as they are about 'structures' as such. A number of excellent studies have successfully sought to illustrate the interplay between labour market formations and socio-cultural phenomena; David Roediger (2005) for instance, has provided a wonderful study of the entwined nature of work and 'whiteness' in the United States, whilst there have been a number of enlightening studies analysing the relationship between gender and labour markets (see, e.g. Jenkins 2004).

Whilst these studies are extremely useful to any scholar of work and labour markets, of particular interest to this research is those who have turned their attention to the interplay between international migration and labour market segmentations. Perhaps most widely known in geography is the work of the political scientist Saskia Sassen. In a number of books and articles, Sassen has developed a sophisticated, if somewhat urban-centric and structural, understanding of the relationship between globalisation, migration and labour market segmentation in post-industrial societies (see, e.g. Sassen 1998, 1999, 2001, 2006). For Sassen, alterations in the geography of production and consumption on a global scale have led to three important changes. Firstly there has been an expansion and consolidation of producer services and corporate headquarters into a core of 'global cities'. Whilst these

industries do not produce the majority of jobs in these centres, this process does act to establish, ‘...a new regime of economic activity and the associated spatial and social transformation evident in these cities’ (Sassen 1996: 580). Secondly, there has been a parallel downgrading of the manufacturing sector in post-industrial societies, with most primary production being increasingly moved to previously peripheral areas of the world to take advantage of lower wages and laxer employment regulations. In its stead, and driven by the growth of the ‘knowledge economy’ in global cities, we find the rapid expansion of the service economy, further encouraged by informalisation of employment relations so typical of the secondary labour market in labour segmentation theory. For Sassen, the growth of the service industry is fundamentally linked to the growth of a super-rich elite in global cities; concentrating on the ‘process’ of major international organisations (rather than their output), Sassen rightly asserts that the assumption that these organisations rely only on highly-skilled knowledge workers is clearly false; underlying this is the concurrent requirement for a vast army of low waged, low-skilled service workers (ibid: 583).

Relatedly, this concentration of opportunity into a small core of global cities has also vastly increased international migration to these centres of the burgeoning knowledge economy. Whilst Sassen is rarely concerned with *why* migrants come, she does note that, whilst a small number arrive as part of the highly regarded knowledge elite, most quickly become incorporated into the deregulated, informalised parts of the service economy. Indeed, we can begin to make out in Sassen’s work the contours of a dual *migrant* labour market, adding to and reflecting the segmentation approaches first introduced by Michael Piore and others. Additionally, Sassen introduces the global aspects of dual labour markets, albeit one very specific instance of them – geographically fixed on elite global cities. Whilst there is substantial empirical evidence supporting much of Sassen’s thesis – for example, recent work based in London has emphasised just how polarised migrant labour markets are (see, e.g. McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2009; Wills et al. 2009) – she does not provide much theorisation about how this bifurcation may be (re-)produced on a day-to-day basis, leaving her open to accusations of a structuralist, ‘top-down’ bias to her work (Smith 2001). Equally, her concentration on ‘global cities’ has the potential to distract from the ways such processes play out away from these centres. However, recent work has begun to redress this balance, acting to outline the everyday interactions which constantly perform such phenomena into being (see, e.g. Bauder 2006; McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2007; Waldinger and Lichter



2003)<sup>24</sup>.

A number of studies have illustrated how the presence of a constant supply of international workers willing to take on low-wage, low-status and informal service work both ties existing migrants into this kind of work and produces the means to recruit further workers through networks of friends and family, essentially embedding many work roles as ‘migrant jobs’ (Bauder 2006; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Whilst this insight was not particularly new in itself – Michael Piore had long ago made broadly the same point (Piore 1979) – their subtle analyses of the ways such processes were played out on the everyday terrain of work and beyond was both novel and insightful. Harald Bauder, for example, has utilised Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural capital and social distinction (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) to describe how social processes and everyday encounters, as well as the political and legal regulation of employment and citizenship, act to create ‘migrant’ labour markets, especially in low-status, low-wage and precarious areas of the economy. Furthermore, Bauder argues that this process itself – whether it occurs between or within countries – allows non-migrants to secure more prestigious primary sector employment for themselves:

*Processes associated with capital and distinction offer explanations for the labor market situation in which many international migrants find themselves. By strategically creating and manipulating various interconnected forms of capital, including citizenship, a non-immigrant labor force can distinguish and subordinate immigrant labor and thereby reproduce itself. In this way, the various forms of capital construct particular labor market roles for immigrants and thus regulate labor markets as a whole.*

(Bauder, 2006: 52)

Meanwhile, Roger Waldinger and Michael Lichter, in their study of immigration and the social organisation of labour in and around Los Angeles, take a particular interest in the processes of migrant labour market segmentation. They emphasise the centrality of migrant networks to this process, noting that they, ‘... provide durable, efficient, conduits for the flow of resources needed to give newcomers the information and social support for moving to a

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<sup>24</sup> I do not mean to suggest here that Sassen’s intention is to talk only of global cities, rather than their wider impacts (which are great). But I do feel that the ubiquity of such a focus tends to underplay the importance of contexts beyond such world metropolises.

new home and getting started' (2003: 11), including providing routes into work where their particular network has gained a foothold. They provide insightful commentary on how different migrant networks have come to dominate certain employment 'niches' in LA and its environs and, furthermore, they outline how these roles come to be seen as quintessentially suited to the perceived embodied attributes of certain migrant groups, so employers are more likely to hire those seen as having the 'correct' cultural and physical distinctions (by dint of their perceived 'race', gender or nationality for example). By highlighting these processes, they bring to our attention the interplay between macro-level regulations – including labour market informalisation – and the dynamic everyday production of migrant networks, employer attitudes and embodied habitus.

Perhaps the most subtle and intellectually stimulating interpretation of this kind of interaction can be found in the use of the notion of dual interpellation, forwarded by Linda McDowell, Adina Batnitzky and Sarah Dyer in their work on employees in a large London hotel chain. For McDowell et al. (2007), the stubborn persistence of labour market segmentation and inequality and the continuing importance of imagined gendered and racialised characteristics to our positions within such a system, is not simply a case of employers making 'common sense assumptions' about the purported suitability of potential employees based on their imagined embodied attributes, it is a more fluid dynamic than this gives credit for:

*Workers do not enter their site of employment with their social characteristics firmly in place; rather gender and ethnicity, race, and skin color, are imbued with particular meanings as the interactions between workers, managers and clients produce particular versions of embodied service workers.*

(McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2007: 5)

In order to make sense of this complex of interactions, McDowell et al utilise the notion of interpellation, as introduced by Louis Althusser (2001) and developed in labour market theory by Michael Burawoy (1982). Whilst they retain the idea that the identity of workers is socially constructed in an elaborate call and response between worker and employer, they go beyond the original conception of this as essentially being constituted of (and created by) class relations, to invoke an understanding of identities as multiple, fluid and nuanced social

(re)constructions that are subject to both contestation and consenting stereotyping<sup>25</sup>. In this way, interpellation refers to the subtle and everyday ways in which expectations of employers, the multiplied identities of (migrant) workers, and the imaginaries of customers interact in a delicate call and response which produce and recreate workers in embodied, dynamic and contextual moments of being and becoming. Furthermore, these moments are not merely the minutia of the inevitable production of appropriate workers/bodies by global capitalism, they are fundamentally constitutive of such processes:

*Migrant workers – their classed, raced and gendered identities and their insertion into the divisions of labor in a global city, such as London – are not merely a consequence of global economic processes, but also shape the ways in which these processes work out, producing and shaping new landscapes of labor and inequality.*

(McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2007: 21)

Therefore, we can understand dual migrant labour markets as being constituted by (and, crucially, constituting) not only ‘global economic processes’, but also the everyday interactions that underlie such a system – the relationship between employer and employee, migrant and non-migrant and so forth.

## **THE GREAT UNKNOWN – KNOWLEDGE AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION:**

*Reports that say something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know.*

U.S. Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, February 2002.

Knowledge is a strange idea. At one level Donald Rumsfeld's quote is a tautological

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<sup>25</sup> In some ways, therefore, this interpretation of interpellation bears more than a passing resemblance to ‘performativity’ as espoused by Judith Butler (1990, 1993) and others. However, as McDowell et al note, theirs is a concept based on a, ‘...more grounded and more specific notion of identity, formed through particular and limited interaction within the workplace, rather than through a broader discursive structure and forms of regulations, although the two forms of regulation are undoubtedly related’ (2007: 6).

minefield of meaningless contrivance; an arrogant man's attempt to conceal his lack of knowledge about the failings of U.S. military intelligence – 'a tale told by an idiot, all sound and fury, signifying nothing' (Shakespeare 1962[1623]: 160). But look at the quote for long enough and it takes on a kind of Zen sentience<sup>26</sup>; there are things we *know* we know (e.g. where we live), just as there are things we *know* we don't know (e.g. how to unify general relativity theory with quantum mechanics) and there must be things we are unaware we don't know (e.g. in the middle ages no-one would have *known* they were unaware of the existence of dark matter, or Pluto, or any number of other things we now consider to be *known*). Perhaps what makes Rumsfeld's words seem so odd is the flakiness of the term 'know' and its derivatives; we are immediately confronted by the confusion and slipperiness of knowing (or not knowing) and of how we *know* we know (or don't know).

At first glance, then, 'knowledge' seems straightforward – you either *know* something or you don't and the 'stuff' you do know is termed knowledge (Rumsfeld's *known knows*). The trouble with this lay explanation, however, is that it relies on a circular definition of knowledge as 'that which is known', which, when unpicked, rapidly falls to pieces – if knowledge is 'stuff we know', how did we come to *know* it in the first place (from observation, experience or reading it in a book, for example) and, secondly, how does this *knowing* differ from 'believing', 'assuming' or 'perceiving' for instance? Follow this line of argument to the bitter end - keeping pulling at those threads – and the concept of knowledge unravels before your eyes. Which is a neat metaphysical trick - an apagogical argument - that doesn't provide much help understanding knowledge transfer, as it appears to imply that knowledge doesn't actually exist.

It is precisely the complexity and vastness of the subject that this part of the thesis seeks to broach, at times veering far from the central ideas of knowledge transfer and international migration in order to do this. I begin, therefore, with a brief précis of some important epistemological arguments, before focusing on the 'science' of knowledge in an attempt to provide the grounds for linking philosophy to experimental data. Having provided these foundational overviews, the paper moves on to analyse some key contemporary theories of knowledge, particularly those of Michael Polanyi, Henri Bergson and Frank Blackler, and

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<sup>26</sup> Note also the similarity to the quote attributed to Confucius, with which Yang begins his discussion of knowledge and adult learning: 'To acknowledge what is known as known, and what is not known as not known is knowledge' (c. Yang 2003: 106).

discusses their relationship to the ‘embodied’ phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. From here, attention turns to the specifics of knowledge transfer in international migration, the shortcomings of previous research and potential ways to approach the subject. Space is also given to discussing Michel Foucault’s concept of power-knowledge and the ways in which power relations play a central role in knowledge.

*Epistemology – What we know and how we know it:*

Most philosophers have found that, at some point in their investigation, they have had to contend with the question of knowledge and certainty – what can be *known* and how we come to know it? Indeed, if we do not have a theory of what can be known with (relative) certainty, it becomes very difficult to build a solid foundation for any more general philosophising. However, the ethereal nature of ‘knowledge’ makes it a very difficult concept to pin down and philosophers have been grappling with this project from at least the time of Plato. In this section, I outline the epistemologies of some key thinkers, then sketch out how these may be relevant to conceptualisations of ‘knowledge transfer’<sup>27</sup>.

Plato understood knowledge as being innate to every human, all the skilled teacher needed to do was to draw out that understanding (Plato 2005). Furthermore, this was different to everyday appearances, existing as unchanging certainties (such as mathematics), rather than shifting ‘shadows on the wall’ (Plato 2007). In addition, this ‘knowledge’ - as opposed to ‘opinion’ - was superior as it was permanent rather than transitory. Indeed, Plato goes on to distinguish between our unreliable everyday knowledge of things and concepts and the ‘Forms’, the ‘true’ objects of knowledge that cannot be comprehended by the senses but are ‘objects of pure understanding’ (Cottingham 1996: 13; Plato 2007). Therefore, Plato creates a separation between physical manifestations of things (i.e. ‘beauty’, or ‘justice’) and their ultimate ‘Form’ (i.e. ‘Beauty’ or ‘Justice’).

In contrast, Aristotle provided a somewhat less mystical account of knowledge. Where Plato

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<sup>27</sup> This, of course, cannot be anything other than a (very) partial sketch of epistemological thought. It only covers a handful of philosophies from the ‘Western’ tradition, and treats these to nothing more than a cursory inspection. However, it does provide a certain philosophical substance to this discussion, a depth which is all too often absent from discussions of ‘knowledge transfer’ or the ‘knowledge’ economy.

had viewed knowledge as innate, Aristotle saw it as developing from our sensual perception of the physical world around us; our innate ability is not to store pre-existing knowledge but, rather, to notice the universal in the particular, to comprehend similarities between apparently different objects. Aristotle calls this *nous*, which is generally translated as ‘intuition’, and it is this concept that provides the starting point for the discovery of knowledge – ‘...that which cannot be otherwise’ (Aristotle 1996: 20).

The writings of Plato and Aristotle were hugely influential on later philosophers and we can begin to see some of the key themes in later epistemology emerging in their writings. Firstly, there is a concern with the difference between ‘everyday’ understandings of the world (Plato calls this ‘opinion’) and ‘true’, or scientific, knowledge. Secondly, there is an interest in how we come to have this ‘knowledge’; is it innate as Plato understood it, or is it built upon our everyday immersion in the world and the connections we draw from this engagement, as with Aristotle’s conception of ‘nous’?

It was broadly these points that preoccupied Rene Descartes in his *Meditations* (1996); he wrote that he was concerned ‘...by the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted as true in my childhood, and by the highly doubtful nature of the whole edifice that I had subsequently based on them’ (ibid: 12). Descartes did not question the existence of an ultimate ‘truth’, but rather he questioned how we could *know* that truth. Our senses are unreliable, as we sometimes perceive what is not there, or create connections which are illusory. Therefore, we cannot simply build our understanding of the world on intuition alone; we must sweep away all that cannot be proven, anything that can be called into doubt. For Descartes this leads inextricably to his famous foundational principle; *cogito ergo sum* - ‘I am thinking, therefore I exist’. From this, we must assume that certain knowledge is, essentially, innate:

*I noticed certain laws which God has so ordained in nature, and of which he has implanted such notions in our minds, that after adequate reflection we cannot doubt that they are exactly observed in everything that exists or occurs in the world.*

(Descartes 1985: 131)

This is a somewhat surprising end point for Descartes; from a very sceptical start – ‘[r]eason

now leads me to think that I should hold back my assent from opinions which are not completely certain and indubitable just as carefully as I do from those that are patently false' (1996: 12) – he finishes by aligning himself to Plato's 'naïve' rationalist assertion of innate knowledge<sup>28</sup>. This was to trigger a profound debate amongst European philosophers, with John Locke castigating Descartes in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Locke 1975) for abandoning the senses, or experience, as the primary source of all knowledge. Locke called this 'empiricism', arguing that sensual experience of the world was inscribed upon the *tabula rasa* of the human mind. Knowledge, therefore, is a purely individual acquisition borne out of a shared environment<sup>29</sup>.

Though somewhat artificial, the contrast between 'empiricism' and 'rationalism' is a useful tool to understanding theories of knowledge in European philosophy. It was, however, an artifice and therefore open to synthesis, which was the goal of Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 2007). Kant begins from an essentially empiricist position, arguing that, '[t]here can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins from experience' (ibid: 37). However, he is troubled by the idea that the mind is a blank slate, just waiting to soak up sensory information. Instead, Kant argues that all human minds are possessed of a certain elementary structure; that is, we all tend to approach the world following similar logical schema. This is certainly not a traditionally empiricist standpoint. Instead, it holds much more in common with the theses of rationalists, such as Plato or Descartes. It does not suggest that knowledge is *innate* – that is, already existing, fully formed, in our minds, just waiting to be consciously discovered - but rather, Kant suggests that what is native to all is the way we approach the world, the way we *structure* the knowledge we gain from experience. What is innate, therefore, is not the knowledge itself but the mechanisms to structure that knowledge.

Epistemological questions are not mere philosophical games, they go to the very heart of how we understand the world; theories of knowledge are the foundation stones of how we approach the world around us. In this case, the particular epistemological position a theorist

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<sup>28</sup> In philosophical terminology, arguments like this became known as rationalism; that is humans have some form of innate reason that exists beyond the realms of everyday sensation and experience.

<sup>29</sup> This was not the end of argument of course; Leibniz, for example, would provide a strong defence of innate knowledge in his *New Essays on Human Understanding* (Leibniz 1981), whilst David Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Hume 1999) provided a robust defence of empiricism. However, these examples illustrate the general points sufficiently for the purposes of this chapter.

(consciously or otherwise) might take will have a significant effect of the way they consider the transfer of knowledge. For example, if you were to follow Plato, knowledge would not need to be transferred, as it would already exist in all of our minds; the emphasis would therefore need to be on realising that innate knowledge. However, an empiricist might well argue that knowledge of something is intimately tied to experiencing it and without this it is impossible for someone to be truly knowledgeable about that thing. Therefore, effective knowledge transfer would centre on experiential learning, rather than teaching *per se*<sup>30</sup>.

*The science of knowing – cognition, learning and knowledge:*

One area of study that we may expect to provide effective working models for knowledge creation and retention is cognitive science. Indeed, the discipline has made great bounds in modelling both the way in which we perceive the world (the building blocks of knowledge) and the manner in which we cognitively structure these perceptions. However, as A.L. Wilkes notes in his overview of the subject, *Knowledge in Minds*, the transfer between the two is a very contentious issue (Wilkes 1997: 29). This means that we are left with something of a gap between *perceiving* and *knowing*. However, experimental research has provided some interesting data on the relationships between implicit and explicit learning, tacit and codified knowledge. Some of Reber's work, for instance, has indicated that unconscious and unintentional implicit learning processes yield tacit knowledge which, though difficult to express verbally, can be used to solve problems and make choices based on a representative knowledge base (Reber 1989). Furthermore, drawing on the evidence of their own experimental data, Hayes & Broadbent (1988) have argued that implicit and explicit learning processes are reliant on distinct learning systems – although this position is contested in later research (e.g. Green and Shanks 1993).

Another important determinant in our nascent understanding of the human mind arrived via the 'cognitive revolution' of the late Twentieth Century – particularly advances in the study

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<sup>30</sup> Of course, this is a simplification; when Plato (an 'empiricist') 'proves' the innateness of 'pure' knowledge by means of getting a young slave to discuss geometry (something he has never been taught), he also uses experiential methods – drawing in the sand etc... Equally, few rationalists would argue for a sole concentration on learning by doing; most of these theorists also understand that some kind of common prior knowledge is required in order to structure our learning experiences, even if this is ultimately underlain by sensual experience.



of human neurology, such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) or Positron Emission Topography (PET) scanning. However, the significance of these findings to our understanding of knowledge is not always made clear. One element that is of potential interest to the study of the transfer and management of knowledge, is the way in which neural networks in the brain continue to be created and to stabilise throughout our lives. This means that humans are continually able to learn from our experiences and to adapt knowledge to different circumstances. The neurobiologist Jean-Pierre Changeux (1985) has proposed three conceptual stages of human cognitive development:

- ❖ ‘Hard-wired’ networks provide the basic circuitry of the brain. These networks tend to be stable, with a ‘tight genetic envelope’ and govern very basic cognitive tasks (see also, Laughlin, McManus, and D’Aquila 1992: 63);
- ❖ ‘Selective stabilisation’ networks, meanwhile, stabilise in early labile phases of cognitive development and may be linked to ‘deep acculturation’. Essentially, during these phases the developing brain produces a vast number of synaptic networks, most of which, ‘are eliminated by irreversible regression and cell death due to inactivity’ (ibid: 41). Others, however, are reinforced through repeated activation and use, allowing cultural, environmental and behavioural ‘traits’ to become embedded in the very structural ‘design’ of the developing brain.
- ❖ Finally, ‘plastic’ networks are consistently flexible and adaptive. They are linked to life-long learning and adaptive behaviour, essentially allowing us to reconfigure our pre-existing knowledge to fit with new sensory experiences.

The significance of this is two-fold – firstly, it appears to support the epistemological stance of both empiricists and rationalists; essentially some very basic neural structures appear to be ‘hard-wired’ or innate. However, there is equally strong evidence that humans learn from experience, particularly during childhood when ‘selective stabilisation’ networks are being reinforced or eliminated, but also throughout our lives. This would suggest a position closer to Kant’s epistemology – humans learn from experience but structure that experience in

similar ways through elementary cognitive structures – and this is supported further by Changeux’s notion of the ‘genetic envelope’ of human cognitive development. Essentially, this indicates that, although the creation of certain neurological networks can, at certain stages of human developmental cycles, be environmentally affected, there are genetically imposed limits on the range of variation (Changeux 1985; see also, Boyer 1999: 213; Shore 1996). For the purpose of this thesis, the significance to draw from this is that human knowledge should generally be structured in similar fashions, but cultural, environmental and behavioural activities do produce different forms within a ‘genetic envelope’ of potential variation.

### *Managing knowledge:*

Knowledge remains a distinctly troublesome concept. Both philosophy and cognitive science only really succeed in providing very flimsy structures on which to build our understanding of it. But thinking, innovating and creating are often seen as central to what makes us human. Surely these are not possible without some form of knowledge or knowing?

Much of the current interest in ‘knowledge transfer’ has been triggered by both observed and theorised changes in the structure of the international economy. As outlined earlier, changes in the international economy, along with technological advances, have encouraged alterations in the mode of production – innovation and production can now be comfortably separated, both metaphorically and geographically. As industrial production moves out of the West to areas of cheaper labour and laxer regulations, greater emphasis is put on what remains – elements in the production process that concern innovation, creativity, technical or other non-physical ‘knowledge’ – which are largely virtual and knowledge-intensive. As these jobs are both the most financially rewarding and prestigious, many researchers are concerned about how to increase their understanding of these precious resources, especially as they are now seen as the very bedrock of successful post-industrial societies. Management Studies journals are, therefore, awash with articles seeking to explain and detail how best to deal with this ‘virtual’ gold-dust. Knowledge transfers, knowledge economies and the knowledge-based view (KBV) are all given ever increasing discussion space. However, much of the work

generated struggles with a confusion over how to deal with knowledge – it isn't like anything people have managed previously (at least not consciously) – and this has resulted in numerous disagreements, many false starts and a fair amount of initial naivety.

*Unspoken knowledge - Michael Polanyi and tacit knowledge:*

One of the most productive avenues that researchers have followed has been to adapt the work of the philosopher-scientist-polymath, Michael Polanyi. Polanyi had pursued a successful career as a Physical Chemist before his attention increasingly turned toward the *nature* of scientific knowledge; it was not, he considered, simply a matter of learning from textbooks or formal lectures, scientific knowledge was also learned by practical experience and social relations:

*Michael Polanyi's philosophy of science argues that there is no scientific method that can be transmitted as a logical and rigorous method to be learned in textbooks (or philosophy books). Science is learned by the practice that is transmitted from master to apprentice, as in the guilds of mediaeval and early modern Europe. A crucial part of scientific knowledge is tacit in character, so it cannot be spoken, but only demonstrated and initiated.*

(Nye 2002: 124)

Working from this observation, Polanyi (1958, 1967) outlined two different types of knowledge (or knowing); *tacit* knowledge – that which we *know* but cannot tell (Polanyi 1967: 4) – and *explicit* knowledge, which we both know and can explain<sup>31</sup>. Because explicit knowledge can be codified (e.g. written into a book, or a scientific formula, or a set of directions) it is therefore somewhat easier to manage. However, problems arise if we consider that such codification presupposes a level of tacit knowledge; to write a management training manual is not, in its self, enough to produce an effective manager, rather the individual will have to learn the 'art' of management through practical experience and socialisation, just as Polanyi's apprentice chemist only became a *Scientist* through learning

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<sup>31</sup> In later work he would also add the concept of *personal* knowledge which contained elements of both tacit and explicit knowledge (see Polanyi, 1958).

from a 'Master', defined as much by social norms as codified scientific knowledge. Codified knowledge is *always* underpinned by pre-logical *tacit* knowledge; that which we know but cannot speak. This, by its very nature, is somewhat more problematic to transfer; it develops through social relationships, shared senses of meaning and purpose, physical *doing* and psychological *seeing*.

*Dynamic knowledge - Blackler and active processes of knowing:*

An interesting extension of Polanyi's work has been provided by Frank Blackler (1995), who identifies a typology<sup>32</sup> of the approaches to knowledge present in the literature on organisational management, as well as outlining a dynamic alternative approach to *knowing* as an active, socially situated process. The first element divides previous writings on knowledge into five main categories – embrained, embodied, encultured, embedded and encoded (ibid: 1023-5). For Blackler, this typology serves not to reify knowledge, nor to break it down to its core components, but rather it acts to emphasise the complexity and spread of knowledge within organisations and wider society. Indeed, he goes on to further stress this point by noting that, 'all individuals and all organizations, not just so-called 'knowledge workers', or 'knowledge organizations', are knowledgeable' (ibid: 1026).

However, it is Blackler's second point that is of most interest here; he argues that these different forms of knowledge cannot be separated from one another, instead stressing that *knowing* is an active process by which individuals engage with their environment. Drawing on Lave (1993) and other activity theorists, Blackler suggests that knowledge cannot be taken as discrete packets of information, separate from the environment in which they were wrought, and applied in a different space by different individuals. For Blackler, this necessitates a turn away from conventional approaches to knowledge and its management; instead, '... as an alternative to focusing on the kinds of knowledge that capitalism currently demands, attention should focus on the systems through which knowing and doing are achieved' (Blackler 1995: 1040). This means understanding the dynamic process of knowing as:

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<sup>32</sup> Amin & Cohendet (2004: 34) provide a further commentary on a number of typologies of knowledge in current use, covering the work of Spender (1997) and Lundvall and Johnson (1994) as well as Blackler.

- ❖ *Mediated* by technical systems, organisational structures and social systems;
- ❖ *Situated* in social, cultural and physical environments;
- ❖ *Provisional* – that is changing, developing and evolving in relation to its situation;
- ❖ *Pragmatic* – in that, people will tend to learn what they feel they *need* to learn;
- ❖ *Contested* – knowledge is hegemonic and hierarchical but open to query.

*Alternative knowledge - Styhre's 'Bergsonian critique':*

For Alexander Styhre, the concept of tacit knowledge, as utilised in knowledge management literature, is highly problematic because it is viewed as a 'residual category', that which, '...is not possible to represent using the available media' (2004: 181). 'Tacit' knowledge is not, therefore, a category in itself but the 'left behind', liminal, areas of knowledge that we cannot explain with reference to physical representation. In light of this, Styhre argues that, in order to fully understand knowledge and its management, it is necessary to problematise both *knowledge* – as an idea, or a 'ready-made concept' – and 'the idea of representation' (ibid). In order to do this, he turns to the work of the French philosopher, Henri Bergson. Bergson essentially viewed the world as being in a state of flux; there is an ongoing tension between what we experience and how we can represent these phenomena. Therefore, there are two types of *knowing* – firstly there are things as we represent them and, secondly, there are things as we experience them. On an individual level, Bergson conceives of *intellect* – which deals with representations, forms and concepts – and *intuition* – a continual 'mode of reflection' (Bergson 1946: 88) which deals with the flux of reality, of *being* and *becoming*. These two processes are involved in an emergent process of thinking about, and engaging with, the world around us. We cannot make sense of the world through representation alone, nor can we successfully comprehend our environment by merely using our intuition.

For Styhre, Bergson's conceptualisation of intellect and intuition frees us from the problematic demarcation of tacit and explicit knowledge. Instead, he sees Bergson as providing a way to see knowledge as '...an assemblage consisting of various cognitive capacities' (Styhre 2004: 183), rather than viewing tacit knowledge as something separate, or left over, from standard, explicit, knowledge. Instead, knowledge is a continual process of *becoming*; it is a system of *knowing* that is constantly changing and shifting its emphasis; stationary 'packets' of explicit knowledge are always subject to assault by our intuitive

engagement with the world. Therefore, 'knowledge' is both place-specific and transitory.

*Commentary on Blackler and Styhre:*

Blackler and Styhre are united in their critique of Polanyi for a perceived 'static' bias in his presentation of 'explicit' and 'tacit' knowledge. Both argue, in different ways, that knowledge is a *process* rather than a stationary event – we do not suddenly *have* knowledge where it did not previously exist, rather we are in a on-going state of *becoming* knowledgeable, of *knowing*. This is a useful point to make, particularly in terms of the interpretation of Polanyi's philosophy in the knowledge management literature. I am, however, unconvinced that it is a valid criticism of his writings. After all, Polanyi was striving to explain how scientific knowledge relies on an apprenticeship of experience, of *doing* and *seeing*; which are both very much process-driven, dynamic modes of learning and knowing. Secondly, Styhre views 'tacit' and 'explicit' knowledge as bounded entities which never overlap – one based on representations, the other not. Again, I'm not convinced this is a fair criticism; on another reading we can present the same critique about Henri Bergson as Styhre forwards against Polanyi. It may not be made explicit in Polanyi's work, but it is surely implied that tacit and explicit knowledge are not separate entities, each unknown to the other; rather, just as in Bergson, they are used to deal with different elements of our everyday life, they are different 'modes' of knowing. There is, therefore, much more similarity between Polanyi and Bergson than Styhre allows credit for.

Despite these reservations, it is important to note the key points of Blackler and Styhre's critiques, along with the central tenants of Polanyi's notion of tacit and explicit knowledge. In fact there are useful parallels to be drawn between their work and phenomenological critiques of the separation between mind and body; parallels that are of great use to understanding the concept of knowledge (or knowing).

Blackler views knowledge as an active process, simultaneously incorporating 'embrained', 'embodied', 'encultured', 'embedded' and 'encoded' forms of knowing. Meanwhile, Styhre, drawing heavily on Bergson, argues that knowing is a *process* that involves both an abstract representative understanding of the world – intellect - and an involved engagement with the world as experienced - intuition. Equally, Polanyi stresses the active process of doing and

experiencing in the formation of tacit knowledge<sup>33</sup>.

Similarly, but from a slightly different starting point, the French phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty has argued that the body gifts us with our very grounds of perception and that this transcends representation to provide us with an existential sense of ‘being-in-the-world’ (Csordas 1994; 1999: 184; Merleau-Ponty 1963). This sense is *embodied* due to the pre-objective relationship between the body/self and the world, which acts to, ‘effect the union between the ‘psychic’ and the ‘physiological’. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 80). Indeed, this union actively creates our very ‘perspectives’ on the world; whilst the body is the site of our perceptions about ‘being-in-the-world’, the very world we perceive effects the way we view it. Furthermore, these ‘perspectives of perception’ are not unique to the individual, rather we share a corporate involvement with the world through shared practices and bodily interaction for, ‘as sentient and sensible beings, we can see and be seen, hear and be heard, touch and be touched’ (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 53). Through the medium of the body, therefore, shared emotions and meanings are determined through techniques of acculturation and material action; in a similar way to Mauss, and later Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty views shared mentality and body use as created through socialisation and bodily hexis. Our attitudes to and uses of the body, therefore, are determined both by social issues (through bodily hexis) and physiological factors (by means of our ‘pre-objective’ immersion in the material world) and cannot be separated into neatly defined categories of mind or psyche, body or biology:

*Man taken as a concrete being is not a psyche joined to an organism, but the movement to and fro of existence which at one time allows itself to take corporeal form and at other times moves towards personal acts .... The union between soul and body is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object, brought about by arbitrary decree. It is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence.*

(Merleau-Ponty 1962: 88-9)

In this way, the body becomes the site of interaction with the world, our very ‘ways of knowing’ being shaped by our status as embodied actors. Blackler’s typology of knowledge

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<sup>33</sup> Which, by extension, creates the foundations of explicit knowledge.

can be seen as highlighting parts of the same embodied picture. Indeed, it is clear from the theorists discussed that our immersion in the world has some effect on how we acquire knowledge – for empiricists, sensual perception is the very basis of this acquisition, whilst Bergson and Polanyi both stress a certain physicality, or environmental embeddedness, in the construction of knowledge. The work of Merleau-Ponty allows us a window onto a possible means by which intuitive or tacit knowing is fundamentally an ‘embodied’ process. He argues that the human subject is rooted in their social and physical environment by ‘pre-conceptual’ or ‘non-propositional’ structures, which form our fundamental perceptions (and therefore knowledge) of the world around us. This has some profound implications both for theories of knowledge transfer and our understanding of how migration affects the processes of relocating knowledge; implications to which I shall return later in the paper.

### *Migrating knowledge:*

Despite the stress on space and place in literature concerned with both knowledge economies and knowledge transfer - such as conceptions of ‘learning regions’ (Maskell and Malmberg 1999) or the ‘locality’ versus ‘distanciation’ of transfers (Amin and Cohendet 2004) – relatively little has been written on the relationships between international migration and knowledge<sup>34</sup>. Neither has the acknowledgement of the centrality of both migration and knowledge/information to contemporary processes of globalization (Drucker 1993; Held 2000) led many researchers to examine their relationship. What has been written has focused largely on ‘high-level’ migration in ‘knowledge-intensive’ jobs, such as banking or I.T. (Alarcon 1999; Beaverstock 2002, 2005), suggesting the ‘knowledge economy’ is often viewed as the preserve of the elite. However, as Blackler (1995: 1026) and Williams (2007: 33) have pointed out, all migrants are ‘knowing individuals’ and have the potential to engage in knowledge transactions.

The literature on highly-skilled migrants has centred on the premise that these ‘learning’

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<sup>34</sup> Williams traces this back to the profoundly different conceptual and theoretical approaches employed by researchers of these phenomena, with discussions of ‘knowledge transfers’ largely confined to management studies approaches, whilst migration research has been dominated by economic approaches (Williams 2007: 30).



individuals are central to knowledge creation and its transfer (see, e.g. Alarcon 1999; Bunnell and Coe 2001); a point which is implicitly supported by research on British managerial-level workers in New York's financial sector (Beaverstock 2005), illustrating their role in enabling the effective flow of information, capital and skills between the different geographical centres of their organisations. However, Beaverstock also stressed the difficulties these migrant employees faced in 'doing their jobs' before they gained the relevant 'social' know-how to engage with their workmates effectively (2005: 263-4); a point noted in 'human capital' approaches to international migration. Though migration research has generally not focused on 'knowledge' itself, the concept of 'skills' in human capital approaches can be regarded as covering some similar areas. Notably, there is an increased stress on the ability of *all* migrants to gain skills throughout their migrant 'life course', as well as a recognition of the importance of socially situated knowledge (e.g. gaining language skills, or understanding laws and customs) to the ability of the migrant to 'cash in' on other skills (technical, creative or educational talents for example). Duvander (2001), for instance, writes that increased time spent in the host country leads to increased 'country-specific' skills, which in turn lead, after a short time 'lag', to increased income potential. Therefore, it is important to view *all* migrants, whether they are conventionally viewed as 'skilled' or 'unskilled', as knowledgeable individuals engaged with their environment, both inside and outside of the workplace. This means that every migrant in every job has the ability to transfer knowledge.

*Power, knowledge and migration:*

If we are to argue that all migrants are knowing individuals, we must also ask why this is not widely recognised (or, at least, that the 'knowledge' of some workers in certain sectors is seen as more worthy of academic scrutiny). Here it is useful to turn our attention to power and its deep relationship to both knowledge and migration – a point to which the literature often alludes but rarely confronts. As I have discussed above, knowledge exists in a number of different forms, some more recognised and celebrated than others. Furthermore, some knowledge is *valued* more highly than others (both commercially and socially); therefore the ability to demonstrate those types of knowing which are given a high social or financial value are liable to be more sought after than those considered to be of low value. However, knowledge is only valuable when there is a market for it. This means for a form of

knowledge to have a high value it needs to be useful and relatively rare – if every other person was a fully trained Doctor, that knowledge would become virtually valueless, both socially and economically. Therefore, it pays for people with ‘knowledge’ that has a high social or financial value to control the number of people acquiring this in order to protect their own status and position. Furthermore, having a highly-valued form of knowledge places the individuals who have that know-how in a very good position to dictate the terms under which we are allowed access to it; in essence, as Francis Bacon wrote, ‘knowledge is power’. Michel Foucault (1980) added to this through the utilisation of his interpretation of discourse; if knowledge creates power, it therefore provides the grounds to produce an argument about the values we ascribe to certain forms of knowledge as well as producing bureaucratic mechanisms to determine access to certain types of knowledge (both in terms of using them and acquiring them). Foucault refers to this self-duplicating nexus as power/knowledge, indicating his view of the terms as inseparable and mutually replicating: ‘the production of knowledge and the exercise of administrative power intertwine, and each begins to enhance the other’ (Allen 1999: 70). For example, in *Madness & Civilization* (1993[1961]), Foucault illustrates how what became known as psychiatric knowledge arose from both the emergence of a discourse about madness (*la folie*) and the gradual creation of a physical and bureaucratic structure to deal with those deemed ‘mad’. Therefore, the power of psychiatry is drawn both from a hegemonic discourse and the mechanics of control, and is thus both physical and bureaucratic<sup>35</sup>.

Therefore, knowledge must always be viewed in relation to power; the ascription of worth to different forms of knowledge is not a value-free act, nor does it happen away from the influence of competing discourses or administrative structures of power and control. The forms of knowledge fore-grounded and prioritised in previous research reveal strong implicit assumptions about the value of certain forms of knowing over others that are not necessarily justified. Therefore, it is important to redress the balance by focusing on what has previously been ascribed low status in this work, such as the knowledge of the migrant employed in itinerant work outside of organisations explicitly understood as ‘knowledge’

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<sup>35</sup> For fuller discussions of the relevance of *Madness & Civilization* see Gutting (2003) or, on a more accessible level, Sarup (1993: 59-65). It is also important to note that Foucault saw the mechanics of power-knowledge as not only an external force direct *at* the individual, but also as an internal form of self-regulation through a certain type of knowledge (*savoir*) direct from *within* the individual (see, Foucault 1981).

firms. Such migrants can be seen as doubly marginalised – knowledge that they do hold is often devalued, both socially and commercially, and they are often restricted from acquiring country-specific skills and thus higher-value knowledge through work and employment practices<sup>36</sup>.

*Commentary – knowing migrants:*

The range of theories, philosophies and practices of knowledge that have been outlined in this chapter reflect both the vastness of the subject and the difficulty in bringing together the various strands that exist within it. However, there are two major areas that I wish to clarify in terms of their relevance to my proposed research. Firstly, there is the complex subject of the cognitive structuring of knowledge, as outlined by Changeux (1985), and the relationship this has with concepts of embodied knowing, evident in the work of Blackler (1995) and Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1963) amongst others. Further to this, it is necessary to hypothesise about how this may be relevant to international migrants. Secondly, there are economic implications to the way in which we structure the labour market in relation to international migrants and how we approach them as ‘knowing individuals’. These clarifications will lead towards the initial formulation of key research themes.

Jean-Pierre Changeux suggests that human cognition is the product of three accreting stages of neural and synaptic development, progressing from the creation of ‘hard-wired’ and universal foundations, through ‘selective stabilisation’ networks which are partly cultural, socially and environmentally determined through repeated activation, to the ‘plastic’ networks of adulthood, which are highly flexible and adaptive. Additionally, this process happens within a ‘cognitive envelope’ of potential neural development, meaning that the

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<sup>36</sup> It is little wonder, therefore, that many migrant groups have been keen to utilise their resources without recourse to wider society by setting up independent ventures. From Portuguese cafes in Thetford, through ‘Indian’ and ‘Chinese’ restaurants, to Polish plumbers, there is a lively and widespread culture of entrepreneurship amongst ‘immigrant’ communities in the UK (see, e.g. Basu and Altinay 2002; Kloosterman and Rath 2001, 2003; McCabe, Harlaftis, and Minoglou 2005; Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2001). This entrepreneurial tendency might be viewed as a response to the knowledge of migrants being undervalued. Instead, self-employment and entrepreneurship amongst migrant groups should be viewed as a potential resource and a reserve of knowledge. Equally, we must remain aware that forms of knowledge are valued hierarchically *within* migrant communities as well, creating discourses about who has legitimate access to what forms of knowledge and how they can acceptably use them.

range of variation from person to person, culture to culture is limited (but not illusory). We can compare this to the epistemological position of Kant, suggesting that knowledge is learnt through experience but that this is structured through broadly similar neurological networks. This has two important implications for this research – a) similar experience should lead to similar knowledge (Changeux 1985: 247) *but* this will be subtly affected by prior cultural, social and environmental experiences, and b) that human knowledge is not created in separation from the world we inhabit (Shore 1996: 17; Tancredi 1997: 314). This latter point brings us to theories of embodiment which, in different forms, are identifiable in the work of Blackler, Bergson and Merleau-Ponty, as well as being implied in Polanyi's notion of 'tacit' knowledge. Here the emphasis is on the active, dynamic and embedded process of knowing, but there is little explanation of how this works in practice. The danger here is that it is easy to fall into the trap of what Dan Sperber has described as 'empty materialism' (1996: 11), paying lip-service to 'knowing' as an on-going process, intimately related to the world around us without being clear about how this effects, and is effected by, other material processes and quasi-material networks, such as cultures, societies, environments or discourses. However, Changeux's theory of the three-fold accumulation of neural pathways and synaptic development allows us to see how knowledge could be a continual process of engagement with the world. Equally, Foucault's notion of power-knowledge (as well as his concept of internal self-regulation) allows us to see the politics of defining 'proper' knowledge. In this way, it is useful shorthand to speak of 'knowing-in-the-world'<sup>37</sup>; an on-going and dynamic process, drawing in social, cultural, environmental and political elements in our understanding of the world and how we collect, use and interpret knowledge.

In terms of international migration and 'knowledge transfer' it is therefore necessary to reconfigure our understanding of knowledge and 'knowing individuals' and the ways in which they interact with those around them. There are numerous ways in which the ideas outlined above could affect the transfer of ideas and understandings – is some knowledge so heavily dependent on mutual cultural, linguistic, even environmental understanding that it can conceivably be 'lost in translation'? Or is the combination of Changeux's 'genetic envelope' and the presence of adaptive neural networks able to combat this? Equally, do such problems only apply to 'tacit' knowledge, or 'intuition', but not 'explicit' knowledge or

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<sup>37</sup> A term adapted from Martin Heidegger's concept of 'being-in-the-world' (1962).

‘intellect’? One interesting possibility is that the reconfiguration of knowledge through acculturation and migration may necessitate new ways of approaching and arranging both prior and novel knowledge – key elements in creativity and innovation. Therefore, should we see all migrants as having an increased potential for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship; a potential that could be encouraged by changes to the structuring of the labour market and immigration rules?

These questions lead us towards the second element of this chapter that I wish to clarify further; that of the local (and broadly economic) implications of international migration and knowledge transfer. A large part of the interest in ‘knowledge transfer’, ‘knowledge economies’ and ‘knowledge organisations’ in the management studies literature stems from the view that changes in the international economy have produced a situation where knowledge and information creation and retention are the foundation stones of a successful economy. Therefore, a focus on ‘knowledge transfer’ has an economic implication; how do companies, nations, even individuals ‘harvest’ the knowledge of others for their own gain? Equally, arguments over the relative merits of international migration are often couched in economic language (see, e.g. Chang 2000) – which migrants provide most to their ‘host’ or ‘sending’ country. In terms of knowledge, the implicit division in the literature is that elite individuals have knowledge which is of use to potential ‘host’ countries and should be actively encouraged in certain areas of the labour market, whilst ‘unskilled’ migration is seen as providing for only one economic imperative; to supply ‘cheap labour’ for low-status jobs that British workers ‘won’t do’. However, the arguments above suggest that these ‘unskilled’ migrants are just as much ‘knowing individuals’ as their ‘elite’ counterparts but that there is a potential structural bias against them sharing their knowledge, leading to knowledge being channelled into the creation of small niche businesses and self-employment. Equally, there is also the suggestion that all migrants have the potential for increased creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship because of neurological adaptations necessitated by acculturation. The ‘reality’ is without doubt a much more complex situation than has been outlined above, but these issues do raise enormous questions about the validity of many current approaches to international migration and knowledge transfers: questions that this research intends to go some way towards redressing.

To fully address these issues, it becomes necessary to turn our attention towards the ‘local’

context of this research. This alters our focus from the abstract to the particular and begins to allow for an exploration of how some of the ideas outlined in this chapter may ‘play out’ in the specific locale of the south-west of England. The contextuality of this research is also considered, in order to develop a more nuanced and complex understanding of how we might understand the region – the ‘local’ site of this research.

However, before we move on there remains another point to be considered – what the discussion of the nature of knowing earlier in this chapter implies for the creation of this thesis itself.

### **AFTERWORD – KNOWING-IN-THE-WORLD, WRITING OF THE WORLD:**

I made the point earlier in the chapter – following a discussion of the work of Styrhe and Blackler, as well as Polanyi, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty and, later, Foucault – that knowing was a *process* that was embodied through an on-going immersion in the world. Therefore, ‘what we know’ is contextual and subject to change and development – what I describe as ‘knowing-in-the-world’. The logical extension of this, as perhaps hinted at in both the preface to this work and the initial paragraphs of this chapter, is that this thesis – and the research which informed it – is as much a product of such a process as any other form of knowledge. This has ramifications for this research which cannot be ignored. Without presupposing what I write later, or providing too much of a distraction from the discussions at hand, it indicates that the context of the research – its biography perhaps – is of fundamental relevance to what is produced. This provides a partial illustration as to why I present the research in the way I do – each chapter building on the previous one is a series of iterative spirals narrowing to a way of thinking about the subject at hand, without pre-empting where that may lead us – though I am aware it does not explain all. That is still to come. Therefore, I still resist the urge to set out the structure of the thesis so soon into its journey, other than to state that the next ‘logical’ step is to turn our focus to the local context to the research.

*Chapter 3*

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**The 'local' context:**

Situating the research

*The universe does not exist 'out there,' independent of us. We are inescapably involved in bringing about that which appears to be happening. We are not only observers. We are participators.*

- John Archibald Wheeler (c. Brian 1995: 127)

In this chapter I wish to bring together some disparate elements which could be said to form the local context of the thesis. Whilst the previous chapter was concerned with the main intellectual pillars of the research – migration, work and processes of ‘knowing’ – this one represents an attempt to discuss how these can be understood in their immediate context – the South West of England in the latter half of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (see Appendix 2 for a local area map).

The reason for choosing the South West as my case study area was both a matter of practicality and of academic interest. As I discussed in Chapter One, the research was co-sponsored by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and part of their interest was in the notion of a ‘regional skills gap’ and how international migration to the region may interact with this. There was, therefore, a clear boundary to the original rationale of the research – namely the area of geographic responsibility of SWRDA. Whilst it was never presented as a non-negotiable aspect of the project, it seemed to me to be an interesting area to carry out research of this kind. I was aware that very little research on international migration had been carried out in the region and that it contained examples of sites attracting ‘new’ forms of migration, particularly those of ‘Accession’ nationals moving to rural areas with previously low rates of international in-migration, as well as a handful of urban areas with longer ‘post-colonial’ migration histories, such as Bristol and, to a lesser extent, Swindon. The boundaries of SWRDA therefore appeared to present the research with a number of interesting sites to explore in terms of international migration, knowledge and labour markets.

However, in order to make informed choices about where to target my research I needed to gain a more nuanced understanding of the ‘local context.’ After briefly outlining some broad demographic

and labour market data concerning the South West region (and variations within it), I approach this in three broad movements: firstly, discussing international migration to the region, including geographic, demographic and labour force characteristics, before turning to a brief overview of skills, knowledge and 'local' labour markets. Finally, I shall return to some of the issues raised in order to ask questions about how we should consider the context of this research, especially with reference to ways of understanding the interactions between what might be described as the 'local', or proximal, elements and those that are more global, or distal<sup>38</sup>, in appearance.

### **THE SOUTH WEST – LABOUR MARKET CHARACTERISTICS:**

The region governed by SWRDA – from Penzance on the South-western-most tip of Cornwall, to Swindon in the Northeast of the region – is not an area which lends itself to easy characterisation. The towns, cities and villages which make up the South West are far from homogenous and vary significantly in terms of both demographic and labour market characteristics.

A brief look at the two towns mentioned above is instructive as to the diversity of the region: Penwith<sup>39</sup> scores highly in terms of relative deprivation, has a low rate of economic activity (see Table 3.1) and is isolated from the rest of the UK – Plymouth, the nearest city, is 80 miles away (1 hr 50 mins by car or train), whilst London lies some 307 miles, or 5½ hours, away by car or train. Swindon, by comparison, is a relatively prosperous town, with high levels of employment and a low average rank of relative deprivation, and lies just an one hour train ride away from central London, or an 80 mile drive down the M4 motorway (about 1½ hours). In this sense, the South West region is characterised as much by its internal diversity as it is by any difference from other regions of the UK. This section provides an overview of some labour market characteristics of the South West, illustrating both how the region compares to the UK as a whole, and how areas within the region differ substantially from one another.

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<sup>38</sup> The terms 'proximal' and 'distal' are medical in origin. I use them here to denote phenomena which are *experienced* as local and everyday (proximal), or distant and indirectly associated with our everyday lives (distal). They are therefore experiential and utilised in a way that follows Michael Polanyi's use of them in his discussion of tacit and explicit knowing.

<sup>39</sup> A former local authority area (of which Penzance was the major urban area).



**Table 3.1:** Employment and Deprivation Indicators, Swindon and Penwith Local Authority Areas

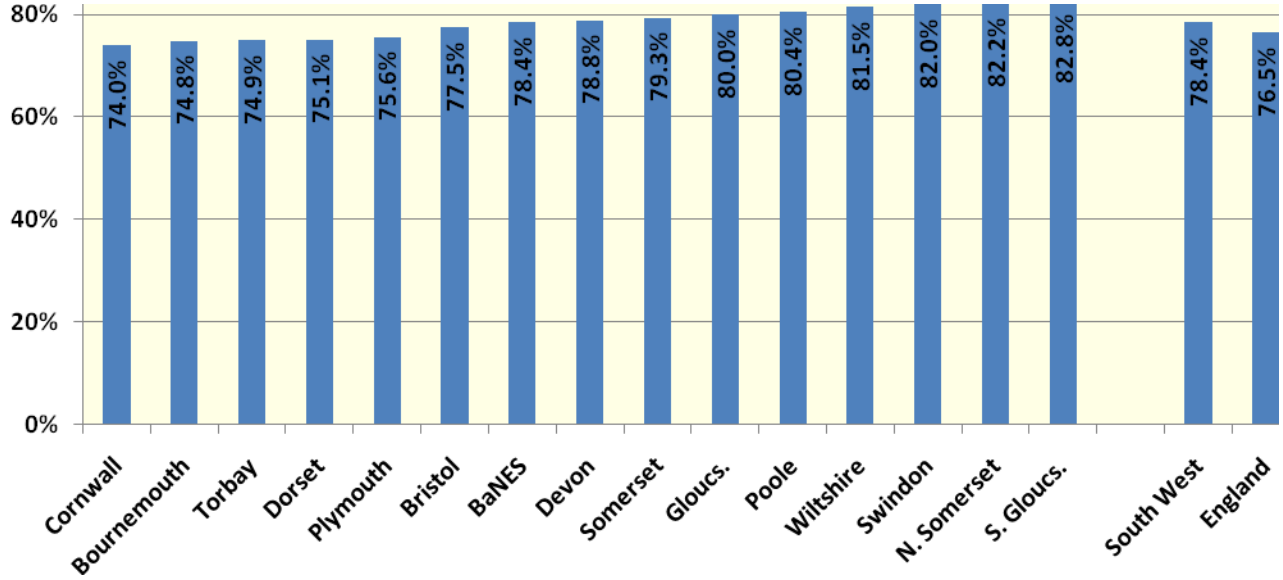
<b>Area</b>	<b>Economic Activity Rate</b> (April 2009 – March 2010, ONS)	<b>Indices of Deprivation 2007;</b> <b>Rank of Average Score (DCLG)</b> (1 = most deprived)
<b>Penwith</b> <b>(former LA area)</b>	72.5%	36
<b>Swindon UA area</b>	83.3%	182
<b>South West GOR</b>	78.7%	-
<b>England</b>	76.6%	-

**Source:** Office for National Statistics, Annual Population Survey, 2010; Department for Communities and Local Government, Indices of Deprivation 2007 [Accessed via ONS Neighbourhood Statistics; [www.neighbourhoodstatistic.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodstatistic.gov.uk), 18/1/11].

The South West region can be characterised by relatively high economic activity rates (78.7% in the year up to March 2010, as opposed to 76.6% for England), high levels of employment (73.4% v 70.5%) and low rates of unemployment (6.4% v 7%). Additionally, the region has relatively high levels of self-employment (10.3%) compared to the average for England (9.2%).

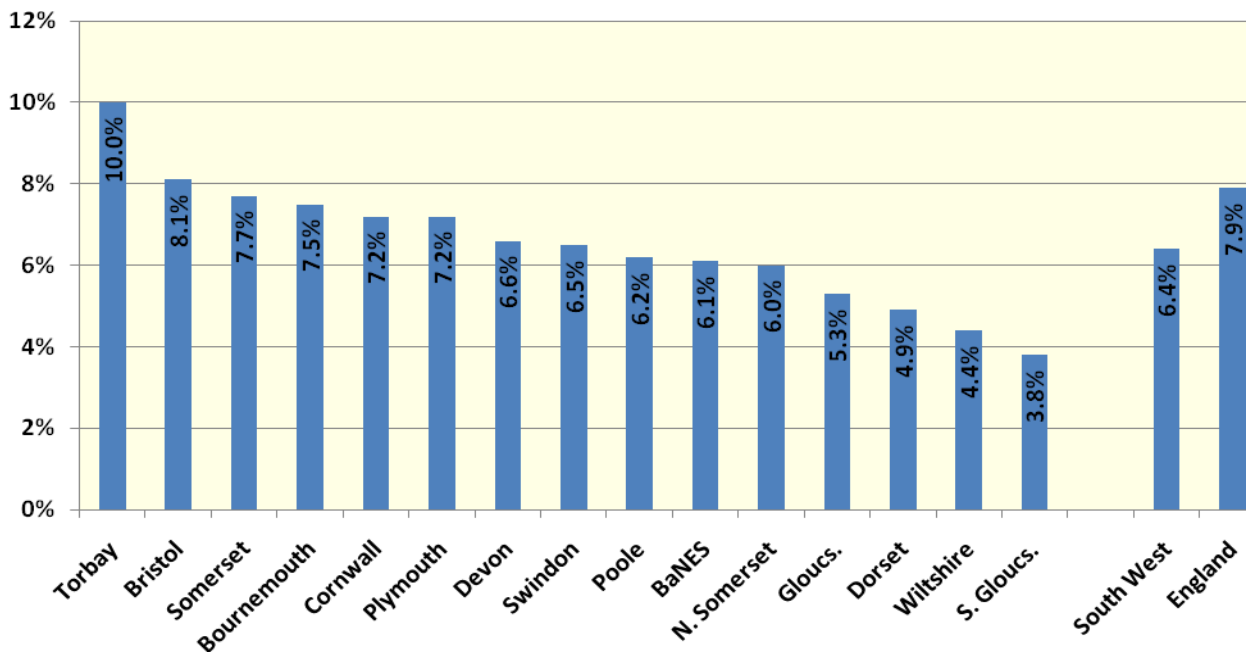
Sub-regionally, as figures 3.1 and 3.2 illustrate, economic activity is highest in the north-east of the region, peaking in South Gloucestershire at 82.8%, and lowest in the south and west of the region, reaching just 74% in Cornwall. Similarly, unemployment is higher in the region's large urban areas and in the more peripheral south and west, and lowest in the well connected areas to the north and east of the region, ranging from 10% in Torbay to just 3.8% in South Gloucestershire. However, it must also be noted that only Torbay and Bristol (8.1%) have unemployment rates higher than the average for England.

Figure 3.1: Economic Activity Rates by Local Authority, July 2009 to June 2010.



Source: ONS Annual Population Survey [Accessed via NOMIS – [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) – 19/1/11]

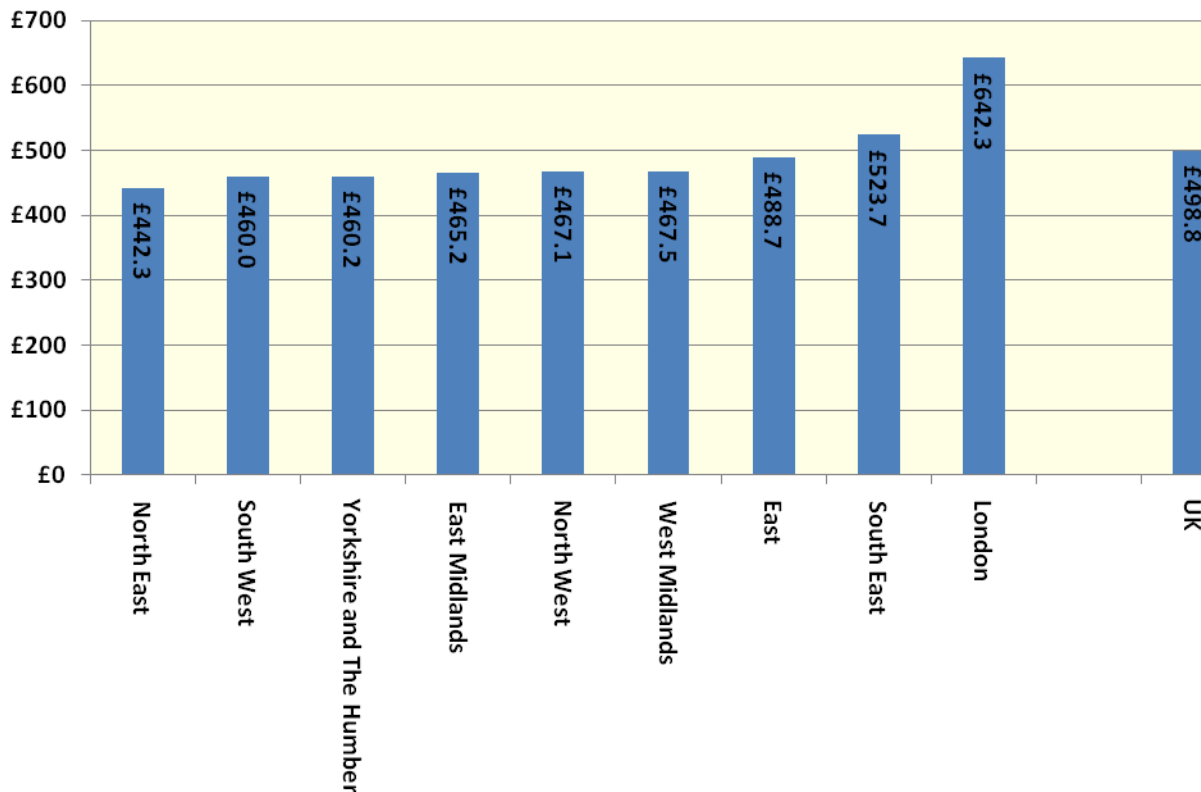
Figure 3.2: Unemployment Rates by Local Authority, July 2009 to June 2010.



Source: ONS Annual Population Survey [Accessed via NOMIS – [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) – 19/1/11]

However, although economic activity rates are high (and unemployment relatively low) in the region, this is counterbalanced to some degree by relatively low wage levels<sup>40</sup> (see figure 3.3) and high rates of part-time working in the region<sup>41</sup> – perhaps reflecting an overdependence on low-wage sectors, such as tourism, and public administration compared to other regions (see SWO 2010: 41):

**Figure 3.3:** Gross weekly earnings, full-time workers, 2010 (workplace based).



**Source:** ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2010

These figures indicate that the South West region includes substantial inter-regional variations, as well as striking differences to other regions in the UK (for example, the unusual combination of high economic activity levels and low relative earnings). It is also clear that international migrants to the region are likely to face very different labour markets dependent on where in the region they find

<sup>40</sup> The median hourly earnings rate for all employee jobs in the South West region was £10.39 in the financial year 2009/10, as opposed to £11.26 for England: ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2010).

<sup>41</sup> 28.8% of those employed in the region work part-time, as opposed to 25.6% in England as a whole (ONS Annual Population Survey, 2010).

themselves. In the following section, I explore international migration to the region and what kind of work migrants are doing once they arrive in the region.

### **INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND THE SOUTH WEST:**

Measuring international migration flows is a contentious business, partly at least because there is not a simple way to identify who comes and goes from the U.K. in any given period. For example, some people entering the country require a visa for certain purposes, whilst others do not, so merely collecting the number of people given certain sorts of visa entry clearance does not tell us how many people are entering the country at any one time. Equally, measuring inward international migration alone only tells us how many people enter the country but not how many people leave, so it is difficult to know what the current 'stock' of overseas nationals in the UK is at any given time. However, for the purposes of *this* research, what is important is not the total number of migrants in the UK, or even their inward and outward flows, but rather where international migrants go in the region and what they do once they are there<sup>42</sup>. It is these two bits of data that will allow us the most scope to determine how international migration interacts with processes of knowing and local labour markets.

We can use a proxy measure for the first of these by using national insurance number (NINo) registration data collated by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). This information tells us where migrants are applying for their NINo and we can use this to make assumptions about approximately where in the region international migrants live and work. However, there are two possible drawbacks to this approach; firstly, as the data is collated using residence at the time of making an application, we are given an indication of where the migrant lived (rather than worked) at the time of applying for a NINo, rather than where they are currently resident or where they may work. Secondly, these data sets only tell us how many non-UK nationals registered in a given period. It does not tell us how many people have since left the country, moved to a different area, or are in the UK but not working (e.g. looking after the family). However, it does allow us to get an approximate indication of where international migrants live and work.

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<sup>42</sup> Of course, this isn't to say the concentration and distribution of international migrants in the South West is not important, but rather these are often better approached 'on the ground', rather than relying on statistical breakdowns of official data sets.

An analysis of two other national level data sets – the Annual Population Survey (APS) and the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) – will also provide us with a preliminary understanding of what international migrants do once they have got to the South West of England. However, it is enlightening to first look at the national insurance data as an introduction to some broad demographic trends.

*Locating international migration to the South West – An analysis of NINo data:*

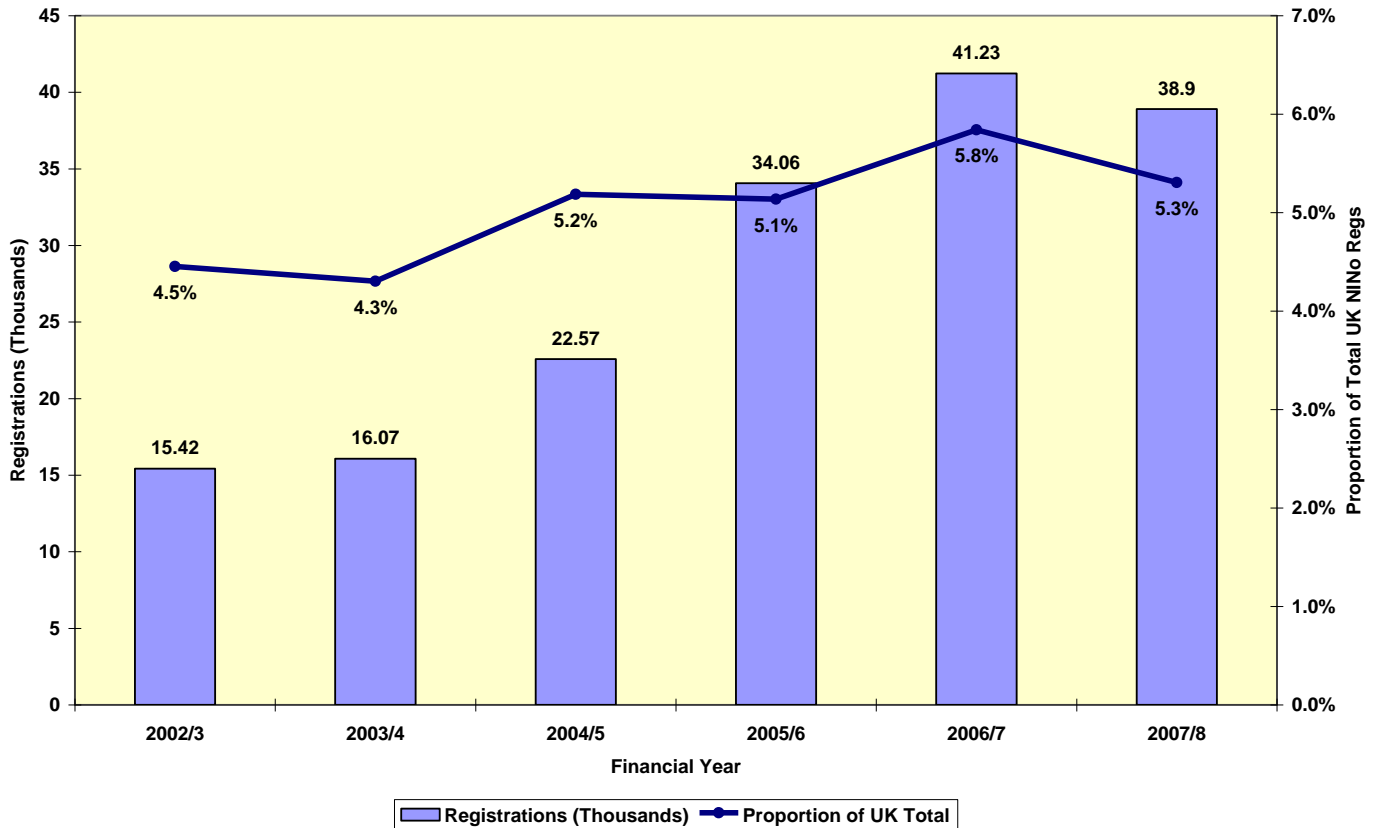
Any foreign national wishing to work legally in the UK (as an employed or self-employed person) needs to register for a national insurance number through their local Job Centre. These are allocated by the DWP and the information entered on the National Insurance Recording System (NIRS). There are two separate times when information is added to this system; when a migrant arrives in the country and when they register for a NINo. It is the second 'series' that we are concerned with here and part of this process includes collecting nationality data and postcode information, as well as the applicant's age and gender. This allows us to draw out certain quantitative data regarding the migration of non-UK nationals to the South West region and is a useful illustration of the context of this research.

The South West region accounted for 38,900 new national insurance registrations from non-UK nationals in 2007/8, around 5.3% of the national total and more than double the 15,420 recorded in 2002/3, but down from the 41,230 recorded in 2006/7. The vast majority (81.4%) of migrants to the region in 2007/8, as with the UK in general (80.2%), were aged between 18 and 34 and were approximately evenly split between the genders<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> All NINo registration data compiled on 20/4/2009 using the Department for Work and Pension's Tabulation Tool, available at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/tabtool.asp>. Additional analyses and interpretations by the author.

**Figure 3.4:** NINo Registrations of non-UK Citizens in the South West Government Office Region by Financial Year.



Source: Department for Work and Pensions NIRS data (2009).

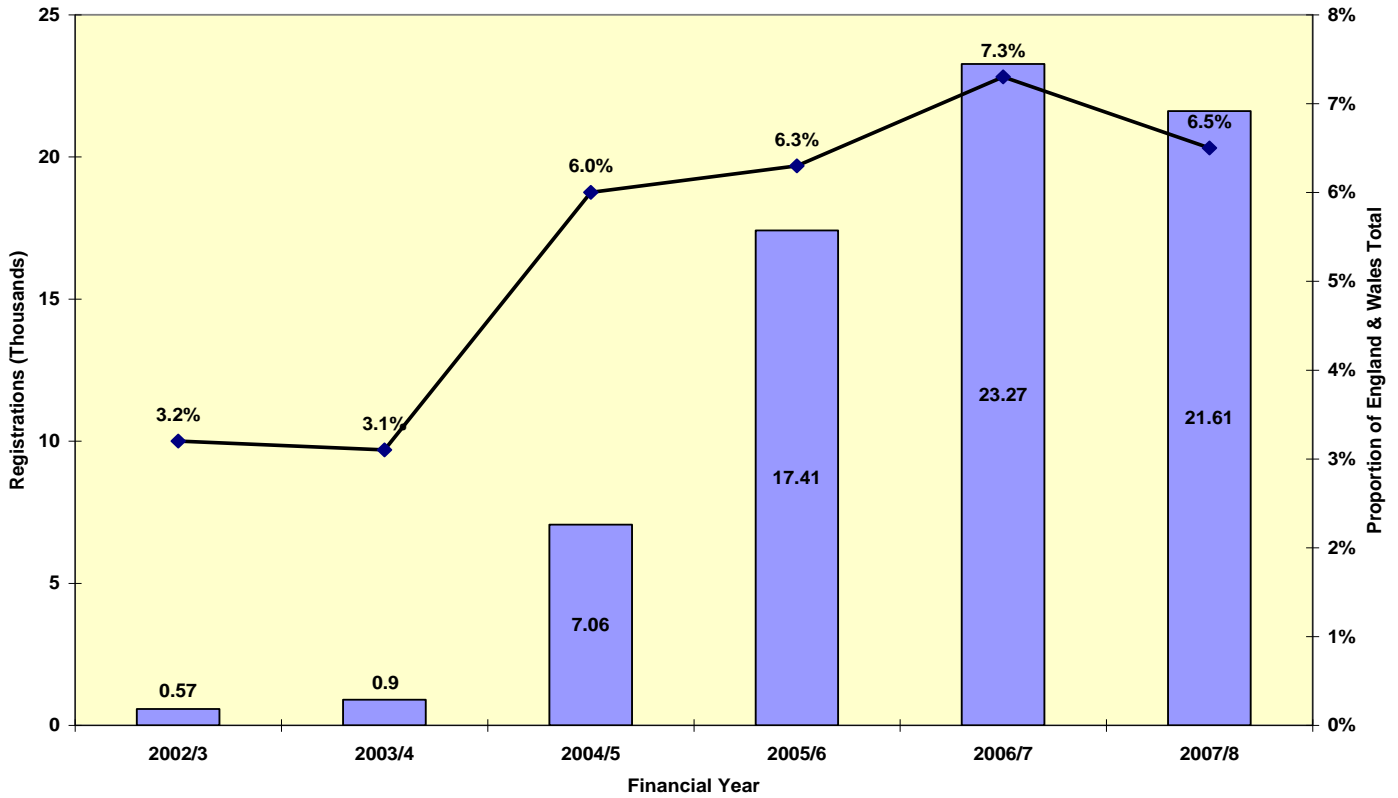
It is also apparent from Figure 3.4 that there was a marked increase in NINo registrations of non-UK nationals in the South West Government Office Region (GOR)<sup>44</sup> between 2004/5 and 2006/7. Whilst this broadly reflects the changing situation in England and Wales as a whole – note that the increase in the *proportion* of total NINo registrations in England and Wales only rises by 1.5% - a further interrogation of the data based on the world area of origin of applicants reveals the central role increased migration from so-called ‘Accession’ nations<sup>45</sup> played in the overall increases flow of

<sup>44</sup> The geographic boundaries of the South West GOR are coterminous with those of the South West Regional Development Agency.

<sup>45</sup> DWP define ‘EU Accession States’ as including those nations that joined the European Union (EU) on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004 – Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia – as well as Bulgaria and Romania, who joined on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007. Registrants from these countries are collated in the ‘EU Accession States’ world area of origin whether or not they registered before or after their country of origin acceded to the EU.

international migrants to both the UK in general and the South West in particular.

**Figure 3.5:** NINo Registrations by Nationals of EU Accession States in the South West Government Office Region by Financial Year.



**Source:** Department for Work and Pensions NIRS data (2009).

There are a number of points to comment on here; firstly, it is clear that the rapid rise in the number of non-UK nationals registering for a NINo in the South West (as with the rest of England and Wales) is closely matched to the sudden upsurge in the number of registrants from EU Accession States after 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004. Furthermore, this increase fundamentally changed the demographics of international immigration to the South West region; from a situation of relatively low 'inflow', dominated by migrants from the 'old' EU and Asia<sup>46</sup>, to one consisting of substantially increased migration activity dominated by registrants from Accession States – who accounted for over half

<sup>46</sup> These world areas of origin accounted for 27.7% and 30.9% of NINo registrations by non-UK nationals in the region in 2002/3 respectively, as opposed to 3.7% from nationals of the future Accession States.

(55.6%) of NINo registrations by non-UK nationals in the region in 2007/8<sup>47</sup>. It is also important to note that, as Figure 3.5 (above) illustrates, the South West became *relatively* more important for migration from EU Accession States, with a markedly increased proportion of all NINo registrations from nationals of these countries made in England and Wales being made in the South West region. This translates as an increase in registrations by EU Accession State nationals in the region of 3,982% between 2002/3 and 2006/7 (compared to a 1,696% rise in England and Wales as a whole), figures which emphasise the importance of migrants from these states to the overall increase in international migration at a national level and, particularly, at a regional level<sup>48</sup>.

Of particular importance within this group, at least in terms of gross numbers, is immigration from Poland, which reached its peak in 2006/7 when 17,360 new NINo registrations (42% of the regional total) were made by Polish nationals in the South West GOR. As the following table illustrates migrants from Poland were by far the largest group of non-UK nationals making new NINo registrations in the region.

**Table 3.2:** NINo Registrations by Adult Overseas Nationals Entering the UK (South West GOR), Top Five Countries by Financial Year (Thousands).

2003/4		2004/5		2005/6		2006/7		2007/8	
India	1.44	<b>POLAND</b>	<b>3.66</b>	<b>POLAND</b>	<b>11.37</b>	<b>POLAND</b>	<b>17.36</b>	<b>POLAND</b>	<b>15.75</b>
Portugal	1.20	India	1.53	Slovakia	2.02	Slovakia	2.07	Slovakia	1.86
S. Africa	1.14	S. Africa	1.24	India	1.97	India	1.88	India	1.69
China	0.80	Portugal	1.14	Lithuania	1.20	Lithuania	1.08	China	1.08
Australia	0.74	Slovakia	0.82	S. Africa	1.17	Czech R.	0.97	France	1.01

**Source:** Department of Work and Pensions NIRS data (2009).

The table also clearly illustrates how migration to the region changed quickly after the accession of the new EU states (and the resultant free movement of labour between the accession states and the

<sup>47</sup> As compared to 14% and 15% respectively for migrants from the 'old' EU and Asia.

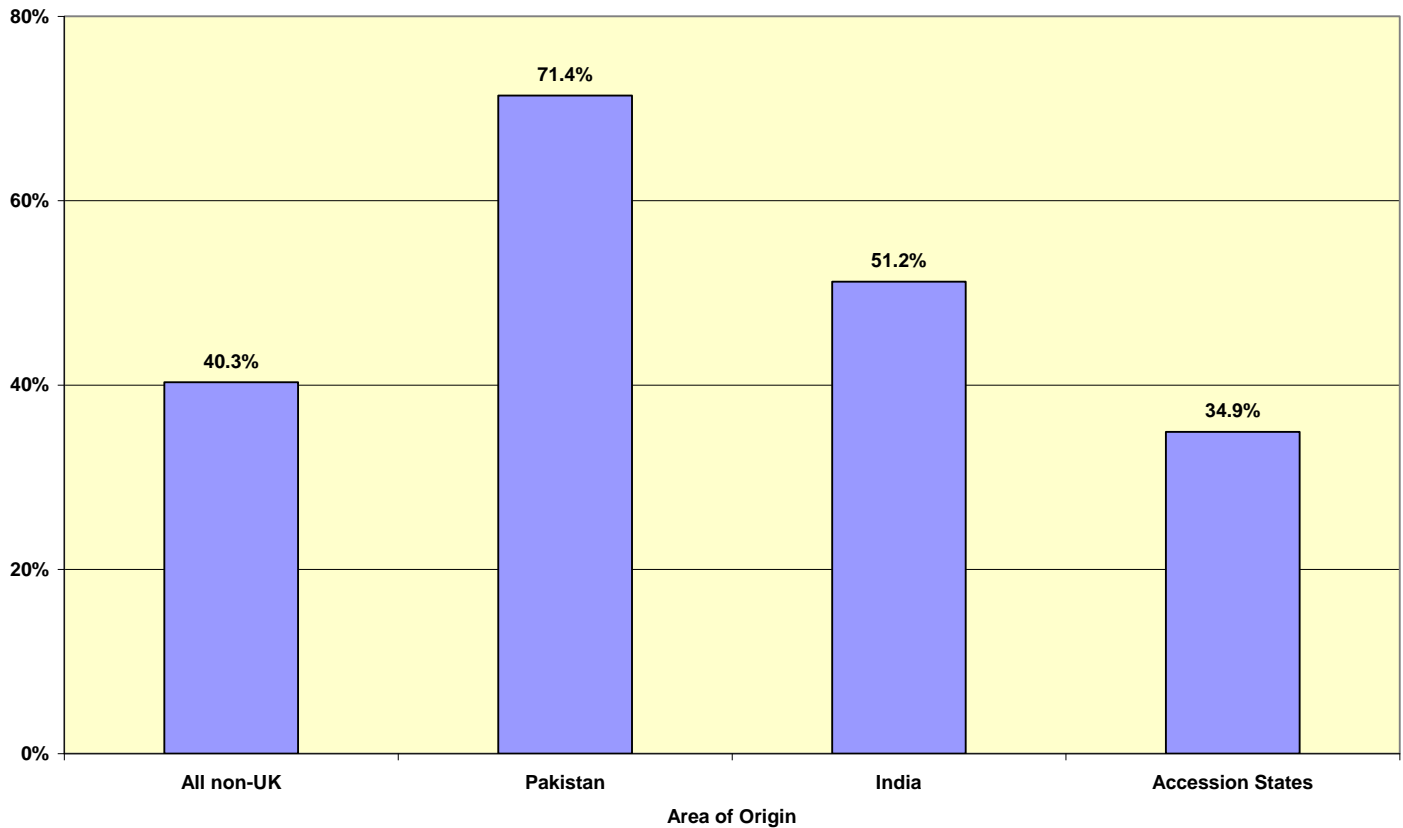
<sup>48</sup> Overall, NINo registrations by non-UK nationals rose by 103.9% between 2002/3 and 2006/7 in England and Wales, and 167.4% in the South West GOR.



UK) in 2004.

There also appears to be some evidence available from these data sets to suggest that Accession State nationals were *proportionally* less likely to migrate to the larger urban centres in the region, which had been a characteristic of previous large scale migrations to the region. By using four large, predominately urban, Unitary Authorities (Bournemouth, City of Bristol, Plymouth and Swindon) as a proxy for the urban South West, it is possible to illustrate this point quite clearly by comparing the proportion of Accession State nationals registering for their NINo in the 'Urban 4' in 2007/8 to the registration patterns of those from two 'sending' countries with much longer and more established histories of migration to the UK – Pakistan and India:

**Figure 3.6:** Proportion of South West GOR NINo Registrations made in the 'Urban 4' by Area of Origin, 2007/8.



**Source:** Department of Work and Pensions NIRS data (2009).

There is further evidence that Accession State nationals were more likely to migrate to rural areas with relatively low concentrations of non-UK nationals and higher than average proportions of people working in agriculture and food processing roles. For example, four of the five Local Authorities in which Accession State nationals made up the highest proportion of all NINo registrations by non-UK nationals also had relatively high proportions of people working in agriculture at the time of the most recent Census, with the remainder (West Wiltshire) having a high concentration of food processing industries.

**Table 3.3:** Proportion of Workforce Employed in 'Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry' Industry Sector in the Five Local Authorities with the Highest Proportion of A12 NINo Registrations in the South West GOR.

<b>Area</b>	<b>NINo Registrations by A12 Nationals as Proportion of Total (NIRS data, 2007/8)</b>	<b>Proportion of Workforce Employed in 'Agriculture, Hunting &amp; Forestry' (2001 Census)</b>
<b>Kerrier (Cornwall)</b>	79.5%	3.8%
<b>Penwith (Cornwall)</b>	78.3%	4.3%
<b>West Wiltshire</b>	77.9%	2.0%
<b>West Somerset</b>	77.8%	7.2%
<b>Mid Devon</b>	77.4%	7.2%
<b><i>SOUTH WEST GOR</i></b>	55.6%	2.5%
<b><i>ENGLAND &amp; WALES</i></b>	45.3%	1.5%

**Source:** Department for Work & Pensions NIRS data (2009) and Office for National Statistics Census 2001 data (2009)

For the purposes of this argument, we can draw four main points from this analysis:

- ❖ International migration to the South West GOR has increased substantially since 2003/4;

- ❖ This increase has been largely driven by migration from Accession States (especially Poland);
- ❖ The relative impact of increasing Accession State migration to the UK has been proportionally higher in the South West region – this can be seen in the increased share of Accession State nationals migrating to the UK coming to the South West GOR, and in the 40-fold increase in the gross numbers of Accession nationals registering for NINOs in the region between 2002/3 and 2006/7 (as opposed to a 17-fold increase for England & Wales as a whole in the same period).
- ❖ Migration from the Accession States appears to be directed more towards rural areas of the region than previous large-scale migrations.

Whilst the relevance of these points to this study is yet to be fully explored, it is perhaps useful to first get an overview of the labour force characteristics of international migrants to the South West GOR – particularly those from the Accession States – by exploring some data contained within the Annual Population Survey (APS) and the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS).

*Labour force characteristics of international migrants in the South West – An analysis of APS and WRS data:*

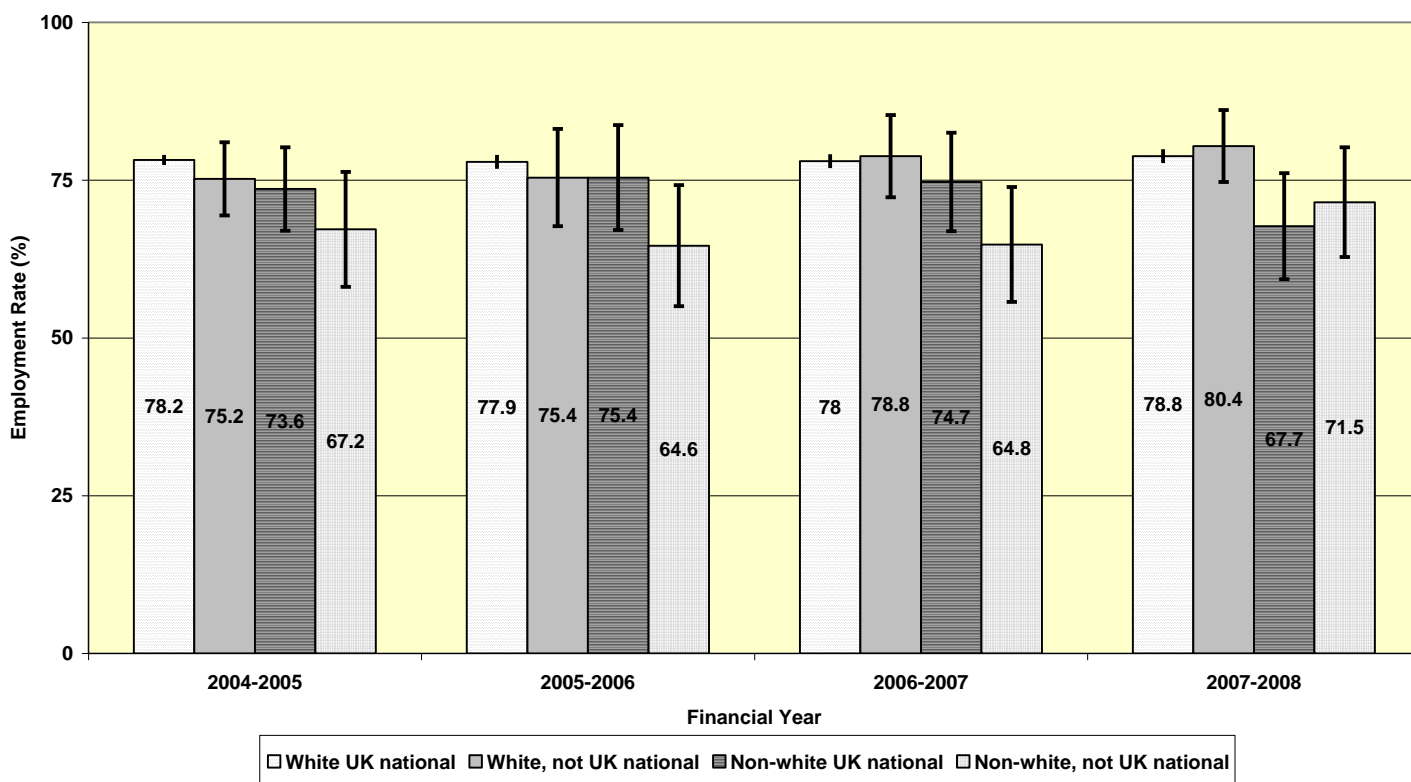
The second element of this analysis of international migration to the South West region considers what migrants do when they reach their destination. Again, it is possible to get some level of understanding of this by analysing the available data. Whilst the nature of this data tends towards providing a broad overview rather than a nuanced understanding of the situation, it will be a useful basis to begin an exploration of international migration to the region.

There are two major sources of information on the labour force characteristics of migrants; the Annual Population Survey (APS) collated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) from a postal survey of a sample of UK households, and the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) run by the UK Border Agency as a temporary measure to allow nationals from EU 'accession' states to work in the UK. It records the industry sector of employment and the location of the applicant's main employer. Though a useful source of information, it provides no data on any nationals other than

those of the eight 'accession' countries included in the scheme<sup>49</sup>.

APS data is a good source for broad labour force information; the data it collects includes a breakdown of different types of labour force activity or inactivity by nationality and geographical area of residence. It also differentiates between 'white' and 'non-white' or 'ethnic minority' respondents, allowing us to briefly compare the different employment rates of four groups – White UK nationals, White non-UK nationals, Non-white UK nationals and non-White non-UK nationals.

**Figure 3.7:** Employment Rate (Working Age) by Nationality and Ethnicity, South West GOR.



**Source:** ONS Annual Population Survey [Accessed via Nomis – [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) – 12/1/09].

**Note:** Error bars indicate 95% confidence interval of percent figures given.

<sup>49</sup> The 'A8' nations included in the WRS are the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Workers from Malta and Cyprus do not have to register, whilst those from Bulgaria and Romania are subject to different, more stringent, restrictions.

As Figure 3.7 illustrates, employment rates for working age populations in the South West seem to be affected more by 'whiteness/non-whiteness' than by nationality, with white non-UK nationals consistently registering equal or higher rates of employment than their non-white UK national equivalents. Though it is tempting to see in such a table reflections of arguments about the hierarchical racialisation of the South West labour market and, perhaps, the continuation of (post-) colonial imaginaries of race and suitability for work, such conclusions would be somewhat hasty here. Firstly, because of the relatively small sample size, the statistical reliability of these figures are somewhat limited (note the error bars in Figure 3.7), so we cannot immediately assume that they accurately describe widespread discriminatory practices. We should, however, be aware that this *may* be the case, especially when considered in consort with arguments made about ethnic and racial segmentation of the labour force made by scholars studying 'global cities' (May et al. 2007; Sassen 1998) and the United States (Roediger 2005; Waldinger and Lichter 2003).

What *can* be drawn from this data at this point is that it illustrates that the employment rate of *White* non-UK nationals is high – probably as high (if not higher) than that of white UK nationals. If we also note the proportional increase in the 'White, non-UK' population in the South West since 2004/5 (see Table 3.4, below) and combine this with the NINo registration data, then it appears reasonable to use the employment rate of the 'White, non-UK' population in the APS as a proxy for international migrants from the Accession States in the region<sup>50</sup>.

**Table 3.4:** Population by Ethnicity and Nationality, South West GOR, Financial Year.

<b>Ethnicity/Nationality</b>	<b>2004 / 5</b>	<b>2005 / 6</b>	<b>2006 / 7</b>	<b>2007 / 8</b>
<b>White UK National</b>	95.2%	94.9%	94%	93.5%
<b>White, non-UK National</b>	1.9%	1.9%	2.4%	2.9%
<b>Non-White UK National</b>	1.8%	1.7%	1.9%	1.9%
<b>Non-White, non-UK National</b>	1.0%	1.5%	1.6%	1.6%

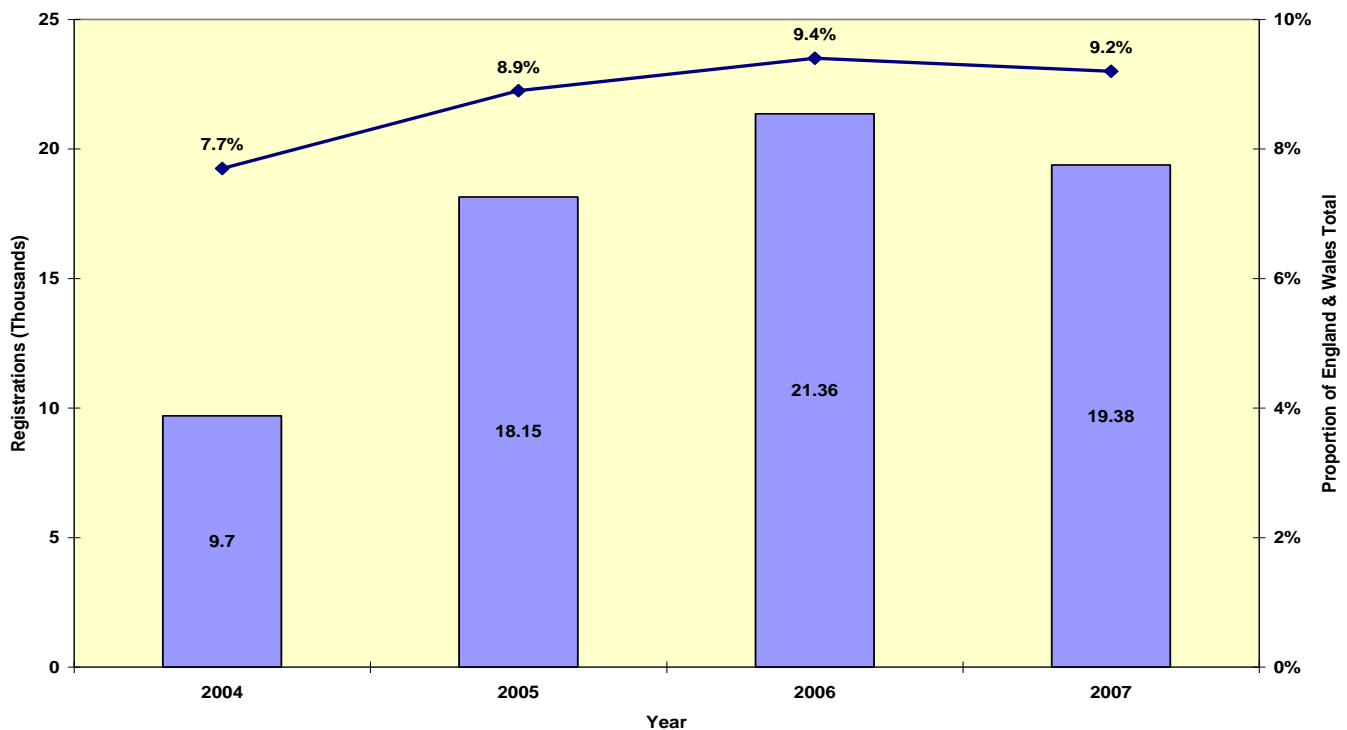
**Source:** ONS Annual Population Survey [Accessed via Nomis – [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) – 22/04/09].

<sup>50</sup> Of course, exactly what 'white' means in this context is unclear. The APS is a self completion survey so 'white' occurs here as self-reflexive category (i.e. people are 'white' if they tick a box labelled 'white') and should not be taken to have a deeper significance. Debates about 'whiteness' and non-'whiteness' are complex and multifaceted (see, e.g. Roediger 2005) and, though hugely relevant to understanding migration, work and 'ethnicity', sadly cannot be afforded the necessary discussion space here, other than to note that the term 'white' does not imply a homogenous category.

Therefore, we can tentatively assert that Accession State nationals who have migrated to the region have a rate of employment equivalent to that of the white UK national majority. By turning our attention to data available through the Workers' Registration Scheme we can begin to test this hypothesis and to find out what sectors this particular group may be employed in.

WRS data supplies information about the industrial sector of employment of nationals of the eight 'accession' states who are required to register with the scheme. Together, nationals of these countries made up over half (55.6%) of non-UK nationals registering for a NINo in 2007/8 in the region. It therefore supplies us with important information about the majority of international migrants to the South West.

**Figure 3.8:** WRS Registrations, South West Postal Address Book Region<sup>51</sup>.



**Source:** Adapted from data contained in UK Border Agency, *Accession Monitoring Report* (UK Border Agency et al. 2008)

<sup>51</sup> The South West Postal Address Book region is not coterminous with the South West GOR.

As Figure 3.8 illustrates, the number of Accession State nationals registering with the WRS has increased notably since 2004, as has the proportion of registrations being made in the South West region. This data supports the increases in Accession State nationals applying for NINOs in the region illustrated in Figure 3.5.

The WRS also provides further demographic data regarding those registering with it. The national-level highlights are as follows:

- ❖ 66% of WRS approved applicants between May 2004 and September 2008 were Polish, a figure that dwarfed the next largest groups; Slovaks (11% of total) and Lithuanians (9%) (UK Border Agency et al. 2008: 8);
- ❖ 81% of approved applicants in the same period were aged between 18 and 34 (ibid: 10);
- ❖ 57% were male, though in the latest available quarter (July – September 2008) this had fallen to 50% (ibid);
- ❖ Only 8% declared that they had dependents (ibid: 11).

These figures largely agree with the equivalent NINO data discussed previously, suggesting that Accession State migrants to the region are predominately younger working age people with no dependents. We can also extract data regarding the industry sectors in which registrants were employed at the time of application and compare how these differ between the UK as a whole and the South West region as defined in this instance.

**Table 3.5:** Proportion of Cumulative Total of WRS Registrants Employed in Certain Industry Sectors, May 2004 – September 2008.

Industry Sector	South West	UK
Admin, Business & Management Services	32.8%	40.9%
Hospitality & Catering	21.2%	19.2%
Agriculture	19.1%	10.5%
Manufacturing	6.7%	7.4%
Food/Fish/Meat Processing	5.2%	5.0%
Health & Medical Services	5.1%	4.3%
Retail & Related Services	3.2%	4.5%
Construction & Land Services	2.5%	4.1%
Transport	2.1%	2.7%
Entertainment & Leisure	2.2%	1.5%

**Source:** UK Border Agency et al. (2008: 20)

The large proportion of registrants listed under the 'Administration, Business and Management Services' industry sector include those who were working as employees of an employment or recruitment agencies at the time of registration. It is likely that only a small proportion were working in any of the fields mentioned. Indeed, a government analysis of these figures indicated that more than two thirds of applicants were working in fields that could be defined as routine or semi-routine, with nearly one in three (30.5%) working as 'Process Operatives' (UK Border Agency et al., 2008: 14).

**Table 3.6:** Top 5 Occupations in Which WRS Registrants were Employed, England & Wales, 2007.

Occupation	Number	Proportion of Total
Process Operative (Other Factory Worker)	64 270	30.5%
Warehouse Operative	19 890	9.4%
Packer	11 885	5.6%
Cleaner, Domestic Staff	11 830	5.6%
Kitchen & Catering Assistants	11 120	5.3%

**Source:** UK Border Agency et al., 2008: 15



Additionally, the assumption made previously in this chapter that 'A8' nationals were more likely to be working in rural areas, appears to be borne out by the large proportion of WRS applicants registered as working in 'Agriculture'. The South West also boasts rates higher than the national average of WRS registered migrants working in 'Health & Medical Services' and 'Entertainment & Leisure' industry sectors, suggesting employment for A8 nationals may be proportionally high in low-wage, low-productivity sectors of the South West economy. This is supported by the low hourly wage levels reported by many applicants to the scheme, with 75% earning in the region of £4.50 - £5.99 per hour, and 94% earning £7.99 or less per hour (ibid: 16). Furthermore, 97% of workers who applied to the scheme in September 2008 or before were working more than 16 hours a week, with 86% working over 35 hours.

*Commentary – Conceptualising contemporary migrations to South West England:*

At the end of my analysis of the NINo data I had made four broad points; 1) that international migration to the South West (as with the rest of the UK) had increased substantially since 2004; 2) that this was largely driven by the arrival of migrants from EU Accession States (in particular, Poland); 3) that the South West GOR had been attracting an increasing proportion of these migrants and; 4) that Accession State migrants appeared more likely than migrants arriving from 'traditional' sending societies (such as India or Pakistan) to be moving to rural areas of the region. After analysing the APS and WRS data, I can not only restate these points with renewed confidence, but also add three new arguments with a good degree of certainty:

- ❖ International migrants to the South West are overwhelming young (18-35) with no accompanying dependents;
- ❖ They are likely to be in full-time employment (working more than 35 hours per week) and;
- ❖ They are likely to be working in low-paid (less than £6 per hour), semi-routine or routine jobs.

Taken in combination, these data sets allow for a good overview of the post-2004 landscape of international migration to the South West. It is also clear that the situation is very different to the

one that existed prior to 2004. Firstly, there are more migrants coming to the region so, although we have no way of knowing what the current stock of migrants is, we know that the in-flow has increased dramatically. Additionally, although some 62% of those registering with the WRS state they intend to stay for less than 3 months (UK Border Agency et al., 2008: 16), we neither know whether this is actually the case, or whether people are engaged in transnational working patterns – alternating work and residence between the UK and 'home'. Either way, we can safely assume that the overall stock has increased as well; an assertion that is supported by the increasing proportion of the population categorised as 'White, non-UK national' in the APS (see Table 3.4). However, we must also assume that a significant proportion of this overall stock consists of 'churn' – those leaving the country being replaced by other 'new' arrivals. Such a situation will have a significant impact on how international migrants (as a composite group) perform in regards to knowledge and skills; the shorter the amount of time spent in the country, the less time the new arrival has to transfer their knowledge, engage with fellow workers and learn any new skills.

On the other hand, these figures also appear to point to international migrants (at least from the Accession States) being heavily employed in occupation groups that tend to report high levels of under-skilled employees<sup>52</sup>. It could be considered, therefore, that these workers have the potential to reduce this apparent 'skills gap' in the region. Their ability to do so, however, will depend on a number of factors, including how knowledge is shared and transferred *within* migrant groups and *between* migrants and their employers and non-migrant co-workers. The relative success or failure of such transfers also depends on a number of other potential structural factors, such as acquiring recognised qualifications and the necessary proficiency in the local language, as well as more tacit and ethereal determinants, such as attaining 'country-specific' skills (Duvander 2001), and the attitudes of employers as to what work certain groups of migrants are suitable for (McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2007). The way in which such dynamics of knowing, working and migrating actually occur in the region will be a key element of this research.

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<sup>52</sup> 21% of workers in 'elementary' occupations in the South West were seen as lacking in skills by their employers in 2005 (BMG Research 2006: 73-4), compared to just 11% of 'managers' and 8% of 'professionals'

**SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND THE 'LOCAL' CONTEXT:**

Before we can begin to investigate the local dynamics of knowing, working and migrating in the South West it is necessary to look more closely at a one particular element of the research project in its original formulation – the regional skills gap. In this section, I wish to explore this concept in light of what we already 'know' about both the local context and the theoretical underpinnings of international migration and knowledge. I begin to do this by critically engaging with the notion of a skills gap and questioning how such a concept may be considered 'regional', before expanding my analysis to 'local' labour markets and, finally, exploring how we can understand the interrelations between the proximal and the distal, the local and the global.

***Measuring problems:***

The concept of a skills gap requires some exploration, both in regards to its meanings and, more pressingly, in the way these are operationalised. In essence, a skills gap is formed when a workforce lacks the requisite abilities to undertake the available jobs effectively. We might add to this the caveat that this gap cannot easily be closed with a burst of recruitment or training. Thus a 'skills gap' implies a structural situation which pervades certain sectors of the labour market on a large scale. Neo-classical economics tends to present such a situation as that of the 'sow's ear effect', arguing that an inadequately educated, or skilled, workforce cannot be made to increase productivity or output – you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear (see, e.g. Bannock, Baxter, and Davis 2003: 361). Therefore, it becomes necessary to 'upskill' the workforce – to give them the skills they need to increase their own productivity levels on a per capita or per hour-worked basis – and, by extension, that of the wider labour market.

However, one problem with the concept of a skills gap lies in the measurement and conceptualisation of skill, for it is not an easily calculable entity, a situation which becomes even more testing across the entire labour force. This leaves two options – using qualitative attitudinal measures, or utilising quantifiable proxies (such as level of formal educational qualifications). Both methods have been used and both incur significant problems. The first is hampered by its qualitative nature – what we are getting is a reflection about how people *feel* about skill levels, not a definitive

measure. Added to this, the most commonly cited measure of 'skills gaps' arises from a question asked to employers (not, it is important to note, employees) in the National Employers Skills Survey (NESS) and therefore reflects attitudes of only elite members of the workforce. The second method requires using educational qualifications as a proxy measure – each job can be defined as requiring a certain level of skill and knowledge (conventionally in the form of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) levels) which can then be compared with the actual qualifications of the people in post. Whilst this provides a much more quantifiable measure, it conflates skills with qualifications and negates practical experience, informal learning and tacit knowledge. Therefore, accurately recognising and measuring a skills gap is a very difficult task, so it immediately becomes almost impossible to definitively say whether or not an area, organisation or occupation 'really' suffers from a skills gap or not. It is, in essence, a matter of opinion.

### *An attitude problem?*

Regardless of this, the concept appears to have entered the lexicon of local and national governance and been largely accepted as 'fact' despite the lack of firm proof (or, indeed, much academic testing of the hypothesis). Peter Capelli has argued that such a position flows less from direct evidence than from, 'the logical combination of a series of related arguments' (Capelli 1995: 109), namely observations that the level of basic skills in literacy and numeracy amongst new entrants to low-wage jobs appeared to be very low in *some* urban areas in the United States during the 1980s, and the related idea of the 'knowledge economy', where workers would need ever higher levels of qualifications, knowledge and skills to keep pace with a changing labour market<sup>53</sup>.

One effect of this was an attempt to 're-skill' these youngsters with generic or transferable skills, such as communication, numeracy, IT skills, team working, self-directed learning and problem solving<sup>54</sup>. This was seen as providing nascent workers with core competencies to engage in a wide range of posts. However, as Jonathan Payne (2004) and others have pointed out, there are a number of problems with this assumption. Firstly, there is a continuing question of the transferability of

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<sup>53</sup> Payne (1999) makes a similar argument for the U.K., arguing that during the 1980's and early 1990's, the U.K. government increasingly saw mass youth unemployment as being linked to the lack of the personal qualities that employers were looking for.

<sup>54</sup> The CBI (1989) also include 'values and integrity' and 'positive attitudes towards change' as core generic skills.

'transferable' skills; for example problem solving relies heavily on job-specific, even place-specific, 'expertise and specialist bodies of knowledge' (ibid: 3). Essentially many, apparently generic, skills are, in fact, underpinned by very particular tacit and explicit knowledge which cannot easily be *taught*. Instead they must be *learnt* through experience and understanding of the particular circumstance in which they are embedded. Additionally, there has been a widening of the meaning of skills away from 'technical' skills to encompass almost every aspect of human behaviour, including the realms of emotion and embodied attributes; everything, from body language to emotional behaviour, body shape to dress sense have been redeployed as 'skills'<sup>55</sup>. One aspect of this has arguably been the reinforcement of middle-class advantage through embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990); not a new process but certainly a novel way to normalise essentially discriminatory behaviour. Payne also makes the point that these changes have produced a situation where we are all apparently skilled. Whilst, in certain circumstances, this has been a positive change, leading to the (partial) recognition of certain 'unskilled' jobs as 'skilled', he also contends that it has produced a situation where many 'skills', particularly technical ones, have been devalued or marginalised in the rush towards generic, flexible or transferable skills. He suggests another potential downfall in his conclusion:

*Equipping the unemployed with 'skills' such as motivation, the ability to co-operate and respect for authority in preparation for low-skill, low wage, 'dead end' jobs may be seen as tantamount to socializing people simply to accept their lot.*

(Payne 2004: 6; see also Lafer 2004)

Equally, the increasing expectation of the education system to produce 'oven-ready' workers, who have been thoroughly socialised and equipped with generic skills to achieve success in a wide variety of jobs, relies on the assumption that *all* jobs can be done merely with the application of generic skills without the provision of time and direction to learn the specific tacit and explicit knowledge to do that job to a high level of accomplishment. Additionally, there appears to be a pervasive expectation that personal attributes, repackaged as generic skills (Keep and Mayhew 1999), such as

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<sup>55</sup> See, e.g. Witz, Warhurst & Nixon (2003), or Entwistle & Wissinger (2006) on 'aesthetic labour', and Seymour & Sandiford (2005) on 'emotional labour'.

motivation<sup>56</sup> or team-working<sup>57</sup>, will 'stick', regardless of the specific circumstance and nature of a post. Arguably this shifting of the burden of training and learning on to the education sector has produced a situation which has encouraged employers not to invest in allowing many of their workers to develop job-specific or tacit groundings in their particular roles, in the process reproducing the 'skills gap' they aim to eradicate. Indeed, the tendency for 'skills gaps' to be identified in low-wage, low-status and seasonal jobs which rely heavily on skills associated with emotional and aesthetic labour, such as tourism or sales, tends to support this hypothesis.

### *Reconceptualising skills and locality:*

Some academics have written of the economy as an epiphenomenon of *economics*, suggesting that, '[e]conomics does not describe an existing external 'economy' but it brings that economy into being; economics performs the economy, creating the phenomena it describes' (MacKenzie and Millo 2003: 108; see also Callon 1998: 30). In a similar way, the possibility remains that 'skills gaps' are the academic equivalent of an iatrogenic illness – a *schologenic* creation<sup>58</sup> – and must be treated with some caution. Additionally, it is important to understand discourses of 'skills' and 'skills gaps' as dialogues about what should be expected of employers and employees, the 'state' and private enterprise, in order to make a collective move towards greater per capita and per hour productivity; to turn a 'sow's ear' into a 'silk purse'. In this way, they can also be analysed as functioning in political economy in which actualised knowledge about the relative skills and abilities of individuals acts to regulate, control and perform 'the worker' in the putative 'knowledge economy'. Such a situation brings to mind Foucault's theorisation of the functioning of 'power/knowledge' (see, e.g. Deleuze 1988; Foucault 1980) discussed at the end of Chapter 1 – discourses about an economy where skills and knowledge are pre-eminent both act to produce such a reality (they are performative) and to provide the bureaucratic and institutional means to 'manage' this. How international migrants fit into

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<sup>56</sup> 'Lack of motivation/commitment/poor work ethic' was the single most noted way in which young labour market entrants were seen as poorly prepared for work by surveyed South West employers in NESS 2005 (BMG Research 2006: 67).

<sup>57</sup> Along with a lack of 'customer handling' skills, 'team working' was the skill most likely to be seen as missing amongst employees with gaps in their 'skills' (BMG Research 2006: 75).

<sup>58</sup> The term 'schologenic' is a conflation of the ancient Greek root words, *skhole* (school) and *genesis* (literally 'birth'), thus indicating something produced by a school (or a scholar). Iatrogenesis is from the roots *iatros* (healer) and *genesis*, thus referring to something healer- (or Doctor-) created.

such a discourse, however, is not immediately clear.

However, what is at stake here is that a regional skills gap is *seen* to exist and that it affects the functioning of local and national labour markets. Indeed, the *regionality* of the 'regional skills gap' suggests something that is peculiar to the South West of England. The background to this is the idea, supported by demographic data and personal experience, that much of the region suffers a net 'loss' from the younger working-age labour pool to 'elevator' regions in London and its periphery (see, e.g. Office for National Statistics 2010). This loss is higher amongst the more highly educated members and crucially they are not replaced by equivalent internal migration into the region, which tends to be skewed towards older migrants with lower levels of labour market participation. The reasons for these flows are complex and I do not intend to analyse them in depth here<sup>59</sup>, but one notable outcome is a reduction in the available labour pool of younger workers in the region. Therefore, the 'regional skills gap' may also be underlain by a regional labour shortage, which could be partly reduced through a reliance on international migrants. Indeed, how *international* migrants to the region interact with local labour markets, including related notions of skills gaps, is a question of great concern and one I shall return to later.

But how do such situations – skills gaps, international migration, labour markets – come to be conceptualised on a *regional* level. Indeed, how does my emphasis on the 'local' context of such processes fit with this and the multi-scalar dynamics of immigration law, employment regulations and international trading relations? In the following section I turn my attention towards how these relations have been conceptualised in contemporary social science and what these demand of this particular research.

### **THE PROXIMAL AND THE DISTAL – ON SCALE, LOCALITY AND RELATIONALITY:**

I have stressed throughout that migrating, knowing and working take place in a local context – or rather local contexts – it is the tangible day-to-day interactions that make up our everyday lives which form our shared experience of life. But it is equally clear that forces beyond this local context have the power to fundamentally alter our local experiences; a powerful example here would be the way in which the accession of ten states to the EU in May 2004 radically altered the labour market

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<sup>59</sup> See, e.g. Fielding (1992) for an informative analysis of in-migration to the South West.

landscape of the South West. This was certainly not negotiated on a local level, nor did it occur on a regional level (or even a national one) but its effects were felt on a day-to-day level, not least for the tens of thousands of migrants from these countries who lived and worked (however temporarily) in the South West, not to mention those who worked alongside them, lived next door, or simply enjoyed the new found availability of kabanos sausages or Zywiec beer.

However, it is not necessary to abandon a focus on the local in order to incorporate an understanding of the 'more-than-local' aspects of everyday processes of migrating, knowing and working. Indeed, to do so would be counter-intuitive, moving against convincing recent arguments in economic geography that have illustrated how the 'local' and everyday is the nexus at which important structures (such as the labour market perform) are performed and 'made real' as sites of regulation, differentiation and administration (see, e.g. Martin 2000). In this way, the local is the stage for the everyday playing out of the world we inhabit. But, more than that, whilst knowledge, skills and work are performed in a local context, they are also fundamentally informed and transformed by events occurring at both this proximate level *and* those taking place at a distal, non-local, scale. Therefore, in order to understand the local context of this research (and perhaps its implications beyond its immediate boundaries), it is necessary to critically engage with notions of scale, locality and relationality. I begin to do this by exploring Allan Williams' multi-scalar perspective on knowledge and international migration, before turning to wider geographic conceptualisations of the nature and functioning of scale and locality.

### *Situating knowledge - Multi-level perspectives:*

Allan Williams has argued over the course of a number of articles (2005, 2006, 2007, 2007) that, 'international migrants are potentially significant as knowledge brokers' (2007: 34) because they build bridges between geographically distant communities and often act as agents between them. Additionally, the local and trans-national aspects of economies are dynamically reworked and reshaped by the process of migration (ibid: 35). In order to analyse this, however, he has stressed the need to focus on three key levels of perspective which affect the ways knowledge transfers take



place: the 'national', the 'regional' and the 'workplace'<sup>60</sup>.

The *national* level acts as the core site for regulation (of migration, but also of knowledge). For example, immigration policies, created with reference to national employment policies and state investments in human capital<sup>61</sup>, shape the form of migration and attempt to regulate its flow. However, the effects of these policies are often difficult to predict and may diverge from the government's stated reasons for imposing them<sup>62</sup>. Additionally, it is largely true to say that the immigration policies of industrialised countries tend to favour applicants with high level of certified technical expertise over those with potentially high levels of social or tacit knowledge, as the latter are extremely difficult to measure. However, unskilled migrants are often used, legally or otherwise, to fill posts which 'native' workers are unwilling to do. These posts tend to be low status and low waged and, crucially, often leave the migrant worker open to a high level of potential exploitation. Additionally, the temporary and transient nature of these posts, as well as the long hours worked, make it hard for employees to gain sufficient 'country-specific' knowledge, or to transfer that knowledge should they eventually acquire it. This situation illustrates how, 'immigration policies are significant mediators of tacit knowledge transactions' (Williams, 2007a: 37).

Employment regulations are another national level factor which has an effect on knowledge transfer through migration. Essentially, employment regulations tend to be biased towards qualifications gained in the 'host' country. Overseas qualifications are often not considered acceptable equivalents, or their equivalence is very hard to prove for the migrant. Duvander (2001) has seen this as acting to conceal an intolerance for diversity, but perhaps it is more accurate to follow Chang (2000: 212) and view this as a *protectionist* tendency, seeking to avoid 'native' competition with 'foreign' workers. This situation also means that non-native workers with U.K. qualifications hold a significant advantage over potential migrants with 'only' 'home' qualifications, thus increasing the 'value' of a high-level U.K. education.

The *regional* level, meanwhile, is '... a key site for mediating relations between migration and knowledge' (2007a: 39) in that it acts as a fulcrum balancing national policies with local, or

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<sup>60</sup> See also Goss & Lindquist (1995), who argued that all migration research should focus on similar key levels of perspective, in order to remove the biases inherent in micro- or macro- approaches. The rationale behind this approach is also discussed in Williams (2005: 29).

<sup>61</sup> Australia and Canada currently run a 'points' programme whereby potential migrants need to score a certain number of points, determined by factors such as education, age and, importantly, whether they work in a area where that country lacks capacity.

<sup>62</sup> Chang (2000) provides an interesting overview of the economic implications of immigration policies in the U.S., whilst Shah (2002) discusses the effects U.K. policies have made to immigration from Bangladesh.

workplace, level practices. One area where this can potentially happen is through the spatial clustering of companies utilising similar knowledge areas; the physical closeness of these organisations leads to increased face-to-face contact, networking and labour-market 'spillovers', whereby knowledgeable individuals circulate between firms, 'spreading their knowledge around'. These factors appear to suggest a high likelihood of tacit knowledge transfer; however, there are questions both regarding the necessary link between spatial clustering and trust – key to knowledge sharing – and to the necessity of physical closeness for knowledge transfer - e-mails, chance meetings at conferences, familial or social relationships can all lead to the sharing of information and knowledge, whilst Bathelt et al. (2004) note the existence of 'knowledge pipelines' as mechanisms for the flow of knowledge and information from one spatial cluster to another. Additionally, work on trans-national networks and diasporas has long spoken of the sharing of knowledge and information between the various sites of diaspora, through social, cultural, kin and economic links (see, e.g. Ballard 2001). However, it seems likely that regular social interaction and physical co-presence at some point in a relationship is important to the creation of trust and social interdependence between individuals. This is obviously aided by working with, or near, others and, though the relationship may endure when the different parties are no longer physically in the same place, it could be essential to provide the foundations for the sharing of knowledge, as well as providing potential future 'knowledge pipelines'. Another element which has the potential to determine the extent and form of knowledge transfer is the nature of cultural attitudes, both of the receiving society and of those migrating. Allan Williams has contrasted the cosmopolitanism of global cities - which encourages and welcomes diversity and difference in pursuit of creativity and social, economic and cultural capital<sup>63</sup> – with the 'blocked mobility' of ethnic minority employees in some organisations, which leads to a downgrading of their knowledge as less valuable than that of their 'native' counterparts (2007a: 40 - 1). One possible effect of the latter is a move towards self-employment or employment in small, ethnically-segmented, businesses. This can lead to ethnic niches, encouraging the development of a narrowing of both the range of knowledge and potential opportunities to share information and understanding.

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<sup>63</sup> Friedman (1997) has argued that the celebration of, and identification with, cosmopolitanism and hybridity are characteristic of certain social practices amongst elite social groups. I would add that 'cosmopolitans' tend to encourage and support certain types of diversity and difference over others. Whilst cosmopolitans are expected to superficially share certain 'core values', it is an ideology which can be viewed as acting as a 'functional aesthetic'; existing as a way for certain members of diverse communities to communicate in a common language without extending any significant roots beyond this arena.

The final level of analysis on which Williams wishes research to focus is that of the *workplace*. The focus here is informed by an interest in the *economic* utilisation of knowledge; thus negating the need for a wider concentration on social or household levels *in this instance*<sup>64</sup>. If we see firms as 'knowledge organisations', as not only the site of embedded knowledge, information and creativity, but also as an assemblage of creative relationships both within and beyond the company, then institutions become central to an understanding of knowledge transfer. In order for individual knowledge to become effective within an organisation it must be shared, but the mechanics of this process present initial problems to the migrant. Firstly, a lack of encultured knowledge and country-specific skills puts the newcomer at a disadvantage as the employing organisation will be required to make a loss whilst that employee becomes *accustomed* to the job, their co-workers and the 'host' country. This immediately encourages organisations which require high levels of encultured knowledge from the start to shy away from recent migrants. Secondly, tacit knowledge transfers tend to be articulated through informal social meetings (Ipe 2003: 349) – a process which requires a high level of encultured knowledge (Williams 2007: 42; see also Beaverstock 2005: 263 - 4). This is often made more difficult for migrant employees because of pervasive discourses of 'otherness', producing social distance and differentiation which provide obstacles to encultured knowledge acquisition (Williams, *ibid*).

***Commentary – Relationality, scale and the dynamism of context:***

Williams illustrates that the interrelations between international migration and knowledge take place on a number of levels. Furthermore, to deal with just one of these levels is to ignore that what happens on each stage of the hierarchy affects what takes place elsewhere – for example, a change in immigration legislation would change workplace relations and, equally, changes in discourses and practices at that level have effects that percolate upwards – therefore each conceptual level is not set

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<sup>64</sup> The possibility of the theoretical separation of the economic from the social – the workplace from the household – depends on how deeply you consider the former to be embedded in the later. For an economist working from a conventional neo-classical perspective, the economy is largely independent of the social (at least for modeling purposes), whilst for an economic anthropologist, the economy is simply another expression of the social, albeit one that has a significant structural effect on the way people live their lives. From either point of view, however, there are valid methodological grounds for focusing on the workplace in this case, whilst retaining an awareness that these are not bounded entities.

but is constantly in an iterative relationship with other levels. But what should this mean for *this* study? On the one hand the answer is already there; the region – the conceptual starting point for this particular research – is already included in Williams' typology. Therefore, the task would be to ensure that a regional level analysis would 'take on' the roles of the national level on the one hand and the local, workplace, context on the other. However, I would argue that the relationship between 'knowledge' and international migration is not best analysed at the regional level *in this instance*. I have already argued that the commonest proxy for 'knowledge' – skills – is poorly quantified through current approaches and, therefore, that a much more proximate and local approach is needed to reconsider these concepts. Therefore, the task steps down a 'level' to the workplace (and beyond), and the challenge becomes interrogating the ways the national and regional interject in (and, to a less apparent degree, are affected by) local practices. However, this is always a challenge; is it possible to ascertain what is a local affect and what is a national or regional effect? Perhaps it is necessary to revisit our conception of scale and the relations between various phenomena present.

To do this I shall return to the concept of the region. The region is important in this research because, on the most elementary level, it is co-sponsored by a regional organisation – the South West Regional Development Agency (South West RDA, or SWRDA). SWRDA is one of nine regional authorities in England, established to manage the development (primarily conceived in economic terms) of the Government Office Regions (GORs) of England, through the administration of national and European Union (EU) development funds. It therefore retains a concern in the regional contingency of this research – the original title of the research (or, at least the ESRC CASE award) was 'International migration, knowledge transfer and the *regional* skills gap' – and therefore, I feel, it is necessary to problematise this concept of the region in order to understand its role more fully.

'Traditionally' the 'region' in geography has been seen as a 'bordered power container' (Giddens 1985: 120), a smaller version of the nation-state and similarly invested with the rights to legitimate violence. They exist in a hierarchically scaled environment, with the nation-state at its pinnacle, with each level providing the one below with its legitimacy. Thus the region becomes a mid-point of analysis, an articulation between the micro and the macro, the local and the national/global. However, it is constantly being challenged from all 'levels'; manipulated and undermined by the controlling interests of the national state (see, e.g. Goodwin, Jones, and Jones 2005), and threatened with usurpation by developments that escape from the 'local', such as globalising economies and

trans-national communities. It is these latter processes – so redolent of the post-modern, global era – that have really forced us to reconsider our notion of the region; if we live in a globalised world, where even the role of the nation-state is undermined and threatened by deterritorialized practices, then what of such (relatively) flimsy strata as regions? One way to answer this is to argue that the region exists because we act as though it exists; that is, it is *performed* through agencies such as the South West RDA. Regions therefore depend on the recognition of their legitimacy by other actors, in the form of the mechanics of political representation (through Regional Assemblies and regional level MEPs for instance) and distributive governance (though bodies such as the RDAs). Furthermore, these regional bodies require something to do in order to have an effect and, therefore, become actualised. For example, without a remit to manage the distribution of EU and national development funds and to develop Regional Economic Strategies, RDAs would become impotent. In this sense, the South West is not a 'natural' entity, but becomes actualised through the everyday practices and discourses of an assemblage of relationships – political, economic, social and cultural (Allen and Cochrane 2007) – that have evolved through historical processes of chance encounters and accidental interactions (Legendijk 2007).

So what does a conceptualisation of the region as essentially relational mean? I would argue that this provides us with an emergent mechanics of how effects on different 'levels' interact to produce something – in this case the South West region. However, this at once exists (in that it is physically embodied in agencies such as the SWRDA) and threatens to vanish forever (in that it is constantly usurped by other site-specific conceptualisations). Likewise, the hierarchically-constituted relationships between 'levels', such as the nation-state, the region, and the workplace or neighbourhood, are always at risk from networks that spread out horizontally and transcend hierarchical boundaries (such as trans-national formations) and, more profoundly, relationships that threaten to do away with scalar ontologies all together (see, e.g. Marston, Jones III, and Woodward 2005). Furthermore, in such a conceptualisation, we cannot assume the existence of the region (or any other way of organising space) as an *a priori* category; rather we must allow such 'site ontologies' to emerge in the course of our research. In this way, '... what exists is always a manifold of interacting sites that emerge within unfolding event-relations that include, of course, relations of force from inside and outside the site' (Escobar 2007: 109). The region, therefore, like any other social organisation, or geographical imagining, is always dependent on context; it is not an essence, but an assemblage (DeLanda 2006), one that is both materialised through the practices of agencies such as the South West RDA and vanishes in activities that transcend and undermine its activities. It

flickers in and out of existence in the blinking of an eye.

For the purposes of this research, therefore, the idea of a region (as with a number of other ways of organising the world geographically) both does and doesn't matter. At times, it becomes a significant factor in the lives of those I interviewed, at other times it is not a conception that people regard as important (or even consider at all). What matters more (or, rather, what is more universally understood) is the relevance of context; what we do is conditioned by where we do it, and what we do conditions the site we do it in. Furthermore, these contexts, these sites, are dynamic; they change with us and we change with them. Therefore, the conceptual relevance of a certain ontology of space and place is an emergent phenomenon. The region matters here because it matters to one of the bodies that fund this research *but* whether it matters to (and is materially or conceptually present for) those I interview is yet to be ascertained.

#### **AFTERWORD – THE DYNAMICS OF CONTEXT:**

In this chapter I have begun to move from the theoretical understandings of the subject explored in Chapter 1 to a more contextual conceptualisation of the research issues. This has been achieved through an analysis of some secondary statistical data sets that allowed me to build up a broad picture of international migration to the South West and to draw out some initial hypotheses about the type of migrants coming to the region – their age, gender, employment status and so on. This, of course, was only a partial unveiling of a complex situation, but it did allow for some initial positioning of the research; to give some idea of what issues I needed to explore in more detail in my own empirical study. Primary amongst these was the predominance of what appeared to be a significant in-flow of young men and women and from the Accession States (particularly Poland) who appeared to be working in low-wage employment in traditionally low-status occupations. Considering this data and the arguments I made in this and the previous chapter about the need to view *all* migrants as knowledgeable, rather than concentrating only on those conventionally designated as 'high-skilled', it seems vital for me to include these workers in my analysis. Indeed, considering that they appear to make up the vast majority of international migrants to the South West and cover the exact age range the region has traditionally 'lost' to London and the South East of England, their potential benefits to encouraging 'knowledge transfer' and filling 'skills gaps' in the area they represent certainly seem worth further investigation. However, to contextualise their

experiences of knowing, working and migrating in and out of the region, it is also useful to compare this to those in more conventionally 'high-skilled' roles. This is useful both to highlight the differences and similarities in the functioning of the migrant knowledge economy across occupational hierarchies, but also to allow a comparison with pre-existing literatures, which have almost exclusively focused on those in high-skilled roles.

The second goal of this chapter was to critically engage with debates about the putative regional skills gap and to begin to ask how this should be interpreted in this instance. Essentially, this meant introducing a new problematic into the research; skills, like knowledge in Chapter 2, are not simple, bounded or easily moveable entities. Their existence is fluid and often ethereal, 'coming-to-be' in different formations depending on an array of different contextual factors. Indeed, there is some value in conflating skill and knowledge in the embodied vision of 'knowing-in-the-world' as explored in the previous chapter. However, there is a current and on-going discourse about 'skills' that permeates the bureaucratic regulation of both international migration and labour markets. For example, the UK has in recent years introduced a 'points-based' system to encourage the movement of those defined as highly skilled (by the quantitative measures used) to the UK. Equally, there is a continued emphasis on encouraging transferable skills and 'up-skilling' the workforce in the rationales of many regional and national education providers. To be *seen* as highly skilled can, however, be enormously beneficial to both individuals and organisations. However, the problematisation of these discourses on skills (and knowledge economies) I made earlier require that this subject should be approached with great care in the substantive research; it becomes necessary to challenge how and why we differentiate between 'highly-skilled' and other migrants and to investigate how skills and knowledge play out in practice in this particular context.

The final role of this chapter was to question the very notions of scale, locality and context themselves and to reassess exactly how to relate to and comprehend phenomena which occur on a number of different levels. Each of the preceding points required an understanding of the context of a situation. However, this context alters across time and is influenced not only by the dynamic interplay of different statutory or regulatory factors across a range of scales, but also by the everyday interactions of people 'on the ground'. To paraphrase the quote from the Nobel winning Astrophysicist Alfred Wheeler, with which I began this chapter, there is no 'out there' to be revealed, rather our every action acts to create our reality; 'we are not only observers, we are participators' (Wheeler c. Brian, 1995: 12). In the forthcoming chapter I explore how I went about attempting to

study this fluid reality in an attempt to find some 'answers' to the questions raised in this and the preceding chapter.



*Chapter 4*

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**Methods:**

**On the complex work of researching migration**

*Things add up and they don't. They flow in linear time and they don't. And they exist within a single space and escape from it. That which is complex cannot be pinned down. To pin it down is to lose it.*

(Mol and Law 2002: 21)

In this chapter I intend to discuss the methods used and the experiences gained in carrying out the research which came to form the substantive element of this thesis. In this sense, I will attempt to present my rationale for using my chosen methods and to explore how these may have affected the 'results' I gained, just as 'I' (as a composite of assumptions, bias, theoretical readings, socialised embodiments and so on) will have had an impact on how those methods 'worked.' In this sense, I am seeking to present a reflexive account of my research, as well as to defend my methods as logical and coherent in themselves. But more than this, I also want to write about the impact of what went wrong, didn't work properly, malfunctioned or failed to get off the ground. In this way, I hope to do justice to the complexity of the subject I seek to research. I did not *know* my subject when I began – and I still don't – so I inevitably made mistakes – 'wrong' approaches, 'incorrect' methods, unworkable plans – but these were not simply failures. They were, in their own way, as *productive* as my putative successes (i.e. the ones that led to interviews and real data and stuff I could write about). Though it did not feel like it in those long months of the spring of 2008 as I searched impotently to get someone to talk to me, that time revealed something about the topology, the structuring, the landscape of my subject. What exactly it was revealing was not always clear – indeed much of it still isn't – but it still matters. There is a tendency in academic writing to present stories of research, including the methods that produced these tales, as unproblematic, as if the nascent academic merely sets off on their methodological travels with a clear eye to what they want and how to get it, and returns triumphant bearing the gilded trophy of truth (see, e.g. Rosaldo 1989: 45). Perhaps this is a

little unfair, a rank over-dramatisation. Maybe it's better to borrow a quote from Annemarie Mol and John Law about the complex, the multiple and the messy:

*The texts that carry academic stories tend to organize phenomena bewildering in their layered complexity into clean overviews. They make smooth schemes that are more or less linear, with a demonstrative or an argumentative logic in which each event follows the one that came before. What may originally have been surprising is explained and is therefore no longer surprising or disturbing. Academic texts may talk about strange things, but their tone is always calm.*

(Mol and Law 2002: 3)

So what to do instead? If I am not to write calmly about strange things - or at least things that did not work, or make sense – am I to write hysterically? Perhaps not, but I certainly do not think that it is wise to ignore these elements of my research entirely. Instead I shall seek to explain the role these experiences played in *my* understanding (however partial) of the subject I was addressing. This will inherently be an unfinished process for there is no end; my subject matter does not begin and end with this thesis; it lives its life beyond me, beyond all of its participants, beyond any logic I impose on it. All I can do is to tell part of the story; something that makes sense, at least for now.

I shall therefore spend this chapter discussing the 'story' – or, perhaps more accurately a story – of the research, attempting to explain the whys, whats and hows of the project, including the 'messy' parts which didn't quite work. In addition I shall cover questions regarding how I then attempted to 'make sense' of it all, through processes of analysis, including writing.

### **THE STORY OF THE RESEARCH:**

Looking back over the research I carried out for this project and trying to make sense of it is an oddly uncomfortable experience. Do I attempt to craft an apparently coherent and logical explanation of the methods used? Or do I write the period of research as a chaotic and emergent naturalistic phenomenon? In truth, I do not feel inclined to follow either of these logics; the former would be to indulge in post-hoc rationalisations of something that never unfurled in such a clear-cut manner. Equally, neither is the latter a satisfactory explanation of how I approached the project; it

was not naturalistic in the sense that the only research questions were inductive and iterative, rather than deductive and pre-ordained. Rather – I suspect like the majority of people carrying out social research – my investigation was both somewhat accidental – in that my careful worked out and justified plan of research did not happen anything like I had originally conceived it – *and* somewhat contrived – in that I approached my subject, and thus my methods, with a plan to allow me to ask certain questions. Now, whilst I do not believe that this is to damn my approach as fuzzy-minded or of having weak methodological foundations – though you may disagree – I do think that a careful exposition of how I went about attempting to gather ‘data’ for this research does shed a considerable amount of light on the subject itself. Therefore, in this section I shall attempt to outline the unfolding process of my research and, moreover, to try to write something about why I made the decisions I did and what effect those choices may have had on the rest of the thesis. Whilst, I happily admit that I will be unable to provide an account to satisfy every reader, I do hope that the following discussion sheds light on the, often hidden, mechanics of the research process and, furthermore, goes some way to explaining *why* this matters.

### *An ‘obvious’ beginning:*

In the previous chapter I outlined the current arguments surrounding the topics of concern to this research and raised a number of questions that I felt needed to be addressed. To a significant degree this reflects the work of the first year or so of my PhD and, therefore, can also be taken as an indication of where I was at the beginning of the part of the story we are now concerned with. Here, my ‘job’ was, conventionally, to select the ‘best’ methods to answer the questions previously raised. Now, I was never very comfortable with the idea of simply forwarding these questions as hypotheses to be tested by rigorous (and rational) empirical research. There were two closely connected reasons for this that may be constructive to outline here.

The first can perhaps be considered to be somewhat autobiographical. I had received my academic training in social anthropology, a discipline traditionally associated with a methodological persuasion that argues that to impose pre-ordained hypotheses on to a research subject (especially one, as here, from another ‘culture’) was fundamentally to presuppose the answers that may be given. Therefore, whilst we may take an awareness of certain areas of interest to the ‘field’ – what Malinowski calls

‘foreshadowed problems’ (2007[1922]: 9) - the development of analytic categories *throughout* the research process allows for the continual checking of pre-conceived ideas against the observed situation and the concurrent adaptation of our understanding of the research problem. In this way, data analysis in ethnography is an on-going, reflexive and iterative process. Ideally this takes the form of a spiral eventually narrowing to a point (the research problem), allowing the researcher to check increasingly specific theories and analytic categories against observed data and triangulating observations through methods such as respondent verification, a change in setting or participants, or even direct participation in an environment. In this sense, there is no discrete period of analysis in ethnographic research, rather the analytical period begins prior to fieldwork and extends right through the process of writing. Therefore, analysis is not simply a matter of testing a pre-ordained hypothesis against available ‘facts’ – as in a positivist model of social research – but, rather, such a process is on-going and iterative.

The second reason I felt unable to take a classically positivist approach to testing hypotheses was that the arguments I had developed in the early part of my research – my ontological and epistemological assumptions – meant that such an approach would be profoundly at odds with this theoretical stance. Therefore, I needed to find an approach which allowed me to ask the questions I wished to in a way that made sense in terms of the ‘logic’ of my argument.

The ‘obvious’ solution was to take an ethnographic approach – this would allow me to explore my ‘foreshadowed problems’ in context and in an iterative and reflexive manner. Indeed, this was the method of research I presented in my ‘upgrade’ report towards the end of my first year; I was to do a pair of industrial ethnographies exploring the interrelations between international migration, knowledge and work in two sectors of interest – one was to be in aerospace<sup>65</sup>, the other in marine engineering and ship-building (two areas of industrial importance in the South-West). These ethnographies were to cross-cut the organisations I studied, looking at the ‘lived experiences’ of workers throughout the organisation (or at least in a good spread of roles) – from ‘high-skilled’ or knowledge-intensive jobs in design, advertising and sales, to more manual jobs, on process-lines and the ship-yard. However, whilst this approach was ‘obvious’ it was by no means an easy option. Indeed, it was to be significantly more difficult than I had anticipated.

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<sup>65</sup> I provided a number of reasons to explain my rationale for focusing on aerospace in my ‘upgrade’ report. These are included in Appendix 1.

### *Complications:*

Whilst I had been busily reading everything I could find on the subjects that would form the research project, I had also been contacting organisations who I hoped would be able to provide me with the access required in order to carry out my ethnographic research. This was in some ways a relatively arbitrary process; I sent letters or e-mails to as many organisations in the industry areas I was focussing on and then followed these up with 'phone-calls. I was aware of having to get past organisational 'gate-keepers', so I 'pitched' my research to suggest it would have been of benefit to the organisation concerned (I genuinely hoped it would be). Most of the firms I spoke to politely (but firmly) turned me down – a few did so less politely – whilst a couple showed some tentative interest. However, as I waited for a definitive answer from first one part of the organisation then another, it became increasingly clear that it was going to require a major stroke of luck to be able to do this. For the nature of organisations I was approaching meant that I needed a number of people to accept my presence for access to be granted. Just one person feeling uncertain about an unknown researcher 'sticking their nose in' was likely to deliver a resounding filibuster to my proposal. In the end, what I got wasn't a definite 'no', but a seemingly endless supply of uncertainties; over exactly what I wanted to do, when I might be able to do it and who could provide the relevant permissions, until, painfully late and with a sinking heart, I realised I would have to abandon this approach all together.

Parallel to this, as I became more aware of the potential of this tactic to fail, I was approaching *any* organisation in the region that I was aware employed a significant number of migrants, at first enquiring after the possibility of gaining access to do ethnographic research or, should this fail, a series of interviews with staff and managers. These approaches were possibly even less successful than the first; of the forty organisations I approached, just 8 were willing to indulge in even initial discussions; of those, three provided me with access to staff and managers, whilst at one other I was able to get an interview with a manager but not the staff members. Furthermore, even when I could gain access to the staff members, very few people would agree to talk to me<sup>66</sup>. Quite apart from the mounting panic I was now feeling – I was, at this stage, some way into my second year – this

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<sup>66</sup> The one notable exception to this rule was amongst University academics, who were very quick to respond to enquiries and over-whelming positive to the point where I actually had to apologise to people for not being able to interview them. A rare occurrence during this research!

situation begged two important questions; firstly, why was it so difficult to gain the relevant interviews and/or access to do ethnographic research – was it a) a problem of approach, or b) was this indicative of something more profound, something which could in itself shed some light on the questions I had earlier raised? Secondly, as it was now too late to carry out a conventional ethnography – apparently the ‘right’ way to ask the questions I wished to investigate – how was I to go about gaining the relevant data? Whilst the former question was one that, at that point, I was relatively ill-equipped to deal with, the latter was something that I could at least begin to engage with.

*Readjustments:*

Such a change in direction is never a decision to be taken lightly; it alters both the nature of the information gained, but also what we might call the geography of method – the spaces and places of interactions with the people and things you are hoping to study. These changes will, in turn, inevitably effect what you eventually ‘write up’. Methods are not merely the mechanics of research, they are integral to the entire project; delimiting what we see and what we do not, how relationships are built and what questions are answered. However, despite my reservations – and, I have to admit, no little emotional attachment to the idea of doing an ethnography, the traditional rite of passage of the Anthropologist (see, e.g. Coleman and Collins 2006) – this was an unavoidable necessity. However, during the ethnographic period I had also been planning to do a series of more formal semi-structured interviews to provide a space where ‘informants’ – for the want of a better term – could reflect on their own experiences of migration, work and, most testingly, of ‘knowing-in-the-world’. Furthermore, I was aware that the complexity of what I wanted to discuss had the potential to be confusing and alienating. Therefore, I had already investigated ways to set-up these interviews along lines which I hoped allowed participants to discuss these issues without dealing with them ‘head-on’. These alone, I felt, held the possibility to reveal *something* about the subjects of concern (if not the *same* thing as would have been illustrated using another method). However, before I discuss this further, it is necessary to expand a little on the idea of biographic-narrative interviewing and the way one interpretation of this was utilised in this project.

*Telling tales – Introducing biographic and narrative approaches:*

As with any method in social science research, there are a smorgasbord of different ‘flavours’ of biographic and narrative techniques available for consumption by the interested academic (see, e.g. Clandinin and Connelly 1998; Denzin 1989; Manning and Cullum-Swan 1998; and especially, Roberts 2002 for overviews). In fact, the variation is astonishingly vast; ranging from autobiographies of situated positionality, through structural and semiotic analyses of the significance of a narrative, to psycho-analytical approaches to uncovering ‘meaning’ behind tacit or taken-for-granted actions and experiences. Each of these approaches is built on a series of methodological, ontological and epistemological conceptualisations which make their output (and, very often, their methods) very different indeed<sup>67</sup>. Whilst I do not have the space to discuss these in depth here, there follows a brief introduction to the academic evolution of biographic and narrative approaches to social research, before attention is given to why a particular variant of a ‘biographic-narrative’ approach to interviewing is utilised in this research.

The use of biographic and narrative approaches in social research has a longer history than is sometimes assumed; they have long been tools in the cannon of researchers working from an interpretive social research background. The seeds of such an approach can be found in the work of Max Weber and particularly in his concept of *verstehen*. For Weber (2001), the world did not exist as it did simply because of mechanical processes, but was also formed by human actions. These were neither pre-defined nor determined solely by technological, economic or environmental influences. Furthermore, for Weber this implied that they could not be understood simply by the application of positivist scientific method – which simply dealt with the *appearance* of things and not their *meaning* to individuals or groups of humans. Instead, what was needed was a method that allowed the researcher to understand both the intention and the social context of human action for, as Weber notes in *Economy and Society*, this new sociology was ‘...concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences’ (1978: 4).

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<sup>67</sup> This diversity in itself provokes a certain amount of anxiety regarding the use of the term ‘biographic-narrative’ to describe the approach I utilise here. However, on one level at least, I feel it provides a useful signpost to what I hope to achieve and, therefore, I shall tentatively retain this imperfect descriptor for the purposes of this essay.

Through the work of influential anthropologists and sociologists, such as Talcott Parsons and the 'Chicago school' in the US and Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown in the UK, Weber's view of an interpretive social science came to find methodological expression through embedded qualitative research that sought to understand the lived reality of individuals through a variety of sources including the collection of biographies and narratives (Kuper 1996).

However, whilst broadly 'anti-positivist' interpretive social researchers embraced methods including biographic, narrative and 'life history' approaches, many social *scientists* continued to follow a more positivist route, holding firm to a hypothetico-deductive model that, as Becker (1970) has noted, did not view life stories as providing sufficient 'answers' to satisfy such an approach. It was not, therefore, until wider social science was faced with a broad 'cultural turn' that biographic and narrative approaches entered the mainstream.

The 'cultural turn' is generally used to refer to a crisis in the humanities and social science in regards to the nature and ethics of the 'scientific' representation of society. It is often associated with the growth in influence of post-structuralism and cultural studies and a movement towards understanding *meaning* and away from political or economic *appearances*. Whilst its origins and courses were not as clear-cut as is sometimes presented, the 'cultural turn' did raise the profile of questions regarding the nature of representation in social research and the authority of the author that had been missing even from prior interpretive sociology and anthropology (Clifford & Marcus) and encouraged a turn towards a viewing society as a text - through Derrida's textual deconstructions and Foucault's analysis of discourse. This, in turn, led to a crisis of method, for abandoning the grand narratives of positivist science for the multiplicity, diversity and fluidity of individual meanings and actions implied a new set of methods was needed. For many researchers, biographic and narrative approaches seemed a logical choice:

*The appeal of biographic research is that exploring, in diverse methodological and interpretive ways, how individual accounts of life experience can be understood within contemporary cultural and structural settings and is therefore helping to chart major societal changes that are underway, but not merely at some broad social level. Biographic research has the important merit of aiding the task of understanding major social shifts, by including how new experiences are interpreted by individuals within families, small groups and institutions.*

(Roberts, 2002: 5).

Thus biographic methods presented an opportunity to 'hear the voices' of the individual, to



undermine the authority of the academic, to understand the world-views of the oppressed, marginalised or deviant. The breadth of political, philosophical and methodological drivers as to why researchers adopt biographic and narrative approaches has inevitably led to an array of, often very different, methods in this area. Presenting an overview of these approaches is not worthwhile here, instead, the following paragraphs attempt to explore the nuances behind the decision to utilise a certain form of biographic narrative in this research, and to illustrate what that method consisted of.

As I outlined in the previous chapter(s), I wanted to talk about embodied and lived realities, on-going and fluid experiences of working, migrating and knowing. These were not factors outside the immediate reality of those to whom I wished to talk. To approach such topics analytically and to ask interviewees to make sense of such complex matters directly and immediately seemed ludicrous. To approach an edifice so overwhelming vast and apparently inaccessible appeared, at best, off-putting, let alone to require people to climb and conquer it – to force these issues to make sense. If this wasn't reason enough to think carefully about how to encourage people to engage with the topics in which I was interested, to ask questions about such issues directly was surely to construct the interviews in such a way that my own reasonings, a priori assumptions and etic<sup>68</sup> categorisations would delimit the range of possible responses. Therefore, an approach was needed which allowed participants to explore their experiences of working, migrating and knowing without placing restrictions on how these were understood or talked about. A biographic-narrative approach to interviewing appeared to allow this on a number of levels:

Firstly, it enables the development of emic structures for making sense of individual narratives. To understand this, we need to comprehend two related points; firstly, narratives can be seen as a pre-existing way of making sense of the world and our relationship to it. Their expression may vary greatly due to pre-existing cultural formats, or diverse personal identifications (Gardner 2002: 31), but they arguably remain a fundamentally *human* way of interacting with the world<sup>69</sup>. Secondly, that

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<sup>68</sup> I use 'etic' here to refer to abstract, non-contextualised, or deductive interpretations proposed by the 'observer', as opposed to 'emic', which is used to refer to contextual, situated, and inductive interpretations as proposed by the 'observed' (Geertz 1983: 57).

<sup>69</sup> This, of course, is a somewhat controversial statement. The idea that narratives are somehow fundamentally human may appear an indefensible universalism (and one that is impossible to 'prove'), however, I will assume, for the purposes of this thesis, that, though narratives are culturally contextual and individually variable, they can be considered a common mode of communication – we all, if you like, tell stories.

they are structured in such a way that they illustrate the narrator's orientation toward, and evaluation of, an event or series of events (see, e.g. Labov 1972). They reveal this because all narratives are embedded within social and cultural idioms – they are at once explaining the world and performing it (Wiles, Rosenberg, and Kearns 2005: 90; McDowell 2004: 705). In this way, biographic and narrative approaches allow for talking about the 'lived experience' (Eastwood 2007) of the narrator, without presupposing the structure or content of the story. Indeed, the emergent format of that biography retains the potential to tell significantly more than merely relaying information; it speaks of 'ways of being' and 'taken-for-granted' assumptions that may not be forwarded explicitly but impact on what is deemed important and what is considered secondary, what is told and what is left unspoken; it tells us something about the tacit and the embodied, as much as the explicit and rational (Wengraf 2001: 116).

Indeed, this points us to our next proposition – that biographic and narrative approaches allow for the multiplication of the stories we hear as researchers. It can be argued that the emic and emergent structuring of such encounters means that each individual is able to develop the structure and content of their 'story' in regards to the issues under discussion. However, it also necessitates this process of multiplication. Because the biographies narrated are closely tied to provisional and fluid ways of understanding self and experience (McDowell 2004: 706), as well as embodied social and cultural ways of telling and conceptualising the world, they are often 'messy' and elusive (Bauer and Thompson 2004: 347; Gardner 2002: 33; Wiles, Rosenberg, and Kearns 2005: 92). Taking multiple biographic narratives allows for both the building up of a 'picture' of the issues and an ability to retain the complexity and messiness of the situation – a point to which I shall return later.

Furthermore, such approaches are a way of adding temporal and geographic depth to an analysis. They are ways of 'following the story', rather than analysing it in one specific context (Frändberg 2008); a point which connects directly to arguments forwarded about the need for studies of mobility and migration to move with their subjects (see, e.g. Clifford 1997; Hannerz 2006; Marcus 1995) in order to avoid presenting the objects of study as static and unchanging. Indeed narratives of migration can be seen as inherently temporal and geographic, as they consist of movement through space and time in the form of a physical displacement, to say nothing of social, cultural or psychological disjuncture. Indeed, these parallel themes in life-course and in migration (of movement and change, displacement and ongoing projects of sense-making) are explicitly present in

much literature, both in the academic sphere (see, e.g. Buttimer 1983; Gardner 2002) and in literary fiction (see, e.g. Ali 2003; Levy 2004; Naipaul 1988).

However, there are a number of additional factors that must be considered when following this sort of approach. To begin, narratives are always contextual. I mean this in two broad ways – firstly, they are affected by what we might describe as the immediate and external (that is, such things as the physical place of telling and proximal social dynamics) and, secondly, they are created in iterative response to on-going and largely internal factors (such as one's orientation towards oneself). This means that our stories change as our situation does, both in a prosaic sense of being in a new environment or social situation – an interview in a particular room with a particular person – but also in a more profound sense of being in an ever changing 'life-course', in which we are constantly striving to make sense of those 'strings of memories' (Ewing 1990) which inform who we are and how we relate to the world around us. Relatedly, we must also remain aware that narratives are expressed through cultural idioms, which may not always translate easily into our own styles of comprehending the world (see, e.g. Gardner 2002: 52-9). In combination with these contextual and cultural factors, it is also important to note the role of power and positionality; as Gardner (2002: 32) argues, '... the degree to which one can plot one's own life depends very much on the amount of power which one has over events, something that varies widely between individuals.' It is important to comprehend that such stories cannot be understood outside of the 'moment' in which they were produced, and that all the factors producing such a temporary assemblage cannot necessarily be directly ascertained from listening to a narrative in isolation (Bauer and Thompson 2004: 348; McDowell 2004: 708). However, we should not lose sight of the fact that this embeddedness is one of the most attractive elements of such an approach; it provides a semblance of multi-vocality and reflexivity in a process in which this is often missing.

### *Access revisited:*

Having settled on using a form of biographic-narrative interviewing for the purposes of the research, it was now necessary to search out potential interviewees. As I explored above, however, going directly through organisations seemed a route fraught with difficulties and barriers. Instead new avenues for getting in touch with international migrants to the South-West needed to be explored.

Here I encountered further difficulties which, as we shall see later, were somewhat instructive in themselves. The major points of this period of the research, however, are detailed below:

Seeking to gain an overview of the situation regarding international migrants in the region, I had already begun to get in touch with all the people who might have been able to assist. They in turn passed me on to other people with different perspectives or areas of knowledge, and so my contacts snowballed. This is a standard technique in social science research; it's what all my 'research methods' textbooks said I should do:

*The strength of this technique is that it helps researchers to overcome one of the main obstacles to recruiting interviewees, gaining their trust. It also allows the researcher to seek out more easily interviewees with particular experiences or backgrounds.*

(Valentine 1997: 116)

However, there was one problem with this; the people who I was getting in contact with did not include a large section of those who I had explicitly set out to talk to – namely international migrants working in low-skilled roles. Indeed, remarkably few of these initial contacts were anything other than British. Whilst these community workers, local and regional government employees, trade unionists and the odd employer were more than happy to talk about 'the migrants,' it seemed nobody could provide any access. Frustratingly, I seemed to be cut off from those who I wished to talk to by an invisible wall. I'm not arguing here that I had no contact with 'migrant workers' during this period; every day we would encounter each other – they served me when I went to the supermarket, drove the bus that took me to University when it rained, lectured to me when I arrived. We walked the same streets, visited the same places and did many of the same things. Everyone I spoke seemed to know *of* them, but no-one *knew* them, or at least no-one I had yet found. Why was this the case? What could be done about it?

First of all, it was not *all* international migrants I was having difficulty contacting; having decided to interview University academics in order to have a sample of what may conventionally be described as 'knowledge workers', I encountered no problems recruiting a handsome number of them. A polite e-mail request provided me with a sample of 13 interviewees from a range of disciplines within a few days, and nearly as many who would have been happy to be included had I needed to

speak to them. Whilst this may simply be seen as an indication of the ‘natural’ inclination of the average academic to welcome any change to talk about themselves for an interrupted period of time – or, less cynically, their keenness to assist ‘one of their own’ – it did not seem to me to be a satisfactory explanation in itself. Instead, I turned to the small number of people I knew who had regular contact with international migrants in job roles that could be considered low-skilled. Why, I asked, would nobody talk to me? The responses were instructive; ‘they do not know you’ I was told ‘and they are not confident talking to you in English. Anyway, they would be suspicious of why you wanted to talk to them’<sup>70</sup>. These are classic problems in participant-observation and ethnography; for example, the anthropologist Clifford Geertz has written about spending an extended period of time being ignored by his Balinese hosts, before they came to accept his presence and he was granted access to their world (1973: 412-13). However, because of the delays I had already encountered, I did not have months to spare. Neither, did there seem to be any obvious location I could go to make myself more visible<sup>71</sup> to gain the trust I required. Sadly, I would need another way.

It occurred to me that this other way could be found whilst simultaneously solving another problem I had – that potential interviewees were being put off by having to be interviewed in English. The solution seemed suddenly obvious – ask some contacts who happened to combine running an organisation supporting international migrants (in this case Polish people), with being qualified community translators. They had the contacts *and* they could conduct the interviews in the language of the majority of migrant workers in the area. Plus they had recently completed their own research project, so had some idea of how such a process worked. As an added bonus both had worked in the kind of ‘low-skill’ role that I was hoping to investigate in this part of the project. Money of course would be an issue, but, thanks to my ESRC award, I had enough in my research pot to pay for their help. Within hours of broaching the topic with first my supervisors, and then my contacts – Agnieszka and Caroline – I had a response. Yes, they would be able to help and yes they would be happy to do so. The terms of the agreement (see Appendix 2) were for Agnieszka and Caroline to contact potential interviewees following the parameters given, to then carry out the interviews in Polish, and, finally, to translate and transcribe these, before returning the original recordings and the transcribed data to me. In turn, I would provide them with an interview schedule (see Appendix 3)

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<sup>70</sup> These are generalised responses based on my field notes during conversations with three informants on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February and the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2008.

<sup>71</sup> In retrospect there were such places. However, I was not yet aware of them, nor would such a process have been a matter of simply *being* there. As Geertz’s experience in Bali illustrates, presence is nothing without rapport – ‘that mysterious necessity of anthropological research’ (1973: 416).

and spend an afternoon with them discussing how to carry out biographic-narrative style interviews. Additionally, I would 'sit in' on the first few interviews to provide feedback on technique and context. This seemed to be to everyone's satisfaction and Agnieszka and Caroline seemed more than confident of getting the required number of interviewees<sup>72</sup>. A 'way in' had been found, however far it seemed from my original plan.

*Biographic-narrative interviews revisited – reflections on context:*

With interviews arranged and a method set up to carry them out, all that was left to do was to put them into practice. There were, of course, still a handful of issues left to deal with in practice and it is to these I shall turn in this section. In doing so I shall explore a number of issues that emerged during the period of interviews (some universal, others more specific to certain cases) whilst also discussing what effects such things had – or, perhaps more accurately, may have had – on the research:

First some context; there were broadly two sets of interviews I carried out during the project (with a further set carried out by Agnieszka and Caroline) and all were, to a degree, set up to induce a broadly 'narrative' approach to the interview. Whilst each interview was subtly different in practice – a point I shall return to in the following chapter – there were enough cross-cutting similarities within these four 'sets' to make it worthwhile briefly delineating them. Alongside these introductions, I shall use this opportunity to put into context some practical and theoretical issues that these interviews raised<sup>73</sup>.

Community Workers (4 interviews):

The first set of interviews I carried out were with a group of people I have taken to calling 'community workers' – it's not necessarily what they would call themselves, nor is it explicitly what

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<sup>72</sup> Interviewees were contacted by Agnieszka and Caroline through a 'snowballing' technique, starting with contacts at a local 'Polish' Sunday school and community organisation.

<sup>73</sup> Whilst I use particular 'sets' of interviews to raise questions about context, their relevance goes beyond the group under discussion. In the following chapters, the 'community worker' is conflated with the 'low-skilled worker' group as the commonality of experience and backgrounds meant it was more informative to discuss them together. However, in terms of the context of interviews, they were notably different.

their job titles are, but it is (as I will explain later) representative of a commonality between them. These interviews took place, exclusively, in public spaces – in cafés and coffee shops – and all were conducted in English. Additionally, whilst we were discussing individual experiences, they often swung between talking about such personal matters and discussing ‘migrants’ in general and, in doing so, moved from a very personal and subjective narrative format towards an official form of ‘work’ talk that indicated their position as a representative of the ‘migrant’ to the local ‘non-migrant’ community. In this sense, they were extremely comfortable talking about such things as migration, work and knowledge; it was, to a lesser or greater degree, their ‘job’. They were both embedded in the world of bureaucracy and its related terms – where ideas of ‘migrant workers,’ ‘knowledge transfer’ and ‘community cohesion’ were everyday, tripping off the tongue as readily as the most exhausted of clichés<sup>74</sup>. Therefore, their narratives were often dual, switching between an ‘official’ representation and a personal one. Indeed, for some the conjunction of these two stories brought them into conflict – arguing one point in one idiom, but finding this made their own experience, or official line, incoherent. Indeed, this multiplication of stories *within* narratives is an issue that repeats regularly across the interviews and is illustrative of an important point that is relevant across all the ‘stories’ discussed in this research; that narrative identities are developed in a number of different realms (Loseke 2007: 662) *and* they can exist separately within a particular idiom, without ever necessarily being mutually coherent (Ewing 1990). Therefore, it is important to note that the cultural embeddedness of a narrative approach does not lead to the authoring of a single systematic account in each interview, but a multiplex of different ones, sometimes working together, sometimes in direct opposition. These strings of narrative identity reveal some of the influence of context in biographic narrative interviews; that is, depending on the role being narrated by the interviewee, the story will change.

#### Academics (13 interviews)

The second set of interviews were conducted with University academics at a university in the South-West of England which I shall henceforth call Wessex University. These interviews covered academics in a number of different disciplines and across a range of roles, ages, nationalities and

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<sup>74</sup> Intriguingly, in the latter idiom, ‘migrants’ were almost exclusively referred to as ‘they’, despite all the women I spoke to in this category having been born and raised overseas.

genders<sup>75</sup>. Interviews were carried out at the chosen venue of the interviewee – in practice, a campus coffee shop or the academic's office.

Whilst carrying out this set of interviews I became increasingly aware that these conversations were subtly different to those I had conducted previously. This was not just a matter of content – though their experiences were quite different from the other migrants to whom I was speaking – it was also a matter of the 'tone' of some of the interviews. Pondering on this, I came to the conclusion that the intangible character I had detected was a sort of conversational distance, an 'official-ness.' Whilst this often dissipated after we had relaxed into the interview, it did on a few occasions remain, giving the interviews a stilted and artificial edge. This is relevant in a number of ways; firstly, there is the matter of inter-personal dynamics, that delicate ballet of social and cultural norms, somatic actions and linguistic devices that affects how we relate to each other. The ways those I was talking to perceived me, how they wished for me to see them, and the tacit hints I gave regarding my own orientation towards them<sup>76</sup>, all came into play regarding what was said and what was not. Though it is *their* stories that are being told, *I* do not disappear from the equation; for what was told in these encounters was expressed in the context of a (semi-official) interview. Therefore, the dynamics between interviewer and interviewee – or, ideally, narrator and listener – is crucial to what is told. My age, gender and other roles – revealed, embodied, presumed or otherwise – all have an effect (see, e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986; Ganga and Scott 2006; Malam 2004; Moser 2008; Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert 2008). However, this was the case in all of the interviews, not only with 'the academics.' What I was noticing in the form of a sense of 'official-ness' was certainly partly a matter of inter-personal context; I was a 'student,' a fellow academic, a researcher, and each of these roles suggested a slight alteration in what we might call the power dynamics of the situation. A relationship between a 'student' and a 'lecturer' is routinely one of pupil and teacher and an interview could be seen as attempting to subvert that relationship – it is a dangerous, liminal, space, where the normal relationship breaks down as the normally empowered academic is interrogated and questioned. Furthermore, by conducting such an experiment in that space where the 'official' role of the academic is most clearly performed – the office – makes such a protective reaction all the more

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<sup>75</sup> Selected demographic information on all the interviewees is included in Appendix 4.

<sup>76</sup> And, however much I tried to give the impression of being both approachable (someone you can talk to) and neutral (someone who is not going to judge you), I undoubtedly failed in this attempt to some degree. Whilst I agree that, 'after one's presentational self is 'cast' it leaves a profound impression on the respondents and has a great influence on the success (or failure) of the study' (Fontana and Frey 1998: 59), the process as I experienced it was both more iterative and relational than this would give credit for.



likely. Such an extreme reaction was, of course, not the norm, but it was a tacit (and somewhat confusing) power dynamic that certainly affected me and, I believe, was an issue for some of those I spoke to. Whilst, in retrospect, it is easy to argue that I should simply have avoided carrying out interviews in these venues, it is another illustration of the way seemingly prosaic decisions have a significant impact on the research process. The choice of venue for interviews was always that of the interviewee, so it was difficult to reject these arenas as the space to talk. However, this does suggest one of the elements to bear in mind when reading through this work; that what is told was, to some degree, defined by the social significance of *where* it was told.

‘Low-skilled’ workers (15 interviews):

My final set of interviews and my final points for consideration are in some ways rather particular. These were the interviews carried out by Agnieszka and Caroline with Polish workers in ‘low-skilled’ roles (though, as we shall discover, they are by no means ‘low-skilled’ people). They are peculiar because the majority of these interviews were not conducted in English, nor were they conducted by me. This raises two major points; firstly, there is the matter of translation (and, more broadly, the idea of ‘cultural’ and linguistic idioms of story-telling) and, secondly, there is the matter of reflexivity and the auto/ethnographic responses that feed into reflections on, and analyses of, biographic narrative interviews.

To deal with the former first, what language a narrative is presented in – and, by extension, the language in which an interview is conducted – will have an effect on what is provided (Temple 2008: 362). Language understood as a socially-embedded phenomenon can be seen to influence which narrative persona we might wish to present; for example, for an international migrant, the use of the language of the country they have migrated to may well represent something different – a cosmopolitanism or belonging, perhaps – than using the language of ‘home’ (see, e.g. Kazmierska 2003). Equally, language allows for the presentation of narrative in certain idioms, the evocative nature of which may be lost or confused when translated (Temple 2008: 357; see also Eco 2003)<sup>77</sup>. Furthermore, the translation of such a narrative in this context is dependent on a two-fold move,

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<sup>77</sup> Of course, conducting the interviews in English, or a mixture of English and my bad Polish, would have resulted in considerably more confusion and loss of information than through using translators. Thus we must also bear in mind the potentially liberating effect of expressing oneself in one’s own language, as well as focusing on translation as a barrier.

from the narrator to the interviewer then, through a translated text, the interviewer to the researcher. This means that we are dealing with a double layer of contextualization; not only is the narrator producing a 'story' within a context, for a particular imagined audience, but that 'story' is then translated in another context, for another imagined audience. As Temple argues, 'all translation is conditional... it depends on the context it is written within' (Temple 2006: 10), just as all narration is contextual and conditional. Therefore, we must ask questions regarding how this impacts on the research for, as Temple points out, '[w]ho translates matters' (Temple 2008: 362).

Indeed, these questions are closely related to the second point I outlined above – that of the interviews being conducted by someone else and the resultant loss of a direct reflexive or auto/ethnographic account of the context. Though I had a two-hour 'debrief' with Agnieszka and Caroline in which they outlined some of the tacit and unspoken issues they 'picked up' on during the interview, this did not replace the experience of 'being there,' of interacting with the person I was interviewing. However, the times I was present (to provide feedback and ensure there were no problems in the initial interviews), my role was so external and awkward – the interviewees and I could do nothing more than exchange heavily accented 'hello's and '*dziękuję*'s – that my presence became counter-productive to the carefully coordinated sense of informality and welcome that had been provided. Therefore, we must consider this (and, relatedly, the need for translation) a necessary sacrifice, for my only other realistic option in this research project was to abandon any hope of hearing the stories of international migrants in low-skilled roles, an option that I believe would have been more damaging than losing a direct reflective capacity on the context of the production of certain narratives. However, at the same moment, it is important to recognize that this happened; even if my ultimate decision was to continue with these interviews, I remain aware of the significance of this decision and its potential effects on the 'data' produced.

### *'Little stories' – Managing biographic-narrative interviews:*

Having outlined the main 'sets' of interviews that were carried out during the research period and some of the issues of methodology that these raised, it is also important to briefly note how these interviews were managed. This is done both to further illuminate the context in which these narratives were produced and also to consider how these constraints relate to wider notions of what

counts as a ‘proper’ biographic-narrative – rather than ‘just’ exchanging stories, or producing a ‘standard’ semi-structured interview.

I will begin with a short reflection on time. The interviews lasted somewhere between 23 and 97 minutes, that is a huge differential and one that undoubtedly has an influence over what is said. However, this was not merely a matter of talkative or non-talkative interviewees, it was also a reflection of when, where and how the interviews were carried out. I do not think it is simply by chance that the shortest interview was the first I carried out for this project (and the first time I had used a biographic-narrative approach), whilst the longest was one of the last. As I got more experienced, I got more proficient at ‘inducing’ narratives from my interviewees – I noticed as I transcribed the interviews that, the later it is in the research ‘cycle’, the less I say and the longer the narratives (these, I am sure, are related and I shall discuss this in more detail shortly). However, it is important to briefly return to the length of these interviews. Everyone I spoke to was limited in the amount of time they could spare me; therefore, in order to cover the aspects of their experiences I wished to explore, I had to ensure that these could be discussed in the given time-frame (normally an hour). To do this, I produced a lightly structured interview schedule – basically, a series of notes to myself (see Appendix 5). This, of course, necessitated an occasional directive impetus from me, encouraging the interviewee to think about a different aspect of their experience. In turn, this direction effects what is told – rather than stories solely about things the subject wished to talk about, the interviews became a series of ‘little narratives’ about the questions I raised, or points I encouraged the participant to consider. In this way, it becomes a succession of reflections on the part of the interviewee, determined partly by my schedule, but not controlled by it.

*How* I managed this precious balance between influencing a certain level of control over what was discussed and allowing the participant to expound their stories in their own way, is of course another matter, and one I shall now turn to. Interviewing is a dynamic process and getting people to talk about often difficult or confusing issues is always a challenge. It is also something that social researchers have become somewhat skilled at, even if they often do not transmit the *how* of this process in their finished books and articles. It is also a matter of experience; the more you do it the more effective you become. So I employed what I had previously learned in my research methods courses and read in books on interviewing and research. I tried to avoid leading questions (not always successfully) and to set up interviews in such a way that each participant was on an equal (not always possible) – avoiding sitting behind a desk, or at a higher level than the interviewee, keeping

my body language open and attentive. Finally, I attempted to reduce my directive involvement in the interview to a minimum. However, I could not simply sit there and say nothing until the interviewee began to discuss an issue of concern to them, as some psychoanalytic therapists do. Instead, I attempted to utilise a minimally directive approach to inducing a biographic-narrative, essentially based on Wengraf's (2001) notion of a Single Question aimed at Inducing Narrative (SQuIN). This is an approach to providing interviewees with a 'jumping-off' point to discuss a topic and then withdrawing as much as possible from the active creation of that narrative. As Wengraf notes the idea is to be, '*... a story facilitator*' (ibid: 122; italics in original)<sup>78</sup>, rather than a directive interrogator (ibid: 113).

In this way, what was produced in these interviews is perhaps better understood as 'little stories' about aspects of experience, rather than an attempt to produce a definitive biography or life-story (see also Ní Laoire 2000: 233). Additionally, as I have stressed previously, the context in which these stories were produced will affect their presentation. This both refers to the social and cultural elements I discussed previously and the 'mundane' matters of how, when and where an interview takes place.

### **MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL – REFLECTIONS ON METHOD:**

In this part of the chapter, I will turn my attention to some reflections on method which go beyond the descriptive analysis of 'the story of the research' included above. It includes three broad parts; a discussion of how the 'data' gathered through the research process is conceptualized and made coherent (or not); an exploration of the way reflexivity, positionality and an (partly unplanned) immersion in the subject related to the production of the thesis, and; finally, a discussion of ethics, representation and responsibility. These final reflections are important elements in understanding the *how* of the research and the way the information I utilise in future chapters was produced, understood and put into action.

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<sup>78</sup> Whilst I was influenced by Wengraf's conception of biographic narrative interviewing, I did not follow his SQuIN-BNIM model exactly (or even that closely), partly as a matter of some of the constraints I faced during the research, but also because the model is so rigorous and controlled that I did not feel comfortable blindly following such a process without fully understanding the philosophical and psychological logic behind it.

Once the literature review has been produced, research methods proposed and rationalised, problems faced and dealt with, data collected and the immediate impacts of these considered, there remains the issue of what to do with all this... stuff – this data and information, words and sentences, noise and silence. How do we go about making sense of it all? I have attempted to lay out how I went about getting this, so I think it is only reasonable and consistent to extend such a program to what I did next. This can be presented in three steps; first the interview ‘data’ was transcribed, next it was ‘coded’ and, finally, it was analysed. Each of these requires both some elucidation and critical interrogation.

### *Transcription:*

Each interview carried out was recorded on a digital voice recorder. Once the interview was over (and I had built up the will) I would transfer the interview – now living a sort of zombie half-life as a disembodied MP3 file – on to my computer (or Agnieszka or Caroline’s) and transcribed. In other words, I would listen back to the interview and attempt to turn it into a written document. This in itself implies an authorship. It is necessary to present what was said as it was said, but also to note the silences, the expressive non-words (laughter, ‘um’s and ‘er’s) and to recollect the *meaning* of things that are not always obvious – did that laugh imply amusement or nervousness? What was the meaning of that long pause, how do I ‘write’ it? Whilst I always strived to present an account of the interview that resembled the ‘reality’ (as I remembered it) as closely as possible, it was already necessary to begin to forward some interpretation of the situation; some translation of intent. If we follow Hannah Arendt’s dictum that, ‘[s]torytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it’ (1967: 105), then, through this process of transcription, these narratives are perhaps already becoming something other than stories, they are becoming an edited report, an interpretation, a translation.

### *'Coding,' or quantifying the qualitative?*

If the act of transcribing an interview is a move away from the story-as-told, then using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) programs – in this case NVivo 8 – to store, code and retrieve interview transcripts retains the potential to destroy it completely; to dismantle the contextual nature of the original narrative. Instead of a story viewed as a whole, it can become a series of detachable constituent parts that are presented without reference to the rest of the narrative. At worst, this may lead to the temptation to present qualitative data as if it is quantifiable – a series of occurrences ('codes') whose frequency and statistical spread can be presented as significant and insightful<sup>79</sup>. However, even with good intentions, the outcome of a '... reliance on code and retrieve techniques [can be] the loss of the many layers of meaning at which an interview operates' (Wiles, Rosenberg, and Kearns 2005: 90). If this is the case, then why use a CAQDAS system? If the effect is simply to rationalise and dismember a contextualised narrative then there should be no defence for employing such an approach. However, Janine Wiles and her co-authors were discussing the way such systems are *used*, rather than suggesting that using such programs produced this effect in themselves<sup>80</sup>. CAQDAS programs are a way of managing qualitative information and are now sophisticated enough to handle numerous ways of exploring that data. Though I agree with Wiles et al that there has been a tendency for researchers to be funnelled toward a certain way of looking at (and therefore understanding) 'data' because of the ease of retrieving chunks of information based on prior coding *without* reference to the context of that information, this is not an insurmountable problem. Firstly it seems to be based on an assumption that by using these programs researchers are inevitably using deductive thematic coding techniques, '... where the goal is to reduce the 'noise' surrounding key themes identified by the researcher' (ibid: 94). This was far from the case here. My motivation in using a CAQDAS program was at once functional – it is an excellent project management device, linking interview transcripts, field-notes and other files (such as the original recordings of interviews) – and analytical – it allows the researcher to make connections between multiple elements; to make connections *and* see things in

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<sup>79</sup> This kind of mechanical dismantling of narratives into their 'consistent parts' may even be seen as a logical extension of some forms of narrative analysis, especially the strongly structuralist readings of William Labov and others. However, my continuing concern with context as an important element in understanding narrative makes such an approach inconsistent at best.

<sup>80</sup> Though they may well have been implying this.

context. In this way, using such a program did not limit the ways I analysed the data<sup>81</sup>, rather it gave me a way of managing a battery of approaches. ‘Coding’ schemas used were both inductive and deductive, transcripts were analysed both as stories-in-themselves and in relation to parts of other stories, my field-notes and any other data I felt was relevant. This is not to say such an analysis wasn’t an act in producing something new, or of translating intent, but rather that such an approach was not due to the use of CAQDAS software. Such an alteration would have taken place whatever method of analysis I used<sup>82</sup>.

### *Analysis and processes of sense-making:*

If we understand interpretation, translation and analysis as altering the meaning of the ‘story-as-told,’ how should we begin to understand our own processes of comprehending ‘data’; of making sense of it all? Is this somehow to be considered a different sort of sense-making, one that lays claim to a (social) scientific paradigm unavailable to those who provided their stories? Or should we understand this as equally as problematic as the process of translation from one language to another, just as contextually embedded as the original narratives?

I think this can be approached through three conceptual steps – firstly a further consideration of context and contextuality; secondly, an overview of reflexivity and ‘positionality’ in the research process; and, finally, a discussion of ethics, representation and responsibility.

### *Context and contextualisation:*

Throughout this chapter, I have stressed the contextual nature of the narratives produced. This has been a common theme in many fields of enquiry recently, as researchers begin to look critically at both the way they produce ‘knowledge’ – their methods (see, e.g. Law 2004) – and how they then present this knowledge – their role as authors (see, e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986). Whilst much of

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<sup>81</sup> There is an issue here about the development of such CAQDAS software. One of my undergraduate research methods course-books provides an extensive and detailed sketch of why we should be wary of such programs (see Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 198-203). However, nearly a decade and a half later, very little of what they say as much relevance to such software today.

<sup>82</sup> Of course, this assertion is premised on an ontological assumption that any act of interpretation alters the ‘meaning’ of that which has been interpreted.

this has concentrated on the academic researchers' role in this, I think it is first useful to turn our attention to the way in which our original 'data' was produced. I do this in order to make two points about what could be referred to as the 'double-edged' nature of context; firstly, as I argued earlier in defence of using a biographic-narrative interview method, such an approach allows for the *emic* development of the structures and idioms of a narrative. In this way, such a story embodies aspects of the social and cultural context in which it was produced; contextualisations which reveal the tacit and taken-for-granted that may have been overlooked using more *etic* approaches. This is of great benefit to the social researcher; it provides a window onto the banal, the everyday, that we do not consider worth mentioning – the common-sense assumptions that underlay our social worlds. However, this aspect of the embedded nature of narratives is also what makes them difficult to analyse; because they are socially and culturally embedded – embodied even – such stories are just that; stories. They are mediated responses not unconditional truths and, because of this, it becomes difficult to know what is really real and what is interpretation. Therefore, we cannot here consider our 'data' as anything other than a 'story,' nor can we consider that it has ever been any other way. If there is a truth, it is one we only ever glimpse through a glass darkly.

This, of course, raises a number of questions which demand analysis in and of themselves. However I shall return to them after considering another aspect of context, that of the role of the researcher in the production of 'data.'

*Reflexivity and the ignorant interloper:*

If we are to consider the role of context in the narratives of our research 'subjects,' we must surely bring the same critical awareness to our own role in the process. However, this is often a difficult and unsatisfactory element to a research project. It is very difficult to constantly pay attention to your own actions and their possible affects, particularly when your own position is uncertain or tenuous. I found that my reflections were often more concerned with process than self. I was often simply too worried about getting things done to be constantly reflexive. The intention to be so was there, but the reality was somewhat different. In truth my reflections on my role, and the context I was working from came later, as I sat on the bus or train returning from an interview, or started transcribing them, or began 'making sense' of what they contained. This is a very different form of reflection than the constant back and forth iterations that 'reflexivity' seems to suggest. Moreover, this can be taken as an illustration of two different aspects of engaging with our research – a duality



that is often not explicitly recognised in discussions of reflexivity – between an immersion in the process of research; that is we are busy *doing* the research, meeting people, chatting to them, being present, and a reflective absence, where we reassess our experiences and try to make sense of them. This is not to say such a process mimics the objective gaze of the positivist scientist, but rather that reflection – as subjective and contextual as that may be – happens only in certain circumstances and rarely, in my experience, in active moments. In this sense I was often an ignorant interloper, the impact and effect of my presence and actions (and those of other people and things) were rarely that obvious to me. It was only afterwards that these effects became meaningful to me, gained a ‘thick’ context and began to make sense. Now, whilst this meaning was construed reflexively – that is, I took into account how I may have had an impact before, during and after the ‘data’ was gathered – it was part of a retrospective interpretation; rather than writing myself out of the story – as the positivist social scientist is often considered to have done (see, e.g. Rosaldo 1989) – I wrote myself back into the story. Now part of this I could consider before I carried out my interviews, thinking about how I would engage with my ‘informants’, how I might avoid asking leading questions, or producing a polarised power relation, how my ‘me’-ness may impact on the encounter. Equally, I could try and remain aware of what my goals are and how they might affect how I go about things (just as the goals of those who I interview will impact on what they do). I could, in doing so, lay the foundations for the interviews in a reflexive manner. However, this is only ever partial. It is not possible to be fully aware of these things at all times; I was both within and without of the world which I was studying, where the ‘in’ and where the ‘out’ began was never clear to me. In other words, *what* and *how* context matters is far harder to decide than to simply claim it is important. Therefore, what I provide here is only ever a partial account and, furthermore, one from which I can never entirely either disentangle myself, or honestly point out how I am entwined.

*Ethics, representation and responsibility:*

Ethics here can be understood in two ways; there is an ethics of gathering information, and an ethics of representation. Of course, these are not separate; in practice they are closely connected. However, we can understand the ethics of data collection as one of providing the interviewee with ‘informed consent’ – that is, they have some understanding of what you will be asking them, how that information will be used and their rights over that information. In this project, this was garnered through the use of a verbal ethical statement and the resultant (informed) consent of the interviewee

(see Appendix 2 for an example). In this way, the ‘subject’ of research has the ability to retain some control over how the ‘data’ they supply is used. Participants were also informed of the purpose of the research, the style of interview and how the information supplied may be used when they were originally asked to take part<sup>83</sup>. Additionally, care was taken as to how consent was gained – both in the interviews and at the recruitment stage – seeking to avoid putting people ‘on the spot’, where it is difficult to avoid agreeing to be involved, even if that is not what someone may wish to do<sup>84</sup>. This is a fairly paradigmatic approach in mainstream social research, based in a bio-medical paradigm which seeks to protect the research ‘subject’ from the abuse of their rights and welfare. It requires that consent equates to the participant being provided with all the relevant information regarding whether they wish to be involved (e.g. how the information provided will be used, whether they will be able to remain anonymous and so forth), that this decision is voluntary and, finally, that the person giving their consent is capable of making such a decision (see, e.g. Boulton and Parker 2007: 2189; Social Research Association 2003: 14).

In this narrow definition of ethics and informed consent, this research could consequently be seen as perfectly acceptable. However, as a number of authors have pointed out, such a conceptualisation of ethics is highly restrictive, and possibly more concerned with standardisation and normative modes of accountability (see, e.g. Greenhough 2007; Koro-Ljungberg et al. 2007; Strathern 2000) than ethics ‘in themselves’. Instead, ethics can be considered relational, situated and multi-layered (Greenhough 2007; Miller and Boulton 2007), with our ethical responsibility extending well beyond the ‘data gathering’ stage to incorporate how we represent the views of those of whom we wish to speak. In this sense, it becomes necessary to turn our attention to representation. In this research, as with the vast majority of social ‘science’, this almost exclusively takes the form of the written word. However, this is further complicated if we understand writing as a method of inquiry in itself (Denzin 1998; Richardson 1998). Therefore, writing is both a means of representing that which we have researched and a process of making sense of it. This provides us with a potential dilemma; if we follow the argument that representation is an ethical act, we are directed towards presenting our ‘stories-as-told’ as accurately as we can – representation as reflection – however, if we wish to use writing as a means of analysis, as a way of finding something out (Richardson, 1998: 347), we are

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<sup>83</sup> The information given prior to interviews, as well as the informed consent provided in interviews, would have been given in Polish where necessary.

<sup>84</sup> I did not find potential participants had any problems turning me down if they were uncertain about being interviewed. In fact, the difficulty in getting some groups of people to be interviewed was one of the reasons I altered my approach and employed Agnieszka and Caroline to carry out some interviews.

inevitably going to interpret the information we have access to. Are we to choose between representation as multiple and collective, where all participants (or stake-holders) get some say in the end product, or are we to think of writing and representation as a situated and personal narrative of narratives – a mediated and imperfect interpretation? Of course, there is no singular answer to this. Writing and presenting material can take a vast array of different forms, each of them telling a different story, using the available *material* in a different way, for a different purpose (ibid: 360). In the final section of this part of the chapter, I shall discuss the conceptualisation of writing and analysis used in *this* research and its relationship to the rest of the thesis.

*On the production of knowledge and processes of analysis:*

In a previous chapter I argued that knowledge should be understood as a *process*; it is fluid, evolving and iterative. In this sense, I wrote of ‘knowing-in-the-world’<sup>85</sup>; an on-going and dynamic process, drawing in social, cultural, environmental and political elements in our understanding of the world and how we collect, use and interpret knowledge. There is, I think, no real defence to forward such a theory and then to suggest it does not correspond to my own construction of this thesis; my own little piece of ‘knowing-in-the-world’. In this case, the research and the way it was written can be understood as a continual mode of understanding – ‘a way of knowing’ (Richardson, 1998: 345). Just as Hegel writes of a dynamic process of knowing, complete with often oppositional and antagonistic elements, this work is the reflection of such a ‘coming-to-be of knowledge’ (1977[1807]: 15)

In Hegel there is a sense of access to ‘true’, or ultimate, knowledge being infinitely put off, or suspended. In writing, in authorship, we can equally refer to Derrida’s notion of ‘différance’ (1982: 3 - 25). Here, the physical (and/or symbolic) separation of things (or concepts) from one another – of differentiation, or spacing – produces the articulation of difference. That is, we produce oppositions and hierarchies because such processes underlie the tools – words and symbols – we use to express ourselves through the written word. However, ‘différance’ also refers to the simultaneous deferral of meaning, as words and signs are defined only through other words and signs (rather than things ‘in themselves’). That is, meaning is not only contextual but endless deferred. Meaning is at once present – through differentiation, we can show how what we are discussing is not *something* else –

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<sup>85</sup> A phrase used with reference to Martin Heidegger’s concept of ‘being-in-the-world’ (1962: passim).

and absent – as the meaning is endlessly deferred, the really ‘real’ we are grasping for will always be just out of reach.

To take a practical example, consider what I have discussed about the process of interviewing for this research; whether the interview was carried out by myself, Agnieszka or Caroline, it involved a succession of questions and responses which attempted to ‘put into words’ a series of remembered experiences for which words alone cannot ever quite do justice, however fluent a narrator our interviewee may be. This is precisely due to processes of ‘différance’ – words alone cannot do justice to that which they attempt to describe. Furthermore, once the researcher-author is presented with this collection of imperfect narratives of differentiated and deferred meanings, they are again interrogated for broader, more universal, meanings, and the process of ‘différance’ once again begins. Thus a search for *truth* through analysis and writing will always be infinitely deferred – we may be able to *differentiate* between various processes, typologies or moments, but there will never be an exact fit between signifier and signified, ‘reality’ and interpretation, ‘things’ and words. In this way, we can recognise much of what is written in this thesis as ‘blind tactics’, an ‘empirical wandering’ (ibid: 7) in search of a meaning that is always just beyond my grasp.

#### **AFTERWORD – ON CREATING A THESIS AND PRESENTING NARRATIVES:**

The ever-partial stories and recollections that began life as a research interview are included in this work in a ghost form as edited interview quotes illustrating the arguments I chose to raise. In essence, this is another layer of translation and editing – I, as the author, ultimately determine what a quote *means* through its positioning and presentation. In this sense, the biographic narratives of those whom I interviewed have become nothing more than tools to illustrate the arguments I make here. Whilst I attempt to soften this issue through the use of multiple quotes from a variety of interviews, along with the assurance that many of the emergent themes derived from what people spoke of in these interviews (rather than my own pre-occupations), the final presentation of these is both conventional and recognisable to anyone familiar with current qualitative social research writing.

In essence, therefore, there is a disjuncture between the ontological and methodological assumptions that underlie many biographical approaches and the presentation of their findings in the form of

scholarly works (i.e. theses, academic journal articles and research monographs). There is a convincing argument that these formats are most persuasive in the presentation of a single coherent argument, rather than representing the multitude of opinions and voices that post-structural and interpretive methods try to access (see, e.g. Clifford 1997). Furthermore, there is an inherent tension between the presentation of a thesis – a reasoned argument – and exhibiting the narratives which have influenced the development of that thesis and are now utilised to support and illustrate it. This can be productive in the sense that a commitment to, at least partially, presenting multiple perspectives and ‘voices’ guards against a reversion to the kind of grand narratives of a definitive reality many researchers (including this one) wish to avoid. However, what follows is the presentation of a *thesis*, in the sense of the fundamental argument I put forward in this work, supported by edited quotes from interviews undertaken using the biographic narrative method outlined in this chapter, rather than biographic narratives offered in, and of, themselves.

In the next three chapters I present my analysis, my interpretation, of this messy reality. I do this by beginning to ‘unpack’ the narratives of those to whom I spoke and reconstructing them into something which frames broader discussions of three key aspects which emerged from the interviews as important and powerful factors. Of course, such a neat division of the views and stories of numerous people into three broad categories is an artifice which partially hides the mess of both investigative method and the putative ‘reality’ it seeks to engage. This is an unavoidable consequence of any form of analysis in many respects. However, I have attempted to construct my discussions in such a way that they partially replicate my own ‘coming-to-be’ of understanding the subject matter, if not the ‘truth’ of the matter. I have done this by integrating ‘empirical’ descriptive analyses of the interview narratives with theoretical and analytical discussions of relevant academic debates. The idea here is to mimic the iterative journey of sense-making that I undertook during the writing of these chapters. Deductive and inductive approaches to understanding interview narratives and assigning importance are utilised and they feed back into each other, whilst an on-going engagement with academic debates disrupts certain understandings and encourages others. In this way, the following chapters are more than merely empirical evidence, they are discursive commentaries on three given subjects, supported (and sometimes undermined) by the narratives of those to whom I interviewed, and the words of others who have written on similar topics. They are also, however, a reflection of the slow development of an understanding of the subject at hand and,

more than that, the first shoots, perhaps, of a way of thinking about how complex systems interact with the practice and experience of the mundane and everyday.

The three subjects under discussion are perhaps obvious from the subtitle of this thesis – knowing, working and migrating. They are not, however, as easily delimited as that and each chapter haunts the others to a certain degree. Thus, rather than considering the chapters as individual entities, they are perhaps better comprehended as a set, a triptych, each building on, and interacting with, its predecessor. The first, though generally concerned with migrating, also acts as an introduction to the ‘cast’ of this part of the chapter – the research participants who took part in the study. The second builds on this understanding of migration journeys and individual narratives by focusing in on work and employment experiences, whilst the final part of the set looks closer still at practices and meanings of ‘knowing’ and interrogates how we can begin to comprehend this in relation to the issues discussed in the other two chapters.

*Chapter 5*

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**Journeys:**

Trajectories of migration

*All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveller is unaware*

- Martin Buber

Having outlined the context of the research and the methods used to investigate it, my intention in this chapter is to begin to introduce the ‘subjects’ of that research – the international migrants to whom I spoke and whose testimonies (and my interpretations of them) form the ‘substantive’ basis on which I make my arguments. As I have previously stressed it is not possible for me to give an impartial account of the migration experiences of my research ‘subjects’; what I provide is, at the very least, a translation of a shifting ‘reality’ (Butler 2005). Indeed, many of those I spoke to during the course of this research would agree that the ‘meaning’ of their mobility (if there was such a thing) shifts in relation to the context in which it is understood. At one point it can be conceptualised as a career move, at another a cultural decision to become more worldly-wise, or to have an adventure, or to earn more money. Such manifold motivations – such multiple strings of being and becoming – always co-exist and compete; with sometimes one dominant, sometimes another. Never, however, are such decisions simple and to present them as such is restrictive at best, disingenuous at worst. There are, however, characteristic elements of certain migration experiences that, when compiled, begin to help us build up a picture of contemporary migrations to the South West, which goes beyond individual experience to suggest functional differences between varying trajectories of migration. In this chapter, I outline these characteristics and discuss what they suggest about the relationships between international migration, knowledge, skills and the labour market in the South West region.

Because the concern of this research is primarily the relationship between knowledge and international migration, I have divided the interviewees into two groups – those working as university academics and those working elsewhere in jobs not conventionally defined as

'high-skill'. I do this in order to engage with the way in which much of the literature has developed such a dichotomy between 'high' and 'low' skill migration. Whilst such a separation is arguably somewhat artificial and arbitrary, it does allow for a discussion of the varying trajectories of migration experienced in these two groups. It should be noted, however, that such differences between groups should not deflect attention from diversity within such arbitrary divisions.

### **THE MIGRATION OF ACADEMICS – MOBILE SUCCESS IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP:**

To begin, it is enlightening to outline some demographic information about the academics interviewed<sup>86</sup>. I looked for, and largely succeeded in getting, a broad demographic spread of academics working at 'Wessex' University<sup>87</sup>. Of the 13 interviewees in this category, six were female and seven male. Seven were citizens of EU countries (Germany (3), Denmark, Portugal, Italy and the Netherlands), with the remaining six hailing from Serbia (2), Azerbaijan, Malaysia (2) and India. Furthermore, they were drawn from all steps on the hierarchy of tenured academia – five were employed as Lecturers (though one was currently working as an early career Research Fellow), three as Senior Lecturers, four were Associate Professors and one a full Professor. They worked across the full range of subject areas in the University – three in the physical sciences, five as social scientists, with the remaining five employed in humanities subjects. All but three were either married or had children. The majority (7 of 13) had first worked in the UK after accepting tenured academic posts at British universities, with five of these having only worked at their current employer whilst in the UK. A further four had completed their Doctoral studies at other British universities (and one his undergraduate degree) – though two of these had subsequently completed post-doctoral fellowships in the United States before returning to the UK. Two interviewees had first arrived in the UK through post-doctoral fellowships, subsequently gaining tenured posts at the same institution. All had first arrived in the UK during the 'early' part of their academic career (i.e. initially being appointed to a post no higher than a standard

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<sup>86</sup> A fuller demographic profile of the research participants is given in Appendix 6.

<sup>87</sup> An established 'research-led' University in the south-west of England.



Lectureship); a proposition that ties in with previous research, which points to the higher mobility of early-career researchers as compared to those in more established positions (see, e.g. Ackers and Gill 2005; van der Sande, Ackers, and Gill 2005).

*Routes:*

In this section I briefly outline some of the ways in which the academics to whom I spoke came to be at 'Wessex'. On a prosaic level, this could be summed up very simply – they applied for a job, they were offered the job, they took that job. But the situation is more complicated than this gives credit for; why did they apply for the job, what attributes did they need to get the job, and what barriers were there to them taking up the post?

Ignoring the first question for now – we will turn our attention to the motivation to migrate later – what attributes were required in order to gain jobs in UK academia? Most obviously, a high level of academic ability in their chosen subject was required. At Wessex, as with most British universities, it is the norm – if not quite the rule – for tenured academics to have a PhD or its equivalent. Furthermore, it is necessary to have a qualification that is recognised and valued as at least the equivalent of a British PhD. It is enlightening in this respect to note that over half (8 of 13) of those interviewed gained their PhDs in the Anglophone higher education system<sup>88</sup> where, though there are significant differences between countries, the qualification of PhD is widely recognised as being equivalent and teaching is carried out in English. Of the remaining five interviewees, three gained their doctorates in Germany, with two having spent some part of their undergraduate or postgraduate study in the UK or US, one graduated in the Netherlands, but had spent a significant portion of his study in a leading British research institute, and one had been educated solely in Serbia and its predecessor states. Indeed, it is remarkable to note how often previous links to the UK occurred amongst those 'migrant' academics interviewed in this study. On the simplest of

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<sup>88</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I consider the USA, Canada, Australia, Singapore and the UK to be part of the 'Anglo-American' higher education model, because the award of a PhD is the highest possible research award available (barring 'higher doctorates' awarded on the basis of published work of the highest quality). The award of doctorates in Germany, Serbia and the Netherlands is sufficiently different enough to consider them based on separate models.

levels we can explain this by pointing to the fact that such ‘stints’ in the UK, or at least Anglophone countries, equipped these tyro academics with both the opportunity to develop their academic and idiomatic English language skills, as well as the chance to develop what human capital theorists would describe as ‘country-specific’ skills (Duvander 2001) – the ability to comprehend the unwritten cultural norms and expectations that underlay all our social interactions. Indeed, such skills are not always easily learnt and involve often confusing social and professional interactions. For example, ‘Denise’, a Malaysian academic, related how, soon after arriving in the UK, she witnessed what she thought as a very strange exchange between one of her colleagues and a fundraiser. However, because of her lack of awareness of ‘local’ etiquette, she was uncertain whether this situation was unusual or not:

*[...B]eing new to the UK, you have no guidelines as to what is bizarre and what isn't, so I didn't have any! <laughs> I realised that [my colleague] was acting a little funny and that maybe this is just outside the norm!*

*[...]*

*The culture I grew up in... cannot be more different than... this culture... but the fact that I speak good English completely hides all that. I mean completely hides all that.*

- ‘Denise’

However, it is necessary to consider the role of such precursory academic migration more closely. A number of authors have stressed the importance of undergraduate migration and noted that it has been somewhat understudied and theorised (see, e.g. King 2002: 99). Furthermore, it has, as in this research, been noted that such international educational mobility appears to provide an antecedent to further migration, both as ‘highly skilled migrants’ (Baláž and Williams 2004: 235) and, more particularly, as ‘early career’ academic researchers (van der Sande, Ackers, and Gill 2005). Now, we cannot take this as evidence to suggest that to later become a migrant academic you must first have been a migrant student, or indeed that all migrant students become migrant academics. Both are clearly unreasonable assumptions – even in this small study, migrants had distinctly varying levels of international mobility prior to taking up their first academic posts in the UK, and many had not travelled

abroad until after their undergraduate studies.

Similarly, we can safely assume that flows of students prior to postgraduate research level far outstrip that of those at doctoral level and above, thus suggesting the second assertion is untrue. However, it does appear that precursory mobility is widespread amongst this research sample. Why might this be the case and what does it tell us about the migration routes of academics?

If we take a conventionally neo-classical approach to this question, we might argue that, because international mobility is seen as good for future job prospects and thus wealth creation, the 'best' students will be more likely to both gain and take advantage of such educational opportunities. Furthermore, because this will be as true (within reasonable parameters) when they are undergraduates as when they are looking for tenured posts, it is simply a case of the 'best' migrating to the 'best' universities (or at least, the 'good' moving to the 'good'). Following this logic, we would be able to model – given certain additional parameters, such as wage differentials – these movements to the extent that we could fairly confidently predict the overall flows of migrants at undergraduate level and beyond.

However, as I argued in the first chapter of this thesis, such models are poor predictors of migrant flows because they fail to take into account myriad other non-economic contributory factors. So, how to explain such flows? Why was there such a regular history of previous academic migration amongst those working in UK academia? Was it simply a case of these moves allowing them to build up a level of English which allowed them to write, teach and research proficiently in that language, alongside the development of 'country-specific' skills and sensibilities? There is certainly some truth in this – for all those I spoke to had required a certain amount of time and effort to learn the ways in which both language and culture operated on a day-to-day basis, in the workplace and beyond, a point which has been made numerous times before, both by geographers (see, e.g. Beaverstock 2005) and anthropologists (see, e.g. Ingold and Hallam 2007).

However, this neglects the importance of the role of networks. In migration studies in recent years, the role of networks of kin and friends has increasingly been seen as central to our understanding of the migration process; migrants use such pre-existing connections as support structures, links to 'home', routes in to both jobs and countries, even as mechanisms for social advancement and political activism (see, e.g. Ballard 2001; Gardner 1995; Werbner

2002). This is an idiom, however, that has largely been used to explain migration from the developing world to the developed, from 'South' to 'North', and for 'low-skilled' workers. Whilst this tells us much about the separate development of theories about different 'types' of migrants in migration research, it is also necessary to reconsider the idea of networks when considering academic migration.

Academia is an increasingly mobile and international sector; whether an academic works in his or her own country, they are likely to be internationally mobile – reading papers from those based elsewhere in the world, attending international conferences and debating with peers from overseas. This provides some level of opportunity to develop international and transnational networks of contacts, friends and colleagues. It is easier still, however, to develop such relationships when you share a geographic space on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, what such early periods spent abroad may do is to enable potential future academics to build up professional networks which assist in getting work in the future. Indeed, it is these professional networks – rather than transnational networks of co-nationals or kin – that appeared to play an important role in the migration of many (though not all) of those to whom I spoke:

*He [future Principal Investigator on his post-doctoral project] was someone I met through the – I mean they had contacted me... when I did my PhD to request some material... and I had some free time, so I contacted them and then asked them if they had some time. So I went over and visit them... and... subsequently [we worked together on] two publications...*

- 'Jereon'

Through the activation of such networks, we must understand that, as Louise Ackers has noted, '[b]oth career progression and migration are driven as much by networks and connections than quality per se...' (2005: 109). This is not to argue that those to whom I spoke had somehow not 'deserved' to get their jobs, or that they were guilty of manipulating a nefarious 'old boys' network, rather that they were known and respected by other people in their professional network and, given the choice between two apparently equal candidates, it is likely that the candidate you *know* fits your criteria will do better than the one who is only

*probably* what you are looking for. Furthermore, such networks provide information about up-coming openings, enabling those involved to be better placed to take advantage of such opportunities for progression.

Thus, from this research we can tentatively suggest that international migration allows nascent academics access to different (if not necessarily more) professional networks and contacts and that this in turn increases their chances of success in gaining employment in the future.

Prior to returning to this discussion and analysing it further in regards to an analysis of the motivations and routes of three German academics, it is important to make one final point about the migration routes of academics. They are, as with almost any sort of international movement, at least partially governed by structural determinants; for example, for those academics who moved to the UK from countries outside the EU, it was not simply a matter of getting a job in the UK, they also had to gain a Work Permit, for which they had to reapply every time they moved jobs. This placed limits on what work they could do and also determined what their spouses and children could do and were eligible to receive (for example, the amount of hours they could work, which state benefits they were entitled to and so forth). In turn, the employer is required to illustrate how the particular job for which the Work Permit is required could not have been successfully carried out by a UK or EU national (because of the highly skilled nature of the work, a lack of suitably qualified 'local' applicants etc...). Therefore, a potential academic hoping to move from outside the EU is faced with a number of additional structural impediments to getting a job in the UK; it would make sense therefore that non-EU migrants are concentrated in 'skills gap' areas in UK academia, where it is difficult to recruit sufficient numbers of UK and EU nationals to meet demand, either because these subjects are relatively unpopular with 'local' undergraduates (e.g. Physics or Maths), or that few undergraduates go on to doctoral study and beyond because of the availability of well-paid professional and private sector roles (e.g. Business Studies or Law), or a combination of both (e.g. Economics or Engineering). Indeed, the majority (4 of 6) of non-EU academics covered in this research work in such areas, as opposed to a slight minority (3 of 7) of EU academics, which gives some credence

to this line of argument<sup>89</sup>. The second ‘structural’ element that has an effect on the migration of academics to the UK resonates particularly within the EU. It is the adoption of the ‘Bologna Process’, by which universities across the EU and beyond seek to make their higher education system and related academic awards both more comparable and more compatible. In essence, this has led to moves towards a certain (Anglo-American) model of higher education, based on modular three year Bachelor’s degrees, two-year Master’s qualifications and three-year doctorates (often combined with a one or two year Master’s). This has both encouraged universities across Europe to become increasingly open to overseas qualifications, as well as, through initiatives such as the European Research Area (ERA) strategy and wider EU integration, to encourage cross-national research initiatives and the unrestricted flow of academic labour (see, e.g. Ackers and Gill 2005: 290; Iredale 1999: 102-5; Mahroum 2001). In this way, we can begin to see the ways in which structural initiatives act to both enable/disable and ‘frame’ the trajectories of international migration from different areas and across different sectors.

*Expectations of mobility – motivation and migration in the international academy:*

Though academia is a fairly mobile profession, especially in the early part of a career (see, e.g. Ackers 2005: 104), it was noticeable amongst this group that certain pathways of international (rather than intra-national) migration appeared more open than others at certain points in the course of an academic career.<sup>90</sup> For example, moving from Germany to the UK (as three of those interviewed had done) appeared to be something of a one-way ticket in terms of an academic career. The differences in the way academic careers are organised and monitored, combined with apparently discrete peer networks, seemed to make it difficult for academics to return to Germany once they had left. For example, ‘Max’

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<sup>89</sup> Indeed, it was quite noticeable that such ‘skills gap’ disciplines had strong concentrations of non-UK academic staff and, furthermore, that these disciplines appeared more likely to have non-EU staff than others. However, this research can only provide a weak correlation between the two.

<sup>90</sup> All the academics interviewed here had made at least two changes of institution, whilst the majority had studied or worked at four or more universities (with the most frequent mover having been based in eight different institutions in four different countries).

explained he had been motivated to leave Germany after completing his *habilitation*<sup>91</sup> because of the peculiar professional structure of German academia:

*Well, the thing in Germany... is that, um... as I said, it is different to the English system, and it also different in the sense that... there aren't intermediate stages between, um... you doing your degree, getting a job at the university and then, eventually, after, um, going through several stages, becoming a Professor... right?! <laughs> So you drop out of the university, or rather... you get a certain status, which is called the status of a Privat Dozent, erm... which allows you to teach anything you want at the university, and how much you want, but you're not getting paid for it!*

[...]

*So you have to work as a slave for the university in order to, er... keep you the hope, or the possibility, of eventually becoming a Professor... um... which I didn't want to do, um... I had a wife and two small children...*

- 'Max'

Similarly:

*[...] Because I was already a bit older – my Diploma had taken quite a bit of time out and so on – I was a bit nervous about getting a full Professorship [...] so I decided to go in smaller steps and go into the idea of going to the UK.*

- 'Leon'

Once the decision to leave has been made it can be quite hard to return, as 'Alex', considering his own difficulty in getting a post back in Germany after being based in the UK for some time, discusses:

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<sup>91</sup> The *habilitation* process is a rigorous post-doctoral qualification which, in Germany at least, involves producing a further piece of in-depth research and a professorial thesis. It often takes many years to complete (in this case it was awarded seven years after the completion of the *promotion*, the German equivalent of a PhD).

[...] *You have to be in the system – I mean you have to... show your face, er... at conferences. You have to have a network of contacts... to stand a decent chance to get a job... there... and, um, I was away for five years.*

- 'Alex'

This brief example begins to illustrate some of the decisions and consequences implicit in academic migration. Firstly, our German academics made a conscious decision to apply for jobs in the UK (for two the decision was only to apply for jobs there, for one it was to look for posts in the US and at home also). Such decisions were unanimously narrated as measured choices, essentially weighing up the available options and making an informed decision; certain elements acting as 'push' factors, with others considered a 'pull'. In this case, the hierarchical and insecure structure of German academia was seen as a definite negative, with the higher pay and earlier career stage at which academics gain tenure in the 'Anglo' model seen as attractive 'pull' factors. Such elements interacted with a multitude of additional personal, professional and structural factors to shape the final decisions of those to whom I spoke. Furthermore, certain additional structural factors influenced the potential decisions made by migrants; for example, the decision to migrate from Germany to the UK is not constrained by the need to gain a work permit, unlike those who were moving from countries outside the EU. Equally, to get a job in a UK University also required that German higher degrees (*Promotion* and *Habilitation*) are both recognised as equivalent to British doctoral degrees (or more advanced in the case of the *Habilitation*) and widely respected.

Additionally, to teach in a British university it is necessary to have, and be able to demonstrate, a proficiency in English. Whilst this is perhaps slightly less important in certain research positions in some STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) disciplines, it quickly becomes important once one has to teach students, effectively becoming a structural (if currently informal) barrier to working in UK universities. Therefore, all those I interviewed were fluent in English to the degree they could be considered near native speakers. Though they regularly noted it took some time to adapt to the everyday practice of conversing and working in often idiomatic English:



*[...] You know, when you have to use it for the first time and particularly in situations when you are on the phone... it was, um, it was hairy! <laughs>*

'Zoran'

*I don't know much idiomatic English. Sometimes my colleagues – English colleagues – have to explain to me, they use some expression... well I always ask, 'what's that?' I never hesitate to ask! <laughs>*

'Ayna'

Therefore, an ability to speak English to a good degree (if not, at first, idiomatic English) can be seen as one determining factor as to whether people opted to move to the UK. This, in itself, tends to mean people from certain countries where English is widely spoken as a second or third language (e.g. in many former British colonies), or where it is taught in schools, may be more likely to choose to move to the UK than other, non-Anglophone, countries. Additionally, for some of the European academics interviewed, the UK held a certain attraction amongst Anglophone countries because of its geographic closeness to 'home':

*I wanted to go abroad to do a PhD and I'd already looked at it before I went to Holland [to do an MA] and I... the Fulbright Commission urged me to go to the US [...] but my Mum was like, 'It's too far away, I don't get to see you!' [...] So I thought, 'OK, I can go to England'*

'Mathilde'

However, for those I spoke to, their ability to speak English and the relative closeness of the UK to 'home' (for European migrants) compared to other Anglophone countries alone was not enough; the value of a British qualification or post was also explicitly recognised as being an important factor in making the decision to move to the UK:

HV<sup>92</sup>: *Why was the UK an attractive destination?*

*Ab... Well the prestige of Eng—of UK universities is huge, um... they are known internationally...*

‘Paulo’

*I said, ‘Well, if I go to Spain, or... Italy, or somewhere, um... it’s [a PhD qualification] is not going to be valued once I’ve done my degree, and that’s kind of harsh; if you don’t get a degree from Denmark [her ‘home’ country], or from the UK, or the US... employment opportunities are not great.*

‘Mathilde’

For those further on in their careers, the UK – or at least some institutions in the UK – hold a certain cachet as centres of excellence; clusters of technical expertise, research infrastructure, and what we might call high levels of ‘human’ capital – the presence of those considered excellent in their field – combine to make certain universities particularly attractive to all researchers, including those from overseas (Ackers 2005; Ackers and Gill 2005). This, of course, may differ from one department to the next and its effects may be short-lived or only locally felt. However, the extent to which this was true for those interviewed for this research is debateable; whilst a job or degree at a ‘good’ UK university was obviously highly valued (as previous quotes indicate), it is not clear if Wessex University itself, or even certain departments within it were seen as *the* place to be. Now this may have been different if I had been interviewing academics at Oxford or Cambridge, or it may have been that the academics to whom I spoke chose not to stress their decision to move as solely motivated by professional ambition. Whilst the attractive geography of the South West was called upon a number of times, for instance:

*I came here first for an interview and to see the area and I liked it very much. It’s probably the nicest part of England in my view...*

- ‘Miroslav’

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<sup>92</sup> H.V. refers to the author. A.R. refers to Agnieszka Romaszko, who carried out the Polish language interviews for this research.

The draw of ‘Wessex’ as an entity in itself was not mentioned. Academics saw themselves as coming to a good UK university but not one that ranked by reputation alone alongside Oxbridge or Ivy League institutions; for example, one academic, comparing the university from which he obtained his PhD (which he later explicitly puts in the same ‘league’ as ‘Wessex’) and the institution at which he took up a post-doctoral Fellowship, is instructive in the common differentiation between ‘good’ institutions and the international elite:

*[Suburban London ‘redbrick’ university] is a good university, but it is not an Ivy League university...  
[Urban Ivy League university], in everything they do, they do it very well, and that means that the research environment and the working environment is very competitive...*

- ‘Paulo’

Therefore, whilst we can certainly speak of the attraction of moving to a ‘good’ UK university, and even of the particular environmental attractiveness of the South West region, there is little evidence to support a notion that, in this instance, there is a clustering effect based around ‘Wessex’ as a centre of excellence in any of the fields from which people were interviewed for this study (despite the high ranking of some of these disciplines in the most recent (2008) Research Assessment Exercise)<sup>93</sup>.

Additionally, for a small number of those involved in the research, it was clear that significant geo-political events effectively altered the balance of motivational factors towards migrating to another country. ‘Zoran’, for instance, remembered being largely happy with his lot in the former Yugoslavia in his early career:

*Well, at that time it was fine, you know. There were jobs and work and everything and, you know, if you are young and ambitious you could, um... you could not live in luxury but you could live a decent life, yeah.*

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<sup>93</sup> However, despite this, it has been argued that clustering, whether or not its formation is driven by expectations of high local density of ‘excellence’ (in terms of facilities or people), has an important role to play in knowledge transfer and production; a point to which I return in Chapter 6.

HV: *Did you ever imagine that you would end up in the UK?*

*Absolutely no idea! Not in the UK... anywhere abroad.*

- 'Zoran'

However, the increasing conflict surrounding the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, combined with his wife's ill health, led to him to begin searching for jobs elsewhere:

*[...] The situation in Yugoslavia was becoming unbearable... er, inflation pressures and things like that. I mean, inflation like in Germany in the 1920s... talking 120 million a month... percent a month. Er, and then we couldn't get medicine and medical supplies for her [his wife] so, and... the savings started to disappear, so... that was the main reason...*

- 'Zoran'

These twin changes in his life – one a severe geopolitical rupture, the other intensely personal (and understandably narrated as *the* most significant factor) – combined to elicit a response – international migration – that he previously had no intention of pursuing. Similarly, just two years after 'Ayna' had completed the equivalent of a Physics doctorate the Soviet Union collapsed and her job in a government research institute disappeared. Despite her qualifications, she was only able to get work as a secretary in the US Embassy, before hearing of another opportunity to restart her academic career in the US:

*... through the Embassy, I found out about the, er... scholarships that, um... they give to the citizens of former Soviet Union [countries] to go and study in America for, um... Masters in... kind of, decision-making science [...] – there was Economics and, er, it was only subject which had any Mathematical content <laughs> as far as I could see! So I applied and then I received scholarship... and then, after this Master's programme, I applied for PhD programme [...]*

- 'Ayna'

In this way, 'Ayna' too had the balance of her motivations significantly recalibrated by a major geopolitical shift – in this case the collapse of the Soviet Union. As she already had both a doctorate and a post at a research institute prior to this, it is highly unlikely she would have left to do a Master's degree in another discipline in the United States with no immediate prospect of getting a post there (or even a guaranteed place on a PhD programme). Indeed, it is noticeable that both 'Zoran' (who took a post as a post-doctoral research fellow, despite previously holding a tenured position) and 'Ayna' effectively took a step down in terms of academic hierarchy in order to secure an overseas post – decisions they would be considerably less likely to take in different circumstances. Thus we must remain aware of the rapid and intense alterations in migration trajectories which can be imposed by such geopolitical events. Whilst in these cases the impact was not as severe as it was for many (they were not refugees or 'forced' migrants for example), these events still fundamentally changed their attitudes to moving abroad. Equally, however, as illustrated by 'Zoran', changes in personal circumstances – in this case the serious illness suffered by his wife – can often have just as pronounced (and often more profound) effects on our motivations to move. In this way, we can begin to comprehend the ways in which the personal and the (geo-) political, the proximal and the distal, come together to help shape our decisions over whether or not to migrate and how and where we might go.

*Commentary:*

In this section, I have begun to draw out certain general themes in the trajectories of academic migration – or at least of the academic migrants interviewed here. Whilst I hope I have illustrated that there are determinable commonalities to aspects of such movements and that, as we will come to see, these are notably different to other types of migrations, I do not want to suggest that this means that we can speak of a uniform academic migration – or even homogeneous academic migrations – to the UK. Robyn Iredale, amongst others (see, e.g. Kofman 2000), has noted that a number of studies have demonstrated, 'the unique situation that pertains in each professional arena and therefore the need to differentiate by profession when examining skilled migration' (2001: 15). A point which Louise Ackers and

her collaborators have extended to differentiate between mobility patterns across a variety of academic disciplines (Ackers 2005; Ackers and Gill 2005). While this is certainly true to some extent – though my pool of interviewees was far too small to draw out any substantial differences at such levels – we must also be aware of both the disparities within our group which stretch across a considerable array of variables; as will be discussed in later chapters, gender, life course, class, marital status, even personality, have profound effects on the trajectories of individual migrations. Equally, we must defend against the temptation to infer causality from the ‘noise’ and chaos of these migration experiences; on numerous occasions, interviewees impressed on me that they had no over-arching plan – they had overall ideas of where they would like to get to but, as one put it, mobility can be as much about, ‘surfing your horizons’ as it is about getting that elusive chair. Rather, such trajectories are as much about taking advantage of the opportunities that become available and, in this way, these routes are influenced by a variety of external events, some personal – like Zoran’s wife’s illness – others structural – like the ‘opening up’ of the EU to free labour mobility. Therefore, what we are viewing is the interplay of the personal and the structural in forming our *potential* courses of action; such interplay produces the topography of the landscape we navigate and these interactions generate certain routes which are easier to traverse than others. This cannot be simplistically translated from one context to another, but the wide-reaching effects of certain factors suggest that there will be commonalities between individual topographic landscapes (and thus individual migration routes) amongst those in similar roles<sup>94</sup>.

### **MIGRATION TRAJECTORIES BEYOND THE ACADEMY – ‘LOW SKILLED’ MOBILITY?**

How then might we begin to envisage the commonalities amongst the rest of our migrant cohort? Indeed, is it acceptable to consider them a cohort at all in this instance? Our only rationale at present for arranging them so is that they are *not* academics – a unity drawn from what they are not, rather than what they are. This clearly needs correction, so I will begin

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<sup>94</sup> In such a way we can hear the echoes of Changeux’s concept of an ‘envelope’ of possible human cognitive development within a shared environment, which was discussed in Chapter 1

this section by drawing out some general demographic information<sup>95</sup>.

Of the nineteen interviews in this category, ten were with women and nine with men, broadly reflecting the relatively even gender balance of current international migration to the South West (see Chapter 2). A substantial majority of those interviewed were from Poland (16 of 19), reflecting the recruitment methods explored in the previous chapter, with one research participant a piece from Turkey, Slovakia and Germany (each of whom had significant precursory migrations). In terms of current employment, the majority (12 of 19) worked in routine or process occupations – i.e. in roles ascribed to major groups 8 and 9 in the Office for National Statistics Standard Occupation Classification 2000 (SOC) – within which employment in food processing (7 of 12) was paramount. Of these twelve, just three were women (two of whom worked in a factory making and packaging cosmetics – a role previously occupied by a number of women, and a handful of men, in the study), and only one of the seven interviewees employed at a chicken processing plant was female. All nine men interviewed were employed in elementary (SOC 8 or 9) roles. A further two women were employed in secretarial or administrative roles (SOC 4), with the remaining five women working in associate professional or technical occupations (SOC 3) – four were Community Workers (including the Turkish and German participants), with the other working as a Dental Technician.

In terms of qualifications, thirteen (eight women, five men) were educated to at least the equivalent of an honours degree (with four having gained the equivalent of a Master's degree), all but two of whom had worked in an elementary or routine role after migrating to the UK. Indeed, seven of these graduates still worked in such roles, including all the men; a remarkably high number considering the routine nature of these posts. A further three men had craft or technical qualifications, all of whom currently worked in routine occupations. The remaining two were educated to the equivalent of GCSE and 'A' level respectively, with both currently working towards further qualifications.<sup>96</sup>

This immediately highlights two points of interest; firstly, it is inadequate to refer to 'low-skilled migrants' in this case, as the majority are relatively highly qualified (see also Anderson et al. 2006; May et al. 2007). Secondly, there seems to be a clear separation between men and

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<sup>95</sup> In depth demographic information is included in Appendices 6 and 7.

<sup>96</sup> The Polish equivalent of 'A' levels, the *Matura*, and a BA through the Open University.

women in regards to post-migration upward employment mobility; none of the men, whatever their level of qualification, had managed to 'break out' of routine or elementary occupations. Why were so many highly qualified migrants working in such roles, and why were women more able to move on 'up' the job ladder? In order to answer these questions, it is first necessary to look at some more characteristics of how this cohort came to be in the UK.

### *Routes:*

In terms of routes into the UK labour market, we can determine two broad paths – migrating with a job already secured and migrating without one. Within these, we can produce a number of sub-sets which tell us something of the topography of contemporary labour migrations to the South West. Firstly, there is 'direct recruitment' to UK-based jobs in a migrant's 'home' country. This was the pathway many of our academic cohort followed, but it was relatively rare in the non-academic group, occurring just twice – 'Jan' got a job as a Baker with a major UK supermarket chain via their website, whilst 'Józef' arranged a post at a chicken factory via family already in the UK. Secondly, there were a number of instances of 'mediated' recruitment prior to leaving 'home' – either via specialist agencies (often recruiting via the internet), focusing on certain, typically shortage, occupational areas, such as Au Pairs, Bus Drivers, Dental Services and so on – or through generalist agencies, which collect registrations in the 'home' country and match them with vacancies at businesses who contact them, often charging a 'placement' fee but not acting as employment agencies as such (i.e. the 'placed' worker is then employed by the organisation rather than the agency). This route was followed by four of the research participants, two taking placements as Au Pairs with UK families, one taking up employment as a Dental Technician, and one being placed with a UK factory prior to moving.

A more common route was to migrate prior to securing a job. In these cases, many moved with the firm idea that there was employment to be had – either via promises (all too often not backed up in reality) of pseudo-agents, or via the recommendations of friends and families. Such moves often left the migrant open to disappointment or exploitation once



they arrived. For example, Marcin and a friend were working as galvanisers in a small industrial town in northern Poland shortly after their country acceded to the EU, when they were told of an opportunity to come to the UK to work – all they needed to do was place a deposit with an ‘agent’ who could guarantee them work in a market garden in the South of England after they had made their own way to the UK. However, as in so many cases, particularly in the years immediately after accession, things were not as promised:

*... the agency, which was supposed to give us a job, tricked us... so we were waiting for three weeks for a job.*

- ‘Marcin’

During this period Marcin and his friend continued to pay the agency some £260 per week to cover accommodation and the administration of their job search. Despite the illegality of this, Marcin felt he had no choice but to continue this arrangement – *‘We have to pay them because they find us job’*. Indeed, the agency continued to take illegal payments from them after placing them in a job. Eventually, Marcin and his friends were able to secure help from a local trade union representative – the story eventually making the national press in both the UK and Poland:

*There was lots of drama, attention, devoted to this agency – The Guardian made an article about how this agency treats people. In Gazeta Wyborcza [Polish ‘broadsheet’] was also an article about the story. They put our pictures in those newspapers.<sup>97</sup>*

- ‘Marcin’

Whilst this story garnered a significant amount of press coverage at the time, it was not particularly unusual; many research participants reported similar stories of their ignorance of employment law in the UK being exploited by certain agencies in both the UK and in Poland (see also Anderson et al. 2006; Ruhs 2006). However, it was not only questionable practices by employment agencies which could lead to insecure or no work; as ‘Tomasz’

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<sup>97</sup> See Lawrence (2005) for more details.

explains, even though friends and family may attempt to help, the ‘flexible’ nature of ‘low-skill’ work in the UK often meant promised opportunities could vanish all too easily:

*... My mother lives here, so I expected she would help me a bit to find a job. However, it all became a bit more complicated when we got here.*

AR: *How come?*

*When we got here, we did not have the job completely set. Our employer demanded home-office, so we spend all the money for a month of renting a flat. So we spend a month doing nothing [because no job materialised].*

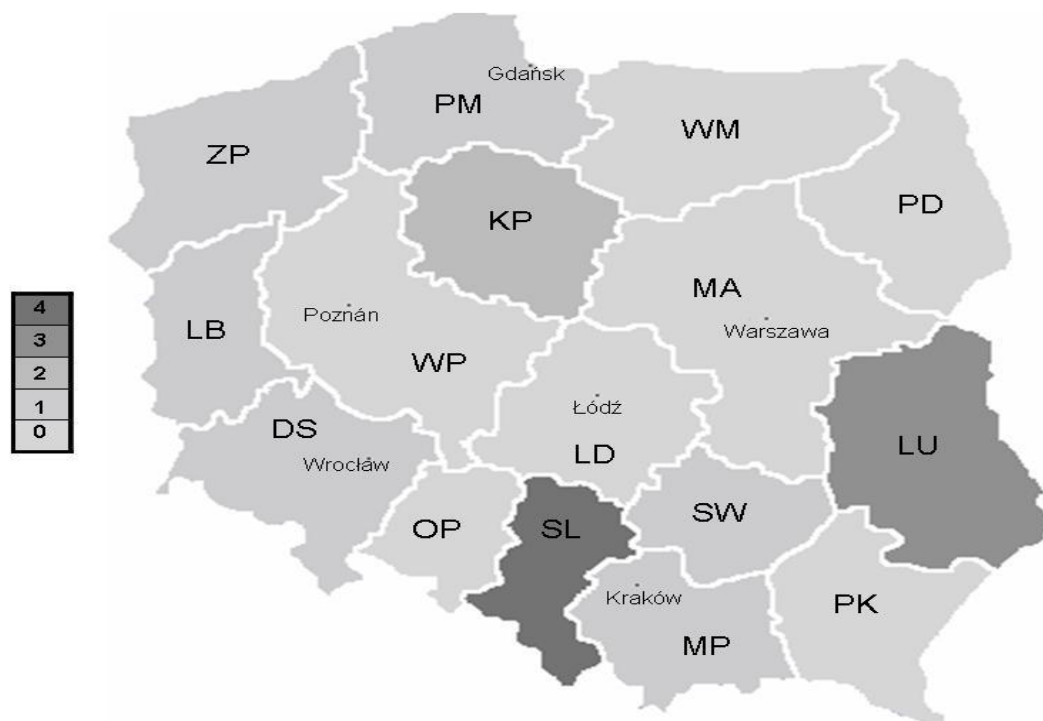
- ‘Tomasz’

However, whilst such situations were all too common, there were many I spoke to who managed to secure acceptable jobs through mobilising social networks, often of friends and families already in the UK. These were characteristically in migrant-heavy industries, which offered low wages (by UK standards) and routine work *but* suffered because of this in terms of attracting labour and thus were keen to take on willing workers with or without good language skills or experience in the particular sector (see also Stenning and Dawley 2009). In this way, we can see such social networks as acting as conduits to the (low-end) of the local labour markets for new arrivals; a process which, over time, begins to replicate itself and produce concentrations of migrants in certain industries (see, e.g. Waldinger and Lichter 2003) – a point to which I shall return in the following chapter.

However, whilst such social network approaches to migration – and the closely allied notion of ‘chain’ migration – have tended to unveil clear parallels between certain towns, villages or families in ‘sending’ societies and areas and occupations in the ‘receiving’ society (see, e.g. Durand and Massey 1992; Gardner 1995; Wilson 1994), no such clear geographies are present here. Whilst the majority of migrants to the South West come from Poland, at a sub-national level they resided across a range of Poland’s Voivodeships (Provinces, *Województwo*) prior to moving. Though there were concentrations in peripheral heavy-industrial areas in the south, such as Silesia (*Śląskie*, SL), and rural areas in the far east, such as Lubelskie (LU,

see Figure 5.1 below), these did not follow any broad pattern in terms of point to point networks or chain migrations. Although, there was a tendency for migrants to come from areas with lower than average rates of employment (see Grabowska-Lusinska 2007: 5), no migrants were encountered from the two Voivodeships that may have been most expected to ‘send’ migrants to the UK – Opolskie (OP) (high unemployment, large declining industrial base, high historic rate of emigration) and Podkarpackie (PD) (high unemployment, large declining agricultural base, high historic rate of emigration) (ibid: *passim*) – suggesting that migration to the UK – or at least the South West – wasn’t a predictable matter of push and pull factors. Indeed, as a number of authors have noted previously, migration networks are complex, emergent and fluid, rather than predictable or static (Brettell 2000: 107; Gardner 2008; Wilson 1994: 275), and that this can have a dramatic impact on the development of economic, social and kin ties between networked areas (see, e.g. Ballard 2001).

**Figure 4.1:** Concentration of Polish interviewees by most recent Voivodeship of Residence<sup>98</sup>



<sup>98</sup> Acronyms for Voivodeships are annotated in the text where relevant.

We must also inquire as to why international migrants, who we have already seen are often highly qualified, accept work in such routine or elementary occupations. Partly, this has to do with the ease of employment in these areas – the structuring of the labour markets in the South West, as with the rest of the UK, is such that the quickest and easiest way to get work is through employment agencies. As Alison Stenning and Stuart Dawley have pointed out in their analysis of A8 migration to the North East of England, '[t]he use of agency routes into work seems to promote low-skill, temporary, low-paid work in light industrial and routine service work...' (2009: 288). In the same study, the authors noted three reasons given by recruitment agents for this – firstly, there were linguistic barriers, secondly, many Polish qualifications were not directly recognised (officially or otherwise) by UK employers and finally, there was a prevalent 'work first' attitude amongst migrant workers (meaning that they were more concerned about getting rapid access to paid work, rather than waiting for a more 'suitable' position to arise) (ibid: 286). Notwithstanding the potential for agencies to place naïve recent arrivals in jobs they found most difficult to fill, my research indicates that there *some* truth to these assertions. Though all but three non-academic interviewees reported speaking some English when they first arrived, the majority (12 of 19) had only basic school-level knowledge. However, those with a good level of English language fluency on arrival (including 'Marek', who had worked as translator of technical documents in his native Slovakia) fared no better, reporting the same difficulties in finding employment outside routine, agency-sourced roles. Indeed, it appeared that employers valued them in these roles because such skilled linguists could work as unpaid translators for their new migrant labour force:

*Initially, I worked so many hours because the agency was satisfied with my work and they knew if they put some Slovakian, or some other nationality [Marek speaks English, Slovakian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish and some Russian] with me who could not speak English, they could work... Just because of my presence here, people got jobs, and even now there are people who do not speak English, but they are full-time employees here, because they find out it is possible to have people with no English, as long as we have one or two people with reasonable English. It was, I was, like the ice-breaker here.*

- 'Marek'

However, by the time I came to interview them, most of those participating in this research had significantly improved their English, with the majority (12 of 19) now reporting that they either had English language skills at a level which could be considered intermediate (i.e. they were able to conduct everyday activities such as ordering in a restaurant, talking to employees, holding simple conversations with some idiomatic phrases) or high (i.e. they were able to converse freely in English, with a good grasp of idiomatic phrases, and technical speech in their area of expertise). Indeed, four had qualified as Community Interpreters, despite the widespread feeling that the structure of local migrant labour markets made it difficult for many people to learn English. The nature of the jobs available meant that many were working unsociable hours, shift patterns or were in insecure employment; meaning finding time to attend the few free English-language classes available was difficult. Furthermore, the concentrations of migrant labour in many of these occupations meant opportunities to practice English were few and far between:

A.R. *Do you use English at work?*

*I try, but 95% of the people at my work are Polish, so I don't even get the chance to speak and learn English. Everyone speaks Polish.*

- 'Marcin'

There is less evidence, however, as to why many of those to whom I spoke were still in these 'entry-level' posts despite their improved English; of the twelve interviewees still working in routine or elementary occupations, half had an intermediate or high level of spoken English, with a further five nearing an intermediate level. Of the three who had managed to move from such employment to 'higher' roles, all had a very high level of spoken English and were trained as Community Interpreters. This indicates the level of English needed to 'escape' such jobs is exceptionally high, strongly suggesting there may be factors other than language at work. Indeed, it was remarkable how few routes out of migrant-heavy employment areas there appeared to be – the only alternative jobs secured by participants in this research were roles in which the native language skills of the employee were paramount – in recruitment

agencies with high proportions of migrant workers on their books, or as Community Workers, often working with speakers of their own language. This forcefully points towards the existence of a segmented labour market in the South West, with migrant workers finding it difficult to break out of low-skill roles and, even when they do, finding only narrow routes 'out' in certain (apparently female dominated) roles, acting as mediators between 'their' community and the 'host' community and/or employers. Such a situation brings to mind the arguments of numerous authors focusing on bifurcated, or dual, migrant labour markets (see, e.g. May et al. 2007; Sassen 1998, 2001) and will be investigated in more depth in the following chapter.

In terms of the recognition of qualifications, the initial evidence is unequally unclear – whilst there are some areas where certain overseas qualifications are *not* recognised, it is often the case that the processes of recognising someone as suitably qualified to do a certain job is decided on a more ad-hoc and contextual basis. Indeed, what seemed vital to gaining a position equivalent to your level of qualification seems to be as much about the route taken to that post than about the qualification itself. In other words, what matters is the *trajectory* of migration – the network through which you migrated and the initial post taken. For example, all those who took up posts equivalent to their qualifications did so after securing them prior to migrating. They could therefore be said to have moved on a professional trajectory. Moving outside such a network appeared to make it much more difficult to subsequently break back in to the kind of role you may expect to hold because of your level of qualification or skill. This is not simply a matter of what skill level you operate at – people are directly recruited to posts as Academics, Bus Drivers and Dental Technicians, yet Doctors, Train Drivers and Teachers report finding it difficult to work in their chosen profession in the UK if they have moved to initially take up work in 'low-skill' sectors – but can be related to the way 'migrant labour' is conceptualised and institutionalised in the UK labour market, as 'Esin' explains:

*The Psychologist – 'Nina' – she could speak really good English, but... it is not just... the language is not the problem, you know? They... I mean, this all agencies, you know? If you go to them, and your English is not really perfect – your native language – they ignore you. Like... like, this easy... they don't look for you a better job, you know?*

[...]

*My husband was GP and they, you know, they don't take it in... in... how do you say?*

HV: *Into account?*

*Yes... and you know England, er, brings in a lot GPs to the country because they don't have enough GP, and they pay a lot money, you know? [...] We have here refugees – really professional – Doctors, yeah – doesn't matter for them, you know?*

[...]

*Yeah, and it's not easy – for example, teachers, they have a lot of problem because there is no organisation to help them... get their diplomas recognised, you know? It's a long way; you have to wait on the 'phone maybe three hours ... and when you are working as cleaner, you know, after a while you don't care... OK, you have your £500 and that's it, you know, you get really tired from this system.*

- 'Esin'

Therefore, international migrants to the UK are often left with a two-fold challenge to getting their qualifications recognised – firstly, the onus often appears to be on the job applicant, rather than the potential employer, to get their qualification recognised, often via complex and confusing systems and agencies. Secondly, there appears to be a tendency amongst employment agents to view all migrant workers as largely suitable for 'low-skill' and 'hard to fill' vacancies, and not to encourage them to use their skills and qualifications to gain entry to more suitable posts. This allows the agencies to fill the maximum number of posts in the shortest period of time, but it also allows the newly arrived worker to quickly get to work and to start earning money; an understandable wish considering the often relatively high costs of migrating to new country and the expectations of those at 'home' for you to begin earning as soon as possible. However, this 'work first' attitude, though prevalent amongst those I interviewed, was just that, a work *first* attitude; it did not mean they did not wish to eventually secure jobs in their chosen field (which was rarely in 'low-skill' routine occupations). Many saw this as an opportunity to earn money whilst they improved their English and adjusted to life in the UK – as human-capital theorists would suggest is required

before new migrants can fully operationalise their skills and qualifications (see, e.g. Duvander 2001):

A.R: *Tell me about your plans for the future.*

*First of all I want to change my job. I gave myself a little bit of time for that because of my English. I will see later, if I can get the job that I want.*

- 'Kryzstof'

However, this is not to say that they were happy to stay in posts at the bottom of the labour market; many were ambitious to improve their situation and get a better post, whether that was in the UK or at 'home' (see also Anderson et al. 2006; Ruhs 2006; Sachdev and Harries 2006):

A.R: *Do you feel you are using your skills and knowledge in your current job?*

*No, because I think that picking... it's just one thing I can do in my life. My ambitions are higher and I expect more from my workplace and myself. I would like to have a more creative job, where I can have challenges and where I can 'grow up'.*

- 'Tomasz'

Therefore, we can only view these three 'barriers' to work outside of the 'low-skill' sector as a partial explanation of the situation many of those interviewed for this research found themselves in. Both the institutional structuring of local labour markets (McGovern 2007), commonly held assumptions about 'migrant workers' (Waldinger and Lichter 2003), and the actions and reactions of the workers themselves (McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2007), came together to form complex, but not necessarily random, trajectories of migration. Additionally, this process only truly began to occur for the majority of those I spoke to *after* a further structural change – the accession of ten states to the EU in 2004 – and the



resultant transformation of the rights of workers from these states to enjoy (relative) freedom of movement and labour within the EU. Furthermore, the decision of many other EU member states initially to severely limit this right also provided a structural imperative for many A8 migrants to move to the UK, rather than Germany for example.<sup>99</sup> However, in order to explore *why* the research participants came to the UK (rather than the routes they took) we need to turn our attention to the question of motivation.

*Expectations of money? Motivation and migration beyond the academy:*

As with the academic cohort, a host of reasons to move were narrated by those interviewed, often cutting against the prosaic assumptions contained within the term ‘economic migrant’. There were those, such as ‘Jan’, who ached for a new experience, an adventure:

*When my Dad was my age, he also set out on an adventure to the West – West of Poland. He left Pomorskie Voivodeship and went to Śląskie [Silesia] but, at this time in history, it was a big event. In a way, I did the same – to my abilities.*

- ‘Krzysztof’

For many, such an adventure was also seen as a potential avenue for self-improvement through romanticised notions of experiencing a new culture and environment. However, there was rarely any sense of the UK, England or the South West being viewed as an idealised Albion; it may have been seen as ‘exotic’, even beautiful (though the ‘constant rain’ alarmed many) and the people polite and helpful, but no one spoke of the UK as a place of dreams. The draw was not necessarily the country itself; it was the opportunity for adventure and advancement, the realisations of dreams and ambitions. However, whilst the UK may not have been a draw in and of itself, one of its languages certainly was – a substantial number of interviewees were at least partially driven by the desire to learn and improve their

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<sup>99</sup> Of the four interviewees from A8 states who had previously lived and worked in a foreign country, all three Polish nationals had been resident in Germany.

English which, as was frequently noted, holds importance beyond merely being able to converse in the UK:

*It [English] is a powerful language, important all over the world.*

- 'Tomasz'

*Honestly, I came for – the first aim was to come improve language, because that was the... [it's] a really good idea if you want find a really good job in my country.*

- 'Anna'

Equally, many had chosen to come to the UK *because* they spoke some English. Therefore, just as with the academics interviewed, linguistic ability was often – though certainly not always – a determining factor in whether people moved to the UK as opposed to another country. In a similar way to the academics, the ability to speak English combined with the relative geographic closeness to 'home' (and, undoubtedly, the 'free' labour mobility within the EU) to make the UK an attractive destination:

*My Mum persuaded me that England is closer than the USA – where I wanted to go in the first place. Also I have an Aunt over here, although she is not very close family, she is there just in case.*

- 'Barbara'

Beyond these personal ambitions, many first arrived because their partner had secured, or wished to secure, a job in the UK. Whilst for several this was a joint decision, with both wanting to move, others suggested that they came largely because of their partner:

*I didn't come to England because I wanted to earn some money. I just come to the UK because of husband, my fiancé – it used to be my fiancée there – so he came here because he found a job [...] and that is why I actually came to the UK.*

- 'Ewa'

Such a diversity of motivations to migrate to the UK as outlined in these quotes were commonplace and often co-existed. However, it was noticeable that a narrative of coming to the UK to get work and earn money was regularly mobilised alongside other motivational factors; the earning potential of jobs in the UK as compared to ‘home’ was a regularly utilised idiom, particularly amongst male participants (see also Gardner 2002; Osella and Osella 2000):

A.R: *Why did you come to the UK?*

*Money. One simply needs money. Wants to buy something new for himself, to have a better life. Also, I had a girlfriend at that point and she wanted to travel too – we planned to make a trip to Scotland.*

*We came with a big crew of friends. We all wanted to make money. I calculated that, if I work for three months in England, I would be able to live off that for one year in Poland and support myself and my sister.*

- ‘Tomasz’

However, as with the comment above, this was rarely expressed purely in an economic sense. Ambitions to ‘get on’ and improve their station were commonplace, particularly amongst younger migrants, though these dialogues were often tinged with a sadness that such goals could not be achieved at ‘home’:

*The choice of work [in Poland] is limited. People who finish University don’t have a job – I’ve noticed that in Poland so many people go to University but, after, they can’t find a job. You can work in a shop but you are too qualified for it, and this is a problem.*

[...]

*I worked in Poland, but the money for my job was no good. I worked nights some times, so I was really busy. I didn’t even have time for my family. I couldn’t meet our basic financial needs.*

- ‘Malgorzata’

Many others spoke in terms of providing for family at ‘home’ – an idiom of transnational migration noted elsewhere (Datta et al. 2008; Gardner 2006) but often neglected in the way we think about migration in *economic* terms:

A.R: *Why did you come to England if you were happy in Poland?*

*To make a living. I have a girlfriend, I have a child... She couldn't work at this time and it was hard to find a good job. I felt like I needed lots of money to support all of us... I didn't want to ask others for help.*

- ‘Artur’

Whilst, as Linda McDowell has noted, ‘it is self evident that different sets of opportunities related to economic development and relative income levels between regions and nation states are a key explanatory factor in the size and direction of economic migration flows’ (2008: 495), it is not (as McDowell goes on to point out) the only determinant. As I argued in Chapter 1, we cannot simply understand international migration as a function of factor-price equalisation – whereby ‘labour’ (i.e. people) is attracted to high-income areas until an over-supply forces wages down in the ‘receiving’ area, and labour shortages and other related factors (such as remittances) push them up in the ‘sending’ society, gradually decreasing the motivation to migrate until it returns to a (low) equilibrium. Whilst, within an EU boasting relatively free movement of labour, this is certainly partially accurate – prompting some alarm in the UK as to the possibilities of losing the ‘Polish workforce’ (see, e.g. Cox 2008) as the zloty-pound exchange rate equalises, and the Polish government makes attempts to attract workers ‘home’ (see, e.g. Easton 2008).<sup>100</sup> People may move because they feel they need to make money, provide for their family, improve their future prospects, have an adventure, escape from troubles back ‘home’, ‘find themselves’. These motivating factors co-exist and play upon one another, producing multiple strings of meaning as to an individual’s migratory trajectory. The way in which such phenomena interact and develop alters across life-course, between genders and across spectrums of class and nation, but they do not

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<sup>100</sup> When Poland acceded to the EU on the 1st of May 2004, the inter-bank exchange rate was approximately 7z to £1, on the exact date five years later, the rate was just under 5z to £1, a significant change but not as radical as has sometimes been suggested.

always do so in a straight-forward or predictable manner. Financial betterment (or even improved 'human capital') may be part of the story of 'economic' migrations, but it must never be viewed as the whole of the story.

*Commentary:*

Migration 'beyond the academy' is therefore influenced by as diverse a range of motivations as those affecting the mobile scholars covered in the first part of this chapter. However, there were discernable differences in initial migration routes, particularly in terms of the ways in which jobs were secured, and in subsequent trajectories. In this way, we may understand these migrants as existing in a slightly different topographical landscape to our academics; one in which the relative ease or difficulty of certain routes is altered. Whilst the elements which produce such a topography are unchanged, they are arranged differently. In both groups the motivation to migrate was driven by factors that were not merely economic – a sense of adventure, relationships, professional ambition, significant geopolitical changes, even simple curiosity all played a part in why people moved. However, in much of the current migration literature, the recognition of this is skewed towards highly skilled migrations. There is a tendency to fall into the trap of reproducing an unhelpful dichotomy between highly skilled migrants (HSMs) and other less skilled migrants (or, more accurately, migrants working in less skilled roles). In a sense this is a replication of the duality at the heart of much debate about contemporary global migrations – that there is a small elite of highly skilled migrants, criss-crossing the globe filling key positions in Western knowledge economies. They are celebrated by pervasive discourses in both academia and in social policy (see, e.g. Florida 2002; Stenning and Dawley 2009: 281) which position them as key brokers of knowledge (Coe and Bunnell 2003; Jöns 2009), producers of wealth, expertise and entrepreneurship in both their 'home' country and receiving societies (Iredale 2001: 17; Moses 2006: 123). They are, in essence, the new Argonauts of the knowledge society; the ultimate cosmopolitans (Friedman 1997; Saxenian 2006). Conversely, migrants who do not fit into these idealised vision of mobile knowledge creators are all too often defined as a 'warm body', an undifferentiated mass suitable only to fill the lowest echelons of the labour

market, to do those jobs too dirty, dull or demeaning for the native workforce. Furthermore, by concentrating on labour market and economic elements of these migrations, there is a tendency to construct an idea of quintessentially *economic* mobility (McGovern 2007), whether that is construed in terms of precarious employment (Anderson 2007), regional development (Stenning and Dawley 2009), or dual migrant labour markets (Ellis, Wright, and Parks 2007; May et al. 2007; Sassen 1998, 2001; Wills et al. 2009). Whilst, these debates are vital to our understanding of contemporary migration, they do illustrate the distinct ways academics write about ‘different’ types of mobility. HSMs are creative, entrepreneurial and cosmopolitan; non-HSMs are at risk of exploitation, work in mundane roles and rely on transnational (but not cosmopolitan) networks of care and support. In essence, the division of writing on different types of mobility may simply be a matter of varying ideological emphases, but it often acts as another unhelpful dichotomy in a discipline plagued by a history of heuristic divides (King 2002: 91). Such a binary is unhelpful in a number of ways; it implies a negation of the knowledge and skills of migrants working in less skilled occupations, ignoring the qualifications and abilities of these workers. Secondly, it fails to critically engage with the ways in which such dichotomies are actively (re)produced through on-going and everyday activities (though see McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2007). Therefore, we need to remain aware of both the similarities and the differences between various ‘forms’ of migration and to keep hold of the flimsiness of such categorisations. Complex processes such as international migration have a tendency to escape any rhetorical or theoretical categorisations we wish to impose. Yet, conversely, such classifications can often become reified and taken as real, implying they retain, ‘the discursive power to shape material processes’ (Dicken et al. 2001: 89).

### **POWERFUL TRAJECTORIES – ROUTES REVISITED:**

If we are to avoid simplistic binaries along the lines of HSM/non-HSM, how are we to understand the experiences outlined in this chapter? For there *were* differences in both initial routes and resultant trajectories of migration, which go beyond personal variation and happenstance. As I argue above, we can utilise the metaphor of variable topographies of migration, limiting certain opportunities and encouraging others. This is not simply a matter

of free choice on behalf of the migrant, nor is it just the cold hand of the international capitalist system forcing our everyday decisions towards an inevitable conclusion. Rather, we are dealing with a multifaceted nexus of differently powered 'forces' that is both emergent and transformative. Furthermore, it varies across space and time, it is both place-specific (that is it takes on certain 'local' forms) and relational (in that it is formed by connections which cut across 'place'); it is both fixed and transitory, turbulent and petrifying. It is complex.

This can be further illustrated by a brief discussion of two related ways of theorising migration. Firstly, analysts of migration traditionally made the distinction between temporary migrants – who moved to another area or country for a specific duration – and permanent migrants – who intend to settle somewhere. However, as King (2002: 93) has noted, this is an over-simplistic division, 'the time-space continuum of migration/mobility is truly continuous...' Migrants resident in a country for many years still yearn to return home, whilst for other 'temporary' migrants, 'home' may be a concept that has become ever more mobile, increasingly neither 'here' nor 'there', a series of negotiations between the reality of 'here' and memories of an idealised, imaginary 'home' (ibid; see also Gardner 2002: *passim*). Therefore, it would seem logical to talk not of temporary and permanent migration but of various expressions of a more pervasive *mobility*. This is the position taken by John Urry (2000, 2007) in a series of books and articles in which mobility becomes both a metaphor and an expression of contemporary life. Such new forms of movement – powered by the growth of the internet, cheap international flights and telephone calls, increased movement of people and things – are the epitome of our globalised society. Thus theorists must adapt accordingly, 'connecting the analysis of different forms of travel, transport and communication with the multiple ways in which economic and social life is performed and organised through time and across various spaces' (2007: 6). Such an emphasis on an encompassing mobility certainly avoids a simplistic separation between different types of migration, for everyone in Urry's conceptualisation of the world is to some degree mobile. However, there is a need, as King points out, to avoid being, 'carried away by such hyperbole' (2002: 101), forgetting the very powerful influences on our ability to enact different forms of mobility. The mobilities paradigm, in common with a number of network-based theories, has a suspect tendency to downplay the political – or rather the differential and uneven distribution of power relations within a system (see, e.g. Allen 2003).

I mean this in the sense that there are some things (migration rules, labour market institutions, the ability to speak a language) that affect our migration trajectories very differently from others. Furthermore, we are not simply dealing with a flattened network of relations, but a multiplicity of differentially powered ‘forces’ hierarchically arranged across time and space, that are organised in an interconnected and, at times, turbulent system (Papastergiadis 2004). Sometimes this system can appear set and consistent – in a state of maximum entropy – whilst at others, the same system with the same component parts can be thrown into rapid change (turbulence) through apparently minor changes, before moving again towards a state of high entropy, albeit with a different arrangement of forces.

In a similar way, we can begin to trace, through the testimonials contained within this chapter, the way in which the interactions of such forces through the migration process produce very different outcomes for different migrants. Here, the interplay and development of pre-existing labour market institutions in the UK and elsewhere, social and professional networks and politico-legal structures came together to begin to form new migrant labour markets in the South West of England. Whilst these cannot be considered ‘set’ in any meaningful sense, it is clear that they have a significant influence over the trajectories of migration, dependent particularly on a migrant’s initial route to the UK and the resultant networks (social, professional and labour market) that this allows access to. Indeed, there are striking parallels with the dual migrant labour markets outlined in a number of studies of ‘global cities’ (Sassen 2001; Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Wills et al. 2009). How such an apparent petrification of trajectories of migration came to be is a question that shall be addressed in the following chapter<sup>101</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> Which, in some senses, could be viewed as cutting against my prior argument regarding the fluid interplay of ‘forces’.



*Chapter 6*

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**Work:**

**Migrant labour markets**

*There's no such thing as being starved and*

*crossed;*

*It's just the power of some to be a boss,*

*And the bally power of others to be bossed:*

- John Davidson, from *Thirty Bob a Week* (Barber 2007: 127)

In the previous chapter, I explored the ways in which different initial trajectories of movement strongly informed the ways in which particular migration experiences would develop. Central to this was the type of work migrants were likely to find themselves carrying out; those who had moved through professional networks were more able to utilise their skills and knowledge than those who had moved via social networks, or had not secured a job prior to migrating. This chapter is intended to further investigate these intersections in order to follow up the assertion, introduced in the previous chapter, that the topographical arrangement of differently powered 'forces' in 'local' labour markets was beginning to produce an effective stratification and 'freezing' of migration trajectories to the region<sup>102</sup>. My focus, therefore, will be on work and labour markets, in order to investigate how these trajectories develop once jobs have been secured, what these jobs actually consist of, and how labour markets affect (and are affected by) migration experiences.

To entertain these questions, we must, of course, explore the narratives of the research participants. Equally, however, there is a need to engage with a series of current academic

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<sup>102</sup> In fact, what we are investigating in this chapter is this concept applied to the labour market and work once people have moved to the UK; therefore, rather than writing of the 'freezing', or petrification, of migration *trajectories*, shouldn't I be writing of migration *outcomes*? Whilst this would be a fair comment if we were to consider that every aspect of that migrant's life had come to rest, it is less accurate when we cannot make this assumption. Indeed, as we can never realistically assume this, it is best to continue writing of trajectories (or moments within an unknown trajectory of migration) rather than outcomes as such.

debates which inform much of what is currently being written on the relationships between work, labour markets and migration. Therefore, the first part of this chapter seeks to explore the 'lived realities' of work for international migrants to the South West of England through the narratives of research participants working in both 'low' and 'high' skilled roles. Additionally, the discussions of these narratives necessitate engaging with some relevant contemporary debates in migration and labour market studies, including the role of agencies in 'post-Fordist' labour markets (Garapich 2008; McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2008; Stenning and Dawley 2009), notions of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism and their relevance to understanding differing forms of migrant labour markets (Cheah 2006; Friedman 1997; Jöns 2009; Meyer, Kaplan, and Charum 2001; Werbner 2008).

These lead into broader discussions of a number of key academic discussions of this subject – the notion of dual migrant labour markets (Ellis, Wright, and Parks 2007; May et al. 2007; Sassen 1998, 2001; Wills et al. 2009) and related studies of how labour markets are ethnically segmented, place-contingent and dynamically produced (Bauder 2006; McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2007; Waldinger and Lichter 2003); the implications of viewing labour markets as socially embedded and constructed (Bauder 2006; Bourdieu 2005; Roediger 2005; Waldinger and Lichter 2003) and a consideration of whether this lends itself to an understanding of them as performative or 'enacted' (Callon 2007; Law and Urry 2004; MacKenzie and Millo 2003).

In conclusion, this requires an outlining of how we might approach 'migrant labour markets', among other things, as complex arrangements of differently powered 'forces', entwining 'actors' and 'structures', the 'proximate' and the 'distal' into evolving topographies that shape (and are shaped by) our everyday practices and 'common-sense assumptions' (Gramsci 1971) about work, migration and the worlds (social, political, economic) which we inhabit. This makes necessary a brief detour to consider some aspects of Michel Foucault's notion of power/knowledge (1980) and its interpretation by Gilles Deleuze (1988), as well as returning to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' and its social reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), before utilising Michel de Certeau's (1984) notion of 'walking the city' to outline how we might to begin to understand how such situations 'come to be'. Finally, I turn to interpretations of complexity theory by social scientists such as John Law and Annemarie Mol (2002) to consider how these ideas can be utilised alongside Foucault and

Bourdieu to begin to conceptualise ‘the complex work of migration’.

### **INTRODUCTION – WORK AND MIGRATION:**

Before we address such theoretical discussions, let’s return to the landscape of labour markets and their relationship to international migration in the South West. Whilst this was touched on in the previous chapter, it is a useful to take a closer look at the work being done by research participants and how this fits into the topography of work in the South West. Again, I shall begin by looking at our two groups – ‘academic’ / ‘non-academic’ – separately, before bringing them back together for a discussion of some key theoretical concepts and their relation to the specifics of this research. Let’s concentrate initially on those working outside academia in largely ‘low-skill’ roles.

#### *Mundane labour, precarious work and the role of agencies:*

For those arriving in the UK to find work, the fact that they ended up in jobs that might be described as low-skilled was not entirely surprising to most of them; many to whom I spoke had a general idea of the types of jobs that would be most readily available to them – after all, they often had friends or relatives who had been to work in the UK previously. For many who would go on to work in such roles it was the chance to earn higher wages than at home that was the attraction, rather than any immediate desire to secure a ‘dream job’:

*It is difficult in Poland to find a position that would give you a good salary. You can work for stores like Tesco or Biedronka and make about 700 zloty a month. Here, you can triple this amount by cleaning houses or offices.*

- ‘Tomasz’

*When you work at the factory in England, you would be able to stay at quite a good level. You can survive. Even if it's like the basic rate you can use those monies to go on holiday – you don't have to worry that you don't have money for food, or clothes for your children, for basic life. But it's still the basic kind of work as in Poland. It is a factory job, but a different level of surviving.*

[...]

*If you work at a factory in Poland you never think about going on holiday, you have to think about how I'm going to find money for a coat for the winter, for my children, when I don't have money for food at the end of the month. So it's different.*

- 'Ewa'

However, this willingness to engage in low-skill, low status, work did not always mean that those to whom I spoke were unsurprised at the reality of working in this kind of field. For many this came as a disappointment – work in the UK was, in some ways, no different to home:

*When I was thinking about working for an English company, I expected that everything would be so ideal, so organised, and nothing would be missing. After a while, it came up that it is the same crap. It was irritating that there is no main regulation here; in Poland, I got used to work based on a set of regulations – there was a point to every single type of procedure. Here it is not like that; in the beginning I was kind of confused and thought that maybe I'm being tested in a way, or maybe they try to trick me. But now I know that is just the way it is here.*

- 'Krzysztof'

However, whilst 'Krzysztof' noted his disappointment at work being 'the same crap' as experienced in Poland, he goes on to note the differences between his current work and prior labour at 'home', a common theme throughout my interviews; one regular thread in these discussions was the way in which work was seen as far more intensively specialised and 'sped up' in the UK:

*You can't stand still in England; even when there is nothing to do you have to find something to do, or pretend you are busy – however, such an attitude is expected more from Polish workers than English, the latter group can be more laid back. Production here is faster, more effective, more segmented and more intensified. It is repetitive; one person does a lot of the same and produces a lot of the same – fast though. In Poland you would be assigned several tasks and you would complete them more slowly. In general they are more effective here.*

- 'Artur'

'Artur's' lucid commentary on his experience of work in the UK points us towards several interesting features that were commented on by other research participants; firstly, there is his passing remark that Polish workers are treated differently than their 'native' equivalents – 'such an attitude is expected more from Polish workers than English...' An experience noted several times:

*... the atmosphere was kind of racist; they were more lenient towards the English people.*

- 'Jan'

A.R.: *So do you think you were discriminated against?*

*Maybe at work, because of the stereotypes, but, to be honest with you, I don't care; I know who I am and I'm not worried.*

- 'Malgorzata'

*You know who have to be at work on time and you have to work all the time when you are at work. It's normal for you so, if... you see around yourself there are people not working as you do, sometimes... it doesn't make you feel good, you know? And we'd... few of us... since we became full-timers, just were complaining, yeah? How it comes we are getting the same money and we are working like hell and somebody else doesn't? How it comes, eh?*

- 'Marek'

Secondly, 'Artur' provides a concise description of the experience of moving into what might be described as a 'post-Fordist'<sup>103</sup> production pattern – '[p]roduction here is faster, more effective, more segmented and more intensified. It is repetitive; one person does a lot of the same and produces a lot of the same.' However, whilst many noted that this did appear effective on the level of accelerating the production process, it was also commonplace to bemoan the associated downsides of such arrangements. One element of this that a number of research participants stressed was the sheer boredom they endured in their roles:

*I work two shifts – one week 6am to 2pm, another 2pm to 10pm. When I arrive there I wash my hands and put on my apron and glasses. I lock my stuff in a locker and go to the factory floor, where we meet the supervisors. Each of them choose a few of us to work with him and give us instructions where to go and what to do [...] Then we start to work; we work for two hours and then we have a first break. After the break sometimes we change our positions; for example, person who did boxes now works on the work line and person who worked on line now does boxes. We work for another two hours, after that we have second break for about half an hour and then we repeat the same situation until we finish work. Then we wait for the driver, with whom we come back to Marketon<sup>104</sup>*

- 'Maria'

*I start at 2pm and I work on the line, and I put some parts of chickens together. I can change my place of work sometimes, so I can go to a place where I can put chickens on the scale; it takes me usually three hours [...] after that I come back to the work on the line [...] My work is not so hard, but I wouldn't say that I love my job! My job doesn't give me any satisfaction, I don't like the people I work with, the atmosphere is awful – people aren't nice and make rumours, they are not friendly.*

- 'Marcin'

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<sup>103</sup> I use the term 'post-Fordist' in a relatively loose way here in order to refer to 'new' forms of both industrial production and labour market participation and 'management'.

<sup>104</sup> Place and company names provided by research participants during interviews have been anonymised where necessary. Where this has occurred names are given in inverted commas.

Further to this mechanisation and ‘mundane-isation’ of work, research participants often spoke of another identifiably ‘post-Fordist’ phenomena, the ‘flexibilisation’ of work practices; this was experienced in a variety of ways, from the preponderance of shift work and a lack of guaranteed hours, through to a highly fluid labour market, ‘encouraged’ through short-term contracts, high employee turnover (often enforced by the cyclical ‘laying-off’ of agency staff), and a certain depersonalisation of labour roles. For example, it was not uncommon for ‘new’ migrant workers to find they are on highly insecure ‘flexible’ contracts with no guaranteed hours:

*Conditions were very primitive; 6 people per cabin, so you wouldn't have a place to wash yourself, to prepare some food, even to sleep well. There was no store close by. One day we would have job, the other day we wouldn't. Steward like to take advantage of people, sometimes he wouldn't pay for a long time.*

- ‘Tomasz’

Equally, the ‘flexible’ nature of such contracts meant employers had little protection from being ‘fired’ should the company they work for feel it necessary:

*I got fired from the flower factory. Basically, they would fire somebody every day so, one day, my turn came. It was a Thursday. I called the recruitment office and they found me a job beginning on a Monday. At the same time, the flower factory was rehiring everybody who they fired before, but I didn't want to come back. I already had a better job.*

A.R: *Why do you think they did it?*

*I guess they did not have enough work for us; they knew they would find new employees once needed.*

- ‘Artur’

Indeed, many noted this flexibilisation extended further than producing insecure and

precarious employment, it also meant that the 'social contract' between employer and employee was being fundamentally altered, encouraging workers to be more mobile and less 'loyal', as well as allowing employers to take advantage of a new 'reserve army of labour':

*People in Poland do not change their jobs from one day to another; it is just not the way it is there. You have a job and you stick to it, even though you may not like it too much; you may complain, but you stay at your employment place for years...*

A.R: *How is it here?*

*Very different; people change jobs frequently. They will move across the country if they think they can find a better offer there; they are not afraid. They are not so attached to their jobs and home towns.*

- 'Katarzyna'

Furthermore, this meant a change in the relationship between employer and employee; though some interviewees felt that social care was better in some ways in the UK<sup>105</sup>, many research participants expressed their surprise at the way they were treated by employers:

*I think workers are more exploited here in a way... There is this capitalistic approach to employment in the UK. Employers have more rights... It's better not to get sick because it is more difficult to seek good healthcare; there is much better social care in Poland.*

- 'Jan'

*It seems like the average worker in Poland is better protected than the average worker in England; there are multiple laws here protecting the employer, but not much protecting the employee. It is easier to hire and fire somebody here.*

- 'Katarzyna'

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<sup>105</sup> Child Tax Benefits, Working Tax Credits and so on were recognised as beneficial to those working on low wage, should they be eligible for them.



However, this was not always the case; those who had secured direct employment in the public sector, or had moved on to more ‘prestigious’ employment, compared their rights as employees favourably with those ‘at home’:

*The difference is, er... people here are more relaxed... er... even in their working environment; if you get sick in the UK you just ring in – you are probably not paid, if you are not working for a big company like I do. In my country, you have to bring in a Doctor's note, even if you are just off for half a day, and...they are very strict about the time you have to work, about attendance... So the way wages are paid are different – in our country there is big pressure put on workers because the basic is... is not... not... very often, not very high, but you could have to up to 100% bonus, but these bonuses you could only have if you fit in certain points, yeah? Like attendance to work, dedication – you always have to carry out your work – never being late; if you are three times late to work, you could lose your personal bonus, which is up to 20%, just like that, you know?*

- ‘Marek’

It is clear, despite this, that many research participants were keenly aware of the precarious nature of their employment; a series of interlinked elements meant that they could not safely assume that they had a secure job. Whilst this was most acutely experienced by those working through agencies – which almost all those I spoke to did initially – it was something that coloured their attitudes towards work in the UK throughout their time in the country.

Alongside these keenly felt encounters with ‘post-Fordist’ production and a neo-liberalised precarious labour market, was a series of collisions with the heavily audited and depersonalised panopticon of the (post-)modern workplace; it was often mentioned by interviewees that they were alarmed at the intense scrutiny their work came under and the lack of initiative they were expected (or even allowed) to show:

*In Poland, I would work by myself – I was director, I could set the pace and, in a way, nobody directly controlled what I was doing – I was driving the train. Here, all the time somebody tells me what I should*

*do... and, in general, I am very annoyed by the commands my supervisors keep giving to me; sometimes I feel like they assume we don't have common knowledge, or something like that...*

- 'Krzysztof'

*He [the Supervisor] goes around with a stopwatch and measures how many packages per minute you can make, or how much cutting you can do... I've always tried to work fast without getting into the details of what, why, it has to be that way; just to do my job.*

- 'Katarzyna'

*I had an intellectual character in Poland; here you don't need to use your brain. I feel like a pawn, I'm being given instructions, ordered where to go and what to do.*

- 'Artur'

So intense was this feeling of surveillance when combined with a precarious labour market position, demeaning work and accelerated 'post-Fordist' production methods, that several research participants related that they were pushed beyond what they felt they could endure:

*I just left one day during the work – at 1pm – I left and I did not come back. Why? I felt like my supervisor always tried to show that he knows everything better than I do; whatever I would do, he would still know better... One day, I was sitting in front of the line, which was set at an optimal speed for the end use of the product we expected. I felt like the density, speed and quality settings were just right. However, my supervisor came and argued with me that we needed to alter it. So she did. Well, the product began to overflow from the bottles and spill around, so I changed it again to my setting. She came back and set the line according to her judgement, but she didn't prove anything; the product was spilling again, so I got frustrated and simply left.*

- 'Jan'

*I quit 'Chicken Land' in February and went back to Poland for a week.*

A.R: *Why did you quit?*

*It was stressful and I was very nervous of the attitudes of the English supervisors to our work, and the people [...] it was like a contest; it mattered more if you could be really funny, over the fact that you can do your job really well*

- 'Katarzyna'

Indeed there was a sense through almost all of these interviews that such work was to be endured – a suffering for the greater good, whether that was thought about purely in terms of financial betterment, or was a means to improve their English language skills and labour market position 'back home' or their future prospects in the UK. Whichever way this was considered, work in the UK was seen as mundane, precarious and often demeaning, but it promised the chance of a 'better life' – of fulfilling dreams and ambitions, of 'getting on':

C.N: *What do you plan to do in the future?*

*That's the big question, that's the big question mark! I don't know. I want to get married [...]*

C.N: *In Poland?*

*Yeab, in Poland; that would be nice because of family. And, um, I don't know. We want to do our own business. We don't really know what it will be like, whether [my boyfriend's] side – like cars and stuff – or will be something on my way; because we can't manage with two businesses.*

C.N: *Maybe you could do something like a touring company?*

*Yeah, we'll try to! [...] We were thinking about, like, pub; disco pub. But I don't know; it's our dreams. We are still young, we don't really know what we want to do in the future [...] I don't know how many more years we are going to stay here; it's fine, it's fine because we've got friends, Polish and English friends.*

- 'Elzbieta'

*I have to have plans, because I think I done with job on the belt... and because secondment I on at the moment only has a limited amount of money to cover and, when it is gone, it is over. I am contracted to return here and I don't want to. So I started to... I did something of it already, because I completed the course for community interpreters. Now I'm on a shadowing of my former course mate, who is tutoring that course in 'Marketon' and I here in 'Univille'. And I intend to complete that course as a teacher of that course. But I don't want to teach, I want to go to the third level; I want to be an assessor for those who have completed the course and want to... have they vocabulary assessed and they role plays... because my grammar and my spelling skills in any language I am doing are 100%, because I am reading a lot and I love it. That is what I am born to do, I not born to be electrician but to do something with writing and with languages, but I started very late with it, but I think I should have some enjoyment when I am older than I am now.*

H.V: *Enjoyment in your work?*

*Yes. At least, on the rest of my life to have some fun, or doing something in... that I am interesting. So I am really working to get myself interpreting jobs... So I established the interpreting agency and I cope... but it wasn't my idea; we did it, three of us... so, the agency is on and it is working. So sometimes I get some excitement and I am really enjoying it. So that is the way I want to go.*

- 'Marek'

Whilst these comments illustrate the experiences of research participants in engaging with local labour markets in the South West of England, it is also useful to look at this from a slightly more 'detached' perspective, in order to take a complimentary view of an emergent topography of migrant labour markets. This can be done through an analysis of a phenomenon that has been seen as increasingly important in recent academic research – that

of the role of ‘employment agencies’<sup>106</sup> in shaping the labour market trajectories of workers – especially ‘migrant workers’ – in ‘low-skill’, low-wage employment (Garapich 2008; McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2008; Stenning and Dawley 2009). Though this work is still in its infancy, it begins to outline the ways in which two phenomena – the ‘outsourcing of labour’ (especially those roles considered dirty, dull or demeaning) to external employment agencies, and the increased availability of a ‘migrant labour force’ – have come together to restructure existing labour market forms. For Michal Garapich this can be associated with the wider ‘migration industry’ – defined as, ‘a sector of service markets that uses human mobility, adaptation in the host country and the sustenance of a transnational social field as its main resource’ (2008: 738). This industry – covering everything from immigration lawyers, through travel and recruitment agents, to ‘ethnic media’ (ibid: 737) – conflates the separation between economic and ‘community’ work of transnational communities (ibid: 746) and, furthermore, is neither a synonym for an ‘ethnic enclave’ nor necessarily any more than instrumentally populated by co-nationals. Indeed, for Garapich, rather than simply being a way of incorporating migrant workers into the labour market, or of acting as a social network – tying migrants into emergent transnational forms of reciprocal responsibility – such migration industries in some ways do both whilst actively easing, ‘the incorporation and adaptation of migrants into the host society at the same time as helping them to maintain transnational links with the sending country’ (ibid: 737) through the development of market forces which lower the ‘costs’ of international mobility by connecting the migrant to pre-existing networks of work and community (ibid: *passim*). For Garapich this approach entails a move beyond simplistic divisions between the political and economic spheres of transnational migration. However, his conclusion to this argument appears distinctly neo-liberal in its understanding of the functioning of the social and economic sphere:

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<sup>106</sup> An ‘employment agency’ as used here refers to an organisation – also known as a temporary staffing agency – which ‘introduces’ technically self-employed individuals to client companies. The agency remains responsible for paying these staff, providing their National Insurance contributions and organising and paying their statutory holiday pay. In turn, they charge this amount, plus an additional fee, to the client company. However, their relationship with placed staff is not legally that of an employer and, therefore, agency staff do not currently qualify for statutory ‘employee’ rights, as enshrined in the Employment Rights Act 1996, such as the right not to be fired without notice, the right to protection from unfair dismissal, redundancy rights, rights to flexible working, a written contract, parental or paternity leave and the right to join a union. Furthermore, beyond the rather limited scope of the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004, the majority of such agencies are subject to no (or very limited) formal legal oversight. In contrast, ‘recruitment agencies’ focus on placing staff into either temporary contracts or permanent positions with an employer, who then takes over formal responsibility for the employment of that person.

*The case of Polish migrants and the role of the migration industry in their incorporation into British society prove that the integration of immigrants and their emergence as social actors are mutually reinforced by market forces which stimulate growing mobility and establish a functional and dynamic transnational field (ibid: 749).*

Whilst I am not convinced this was entirely the author's intention, the implication that 'market forces' will incorporate migrants into British society and 'establish a functional and dynamic transnational field' requires some critical thought. Linda McDowell and her collaborators (McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2008), for instance, have provided an analysis of one aspect of Garapich's 'migration industry' – employment agencies – that introduces some aspects of this relationship which are deserving of close scrutiny. For example, they note that, just as with this research, employment agencies are significant employers of migrant workers and, secondly, that this often entails insecure and precarious work in low-status, low-wage employment (751). Therefore, it could be argued that what such elements of the 'migration industry' are actually incorporating migrants into is low-wage and precarious employment – a point which Garapich somewhat neglects in his argument. However, what both articles make clear is the increasing institutional role employment agencies play in the (re)production of the labour market, especially at its extremities (McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2008: 752). Indeed, employment agencies played a significant role in placing migrant workers in jobs in the South West – at least initially. Some participants in this research had been blatantly mistreated by corrupt agents, such as 'Marcin' (whose story was outlined in the previous chapter), or tricked by 'phantom' agents who promised jobs in exchange for cash and then sent their clients to either an unknowing agency or a false address:

*I did not want to go anywhere without some job secured and some guy in my city put an ad in the paper and, er, he's able to fix some jobs in the UK. So I paid him the equivalent of 100 quid at that time for him to give me hope... but he just lied that he secured a job for me – it was just the address of an agency and when I told them, 'I came here for this particular job, they said, 'we don't offer that job to anyone'.*

- 'Marek'

These cases, though occurring all too often, were not the norm; most people interviewed for this study had been placed in employment by their agents in a broadly legal manner – though I constantly came across instances of questionable behaviour regarding additional charges for housing, travel and subsistence, as well as misdirection over holiday pay and entitlement, this wasn't quite the blatant hucksterism of the 'agents' encountered by 'Marcin' and 'Marek'. But this is not to say that such employment arrangements were anything other than precarious, and the work not difficult, dull or demeaning. However, just as Garapich argues, they did play an important role in the (re)production of the largest 'migrant labour market' in the case study area – directing newly arrived migrant workers into low-skill, low-status work in a similar way to that outlined in Alison Stenning and Stuart Dawley's (2009: 288) work in the North-East of England. In contrast to Garapich, though, there was less evidence of such organisations being tied into any clear 'migration industry' in the way he outlines in his article. Rather, there appeared to be a parallel development of a civic sector – somewhat chaotically and organically growing out of the intersections of existing community organisations (such as Trade Unions), emergent 'ethnic' community groups, and specialist service providers (such as Polish language papers and websites, delis and cafes) – which acted to provide an alternative source of information and support to pre-existing networks and, particularly, to do so beyond the increasingly disliked employment agencies and local organisations (both statutory and voluntary), which were widely viewed as somewhat out of touch and slow to act. Partly, however, we may attribute some of this difference to the geographies of the two studies – whilst Garapich was writing of London, with a heavy concentration of Polish and other international migrant communities, which arguably provided the critical mass to make such a 'migration industry' viable, the South West of England, as illustrated in Chapter 2, is substantially more rural and peripheral, with a far less substantial history of pre-2004 migration and considerably less diverse and geographically concentrated migrant populations. Indeed the differing geographies of recent migrations to the UK – and the implications of this for dominant theories of international migration and labour markets – is a point made elsewhere (Stenning and Dawley 2009) and one which I shall be returning to throughout the chapter.

Employment agencies, as noted above, act as one factor directing migrant workers towards

work that can be viewed as dirty, dull or demeaning. However, whilst the less than ideal nature of many of the roles those interviewed for this research is not in doubt:

*I started the job on Monday. Of course, it didn't look anything as they were talking about; first, they put us on an awful stinking bus, then we had to put some weird boots on, and finally they told us to basically chase the chickens – we had to catch them, grab their legs and take them to cages. It was a very hard job – after two days I lost the sense of feeling in my hands.*

- 'Tomasz'

*It was a recycling place; I would have to pick up different items as glass, cans, cardboard and organise them. I would have to be careful not to hurt myself with drug addicts' needles, broken glass, human excrement, and so on.*

- 'Artur'

*I liked it a lot at the very beginning. I thought they treat employees better but, after a while, I concluded that it is all the same... when you work at the line, the only thing that matters is the product, not the people...*

- 'Katarzyna'

However, we cannot solely lay the blame for this on employment agencies, as there are other factors at play; as outlined in the previous chapter, recently arrived migrants may be motivated by a desire to get work as soon as possible, social networks may increasingly direct migrant workers through certain trusted agencies and employers may become more disposed to using migrant workers – almost exclusively positively caricatured in the UK press as hard-working and slow to complain (Fomina and Frelak 2008: 44 - 5).

These multiple strands of motivation, social networks and pre-existing labour market institutions have increasingly become entwined and reciprocal. Additionally, they interact at different levels with changing political and legal landscapes of both international migration and labour market policy and practice (see, e.g. King 2002). However, what is clear is that these interactions and entanglement have produced a situation where the vast majority of international migrants to the South West in recent years have found themselves funnelled towards work which is both 'low-skill' and low-wage and, crucially, precarious.



*Transnational academia, cosmopolitan 'bubbles' and high-skill migration:*

Whilst such dull, difficult or demeaning work may have been the norm for the majority of migrant workers in the South West, it was not the case for all. Indeed, at first glance, the labour market experiences of our second group – international academic migrants – seem a world away from those of their counterparts working in the region's factories and farms; they were employed on relatively secure contracts, with decent wages, benefits and employee rights, carrying out work that they, in the main, found enjoyable and (at least intellectually) rewarding. Indeed, it was clear that, for many, working as an academic was more than a job; it was a vocation:

*I was running a company [...] for many years, [then] I started a new company; a cruise company – see these are my ships <points to pictures on the wall showing a couple of cruise liners> - [but] I sold it in '96. I had a bit of a mid-life crisis... you never know when you get mid-life crises anyway; had my mid-life crisis, had my third child, decided I didn't know what I wanted to do – I thought I wanted to go back to school... so I went and checked into [University] and started doing my Master's in Research there in July... and then, um, all hell broke loose in Asia in October '97, when you had the start of the financial crisis – everybody thought I'd seen it coming and that's why I sold my company! I wish! <laughs> But I stayed on... and I loved the research I did, I liked it very much, I found it was my calling – sorry I found it so late – and, before I graduated, I told my husband, 'is it alright if I take a 75% pay cut and be an academic!' And he say, 'yeah, alright!' <laughs>*

- 'Denise'

Though this could not be said to be a job without stress or sacrifice (as the quote below illustrates), such troubles were neither as pernicious nor as widespread as those suffered by the majority of migrants in low-skill roles; these were of a distinctly different register – they were not issues of exploitation, mundane work and frustrated ambition, but rather the stresses and strains of a professional career where a huge amount of sweat and self-sacrifice is implicitly expected from nascent practitioners:

*We studied very hard – there was a real sense of no second chance... and, also, [we] saved as much money as we could. So it was a – you know, we had a very good time, but it was a... it was a time of real focus and... diligence... and frugality! <laughs>*

- ‘Madeline’ (on her days as a ‘migrant’ undergraduate student)

*Because people are competing for the next... promotion – it’s like a tournament really – um... you do get a lot of cynicism and a lot of, um... competition... It can be nasty, if you let that go to your head.*

- ‘Paulo’ (on the competitive nature of a researcher’s early career)

*It was difficult because, er... I had to do a lot of teaching and in the subjects that are not... directly my fields of research... It was a bit over-whelming.*

- ‘Ayna’ (on gaining her first Lectureship)

So why were things so different for these international academics? Was this simply a case of differences in job types and, therefore, as applicable to British workers in similar positions as to migrant workers? Or was there something more profound at work which did relate to the status of migrant workers? Whilst it is difficult to answer such questions without interviewing non-migrants in similar roles, it is useful to consider the relatively high levels of qualifications and skills amongst the non-academic cohort examined in the previous chapter. This suggests that the difference in the labour market experiences of these two groups is *also* about something peculiar to migrant workers (or, at least, the way certain labour market topographies are altered depending on your status as a ‘high-skill’ or ‘low-skill’ migrant worker). Perhaps this can be better explained by looking at two aspects of contemporary academia that could also be attributed to a number of other ‘high-skill’ sectors that employ significant numbers of international migrants; transnational working and recruitment practices, and cosmopolitanism (see, e.g. Iredale 2001; King 2002; Mahroum 2001).

Academia, with its extremely specialised division of labour, tends towards extremes both of transnationalism – in that specialised research areas are often international in scope and expertise – and parochialism – in that such focused specialisation encourages a certain amount of intellectual narrow-mindedness whilst simultaneously reinforcing pre-existing

networks of contacts and communities of support and debate. Indeed, both such tendencies were alluded to by participants in this research:

H.V.: *OK. So where do you think your influences – your network of peers, if you like – are? The people who you talk to about your work and have an influence on it?*

*They are scattered all over the world! <laughs> I know individual people in Germany, in the U.S., in Australia. There are a few – just people I happen to know... either, um... because I met them personally, er, because I read their work and got in to, um... a conversation with them*

H.V. *So how do you keep in touch?*

*E-mails mostly... E-mails and sending each other... one's papers, commenting on them – that's a good way of doing it. I hardly ever go to conferences – I don't like conferences at all! <laughs>*

- 'Max'

The overwhelming movement however – at least on a research level – is towards greater internationalism; as indicated in the previous chapter, freedom of movement within the European Union, the encouragement of 'skilled migration' by the UK government, the increasing standardisation of European higher education qualifications through the Bologna Process, and increased European Union funding for pan-European research projects, has both encouraged a certain level of transnational co-operation in academic research and made it far easier for European and other 'skilled' academics to move to the UK<sup>107</sup>. Additionally, as such liberalisations of skilled migration policies became more commonplace across the rich nations of the world, the 'best' universities have increasingly begun to compete for the 'best' staff, regardless of their nationality. Equally, increased international movements of students

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<sup>107</sup> Just as it has made it easier for UK nationals to move to other EU countries, though that is not of concern here.

at under- and post-graduate levels has meant far more potential applicants have the qualifications, contacts and skills to take up those posts. This has had a knock on effect at universities at all levels, encouraging many to move across national borders in search of professional success:

*So I applied for jobs overseas; I didn't really want to go back to [home country] at that point... I wanted to be an academic in the international sense of the word, and I thought [home country] would be very... I just wouldn't be able to fulfil my potential there, so... I applied for jobs in Europe.*

- 'Madeline'

As this quote illustrates, it can also be argued that, for certain academics in certain parts of the world, international academic mobility may be seen as a goal in itself; if the best jobs are seen as spatially distributed in certain parts of the world, it seems a reasonable assumption that to move closer to them may provide better opportunities to gain eventual access to them, whilst also acting to reflect the internationally mobile academic's ambition and successful trajectory to those left behind. However, such movements can be (and often are) viewed as a 'brain drain' (or 'gain' depending on which end of the supposed movement you are focusing), with academics from peripheral countries drawn to the superior resources, remunerations and respect available at universities and research centres in richer parts of the world. Whilst the centres of attraction may have changed and multiplied in recent years, such movements are, '... not completely multidirectional, as the flows seem to always go from the less developed to the more competitive places in the world knowledge-based economy' (Meyer, Kaplan, and Charum 2001). Alternatively, such movements can be seen as acting to produce transnational academic networks, with international migrants acting as conduits linking previously disparate knowledge matrices into ever-more entwined global systems where knowledge and expertise flow freely, in effect benefiting both 'receiving' and 'sending' networks. Whilst there is some evidence that these 'brain circulation' networks exist and are beneficial in some parts of the world (see, e.g. Jöns 2009), the extent and nature of such circulations is less readily discernable. Participants in this research were more likely to admit to a rapid drop-off in collaboration and intellectual networking with colleagues from 'back home' once they had moved to the UK. Partly, this was because few had developed much of

an academic network there, as most were either post-graduates or early-career academics when they left. Networks were therefore developed more readily in their 'new' environment, as funding opportunities were largely defined on a national level, and collaborators and intellectual influences were sought and found through shared engagement in conferences, departments and so forth. Indeed, it was apparent that networks tended to be only superficially international and, furthermore, that such transnational links had often developed post-migration, rather than before or during international moves:

*I use to be a little bit jealous of colleagues who'd been to University here and, you know, could call on their ex-University contacts and have this network of academic... friends. Which I didn't have and... but I just had to build it up and – so now I feel I've built it... now it would be a disadvantage to go anywhere else where... 'Cos here, well, I know how things are run, I know people. So networks are important, and it was a disadvantage, I think, when I moved here, not to have it... um... and now I do. It feels like, professionally and personally... I've just had to apply myself to building those up.*

- 'Mathilde'

It was also clear that *local* networks act to draw international researchers into webs of dependence and responsibility (Meyer, Kaplan, and Charum 2001: 318) that reward membership of only certain types of transnational projects and make it increasingly difficult to retain effective contact with previous networks, effectively breaking the chain of brain circulation:

*I work with some of the people there [his 'home' country], but not as much as I would want to – or like to. You know, the distance is a problem and, er, society and industry works differently from... the one here. So, um... there is a different way of doing things and... I would have to be embedded in that society if I wanted to do more work with them – which I can't – which limits my involvement with them.*

- 'Zoran'

Some participants also spoke of the formation of informal networks consisting only of those directly engaged in their line of work, wherever they may be on the planet.

This marriage of transnationalism and parochialism acts to challenge some of the normative discourses of academic knowledge production, which has a tendency to portray an open system allowing for the free flow of expertise and ability across an ever-growing spectrum of physical sites. However, it is clear that this is rarely the case; high-skill networks may be increasingly global in nature, but this is not to say that they are open to all, or that knowledge (or people) flows freely throughout the system. Equally, it is important to note that much of the everyday networking of those to whom I spoke occurred on the most local of levels; anyone familiar with a department of a university (or any large organisation) will know that much is decided implicitly or otherwise in day-to-day meetings between colleagues ‘in the corridor’, and that this has a profound impact on how we are able to produce, interpret and disseminate ‘knowledge’. Therefore, whilst academia may be increasingly transnational, it remains resolutely parochial in many fundamental aspects; a point perhaps too often overlooked in previous research.

This is not to say that academics and researchers do not appreciate the notion of mobility and migration as a beneficial end in itself, however. Many spoke highly of the intellectual and ‘cultural’ benefits of moving between countries; indeed, it was not unusual for research participants to speak of migration as a ‘learning process’, both in the sense of a period of acculturation, and in the idea that the very act of crossing borders, of learning a new way of doing things (both socially and intellectually), led to novel ways of thinking about and carrying out their work:

*It sort of changes the way you think about your research and your topic; you encounter a whole – a much wider range of opinions and, um... I think moving is actually quite good in that way, because you get to see – there are academic approaches in [‘home’ country] that changed immediately when I went to [the U.K...] So it constantly... adds layers to the way you think about your subject. I found that a really positive experience.*

- ‘Fatima’

*It’s just that it enriches your experiences of life so much that I think it... maybe it should have been obligatory instead of social service for everyone – just to send everyone abroad and let them cope!*

- ‘Jereon’ (on the positive experience of working abroad)

This openness to a certain sort of mobility – social and intellectual in nature as well as physical – has been seen by some as an exemplar of high-skill (particularly scientific) mobility in the ‘new knowledge society. For Meyer et al (2001), following Deleuze and Guattari (2004), this can be termed ‘nomadism’, an approach which is taken to emphasise the pre-existing mobility of institutionalised scientific practitioners, but also to draw attention to its roots in, ‘acculturation, learning, iterative processes and collective bonds’, rather than the, ‘weightless, atomistic, post-social individual components of mankind responding to global market forces’ (Meyer, Kaplan, and Charum 2001: 310)<sup>108</sup>. Therefore, the mobility of academics can be seen as much as a function of a certain attitude to the world, a particular intellectual universalism that both allows for and actively encourages intellectual and physical mobility. Whilst there are obvious limits to the free flow of knowledge in the global system, particularly when we follow Polanyi’s argument that *all* knowledge as fundamentally underlain by tacit understandings (Polanyi 1967), this, as Meyer et al. (2001: 311) recognise, requires that those in whom such tacit foundations of codified knowledge lay must move – at least temporally – to successfully transfer that learning and practice to a new locale. Whether this alone is sufficient to explain academic mobility is tenuous at best, but it does indicate that there is an element of academia which can be seen to embrace such intellectual nomadism; a circulation of people and ideas; a cosmopolitan tendency. But just how far does this cosmopolitanism extend? Amongst those I interviewed, there were clearly some for whom an openness to new ideas, people and places was fundamental to their intellectual life – indeed, one may argue their sense of self – but there were others who were far more tentative about talking of their experiences through such a lens:

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<sup>108</sup> I do not think, however, that Meyer et al.’s interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of ‘nomad science’ is entirely convincing; they, perhaps rightly, delimit it as an openness to new ideas – an intellectual creativity or curiosity – but, in stressing this somewhat limited version, they tend to overplay its importance in everyday ‘normative’ science (or, indeed, in wider academia). In *A Thousand Plateaus* at least, Deleuze and Guattari position ‘nomad science’ in contrast to ‘royal science’, with the latter representing a certain kind of universalising, codifying ‘truth-seeking’ science, as opposed to the creativity, complexity and contingency of nomad science (an opposition which broadly mimics the division between the ‘neurotic’ capitalist and ‘schizoid’ poles elsewhere in the book) (see, e.g. Deleuze and Guattari 2004: passim; Holland 2006). However, whilst these two tendencies co-exist in contemporary ‘science’, it is highly questionable whether the nomad version can be considered a normative ontology amongst scientists (or academics in general). It is not therefore reasonable to assume that simply because certain scientists are ‘nomadic’ (which in itself is a problematic descriptor), that they are necessarily ‘nomad scientists.’

*I like to work in an international department. I like to work with people who are different to me, actually.*

- 'Paulo'

*I like having people around from different, um... backgrounds, different cultures, different languages... I think it is interesting that I can't specify why it is interesting; it just intrigues me that people come together from various places in the world to... because they are interested in similar things.*

- 'Max'

H.V.: *Did you find there was a kind of cosmopolitanism to it [moving to a U.K. University]?*

*Define cosmopolitanism.*

H.V.: *<laughs> It's difficult interviewing academics! I should have been aware of that! A willingness to engage with other cultures; a mixing of different traditions.*

*OK. Yes. I suppose that I did encounter it. As you said just now, dealing with academics – in that sense – is a different experience than living in the 'real' community – in the 'real' world as I – we – refer to it. Because, if nothing else, there is an ideological presumption that exchange is good, and that which is different is worth studying. So, therefore, the talk is always appropriate, the walk is sometimes not. But, then again, it comes down to individual behaviours; you encounter all sorts of things and one needs to listen and learn, and laugh about it.*

- 'Giulia'

Perhaps the latter's reticence indicates her intellectual engagement with ideas of cosmopolitanism as much as her differing attitude to academic nomadism; cosmopolitanism as a concept has many lives – it exists as a political project as much as an explanatory framework, and resultantly can be seen as a highly weighted and contentious term; it may be viewed as a imposition of a particular world-view in the guise of universalism, as Stuart Hall makes clear in a recent interview:



*You know, I hesitate every time I use that word ['cosmopolitanism']. Because a certain view of cosmopolitanism was built into the Enlightenment and Kant's famous question, 'What is Enlightenment?' Kant is the architect of this universalist version of cosmopolitanism. And I resist that kind of cosmopolitanism, not because there weren't enlarging, 'universalising' elements in it, but because, as we know very well, it is a version of cosmopolitanism which represents itself as 'universal' but that universality inevitably becomes harnessed back to the West. 'We' were the enlightened ones, whose civilizational duty and burden it was to enlighten everybody else – the unenlightened, the non-cosmopolitan.*

(Hall and Werbner 2008: 349)

However, there remains a tangible sense that academia, in common with many other 'knowledge-intensive' institutions, celebrates (and even requires) a certain 'cosmopolitan' sensibility. Indeed, it would appear reasonable to argue that globalisation, the increasing ease of movement across national borders (and the resultant weakening of national sovereignty), combined with the kind of nomadic consciousness espoused by Meyer and his collaborators, has, to some degree at least, helped to produce institutions (including Universities) that look and act in transnational or cosmopolitan ways. However, it should not be assumed too readily that this translates to a deeper transformation. As both Cheah (2006) and Friedman (1997) have argued in different ways, cosmopolitanism in its 'weak' form often acts simply as a functional aesthetic – a patchwork solidarity – that extends little further than a willingness to work together and pay lip service to a celebration of a limited repertoire of 'difference'. In essence, it exists as a mechanism to forward the mutual aims of those who champion it, particularly in elite transnational labour market formations. It is highly bounded and applicable only in certain circumstances and for particular, limited, manifestations of difference or hybridity. It could even be argued that it is a classic example of a hegemonic practice as conceived by Gramsci (1971), or *habitus* in the work of Bourdieu (1977); the ideal (and limited enactment) of cosmopolitanism acts to both incorporate, and therefore dissipate the oppositional power of, certain aspects of non-dominant or sub-altern practices and sensibilities. In turn, such incorporations are performed through everyday actions – the ability to do so indicating our innate understanding of this *habitus* and therefore our rightful place within such an elite culture. Indeed, it is enlightening in this regard to note how rarely

the notion of cosmopolitanism is utilised to talk about 'low-skilled' workers, for example<sup>109</sup>.

Whilst there was certainly a notion of a shared, and sharing, approach to people, places and ideas amongst those to whom I spoke in this research, as well as an idea that migration could be a learning experience in itself, its actualisation seemed to be limited in practice to the 'cosmopolitan bubble' of the University in the local geographic sense, just as transnational academic networks appear to be both bounded and parochial, despite cross-cutting national boundaries. What these discussions indicate – beyond a potentially banal discussion of exactly how transnational or cosmopolitan academia is – is that, once again, a tendency to write about 'low' and 'high' skill migrations in vastly different ways becomes apparent. Are they really such divergent phenomena, or are there ways in which we might begin to conceive of these migrations in a more holistic and nuanced format?

#### BEYOND THE GLOBAL CITY, BEYOND LABOUR SEGMENTATION THEORY?

There has been a notable development of theorisation of international migration and labour market segmentation in the 'developed' world over the four decades, with important contributions from both those starting from broadly structuralist or neo-Marxist perspectives on labour market segmentation theories (such as Saskia Sassen) to those increasingly influenced by the more 'cultural' dynamics of Pierre Bourdieu (such as Harald Bauder). Indeed the interactions between these approaches have borne out a number of useful insights. However, there are a number of pertinent questions that have so far not been fully addressed. I think the two most relevant here are concerned with what these theories can tell us about the relationships between international migration and labour markets away from the 'global cities' most of this research has been conducted in, and, secondly, to what extent such binary approaches actually help recreate the very segmentations and inequalities they are critically appraising? Indeed, ultimately we must ask whether retaining such a divisive approach is the 'best' way of understanding the complex interactions that 'create' what we might call migrant labour markets.

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<sup>109</sup> Though see Werbner, ed. (2008) for an attempt to go beyond this and to conceive of a 'vernacular' cosmopolitanism.

The question of the purported urban-centric – or even ‘global city’-centric – bias of much contemporary theorising on international migration, labour markets and globalisation is, in many ways, a very relevant criticism. It is hard to argue against the tendency for studies of migration to focus on hot spots – particularly London in the UK context – with their ‘super-diverse’ international populations (Vertovec 2006) and importance to many theories in this area – not least Sassen’s concept of ‘global cities’ and the division of labour. But the emergence of new migratory routes in the UK and a growing awareness of international migration beyond the urban core has seen a number of researchers turn their attention towards rural, peripheral and non-elite migration destinations in the UK (e.g. Stenning and Dawley 2009) and elsewhere (e.g. Bauder 2006; Chavez 2005). Whilst these authors are often rightly critically of the assumption that migration is an essentially urban phenomenon, some have also begun to consider how we might begin to conceive of migration and labour markets beyond the global city; are they simply reproductions of what is happening in the urban centres, affected merely by outward spreading ripples of influence originating in the world’s metropolises? Or is there something more profound and contextual occurring that might begin to provide an alternative conceptual framework for our imaginings of international migration, global economies and local sites of practice?

Of course, raising such questions is always easier than answering them, but it is clear from this research that at least *this* example of the interaction between international migration and labour markets has important differences to those outlined in, say, the work of Saskia Sassen. There is not, for example, a significant presence of transnational corporate headquarters in any of the research sites under study, so we cannot reasonably correlate this with the growth of a precarious service sector underlain by the labouring of a migrant workforce. Indeed, a substantial proportion of international migrants in the region are employed outside of service professions all together; in the just-about-surviving ‘blue-collar’ or ‘sunset’ industries, especially food production, agriculture and so forth. What it may be tempting to argue instead, therefore, is that the situation in the South-West of England is merely a secondary effect of what is happening in London – the ‘local’ global city – and that the driving force behind changes in both international migration and local labour markets can be found in these epicentres of global commerce, with progressively more peripheral and rural locales affected only by the ripples of change emanating from these sites. Put another way, we could perhaps suggest that what Sassen has produced is a re-working of

Wallestein's (1982) core-periphery nexus for the global age and, therefore, that what happens in the core 'core' – the global cities – is fundamental to the functioning of global capitalism and, therefore, what happens elsewhere. Whilst this argument may be convincing on one level, it does not appear to stand up to scrutiny regarding recent international migration flows to the South West and other 'peripheral' areas in the UK. As has been pointed out elsewhere, one aspect of post-Accession migration to the UK has been its geographical spread and the relative propensity of A8 migrants to work outside both London and 'traditional' migration 'hot-spots.' However, this research has also presented strong indications of something that looks very much like a segmented migrant labour market; with migrants moving either to relatively high-skill, high status primary sector roles (as in the case of the academic cohort), or moving to low-skill, low status service, manufacturing and agricultural roles in the secondary labour market. Furthermore, whilst movement within sectors ('churn') may be relatively commonplace (especially within the secondary labour market), movement between the sectors was extremely rare, despite the relatively high levels of qualification reported by many working in low-skill roles – a phenomenon which is investigated in more detail in the following chapter. Therefore, whilst elements of labour segmentation theory appear to provide a good explanatory framework for what is occurring in the South West region, it – at least in the version presented by Sassen – loses a significant part of its coherence beyond the global city. What is needed, therefore, is a far greater openness to the contextual dynamics – the place specificity – of the interactions between local labour markets and international migration; a point Harald Bauder has stressed in his work on this subject (Bauder 2006: 52). Indeed, following Bauder, we might argue that whilst elements of labour segmentation theory, actualised via 'processes of distinction', may be widely characteristic of the interactions between international migration and local labour markets, their particular forms are locally contingent<sup>110</sup>.

However, before I turn my attention to sketching out an approach to comprehending such contextual manifestations of labour market inequality amongst international migrants, I first want to address the related point that labour market segmentation theory may, to some extent, be considered performative; that is, by concentrating so heavily on a fragmented and

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<sup>110</sup> The contextuality and 'sitedness' of a particular city is, of course, an important element in the 'global city thesis.' My point here, however, is that the logic of what such things (context and site) means beyond the confines of the global city has not been satisfactorily incorporated into the thesis, nor is it immediately obvious what it might be.

unequal labour market terrain, academics are actively producing precisely the phenomena they propose exist. This is an important point to make because, if I am to retain some form of segmentation theory as an ontological scaffold to build this research, it is necessary to ensure that there are reasonable grounds to do so. If, by using this approach, we are inadvertently and uncritically reproducing a dichotomy between low-skill and high-skill roles, primary and secondary labour markets, it may be necessary to redress the degree to which we rely on the normative assumption of segmented labour markets.

Performativity is now a relatively common – some may say overused – concept in the social sciences. However, like many popular terms it has expanded to incorporate a range of different (and often contradictory) meanings. It is useful, therefore, to clarify exactly what I mean – and, indeed, what I hope to gain – by using ‘performativity’ as a concept in this instance. I do not, for example, intend to follow Judith Butler’s broad conceptualisation of ‘performativity’ as a discursive and regulatory (re)production of appropriate ‘bodies’ (Butler 1990, 1993). Rather, my use of the term bears closer resemblance to Michel Callon’s notion of performativity in economics<sup>111</sup> (1998; 2007) and John Law and John Urry’s notion of ‘enactment’ (2004). These theorists argue, in slightly different ways but to essentially the same effect, that social scientists to some degree produce, perform or enact the objects of their gaze. Of course, this is not to argue that, simply by writing an article, a theorist can imagine a situation into reality purely by force of their argument. Rather, it implies that, ‘... the social sciences ... are relational or interactive. They *participate in, reflect upon, and enact* the social in a wide range of locations...’ (Law and Urry 2004: 392); they are, in Callon’s words, ‘inventors’ as much as ‘describers’ (Callon 2007: 314). However, this has not traditionally been widely recognised in academic circles, with many wishing to retain some ideal of themselves as detached observers producing reports of an objective reality. However, once we accept the so called ‘observer’s paradox’ – that by ‘measuring’ an event you are essentially altering it – and that the ‘social sciences’ themselves are fundamentally produced by, and embedded in, ‘society’ itself, then it becomes difficult to escape from the idea that social theorising must be productive to some degree, or at least iterative and relational. However, the extent to which this is true must vary greatly between different theories in different ‘societies’ at different times – not all theories are equal after all, the extent to which they

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<sup>111</sup> He often uses the term ‘performation’ rather than ‘performativity’, presumably to avoid confusion with Butler’s use of the latter.

influence people and institutions depends on an extended and convoluted series of chance events and chaotic interactions. Furthermore, for a social theory to be ‘successfully’ enacted – that is, to have far-ranging effects – it must agree with the majority of people’s experience of a palpable ‘reality’ (particularly those in power). Equally, as a particular way of understanding the world becomes more influential, it arguably becomes *more* performative; as Callon and others have outlined in relation to neo-classical economics, it has produced a limited ‘reality’ that conforms to the theory, thus producing a situation whereby ‘reality’ and ‘theory’ are in a state of iterative confirmation – reality reflects theory, therefore theory is a reflection of what will *necessarily* happen (see, e.g. Callon 1998, 2007; MacKenzie and Millo 2003). However, such a fit between theory and reality is always under threat; for example, economists need to deal with the swathe of times when people do not act as rational calculating agents, maximising profit wherever possible, so such a discipline must always react to things that don’t ‘fit’, alternative ontological manifestations and the limits of explanation. This can be achieved through a number of methods, including retaining the idea that such a theory is *objective* and ensuring that the social presentations to which it refers – in Callon’s work controlled economic markets, such as international banking halls or French strawberry markets – are ‘produced’ in such a way that the ‘objective truth’ of neo-classical economics (people always act as profit-maximising individuals) is constantly reaffirmed through everything from the tacit ‘rules’ of interactions in the marketplace, to the physical architecture of the space of these engagements. This leads Callon to suggest that economic markets – and the neo-classical economic theories that both produce and are produced by them – are best understood, not as a manifest reality, but rather, ‘...as collective calculating devices where sociotechnical algorithms organize and, very often, facilitate encounters between agents endowed with unequal calculating capacities’ (Callon 2007: 348). Whilst, this is a convincing argument with regards to the productive capacity of neo-classical economics, it is less convincing when we consider something like ‘dual labour market theory.’ Unlike conventional economics, labour market segmentation theory neither argues that such a situation is a description of what will necessarily happen, nor has it been so successful in gaining influence over those who hope to determine the structural characteristics of the labour market. However, it arguably still enacts ‘reality’ for social theorists; firstly it provides a plausible way of approaching a very complex and fluid subject in a way that seems to fit well with both our theoretical assumptions about labour markets, and our tacit interactions

with local examples of such phenomena. It, therefore, has been a relatively successful model for understanding labour markets, without having been a particular successful model for changing them! However, as I have argued above, it is a presentation of ‘reality’ that is beginning to creak and groan in certain places; recent developments have begun to force researchers to raise questions about how we understand segmented (migrant) labour markets – the theory and an experienced ‘reality’ have begun to diverge. Partly this has been caused by an inability for such a theory to deal with the changing realities of employment; it has been both too static and too structural to be able to cope with the kinds of multiple, overlapping, and contextual narratives being uncovered by contemporary researchers. How then might we go about reconceptualising a situation such as that which my research uncovered in South-West England, without solely resorting to idiom of a dual migrant labour market, but without abandoning its insight altogether? In the following section, I make a preliminary attempt to sketch out an approach to understanding the complex work of migration that takes such considerations into account and begins to respond to Law and Urry’s argument, ‘...that social-and-physical changes in the world are – and need to be – paralleled by changes in the methods of social inquiry’ (2004: 390).

*Towards an understanding of the complex work of migration:*

Before 2004 and the accession of the so-called A8 countries to the EU, few towns or cities in the area had much experience of international migration. However, by the time I began to interview people, there appeared remarkable similarities in what I kept hearing; there seemed to be a coming together of ways of thinking about and conceptualising these new ‘creations’ – these imagined ‘others’. For example, both employees and employers characterised new accession state nationals as hard-working or, at least, more hard-working than their ‘local’ counterparts:

*...[T]here is a discipline; they are used to having a structure. Whereas most of the UK guys and girls who we've had here... have still got that 'not bothered' look to it...*

‘Colin’ (Factory Manager)

*... [Y]ou know that you have to be at work on time and you have to work all the time when you are at work. It's normal for you, so if... you see around yourself there are people who do not work as you do, sometimes... it doesn't make us feel good, you know?*

- 'Marek'

However, it also appeared that whether or not these emergent (and often shared) discourses were positive or negative, they were petrifying – being turned to stone – helping to produce notions of what sort of work migrants could and couldn't do. But this was not the sole factor at work; it was also clear that networks of contacts in certain areas (and the lack of relevant connections in other places) was leading workers to certain areas seen as safe and migrant friendly:

*...[T]here is now a network over here... certainly in 'Univille'... of Poles and Slovaks... and they get to hear where the work is, and what the work is... and they come together to help each other...*

- 'Colin'

*You need to know the system; how to get jobs. But it is also about community support; people feel safe working there [a local factory]... and they are scared to leave.*

- 'Maria'

In some cases this meant that people, who would conventionally be seen as skilled and desirable additions to the workplace, had apparently become 'trapped' in jobs well below their capabilities. However, this couldn't simply be explained as a discriminatory misuse of migrant labour in order to fill the least desirable roles in the workforce, as the local University employed a large number of international academics, none of whom reported any experiences of their nationality restricting their opportunities. Equally, many of my other interviewees actively propounded the view that the UK and its citizens were not prejudiced. Indeed – perhaps ironically given the argument I am advancing here – the UK was spoken of as a place of opportunity, where anyone could 'get on' should they make the necessary effort. Similarly, the argument, espoused by those following a broadly human-capital approach (see, e.g. Duvander 2001), that people need to hone their country-specific and



linguistic skills before they can ‘activate’ their potential, is unsatisfactory; I spoke to a number of interviewees with an excellent grasp of the language and culture, but who had nevertheless failed to meet their own expectations of ‘success’ in the local labour market.

Broadly speaking, there seemed to be two ways in which international migrants found work in the UK: either they were directly recruited to a post from another similar role – as was the case with, among others, bus drivers and academics – or they took posts, often accessed through networks of friends, families and other connections, in low-paid ‘migrant-heavy’ roles, such as food and drink production, agriculture or cleaning. Indeed, the latter had quickly adapted to take advantage of the emergence of relatively motivated migrant workforce by promoting themselves as migrant-friendly, equal opportunities, employers. However, movement between levels remained exceptionally difficult, with few routes apparently open to migrants regardless of their relative skill sets.

In some ways this account can be understood as the production of a dual migrant labour market and, to an extent, this is true – there did seem to be a division of labour based on imaginings of ‘migrant’ jobs and driven by trajectories of migration. But, equally, it appeared to be coalescing in an apparently arbitrary and unstructured manner, whilst simultaneously becoming petrified as something ‘known’ and, furthermore, commonsensical. However, this wasn’t happening in a way Sassen, for instance, appears to imply it would; it was a far more interactive, nuanced and complex process than such approaches suggest. In the following paragraphs I forward an alternative framework for understanding how such a situation came to be.

To begin, it is useful to consider how power and knowledge interact. This is worthwhile for two reasons; firstly it introduces the notion of power from the very start and, secondly, it is necessary to understand how – in this broadly Foucauldian interpretation – I understand the relationship as one of mutual immanence, rather than as one of determining structures or free agents of change. For Foucault, power was always relational and multiple; it acts as a series of interactions between forces, rather than by taking a concrete form. It is therefore necessary to talk of power *relations* rather than simply ‘power’. Additionally, this argument suggests that these connections exist between all related ‘forces’ and at all levels of society; power relations are not *imposed* by one ‘thing’ – an individual or an institution, a discourse or

a practice – on another ‘thing’, but rather they develop relationally and affectively (Deleuze 1988).

In this way, power relations exist between all ‘forces’, regardless of their ability to *enact* that force. Additionally, these associations are independent of either institutions (or visible forms) and substances (or functional statements), but they can be co-opted as a ‘category of power’ through the deployment of ‘knowledge’<sup>112</sup> in both its forms. For example, in this research, the ‘gaze’ would not be seen simply as a product of either an institution (such as the ‘Organisation’), or of ‘formed subjects’ (such as ‘Managers’ or ‘Migrant Workers’), but goes beyond either of these. The set of related forces that make up this ‘gaze’, this discourse, these words, would be unexceptional – *unknown* – if they had not been *actualised* through knowledge. It would still have existed *in potentia*, but in an impotent form – it would be both immanent and imminent, yet unable to act. Knowledge provides this particular bundle of forces – this ‘diagram’ (Foucault 1979) – with the impetus to effect and be affected.

But how does this happen? It is perhaps tempting to argue that knowledge therefore *produces* power relations. But, for Foucault at least, this is not the case – power is never reducible to knowledge (either in its substantial or functional forms). They may co-exist and interact – be ‘mutually immanent’ (Deleuze 1988) – but at no point can they be conflated. Knowledge actualises power relations through processes of stabilisation and stratification – at first partial and fragmented, but slowly coming to form (and reify) what Deleuze calls a ‘statement curve’ (ibid: 66), aping a set of connections between forces and petrifying this as something ‘known’, logical and natural<sup>113</sup> (Foucault 1972).

If we follow this logic, then what we are beginning to see in discussion and in practice in the South West is the actualisation of knowledge about what migrants can and cannot do, what is natural and logical for different people to be doing. This is not so much an act of symbolic violence, as a series of repeated acts of normalisation; of call and response between varieties

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<sup>112</sup> Confusingly, for those of us confined to reading Foucault in English, the two forms of knowledge he differentiates are usually translated simply as ‘knowledge’. However, knowledge as a theoretical determination – *connaissance* – and knowledge as practice – *savoir* – are separate, yet inter-related elements. The first relates to functions, discourse and the statement (words – *les mots*), whilst the latter pertains to substances, visibility and institutions (things – *les choses*). [NB *Les Mots et Les Choses* is the French title for the book published in English as *The Order of Things* (Foucault 1970)].

<sup>113</sup> Though knowledge actualises power relations, the latter always retains a primacy over the former, because without power relations there would be nothing for knowledge to integrate and reify.

of differently powered ‘forces’. Perhaps, then, we need to understand how such relationships express themselves on a day-to-day basis.

My second point is that ‘economic’ processes – including, in certain conceptions at least, skills and knowledge as commodifiable entities – cannot simply be understood as privileged types of activities – either as words or things – but rather they must be viewed as parts of a landscape; points on a diagram of society. Perhaps this can be best explored through reference to the work of Pierre Bourdieu and his notion of *habitus* – ‘a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures, predisposed towards acting as structuring structures’ (1977: 72)<sup>114</sup>. What presents itself as ‘economic’ is, in reality, a ‘total social fact’ (i.e. a practice that has effects throughout society) and, therefore, these phenomena cannot be separated from the social (and vice-versa). For Bourdieu, ‘economic’ decisions are motivated more by our immersion in a historically constructed *habitus* than by any sort of ‘rational’ judgement (2005: 10). We can argue, therefore, that knowledge and skills do not exist as separate entities in an ‘economic’ sphere, but rather they are enacted through deeply entwined networks of assemblages and ‘actualised’ power relations, which are essentially constituted within a historical strata, or *habitus*. Furthermore, this encompasses far more than is conventionally delimited by terms like ‘the labour market’, ‘the knowledge economy’, or any other ‘economic’ sphere.

So for the subjects in my research, their labour, knowledge and skills are performed through an embodied *habitus* – at once taking on normative ways of behaving as ‘natural’, whilst also actively engaged in producing new ways of being through their everyday interactions with the world around them. In this case the latter point is of more concern – I do not believe we can really argue that those I spoke to during the course of my research would have happily taken on – indeed embodied – a way of being so easily or unproblematically. For example, ‘Marek’ (quoted earlier) did not arrive in ‘Univille’ in 2004 at the age of 39 and begin to act in the way he was expected to. Indeed, the point was that there was *not* really a way that anyone expected him to act, but there were jobs that employers were desperate to get workers for. So Marek and those who followed did those jobs, but they brought their own attitudes to work, their own embodied ways of being, their own *habitus*. It was the interaction

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<sup>114</sup> A few pages later, Bourdieu provides another definition that illustrates the tension between control and freedom that is so central to the dynamic of *habitus*, describing it as, ‘the durably installed generative principle of *regulated improvisations*’ (1977: 78; my italics).

of these ways of doing things with the expectations and attitudes of others – including their employers, managers and co-workers – that helped to produce the situation I would come to study four years later.

I think this can be illustrated by the interplay of what de Certeau (1984) describes as ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics’. The former – the ‘official’ mechanisms of control and representation; the walls of the city – limit our choices and direct our movements. In this sense, a structural approximation for the varied position of international migrants in the South West can be forwarded. For, example, we could draw on Saskia Sassen’s notion of the dual migrant labour market (see, e.g., 1998: 137 - 152) to argue that employment and immigration regimes, organisational structures and spatial practices have produced a situation where it becomes increasingly difficult for people to move from the role they have been indirectly assigned. Indeed, I would argue that elements of this are certainly true. However, it is not the whole story; people are not only *acted on* by Bourdieu’s ‘structured structures’, they also have the capability to engage with the overarching strategies of the place they inhabit – to transform and abandon elements of it; or to return to de Certeau, to take short-cuts, to jay-walk, to use the city – the rules – to their own advantage. However, there are clearly limitations to this; no person I spoke to during the course of this research had got where they were by will alone, indeed, many ambitious and intelligent people had failed, despite their best efforts, to achieve their aims.

Therefore, just as Foucault suggests, neither structure nor agency, strategy nor tactics, discourse nor practice, can alone be used as an explanatory framework. Instead, we must look at the ways these collections of forces interact, become actualised and, crucially, petrify. But how to do this? One way, perhaps is to return to de Certeau’s walking analogy and extend it further; over time we begin to use the same routes, to become stuck in a metaphorical rut, to begin to engage in the call and response – the dual interpellation (McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2007) – of where we can and cannot go, of what we can and cannot do. In this way, our routes become fixed and we become increasingly unable to get to new places – to open up new routes – even if the paths are not blocked by metaphorical walls or one-way systems, they are barricaded by expectations and traditions; norms and common-sense assumptions; tacit behaviours and ways of being.

However, this is not to say that such a situation should be considered set in stone *per se*, rather this is merely the *sensation* of meeting a set of power relations that appear to

definitively create the bounds of our city, to set the limits of what we can and cannot do. Indeed, whilst this may be true for that moment (and, indeed, for many moments to come) it is not how things *necessarily* must be. Even ‘petrified’ ways of being are under constant threat of reformation, of the power relations that constitute them being altered by events unpredictable and unforeseen. As Annemarie Mol and John Law (2002: 13) make clear, any simplified analogy of ‘the way things are’ is always liable to collapse back into complexity. ‘Petrification’ or ‘known-ness’ should, therefore, be considered a temporary state or, even more accurately, a state that never quite exists at all, of constant deferral and immanent differentiation – a ‘diagram of power’ in state of *différance* (Derrida 1982).

#### **AFTERWORD – CONSIDERING THE COMPLEX WORK OF MIGRATION:**

In this chapter I have attempted to both provide a window on both the types of work being carried out by international migrants to the South West of England and how these may be related to contemporary theorisations of both migration and labour markets. These have been numerous and varied and it becomes clear that there are both differences and similarities between the trajectories of work and migration experienced by those in ‘high’ and ‘low’ skilled roles. However, it has also been clear that the way academics discuss these individuals – ‘low’ or ‘high’ skilled migrants – can be highly divisive, with certain theories seen as *more* applicable to one group than another, in effect deepening whatever differences already exist and making it easier for such separations to be reproduced in theory and in practice. This does not, I argue, make such theories performative to the extent Michel Callon suggest certain forms of economics are, but it does require us to reconsider the way theory is ‘enacted’ and whether conceptualising of phenomena such as ‘migrant labour markets’ as implicitly dual is necessarily helpful. Instead, I attempt to sketch out an alternative way of thinking about the locally contingent process of producing a ‘migrant labour market’ that retains the potential to think about ‘high’ *and* ‘low’ skilled migration through the same rubric, whilst allowing for a consideration of a situation that has very powerful impacts of our everyday life to be understood as one that is actually only ever partially set and always under threat of reformation and recomplexification. Therefore, understanding ‘migrant labour markets’ as a complex (and always immanent) process of being and becoming we can

reconceptualise different forms of migration as entwined processes – co-extensive (but partially differentiated) topographies of power relations and embodied practices that produce (always contingent) trajectories of migration and labour market topographies.

In the following chapter I reintroduce the ideas of knowledge – or rather, knowing – and skills to the discussion, exploring how discourses and practices of ‘knowing’ and ‘being skilled’ are enacted in the labour markets of the South West of England. This allows for a further interrogation of some terms – knowledge/knowing and skills/being skilled – that have recurred throughout both this thesis and in numerous contemporary discussions of migration and labour markets.

## Chapter 7

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### Knowing:

#### Skills, knowledge and migration

*The playing of the game of chess is an entity controlled by the principles which rely on the observance of the rules of chess; but the principles controlling the game cannot be derived from the rules.*

- Michael Polanyi, extract from *The Tacit Dimension*, 1967

This is the third (and final) substantive chapter of the thesis. It explores the relationship between international migration, knowledge and skills through the experiences of research participants in both high- and low-skill roles. These are discussed in combination with current theoretical approaches to understanding knowledge, skills and the economy. Supported by arguments made in previous chapters, this allows for the development of a conceptualisation of knowledge (or knowing) as collective, situated and tentative (Amin and Cohendet 2004: 30). In turn, this enables a discussion of the impact of this approach on our understanding of international migration, knowledge and skills.

In previous chapters I explored both how international migrants came to be in the South West area of the UK – what I described as their trajectories of migration – and what may be termed ‘migrant labour markets’ in the region. Throughout both these chapters the notion of knowledge appeared numerous times in various guises – as technical skill, language ability, academic qualifications, even as *habitus* and power/knowledge in the more theoretical sections. Given the concerns of this thesis – namely the interactions between migration, knowledge and skills in the South West of England – and the repeated appearance of knowledge in previous chapters, it seems pertinent to return to this topic. However, as I outlined at the start of the thesis, knowledge and skill are distinctly troublesome concepts; they are neither easy to measure nor straightforward to define, yet they remain central to the lexicon of contemporary understandings of economies and labour markets.

Bearing this in mind, it is useful to first recap the arguments put forward in the earlier discussion of knowledge and international migration. Knowledge and migration are both

related in a general sense – for example, in that the amount of knowledge available in regards to ‘migration industries’, routes, or job opportunities, may affect the migration trajectory of an individual – and in a more specific sense, relevant to the functioning of economies and labour markets – that is, how, where, and to what effect, the pre-existing knowledge of a migrant comes to be ‘actualised’ and put to use in a new domain.

Relevant to both these is what I previously described as the ‘flakiness’ of the concept of knowledge. I argued that knowledge is not something which innately or tangibly exists – rather it is the manifestation of a series of on-going dynamic interactions with the world – what I refer to as ‘knowing-in-the-world’. However, despite the fluidity and apparent ethereality of these processes, knowledge becomes increasingly reified, stratified, and differentially powered through such engagements. Therefore, whilst ‘knowing-in-the-world’ is context-specific, relative and essentially performed, it is not arbitrarily produced, though it may be transformed – given meaning, structure and value – in ways that go beyond (and often invert) the intentions of the ‘knower’. Equally, it becomes clear that such knowledges – actively produced processes of knowing – can exist in many forms – some personal, others communal; some tacit, others explicit; some exclusive, others syncretic – therefore, it becomes increasingly clear that to talk of migration and knowledge (or knowing) is to open a topic with extremely broad and ill-defined parameters, which nevertheless has a fundamental impact on our everyday lives.

Of particular interest to this research is the body of recent literature concerned with studying such complex processes in order to comprehend how best to quickly and efficiently turn individual or communal knowledge into profitable products. Whether these were new types of photocopiers (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995), computer software (Saxenian 2006), financial services (Beaverstock 2002, 2005), or ‘culture industries’ (Florida 2002), the underlying interest was how, in an increasingly knowledge-intensive and globalised world, knowledge could be translated from tacit, embedded or embodied forms into explicit, codifiable and (perhaps most importantly) profitable manifestations. Whilst I may disagree with many of the assumptions inherent in this literature, it does help to illustrate a recognition of the contemporary importance (or, at least, valorisation) of knowledge in economies and labour markets, especially in those employment sectors seen as being ‘knowledge-driven’ or ‘knowledge-intensive’ – that is, almost exclusively those based in



‘global cities’ and their proximate regions<sup>115</sup>. In terms of international migration this means a focus on the translation and use of the knowledges of transnational and often highly mobile migrants in high-tech and professional areas of the economy (see, e.g. Beaverstock 2002, 2005; Raghuram and Kofman 2002; Saxenian 2006). However, as was explored in previous chapters, the labour market participation of international migrants in less prestigious areas of the economy is framed in radically different ways.

What I want to achieve in this chapter, therefore, is to re-frame our understanding of the interactions between knowledge, labour markets and international migrants in the light of my previous critiques. Namely, I wish to explore how ‘knowing-in-the-world’ is performed, understood and valued across a spectrum of roles in local migrant labour markets. As with previous chapters, this will first be illustrated through a discussion of the narratives of those interviewed for this research, before returning to a broader and more theoretically grounded discussion in the latter stages of the chapter.

#### **KNOWING IN THE ACADEMY – ‘HIGH-SKILL’ WORK, MIGRATION AND KNOWLEDGE:**

There can be few sectors where knowledge is more central to its ‘business’ than academia; its whole purpose could be said to be based on *knowing* – whether that is discovering, understanding and disseminating new information, or training and directing learners and other interested parties in the best ways to access, use and conceptualise specific extant knowledges. Academia is also, as illustrated in previous chapters, a highly mobile profession, with numerous international migrants amongst its ranks. Therefore, a University seems to promise an excellent example of how migration and knowledge transfer interact; internationally mobile academics are required to effectively process and transfer knowledge gained overseas into the dominant idiom of the country and institution they are now working in.

Whilst this may initially read like a mechanical process, it became clear during the course of

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<sup>115</sup> This is not to say that the importance of knowledge is recognised as being *universally* important in these areas, rather the significance of knowledge tends to be identified only in certain high-status, non-industrialised sectors of the economy. Whilst this tendency is certainly linked to particular changes in the division of labour in a globalising world, it is also important to note (as in previous chapters) how profoundly different lexicons are used in discussions of what may be described as ‘high’ and ‘low’ skilled roles.

the interviews that, in practice, it involved a whole host of complex and sometimes confusing interactions between the migrant and those who populated their new environment – students, colleagues, non-academics and so on – which resulted, through various iterations, in an on-going transformation. Whilst such changes were sometimes expressed in terms of knowledge – a different approach to teaching, an alteration in research area, a reconceptualisation of an approach – they were equally likely to be expressed as tacit changes, difficult for individuals to explain and analyse satisfactorily.

In order to impose a certain amount of external order and, perhaps, some *post-hoc* rationalisation on these discussions, I have divided this section into parts exploring three recurring elements in the narratives of the research participants. Firstly, I turn my attention to processes of acculturation, by which I refer to the challenges of moving abroad, learning new modes of behaviour and the everyday use of a relatively unfamiliar language. This section also raises questions about how this is utilised in certain contemporary approaches to international migration and knowledge transfer. I make the point that acculturation should not be viewed as simply a temporary barrier to activating ‘human capital’ but, instead, can be seen as a dynamic process with the ability to fundamentally alter future knowledges, whilst also retaining the potential to be a learning process in itself for many migrants. Secondly, our focus moves to notions of ‘learning the job’, exploring the development of tacit knowledges about how to ‘do the job’ at hand. This allows for a practical illustration of how, as Polanyi (1958, 1967) argues, explicit knowledge (expressed, for example, through lectures or research papers) is always underlain by contextual and tacit understandings. Thirdly, the ways in which academics ‘transfer’ their knowledge is explored, illustrating how such processes are, in themselves, often both transformative, contextual and sited. Finally, I turn my attention to understanding knowledge as a process rather than a thing-in-itself, and what this may imply for understanding the relationships between knowledge and migration in the academy.

### *Acculturation:*

The use of the term acculturation implies the assimilation of the cultural traits of another group – broadly the dictionary definition of the term (see, e.g. OED 1989). In ‘human capital’ based approaches to international migration, an acculturation period can be

understood as the hiatus between the time a new migrant arrives in a 'culture' and the moment when they are sufficiently 'literate' (socially and linguistically) to utilise the full extent of their knowledge and skills effectively in their new setting. This is sometimes seen as simply incorporating the time elapsed before the migrant has learnt the dominant language to a sufficient degree to realise their potential human capital (Dustmann and Fabbri 2003; Dustmann and van Soest 2002) and, perhaps, gained some 'country-specific' educational qualifications (Duvander 2001; Rooth and Ekberg 2006). Such approaches often, implicitly or otherwise, also include a notion of 'learning the ropes' – of a new organisation, a new role, a new country – in a way that suggests tacit, embodied and experiential engagements with a 'culture' or community which cannot be reduced to linguistic ability or educational achievement (see, e.g. Rambaut 2008; Williams and Baláz 2005).

However, whilst it is equally important to note that acculturation has increasingly negative connotations, especially in sociology and anthropology, where it is seen as indicative of an idea that new arrivals in a country must adapt themselves to the dominant modes of their 'receiving' society if they wish to be accepted<sup>116</sup>, whether or not we accept the term acculturation to describe these processes of adaptation<sup>117</sup>, it is clear that there is a period of adjustment when moving to a new locale and that this can affect almost every aspect of our everyday life.

For those research participants working in academia, such adjustments often manifested themselves in unexpected circumstances:

*...It was a bit of a culture shock in many... ways. I don't know if you want to hear those ways, what is the focus of it?*

H.V: *No. That'd be something I'd be very interested in.*

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<sup>116</sup> Although these disciplines also recognise the difficulties in acclimatising to a new cultural idiom – it is commonplace for anthropologists in particular to write of their own 'culture shock' when first immersed within a new and alien setting (see, e.g. Gardner 1997; Hendry 1999), in a way comparable to the migrant bankers Jon Beaverstock writes of in New York or Singapore (2002, 2005), whilst authors such as Kathy Ewing (1990), Karen Fog Olwig (1997) and Alberto Melucci (1997) have written fluently about the challenges of integrating and managing numerous cultural 'ways of being' for contemporary transmigrants.

<sup>117</sup> I will retain its use here in a limited sense to refer to the period whilst a new migrant becomes accustomed to the explicit and tacit requirements of living and working in a new culture. This may not mean assimilation as such, rather the development of a certain level of culture-specific 'know-how' (not to mention, 'know-who' and 'know-where').

OK. Trivial things right? <HV nods> I'll tell you the trivial things; I'm taller than most Asian women, so when I go into a business meeting, or a business function, or a cocktail function, I'm use to looking there <indicates eye level> and below. I come into here in a cocktail function, I see a wall of backs and fronts! I'm not used to that, I'm not used to people being so much taller than I am, and that was a bit of... a bit of a culture shock, it was a bit intimidating, um... I've gotten over that. How I've gotten over that is that you meet a couple of idiots, real idiots, horrible people, stupid people - well, I won't say stupid, but you know, a bit thick - and you realise that no country in the world has a monopoly on... idiots! <Laughs> So, that makes you feel that you're not really in that different an environment, it's just that physically they look different, physically they are different.

- 'Madeline'

However, that is not to say that all those interviewed went through this period when they began working in the UK. Those who had studied for some or all of their tertiary qualifications in the UK (though not generally in the South West region), experienced things in a slightly different way – though as many implied, moving to any new workplace, whether in a new country or not, implies a certain level of adaptation to the wiles of that place:

*I think cities have personalities, they are like people... er, London - which is the UK city which I know the best... is a very cosmopolitan city, but it is dominated by particular groups that you see... a lot. You see a lot of South-East Asians... you see a lot of Scandinavians... at least I saw a lot of Scandinavians... and you see a lot of French people... because there is a huge amount of French people working-- and, and, now I guess... Poles are there a lot... but not at the time I was living there. New York has a completely different mix, it is a lot more Latin American... er... and that gives it a different... vibe. So people go out at night a lot more... people spend a lot of, a lot of the time outdoors, even if it is minus 10... people are freezing... and I like that... that's one of the things I miss about New York, um... so... in that sense, New York wasn't a huge difference... there were certain social norms that... I had to fall in line with... but that's normal, I mean you move to a different country, people have their own... customs and you adapt to them.*

- 'Paulo'

*Cambridge is a different place. I mean, Cambridge I'm not sure is the UK, like New York is not the United States. Cambridge is an odd place, full of odd rules. A bit of anthropology helped to find one's way and learn the jokes, which takes a bit of time because the system does not freely distribute information. So information*

*needs to be extracted in interesting terms. It was fun. I am a fan of the tutorial system. It certainly allowed people of different cultures... to come to terms with the system, the country, the historiography in my case - the peculiarities of the discipline - pretty fast.*

- 'Giulia'

However, all at some time had had to deal with certain novelties about moving to a new locale. Firstly, though all those I spoke to reported being fluent in English when they first arrived, many still required time to adapt to certain idiosyncrasies in spoken English, despite a firm grasp on the language and its peculiar use in their chosen discipline. Accents, slang and 'improper' use of English were all pinpointed as aspects of the everyday use of English that took time to get used to, sometimes with comic effect:

*When I came the only person I could understand here was an American guy, and... then I could understand foreigners, I could understand our Greeks... and then the last person of whom I learnt to understand was an English Professor... because he just speaks very differently... I don't know much idiomatic English. Sometimes my colleagues - English colleagues - have to explain me, they use some expression... well, I always ask 'what's that?'... I never hesitate to ask! <Laughs>*

- 'Aynur'

*I mean... I think in a certain way it enhanced flexibility... switching just between different languages... but, um... sometimes it is a bit of struggle... trying to... in a sense because you have a limited vocabulary... So... but almost sometimes; strangely, if you sit with a group of foreigners... it's much easier speaking English... because everybody has similar problems, so... everyone is aware of how difficult it is actually to be understood... and, so... when you are in... a pure group of English people, then it can happen that you are a bit annoying because, if you are speaking slowly and a bit simply, because you are around they probably wouldn't laugh, but they were just pure English. The same thing happens among French people and Germans, I don't... Yeah? ... Even if a person speaks a language, if he doesn't speak it very well, it takes a bit of an effort to integrate.*

- 'Leon'

Additionally, building social networks, understanding the bureaucratic idiosyncrasies of the UK, and even dealing with British interior design, were all pinpointed by as things which needed time and patience to adapt to:

*Um... when you come as a post-doc, um... you don't interact with... many people in the department, you start with your supervisor and you have a few people, if you are sharing office - which you normally do - then you get, er, to interact with these guys and I was really, really lucky that I got in a room with, um... a Post-Doc who is, um, you know... older than me I think, even more mature than me, at the time, and, er, we hit it on immediately and... with him - and there was another one who I met through the landlady that I got the flat, and he was also working in the Department so, with him and a few others, you know, I started to get to know people and they invited me out to lunch, for example, in... during the day, so I get to know them a bit better, so...*

- 'Zoran' (on building a social network)

*... [S]tarting work is different. You need bank accounts and things like this and that was complete may-os - mayhem and chaos... [OK] Because, I didn't think the... the English system is not really, well not very friendly for... accommodating foreigners into the system. I mean it is nearly impossible to open a bank account in the beginning... which I was... quite upset in the beginning. Most, and I, my experience is, most foreigners have the same problem, but... you needed all kinds of proof of evid- of addresses and things, which... were impossible to get, I mean, they'd say, 'Oh, give us utility bills for the last few months', 'Well, you know, I just arrived last week' [Mm] Things like this, and, in the end, you have to use... colleagues address as your permanent address and you had... your company, or your employer send you a letter that you were employed to that address - which wasn't really your address - you need evidence that you were a good customer from your previous bank, which... UK citizens don't need if they open their first bank account, yeah? So, it was things like... well, I don't want to use the word Fascism, but, ab... it didn't feel very welcome at the beginning... and, um... yeah, I needed my Dutch bank to send a letter to also the address which wasn't mine, that I was a good customer for all the years I had been banking, so with two fake address I walked into the bank and they opened up a bank account and, the next day, I walked back in with a change of address slip and they said, 'Oh, fine', yeah? So, it seems a... barrier for the sake of a barrier is not very... for any security reason at all...*

- 'Jereon' (on dealing with unfamiliar bureaucratic systems)

*... [W]hat really shocked me, I mean, she [her landlady] had carpet throughout the house, even in the bathroom, and I found that appalling... because at home, you had tiles... in your bathroom. You just have to*

*- either you have tiles, or lino that's kind of welded together, because they all treat them like wet rooms, and I thought it was just her because... I mean she was terribly, not very hygienic... So, I really made fun of it, until I came to more English homes and realised a lot of people had carpets in their homes, and then I just felt really stupid! <Laughs> Now I have a carpet in my home! <Laughs> So... I mean, that I remember because that is something... extremely English, which I really laugh with my Mum about, because... yeah, that was just completely alien, never did that, never...*

- 'Mathilde'

Importantly, many also reported that differences in working style were very noticeable on arrival in their new environs, with many contrasting it to the dominant style 'at home':

*Oh yes. Oh yes, there were quite a lot - huge differences between two educational systems... um... you know, the one in Yugoslavia was much more autocratic and, um... you know, bah... <sighs> at all levels. Yeah, the difference was I was undergraduate student when I was in Yugoslavia and then you become postgraduate and there is a difference in status... anyway, but then... there was a big difference between two educational systems.*

H.V: *Was it something very noticeable?*

*Yes.*

H.V: *Did it take you time to adapt to that? To work in a new system?*

*Er... well. <Laughs> Well it takes normally time to adapt to any system, so... you get to a new place and then you have to adapt to it, so I wouldn't say that was... that important, but it is, it is quite a... difference. So you have to cope with the new place and the new system... at the same time.*

- 'Zoran'

*... Well, as I said earlier, the... whole university system, the way modules for instance are... organised and the way they are being taught, you don't have modules in Germany, at least you didn't ten years ago, they're now trying to change all that and trying to adapt it to the... um, English system... erm, but, at my time, you didn't have... modules, you just-- teachers, lecturers, just... um, taught whatever they wanted, right? There was no curriculum, or core modules, anything. Every semester you thought about what would you like to teach... and you did it, right? [OK] Um... so that was completely different to here. Also, um... we had mostly seminars, not lectures, which is also different here, the usual structure is a lecture and an accompanying... tutorial...*

*which we didn't have at all. Er, um... so that was an important difference... um... I don't know, I can't recall any others, though I'm sure that... at the time, I was confused by many things! <Laughs>*

- 'Max'

It was noticeable throughout these interviews, and remarked upon by a number of those to whom I spoke, that academia – and particularly its constituent disciplines – retains a certain level of what might be described as a transnational *habitus*; that is, because academics from different countries often interact (if only through reading each other's work) in pursuit of their professional goals, use similar terminologies and study subjects common to those in other parts of the world, an academic moving to a new environment may be *more* familiar with the ways of working in a university in a new country than they might be moving from academia to the 'real world' in their 'home' country. Therefore, some of the challenges of arriving in a new locale are lessened; academia in effect becomes a transnational culture – there is an academic way of doing things that, to varying degrees, crosses conventional cultural borders:

*... Ah, well it is probably a bit different when you work in a University, especially in this department; it's very diverse, internationally, so... and er... I probably don't... interact very much with people outside the university, so... I don't... probably encounter the extremes of British ways of living! <Laughs> Because in academia it is more or less... probably culturally everybody is about on the same level, so...*

- 'Aynur' (on adapting to life in a UK university)

Whilst this is certainly true to an extent, particularly in regards to the production (and performance) of knowledge – a lecture in Japan would be recognisable to a UK academic as a lecture, even if he or she had no grasp of what was being said – many of those interviewed hinted at subtle differences in such processes that could have significant effects on how successfully knowledge was produced, performed and disseminated:

*Here, there is a care about student... evaluations. So, if I say, 'look you didn't show up for your presentation, I'll give you zero'... and somebody says, 'well, I had a headache' and I'm like, 'hard luck really, show me your Doctor's note', um... that, I, I... well then you'd get really poor student evaluations and then you'd get... a slap afterwards. So you just learn, well... [it] doesn't help anybody.*



- 'Mathilde'

*... We didn't have a systematic mentoring at the time and, I mean, you're always welcome to ask your colleagues... if you had a question, but, er... you don't want to continually make a nuisance of yourself, so... Yeah, basically, there had been a few misunderstandings, you know... along the way. How to do, how things have to be done... caused some panic but I mean that's how I learnt. I mean, I was told things but, for instance, the very idea... that you use a very different grading scale... and I read it, and it just seemed completely illogical to me... why would you do that? ... And so I wasn't prepared and it came as a complete surprise and I was told I had a high failure rate...*

- 'Leon' (on adapting to a new marking system)

Therefore, even in an apparently transnational *habitus* such as academia, local differences still have a significant (if subtle) effect on the production, dissemination and performance of knowledge. Furthermore, these are often driven by tacit and embodied ways of being that take time to adapt to. However, though these alterations in the landscape of knowing certainly require a period of adjustment for new migrants, the extent to which they effect 'knowledge transfer' is uncertain. None of those to whom I spoke suggested that moving to the UK had any damaging effect on their career as academic 'knowledge workers', or on the success of the ways in which they imparted their knowledge to others. However, it was clear that it often affected *what* and *how* people studied and how and to whom they 'transferred' that knowledge. It is these subtle changes which are next addressed, exploring how people 'learnt the job' through tacit and explicit learning interactions with a whole range of colleagues, students and other parties. This, in turn, allows for a further examination of how processes of knowing change in response to particular locales.

### ***Learning the job:***

Whenever we take on a new role in life, whatever that may be – pupil, employee, partner or parent – we encounter a challenge to learn how to carry out a role that we will not necessarily have any practical experience of. We may have read and studied about 'best practice' in the field and, therefore, feel we have a good knowledge of what we should be

doing and, indeed, how we might go about doing it. However, as Michael Polanyi (1958) has argued, such codified knowledge as we find in textbooks and academic course manuals does not alone make us experts. It is in the interaction with others, and through an embodied engagement with the world, that we become what Polanyi describes as ‘masters’ – we take on tacit, non-codifiable traits that allow us to successfully convert explicit knowledge into practical knowing.

Equally, in starting our new roles, we will have heard stories about how it is done successfully – from family and friends, from the press and books, from the more subtle directives arising from the predominant *habitus*. We are also likely to have observed others carrying out the role, and made judgements about what we thought was good and bad practice. In this way, we quickly become immersed in the social relationships of a role – what a *proper* way of doing something may look like. To be an academic we must act like academics, otherwise, as Pierre Bourdieu (1988) has noted, we are liable to face difficulties in negotiating with, and being accepted by, the majority – significantly reducing our chances of being a success, having our voices heard, transferring our knowledge. Therefore, in order to ‘do our jobs’ as they are envisaged by the majority, we must learn the ‘rules’. Whilst this is as true of a nascent ‘native’ academic as it is for one from overseas, the added factor of having been immersed in another cultural realm, another *habitus*, for some time in one’s life, provides an additional layer for the migrant academic to negotiate. Indeed, if we understand the development of tacit knowledge as one of ‘emergence’, fundamentally instituted in an embodied and socialised engagement with the world (Polanyi 1967: 29), then we can begin to understand how reproducing knowledge – or reanimating ways of knowing – in a ‘new’ environment will always require a certain level of adaptation and, furthermore, that such acclimatisation will become more difficult the more ‘alien’ the new environment may be to the new arrival. Therefore, whilst there will be a certain level of adaptation in the tacit performance of knowing even for movements between relatively similar environs, such as between Universities in the same national system, the relative impact of such changes may be quite slight compared to moves from other parts of the world, or even other areas of employment.

For some of those I interviewed, this had partially been alleviated by their involvement in British academic life during their prior studies, whilst others had been educated in English-speaking universities in relatively similarly structured academic system in the US or Canada.

Most had a fairly limited degree of teaching experience, some in similar systems, some in institutions which took a significantly different approach to teaching and learning than was found at 'Wessex.' All, however, began their teaching careers in the UK and, though a couple had since spent some time researching in non-UK universities, it remained their primary site of research and teaching.

For the majority of those to whom I spoke, there had been an initial level of uncertainty in how they should go about *being* an academic lecturer. Though several had been enrolled on schemes designed give new academics a basic grounding in how to lecture, teach and tutor, none reported this as being of primary practical benefit:

H.V: *So, when you first arrived, how did you go about learning to be a lecturer?*

*Well, you base it on your experiences as a student, first of all... and then you... get along with what University has to offer young lecturers, whether you are from abroad or from local... so there is a system within University that will... you know, make sure the quality of teaching is, um... at a reasonable level.*

H.V: *Was that there when you started?*

*Yes. I mean changed over time. I know new lecturers now go through a different system, but it was there and I attended a few of those.*

H.V: *Did you find it much help when you were actually doing your lectures?*

*Not really! <Laughs> I had, as I say, my own experiences and then I was starting to do some lecturing, um... so I had to adjust... to the system here, but obviously knew what the system was in Canada - and I was even teaching there, so it was kind of blend of my previous experiences that I put into teaching here.*

- 'Zoran'

Exploring this theme further, many pointed to both 'cultural' difficulties in learning how to teach, and the role of social, tacit and experiential factors in their development as lecturers:

H.V: OK. So... *when you first came to the UK and particularly when you started in a lecturing post, in a teaching post, how did you go about learning how to lecture, how to be a Lecturer?*

*It took a while! <Laughs> I don't know. As you said earlier, trial and error... you just... go ahead and see what happens and... see what reactions you get and... adapt your teaching style to those reactions.*

H.V: *So how did you find you started off doing it?*

*... erm... I very carefully prepared... scripts, which I mostly... read to the students. [OK.] That's the usual way you do it in Germany, but I found quickly that that didn't quite work, because students... were not really, um... capable of listening to a written script for an hour... erm, so I quickly changed my style and, um... most giving power point presentations and... where just have certain images, or... phrases, words... which... serve as a clue for... my talking about a certain issue... [Yeah. OK.] Which works a lot better.*

- 'Max'

*[...] I think in Indian Universities... my experience is it's... it's actually a lot more informal, strangely enough, the way things work... er... you know, the way colleagues interact – or even the way students interact, sort of, outside the classroom... with the teachers... because, you can, sort of... you know... you can kind of... sort of properly pop into somebody's room and... you know, ask a question. I find that it was much more... um... in pragmatic terms, because everyone's doing different things at different times here, so people's teaching schedules are different, so they may not physically be in the same building... um... all of the time, every single day at the same times. So, it's a more... you know, you talk to people - e-mail them... or you fix an appointment, or you... it's a more formal style of interaction in that sense... I don't know if that answers your question?! <Laughs>.*

H.V: *So the differences are almost more structural - the way people teach and that - rather than cultural?*

*Yeah. Definitely. I think that is exactly right... it is structural - it's different in the way things are structured... um... I mean, Indian Universities are quite notoriously loosely structured! <Laughs> I mean*

*the admin doesn't work properly... so I think that creates its own... sort of, defence mechanism, as it were, people find ways of working that can get around that, so...*

- 'Fatima'

Furthermore, few felt their experiences as 'novice' academics – as doctoral students or junior researchers – had prepared them fully for life as an academic; there was much, it seems, that was left out of the job description:

H.V: *So, how did you go about learning?*

*Err... trial and error. I would... I would go and practice in the rooms in which I was teaching before the semester started... to make sure I knew how to switch everything on, and then I would have a number of the IT guy on the mobile! <Laughs> On speed dial! But... it didn't work and, actually, somebody put in their evaluation from that you're the first lecturer that actually knew how to use the PowerPoint and all the equipment and the DVD player and everything. Thank you! <Laughs> But I didn't, I, I had to practice, um... There is nothing worse than you standing there, with 150 students and then it doesn't work, um... and I think a lot of people skills as well... um... It's not a bad thing, I mean I use my skills when I do my research, but from a teaching... no.*

H.V: *You've had to develop a whole... new set of skills? [Yeah] So, does that also leave problems about passing on the knowledge you've got through your PhD to your students?*

*Yeah. I had these ambitions to inspire people, and... they would all be interested, and they would want to stay on and do more things... and... the truth is, very few people are inspired, and the people who are inspired can't afford to stay on... a lot of time, um... I gave up because I found it... Students, if they don't get what you are talking about, they get very impatient... and then don't want to come to your class... um... or they just switch off... and that's not, it needs to be enjoyable... for them, so if I just want to pass on my skills, I find myself rather selfish... If people want to know more, they might want to do... a dissertation on the topic I do... which I had this year, which was really nice... um... no. Otherwise...*

- 'Mathilde'

Whilst many of these experiences would have been equally felt by new UK academics, it does suggest that a large part of the role of the academic is based on unofficial assumptions about how to do the job, as well as local mechanisms of administration and organisation – such as class sizes, marking scales, and research assessments – that may be both alien to the new academic and vital to their success in doing the job. Learning the job effectively, therefore, is more than a case of simply practising lecturing, tutoring or teaching; it is also about learning the social rules and regulations which govern that particular role (see also Bauder 2006). In essence, this encourages the nascent academic to behave in a way becoming of a ‘master’ academic, ensuring the proper recognition of the role of lecturer in the academy, to invoke Bourdieu’s well known statement that, ‘the institution recognises those who recognise it’ (1988: 101).

#### *Transferring knowledge:*

How then does this affect the ways in which these new lecturers ‘transfer’ their knowledge? The implication from what I have outlined above is that it should produce some level of alteration in the ways in which both prior knowledge is reconstituted in a new environment, and future knowledge emerges and is shaped by a novel social, physical and intellectual landscape. In this section I explore some of the ways those whom I interviewed outlined the changing nature of ‘knowledge transfer’ (and indeed knowledge production) in their roles as academics – whether that was through teaching an introductory undergraduate class, or working with multinational corporations to design a major international engineering project. However, it must be noted here that, perhaps because of the tacit nature of much of this, many found it difficult to explain clearly what they meant other than in agreeing that moving to a new environment had somehow changed the ways in which they both approached and presented their ‘knowledge’:

*At the same time, changing job - or, well, maybe job and the country - at the same time it's a big stress, but at the same time it's, er... challenge in a positive way, so you have to adapt, think... learn something and, er... see something new, so... I saw that several times when I worked at different places where I worked, so I went*

*through that three or four times, so... I know that there can be problems, but... well, can be pleasures in it when, well, you see something new and you realise that it... that's... worth thinking or applying or, you know...*

- 'Miroslav'

*When I went to France, I thought this is an eye-opener... and many people I know, it just... changes your, how you view the world, I think....*

- 'Jereon' (On the benefits of moving abroad)

However, for others there were clearer outcomes to a move to a new environment, such as a new research interest borne out of a re-animated view of their subject:

*... [T]hat [moving to the area] was when my work – the research I'm doing – changed as well... um... Where I... tried, well I became, much more interested in the relationship between literature and landscape... um... and literature and place, because... you know, you can't really be in [the local area] and not think about it. So that's when, for the very first time, I really started taking... um... cognisance of my surroundings and actually thinking how that interacts with my research.*

- 'Madeline'

For others, it meant developing an awareness both that knowledge is best presented in different ways in different places, and that the act of producing knowledge for 'transfer' to others changes your own relationship to it:

H.V: *So it's not simply about providing the facts, it's also about...*

*No it's not... Everybody can learn facts, it's how you present it and, you know, I test it on me - if I cannot understand what I'm talking about, then... <laughs> ... there is a problem! You can't teach anybody else - and lecturing actually help, your preparation for lectures help you, because you come to a point when you probably didn't understand something that well, [but] in order to prepare to teach somebody else, you have to understand it 100%.*

H.V: *So you can get away with sort of understanding something when you are doing your own research, but when you have to explain it to somebody else...*

*You can't get away with that! <Laughs> You know, students will see through it... and you will! <Laughs> That's, um... that's even worse! <Laughs>*

H.V: *That's interesting, this idea of performance. I wonder if you find yourself performing in a different way when you are in different places?*

*Yes. Yes. If you give presentation to your colleagues, you have to do it one way. If... in two weeks time, when I'm in China, my lectures will be different... because they expect gravity in your lectures... and they expect you to talk to them, er... because they are still... under the old sort of regime.*

H.V: *Is that because it is in China, rather than...?*

*Yes, because it is in China, you have to demonstrate that you are Professor, that you are clever, when... which you don't need to do to our own students, or your colleagues here in the UK... You have to be down to earth and try to explain very complex stuff in very simple terms. In China you have to do both. You have to show the complex stuff and... the simple explanations.*

H.V: *OK. So almost complex stuff first, to show that you really know your stuff?*

*Yes.*

*I think I'm not unfair when I say that.*

- 'Zoran'

Whilst some may be happy to adapt their presentation style to their environment, others struggle to encourage their 'audiences' to alter their ways of approaching the subject:

H.V: *Do you feel you are using all your skills and knowledge in your current job?*



*... Frankly, I would like to do more research and... I admire, um... my colleagues in [The Netherlands], who can teach at a much higher level and go really over mathematical proof... whereas I've spent my last ten years trying to... get to the level of this... and there's a huge difference.*

H.V: *Do you think that's because of the different way we teach Economics in this country?*

*Um... because the Maths demands... are lower than... I would want them to be at 'Wessex' University...*

H.V: *So there's less Maths here?*

*I'm a Mathematical Economist. My first... I tell the students my first language is German, my second is Tax theory and my third is English... So I communicate with Mathematics, sort of naturally... and I'm actually - when I teach Maths - this is like using... I want an artificial language just for the mathematics itself and that's critical.*

H.V: *So, do you think there is less mathematical literacy amongst the students who are doing Economics in Britain?*

*Well, I mean... it has to do with whom you cater for. If you cater for the average student... then you have to be on a low level. If you cater only for the 10 per cent, you can be a bit more demanding.*

- 'Leon'

Indeed, as discussed above and by Bourdieu and others (Bauder 2006; Bourdieu 1988; Said 1994), the institutionalised production of academic knowledge suggests – perhaps even insists – that such processes of knowing take certain forms. These may be subject to local conventions embedded in tacit ways of being and behaving, or they might be provoked by more international codes of accepted behaviour and practice. It is clear, however, that they are not 'natural', preordained or explicit. They require nascent academic migrants to adapt,

alter and transform their approach to, and practices of, knowing. These changes may be partially lessened if (as is commonly the case) the ‘new’ academic has spent part of their formative post-secondary education in a similar academic setting. Equally, the international norms of academia often present a more ‘familiar’ environment for many than would otherwise be expected. Despite this, however, it was clear that there was always a certain level of adaptation required to ‘do the job’ at hand. Sometimes this was a matter of overcoming a level of ‘culture shock’, but it also regularly took the form of changing practice in order to fit into pre-defined (though rarely codified) ‘rules of the job’ – adopting the embodied habitus of academic labour. Equally, it seems that, whether it was immediately clear to those to whom I spoke or not, this had some effect on how they presented, performed and ‘transferred’ their knowledge. Indeed, it is arguable that this could be seen as a shift in their process of *knowing*. That is, through dynamic and contextual practice, what people *know* changes dependent on where, when and how they are performing, practising or expressing that knowledge. Knowing should therefore be seen, following Polanyi and Bourdieu, as contextually and socially *emergent*, rather than fixed and fully explicit. This emergence, in turn, is not simply arbitrary, but is regulated and actualised through a network of explicit and tacit rules and modes of behaviour which make certain forms of knowing more acceptable, better rewarded and more ‘successful’ than others. In turn, encouraging the reproduction of certain ways of enacting academia which require migrant academics to adapt if they wish to achieve success within the logic of that system.

In summary, therefore, we can understand the relationship between international migration, knowledge and the academy as one of complex, collective and sited *emergence*. It is not simply a case that migrant academics bring parcels of knowledge to their new environments which are then incorporated and disseminated by those with whom they share a physical site. Nor can we understand it simply as a reconfiguration of new or pre-existing networks in which knowledge is then redistributed – passing back and forth through pipelines of information. Instead, knowledge – or, rather, *knowing* – emerges as something that is sited, transformative and contextual. We adapt our practices of knowing to new environments; we take on both the *habitus* of the site and the tacit foundations which underlies the presentation and reformation of this. Whilst these are open to a certain level of contestation and subtle transformation, there are strong, yet generally subtle, encouragements to conform to normative modes of behaviour and practice. Thus, knowing should be understood as social,

fluid and sited. That is, how, where, and in what social context we know is as important as what we know.

### **WASTED KNOWLEDGE? INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS IN LOW-SKILL ROLES:**

What then of international migrants working outside the relatively transnational and increasingly homogenised academy? If processes of knowing are altered to such an extent for those remaining in a familiar environment, albeit in a new location, how would such processes evolve for those who have not only moved to a new country but, as illustrated in previous chapters, are liable to be employed in roles that are both different to those they carried out 'at home', and may require substantially less formal skills and qualifications than they possess?

As I have explored in previous chapters, there are often implicit assumptions of difference in the literatures on 'low' and 'high' skill migration. The former tends to concentrate on labour market segmentation, discrimination and 'ethnic niches', whilst the latter is concerned with discussions of knowledge transfer, cosmopolitan ideals and intuitional and personal networks. However, I have made the point that the differences between the two are not nearly as clear as one would assume from reading the separate literatures. Many international migrants in 'low' skill roles are relatively highly qualified and may have aspirations and abilities beyond the roles they occupied. Similarly, those in 'high' skill roles are not separate from a world of socially defined roles and presumptions simply because they are classified as 'knowledge workers'. However, this is not to say there are no differences in experiences between these two broad groups; as outlined earlier, the role of 'migration trajectories', expectations of what people can and should be doing, and differences in confidence about what you yourself can achieve<sup>118</sup>, can lead to significantly different outcomes. Equally there are often practical differences, especially regarding language skills, the recognition of qualifications and prior experience of, and contacts in, the UK.

In this section, the narratives provided by research participants in 'low' skill roles are used to help explore and illustrate how such 'trajectories of knowing' are played out in individual cases. This is done using broadly the same stages as before; dealing first with the challenges

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<sup>118</sup> See, e.g. Williams and Baláž (2005) on the confidence engendered by 'knowing you know.'

of acculturation – including language acquisition – before concentrating on processes of ‘learning the job’ in a new environment and, finally, discussing if and how international migrants in low-skilled roles are able to actualise and transfer their knowledges in these locales. In this way, it is possible to explore the lived experiences of knowing-in-the-world for these individuals and how this alters over their migration life-course. Furthermore, it allows for an initial illustration of the ways in which different migration trajectories provide very different experiences of knowing.

***Acculturation:***

Unlike those moving to work in academia, there was rarely any equivalence between roles for those who had moved to the UK and found themselves working in ‘low skill’, low wage jobs. Few spoke of a transnational or cosmopolitan way of doing things that they recognised from previous work. Instead, they were faced with relatively unfamiliar work practices, a language the vast majority were not proficient in, and a country whose rules, regulations and social norms regularly surprised and unnerved these new arrivals.

AR: *How did you feel when you moved here?*

*I felt like a stranger... mainly because of the language... People would talk to me at the store, office, at work, and I wouldn't know what to answer... Besides, life here is a little bit different... when I got here, nobody would really socialize, there would be empty streets at 9pm...*

*Also, food made a difference... I could afford many sandwiches, pizzas, and snacks in Poland, which were quite tasty... Here, everything is more expensive, and I didn't like it... I would buy something new to me and hate it immediately...*

- ‘Artur’

Whilst such culture ‘shocks’ may be expected when moving to a new country, the effect this had on some research participants was notable:

AR: *How did you feel when you were about to leave for England?*

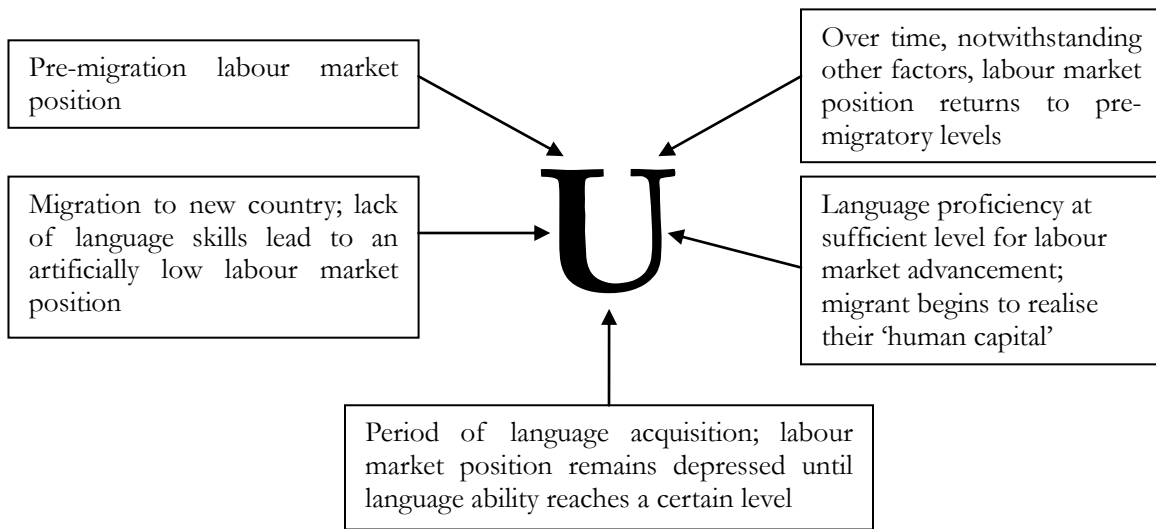
*Excitement on the airplane, and a shock at the first day of work. It occurred that the language barrier was bigger than I expected, I could barely understand anything. It's different to speak English with Polish people and in Poland... When you have to speak to British people in the UK it's another story...*

*At my first cigarette break, I was thinking 'What am I doing here?!' We would communicate via body language, but after a while I adjusted. Actually people from work helped me to find a flat, but then again, I couldn't 'find' some of the people. We would communicate just via body language... so I would think, "should I just go back home?"*

- 'Jan'

Another key element of acculturation, and one particularly widely documented in academic studies, is the impact of developing language proficiency on migration trajectories. A number of studies in Britain (Dustmann and Fabbri 2003), Sweden (Duvander 2001; Rooth and Ekberg 2006) and Germany (Dustmann and van Soest 2002) have, to varying degrees, attempted to illustrate that, on a population-wide level, as a migrant's proficiency in the dominant language of their 'receiving' society increases, so does their level of income. In time, therefore, their level of employment should improve to a point where it matches their 'human capital' (that is their investments in qualifications, skills acquisition and so forth). Whilst this may be affected by what Ann-Zofie Duvander describes as 'statistical discrimination' (2001: 229) against certain groups of migrants, their employment trajectories should generally follow a U-curve (Rooth and Ekberg 2006), with their labour market position improving once they have learnt the dominant language to a necessary level to realise their human capital (see figure overleaf):

**Figure 6.1:** Stylised relationship between labour market position, language proficiency and international migration (after Rooth & Ekberg 2006).



However, despite often significant periods of time spent in the UK, and a proficient level of English language skills amongst many of those working in low skill roles (as discussed in previous chapters) few had moved on to ‘better’ jobs. Indeed, whilst one or two interviewees spoke of an expectation of a period of adjustment to the dominant language and culture before they would get better jobs, those who had succeeded appeared to have done so only in roles in which their nationality had some advantage:

*Yes... hmm... that is nice thing... many Poles can't speak English when they first came to the UK, it can be a problem for employer, they cannot communicate each other sometimes. But when Poles start learn English it's much easier to find a job, to communicate with employer to life in England.*

- ‘Marcin’ (on the advantages of speaking English)

*First of all, I want to change my job... I gave myself a little bit of time for that because of my English, and I will see later... if I can get a job that I want...*

- ‘Krzysztof’ (on his future plans)

*Because I offered to help people and sometimes I used to go to this recruitment agency with some people who had problems – maybe they didn't understand the language, what they are talking about to them or they had*

*a problem with the payslip or they couldn't find a job or help to register, so I was always with them over there. So they noticed that I could be a good help for the company, that's why I find a job with them. It wasn't any advert. I didn't find it in a newspaper or through the internet.*

- 'Ewa' (on finding a job through her work in the community)

*[... T]hat's why I'm still here with the Council, even though I'm very badly paid, because I find the job satisfaction. You know, I'd always wanted to be the translator. I've found it very easy to learn any language. You know, I speak fluently five. Because I could use the language skills here and I could do lots of translation here for [my boss]. So it kept me being happy.*

- 'Marek' (on how his language skills had made him employable)

Whilst the relatively small number of examples here cannot be used as an argument *in themselves* that language acquisition has *no* impact on labour market position – indeed, they appear to suggest that there is *some* initial impact – they do seem to indicate that something more complex is happening than merely a period of delayed gratification prior to reaching a sufficient level of linguistic ability in the dominant language of a receiving society. Indeed, there is much evidence from other research studies that suggest that language skills (and even 'cultural proficiency') are not the only determinants of a migrant's relative success. For example, Duvander has illustrated in a Swedish study that even if a migrant is fluent in Swedish, married to a Swedish partner and has Swedish educational qualifications, they are still more likely to be unemployed than a Swedish-born national with similar qualifications (2001). Equally, Bauder (2001, 2006) has repeatedly pointed to the influence of culture in the labour market in both Canada and Germany, whilst in the UK, Jane Wills and her collaborators (May et al. 2007; Wills et al. 2009; Wills et al. 2010), and particularly McDowell et al (McDowell 2008; McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2007, 2009), have recently illustrated the role of socio-cultural values and norms of behaviour in the construction of what we might call a 'migrant division of labour'. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that acculturation alone – whether we consider this as 'just' a matter of language acquisition, or an adaptation to more complex and unstated social norms and ways of being – is not sufficient to explain the success or failure of international migrants in being able to 'transfer their knowledge' or, perhaps less clumsily, to realise their potential. However, this is not to play down the role of language acquisition, for, as Marek pointed out in one of the

interviews for this study, the inability to communicate with one's peers, not only effects what jobs you are able to do, but also severely constrains the social opportunities open to you:

*... Within three weeks I was able to communicate, so I don't understand [why] there are my colleagues working here for two years and they can't even ask for glass of water. It is very essential. We are lucky here that there are no moving parts... or the health and safety... does not involve constant thinking about.... how to express yourself because you could get harmed and it is very straight-forward here.*

H.V: *Because you don't have to shout 'get out the way' or something?*

*Yeah. They wouldn't survive somewhere else, yeah? Where the environment would be a little more dangerous or something.*

H.V: *So it is limiting to the type of work people can do?*

*Yeah. That is the way I wanted to say it. Yeah. They are limited to work here because their language skill is not very much. And, even if there is eight of you on a line, you cannot talk very much because of the noise, yeah? ... Maybe, just to the person who is next to you... and if it is an Englishman they are quiet for 7 and a half hours... they can't talk. They can't talk... they can't share their feelings about the job, about the bosses, nothing...*

H.V (referring to an earlier discussion): *About the football?*

*Yeah. And there a few football fans here... and so... if Jaroslav could talk to Pete about Manchester United, Pete would love him, because it is their favourite club... but they can't, you know? They make people separated. They... someone said, 'there is a Polish table and there is English table'.... So, around English table, sitting... they are people speak English, and round Polish table there is people who can't speak English and it is no good, yeah? And they can't go to the pub and they can't share their work and... their feelings about work... about things... they are in common.*

- 'Marek'



However, despite the vital role of language in both the social and economic lives of migrants, it cannot be seen as the only factor in the incorporation of a 'new' migrant into the labour market. As illustrated in previous chapters there are both powerful factors which limit some international migrants ability to learn English (such as long, 'anti-social' work hours, the lack of language courses and the predominance of employment in environments dominated by co-nationals), and evidence to suggest that an increase in language proficiency does not, in itself, necessarily lead to an improved labour market position.

### *Learning the job:*

We may ask, therefore, what influence workplace relations and training have on international migrants ability to use and extend their knowledge and skills?

In a similar way to the academics discussed previously, migrants in low-skill roles also had to deal with a combination of following explicit regulations in their new jobs and learning tacit norms of behaviour and ways of acting in an often unfamiliar *habitus*:

*It was informal way. I just watched people how they work and I did the same. It is easy job, but you need to work very fast there. I didn't have any courses.*

- 'Malgorzata' (on how she learnt to do her job)

Equally, as explored in the previous chapter, many found that, whilst the technical aspects of their job were relatively simple to learn and understand, non-explicit rules and regulations appeared to dominant what they could and could not do in their work, and this clearly had an effect on their ability to apply and potential 'transfer' their pre-existing knowledge in these new environments:

*[... T]here was nothing too much complicated to learn: anybody can learn how to put a piece of chicken on a tray, right?*

A.R: *What about your current job? Do you feel like you could share your knowledge with others?*

*Yes, I could teach them how to do some things. Sometimes I feel like I know much more than people who work there. Recently, there's been a guy there, who did not know how to turn on the line.*

- 'Katarzyna'

Therefore, we may consider that, for many migrants in low-skilled roles, 'learning the job' actually equates to simply accepting one's fate in the short term in the hope that this may lead to a better future:

A.R: *What do you plan to do in the future?*

*Nearest plan...hm... I would like to go for the English course and then we will see. I would like to stay in the UK*

A.R: *What about the work?*

*It's a long future. I am not long in the UK but I think if I will improve English I will change a job.*

*I would like to communicate in English in speech and in writing. I don't want to work in factory all my life.*

- 'Malgorzata'

This suggests a number of interesting points of discussion. Firstly, we can see similar tendencies to socialise workers into accepting low-skill work as explored elsewhere amongst working class 'native' workers (see, e.g. Lafer 2004; Payne 2004; Wills 1977), and the resultant under-utilisation of the skills of migrant workers in an increasingly Taylorist production model:

*All what I've learnt in the UK, I use, but it was just informal training. My job is really easy, so I don't use my skills and knowledge there. Even child could do my job.*

- 'Marcin'

AR: *Do you feel like you are using your qualifications, job experience and skills at your current job?*

*No, and probably I wouldn't find a single person who would be able to say so. In general, here in England, I fell like am taking a step backward, like I am regressing.*

- 'Artur'

Furthermore, it also brings our attention to what we might describe as the 'wasted' or 'frustrated' knowledge of migrants, and raises question as to whether we can understand this in terms of blocked mobility and, relatedly, how such knowledges may be given expression outside the conventional workplace.

#### *Transferring knowledge:*

There is an irony even in titling this section 'transferring knowledge'. Knowledge transfer tends to provoke images of knowledge-intensive, ultra-modern contemporary work in the world's global cities, not production-line work in the rural South-West. Indeed, there is a clear reason for this; 'low-skill' production work in the UK and elsewhere in the world is increasingly Taylorist in its methodology and practice. That is, 'knowledge' – of the product, the process creates it, even the reasons for its existence – is packaged up and distributed throughout the system, thus ensuring it functions at maximum efficiency regardless of the make-up of the human elements of the system. Knowledge in such a network is, in essence, beyond the individual. In this way, there is relatively little, if any, room for individual knowledge, let alone the dynamic *knowing-in-the-world* I have written of previously. Workers become mere cogs in a system. As long as there is someone to carry out the task, it does not matter who they are; the skills and techniques of the role at hand are so easily learnt and heavily mechanised that they become almost irrelevant. However, as has been illustrated throughout this thesis, those carrying out these roles were generally not willing to spend their lives simply acting as warm bodies, as cogs in the machine, they wished for more. For some this could be achieved through utilising their skills and abilities in the workplace in

ways that went beyond their job description:

*I used to help new workers when they first time come to work. I learnt quickly; after one week at work I knew almost everything about this place. How to order stuff how to make invoices etc. So I was sharing my knowledge with my friends from work.*

- 'Tomasz'

For others, we must expand our parameters for investigating 'knowledge transfer' beyond the narrow confines of the production line and factory farm, to begin to see limited alternative locales for activating knowledge.

For a small number of those I interviewed this meant gaining work outside of these venues, for others it meant developing a role in the community – acting as an informal ambassador, translator or support worker for their fellows. In either case, interviewees reported an increased ability to utilise their knowledge and skills in a way beneficial to both themselves and those they were working with:

*I'm very excited about Polish school on Saturdays. I'm a teacher there – I teach history. It is very important to me, adds to a sense of my life. I feel as if I was in some kind of relationship. I go to sleep or get up and have something special to think about.*

- 'Jan'

*Almost... almost every man who is working here has his.... apply.... umm.... applied through me, so I wrote they application forms, I was interpreting for them on interviews and beside these I wrote something like 50 or 60 job applications and took part in interviews for people - Slovakian, Czechs, Hungarians who applied for the jobs. Besides that <laughs> people who got sick but could not speak English, I went with them to Doctors, hospital.... get them medication...*

- 'Marek' (on his role as an informal community advisor and translator)

*[... W]hen I work with migrant, I am use my experience, so all that stage when I came to UK, so when I came working in agency, I... I pass all this stage, the same like them, so... I using that to building trust with the migrants, to building confidence, and, like I said earlier, they can identify with me, so that's loads because people... um... feel more... confidential with me, and become more comfortable than with other people which*

*have, you know, great job and they can you talk each other because, you know, sometimes people feel like a barrier between, um... workers, you know, production workers or, you know, different and I don't want to make that barrier.*

- 'Anna' (on using her experience in 'low' skill roles in her new role as a Community worker)

However, it is also clear that these new routes for knowing are relatively limited – both in their scope for the expression of knowledge and their probable financial benefits – as they essentially rely on the migrant acting as a mediator between the dominant community and 'new' migrant groups. Therefore, there is a question of whether this form of 'knowledge transfer' – about the language, social norms or even physical whereabouts of a group – simply acts as a conduit of control and regulation, whereby migrant workers can be further regulated and made accountable. Indeed, a Foucauldian interpretation would suggest that the provision of knowledge about a group essentially further draws them into normative bureaucratic mechanisms of the state or employer, diminishing and marginalising any power they may previously have retained (see, e.g. Foucault 1980, 1991). On the other hand, we may interpret such developments more positively, regarding them as an alternative expression of knowing for a community stifled and frustrated by a Taylorist production system which both directs them to the least skilled jobs in society and discourages them from developing the skills – linguistic, cultural or social – which may lead to eventually improving their labour market position, not to mention their position in the social order at home or in a receiving society. In this light, the development of new routes of knowing acts as both a matter of self-defence – by developing systems for exchanging knowledge within a community, all members become better prepared and protected in their daily dealings with the dominant society – and one of self-empowerment, by producing a new range of roles (some voluntary, others paid) which act to build selective connections between a coalescing migrant 'community' and dominant 'native' ones. The partial evidence provided here appears to point towards a mixture of these three positions, with such roles often acting to protect and empower the emerging migrant communities – particularly the large Polish one – through formal and informal advice networks, schools and community support workers, whilst also occasionally arising in forms which seek (explicitly or otherwise) to control and normalise certain forms of relationships between 'migrant communities', the state, employers and

other vested interests. Examples of the latter would be the recruitment of migrants as employment agents, or as supervisors in factories, where they act to ease the incorporation of migrant workers into subordinate roles, as well as inadvertently aiding the development of a segmented migrant labour market. Equally, it is arguable that the growth of such roles has tended to normalise the view of ‘new’ migrants – particularly those from the A8 – as doing certain kinds of jobs in certain kinds of employment sectors. As I argued previously, this has meant an apparent petrification of trajectories for many migrants, a situation that becomes much harder for individuals to break out of as the common-sense assumptions which support it become more wide-spread.

In terms of our understanding of knowledge, international migration and ‘low’ skill work, this situation suggests that trajectories of knowing, just like trajectories of migration, tend to become petrified over time. This is not to suggest that migrants in low-skill roles know less after migration, rather that opportunities for actualising that knowledge becomes limited to certain circumstances (often beyond the conventional workplace). How this will play out over time is uncertain; frustrated knowledge may lead many to return home as they find they are unable to sufficiently improve their labour market position in the UK, or a critical mass of linguistically and culturally proficient migrants may begin to break through into new roles and transform existing migration and knowledge trajectories. As outlined towards the end of the previous chapter, the petrification of such phenomena is often illusory and only ever temporary; for knowing, though contextual and socially produced, is also fluid and socially productive. Contestation and change will inevitably happen, but the exact form it will take is impossible to predict.

We can conclude, however, that, at present at least, the available routes of expressing knowledge – for the performance of knowing-in-the-world – is limited for international migrants working in low-skill roles. Furthermore, these are fundamentally linked to trajectories of migration. That is, if such a trajectory directs you towards low-skill roles, your routes of knowing are also likely to be restricted regardless of your educational qualifications, linguistic ability or cultural competence. Indeed, this study does not appear to support a U-curve hypothesis of labour market mobility for international migrants, as forwarded by some previous ‘human capital’ based approaches in this field (see, e.g. Rooth and Ekberg 2006). Though the development of linguistic proficiency, cultural know-how and social networks does appear to have had an effect on the lives of those to whom I spoke

during this research, there are often profound difficulties in transforming this into upward labour market mobility. Whilst this may be explained as a 'lag' between developing these skills and gaining economic advantage from them, at present there seem to be very limited openings for any migrant, regardless of their skills or background to move 'up' the employment ladder, if their initial trajectory directed them into low-skill work. Furthermore, those that do exist appear to be directly linked to their role as migrants and their ability to cross boundaries of language, culture and habitus. Thus we must conclude that knowledge, in this case, is not simply about what you know, it is about how, where and in what context that knowledge is enacted.

#### **AFTERWORD – MOBILE KNOWLEDGE, SITED KNOWING:**

In this chapter, I have sought to illustrate what this research has revealed about the relationships between knowledge, work and international migration. It has explored the experiences of both those working in what would conventional be considered a 'knowledge-intensive' role – that of University-based academics – and those in jobs that would rarely be described in such terms. Unsurprisingly, this has revealed as many differences as it has similarities. However, returning briefly to the three thematic areas outlined in this chapter – 'acculturation', 'learning the job' and 'transferring knowledge' – we can begin to develop a deeper understanding of why such differences and similarities may exist and how we might go about reconceptualising 'high' and 'low' skilled roles as part of the same 'knowledge economy.'

Acculturation was presented as the ongoing process of becoming competent in the culture of a new environment. This was both meant in the sense of a new country and a new work role. It involves everything from learning a new language, to getting used to the idiosyncrasies of a new location, whether that is local working practices, idiomatic bureaucratic mechanisms, or the oddities of British interior design. Acculturation is rarely an easier process and, though it does not necessarily mean assimilation, it is always a necessary precursor to being able to function effectively in a new social environment – exam papers marked according to certain criteria, machines run to certain settings, unspoken norms

discovered and adapted to. This is as true for 'knowledge-intensive' academia as it is for Taylorist factories and production lines. The variations in this process in these different locales, however, are both subtle, yet fundamental to the experience of those to whom I spoke. For academics, it seemed a process of acculturation was a matter of learning subtle new rules in a relatively familiar milieu – that of the academy. In a sense, this was a continuation of a trajectory which had begun elsewhere; a new role in a new country was not a barrier to the continuation of a transnational academic career (in fact it may be seen as a bonus). For those working in low-skill roles, however, acculturation did not seem solely to be a matter of coming to terms with life in a new country, but also getting used to inhabiting a very different type of job. Language was certainly a substantial barrier for many, but it was not the sole difficulty in adapting to life in a new country. Indeed, it seemed that, for many of those in low-skill roles, the feeling of displacement was far greater than that expressed by migrant academics. This may have been partly due to the affected cosmopolitanism of university life, the commonality of prior experiences of the UK and its education system, and pre-existing language skills. However, we can not dismiss the possibility this may also be about the respective migration trajectories of these new arrivals. Arriving as an academic, in a reasonably safe, well paid, socially valued job, which provided plentiful opportunities for both intellectual stimulation and career progression, is very different to arriving with little knowledge of the local job market, being channelled into lowly and sometimes unpleasant roles, which offer little in the way of social status or career advancement, not to mention opportunities to become involved with 'British society' or even learn English.

Acculturation, therefore, takes very different forms depending on where specific trajectories of migration direct us. Furthermore, if we consider that acculturation is a dynamic process which fundamentally alters the how we 'know-in-the-world', indeed what we know about our new environment, then we can begin to see how vital (and variable) processes of acculturation are in the interaction between trajectories of migration, processes of knowing and our working roles (not to mention our wider lives).

This is not to say that acclimatisation to a certain cultural idiom *defines* our processes of knowing. Rather, following Changeux's description of the three accreting stages of neural and synaptic development discussed in Chapter 1, we can restate that similar experiences should lead to similar processes of knowing, but that this will be subtly coloured by prior social, cultural and environmental experiences. Thus acculturation to different locales, roles



and ways of being has profound effects on knowing in the world without ever defining *per se*.

If we understand acculturation to be a wider adaption to the peculiarities of place, then 'learning the job' is perhaps its workplace equivalent – it is one important microcosm of becoming socialised in new surroundings, it is the adaption to carrying out a particular role. In this way, I presented it as a practical illustration of how tacit knowledge, ways of behaving and unspoken assumptions about how things are done, always underlay the enactment of explicit, or codifiable, knowledge. Therefore, it would seem logical that these processes of learning the ropes occur in all roles at all levels of society. Once again, however, the differences in these processes reveal much about the nature of these roles and the uses of knowledge this implies. For all those I spoke to, learning the job was far more about learning subtle rules and tacit directives than explicit technical or bureaucratic procedure – for low-skill workers this was because of the relative simplicity of what they had to do – as one said, '...even a child could do my job' – for academics it was due to the assumption that they already knew what they were doing, or at least they had the knowledge to meet the demands made of them. In the latter case, this was often presented as having the requisite knowledge, but lacking the subtle know-how of the seasoned professional. In this regards, learning to become an academic has much in common with Polanyi's vision of an apprenticeship of experience, of learning that which cannot be spoken through both a continued engagement with those more masterful than ourselves and an ongoing immersion in the task itself. For workers on production lines, in factory farms and warehouses, this aspect was played down by most, who instead preferred to stress the ease of learning the actual techniques of their post and struggled to explain the sociality of their roles, bar stressing the marginalisation of their knowledge and skills – indeed, their sense of self. What their narratives ignited was a sense of themselves as warm bodies, under-valued and marginalised in the workplace, not as apprentices learning their trade. Thus, we can understand processes of learning the job as both potentially practical illustrations of the grounding of the expression of explicit knowledge in tacit ways of being and behaving and of an embodied socialisation in a particular habitus, a certain work role. But we must also consider learning the job as representative of learning our place in society, of unveiling the extent to which our knowledge and ability is valued and required. For academics and those working in 'low' skill roles these processes may be recognisable, but their implications are

vastly different.

This thesis began life as a project entitled ‘international migration, *knowledge transfer* and the regional skills gap.’ Considering where discussions developed from that starting point it may seem odd to return to the notion of transferring knowledge at this point. But what I wished to indicate by the use of this term is the ways in which we present our knowledge for the consumption of others – or rather, given the dynamic understanding of knowing built up over these pages – how we enact this knowing for the consumption of others. Again, we find similarities and differences in the experiences of those belonging to our two cohorts.

It is true of all interactive processes of knowing that they are transformative, contextual and sited. That is, how we present ‘that which we know’ is dependent on conventional forms and available routes within the particular environments we inhabit. Thus an ‘expert’ in bioengineering may find more suitable routes for passing on his or her knowledge when employed as a University academic than as a production operative in a frozen food factory. Furthermore, it is transformative because, by performing our knowledge to others we are, in effect, changing both our understandings of it – a process that should be recognisable to anyone who has ever attempted to explain a research project, a theory, or many other ideas and concepts, to another person – and the social ramifications of that knowledge. Such active processes of presenting something as known can, in effect, change the tacit to the explicit, the just-about-understood to the codifiable. However, this latter point rings far more true for academic presentation of knowledge than it does for those working on the factory floor. In fact, I make the point that writing of knowledge transfer, in the sense it is understood in the majority of management journals, is apparently incompatible with the experiences of those in low-skill roles. For them, the answer as to how they transfer their knowledge and skills in their current job, is that they don’t – it is simply neither required nor requested. Their knowledge is, in essence, valueless in the workplace. Instead, I write of the development of alternative routes of knowing – ways in which knowledge marginalised and devalued at work is given its reign beyond this arena, in work within their community, or in ‘bridging roles’ (sometimes paid, often not) between a community of migrant workers and wider society. In this way, I argue that knowledge is still ‘transferred’, simply via different routes to the conventional workplace-based understanding of how we share that which we know (either tacitly or explicitly). Again, however, such different trajectories of knowing

direct us towards very different endpoints and our understanding of the impacts and forms of knowing-in-the-world, as well, perhaps, as their processes, is fundamentally altered along different routes of migrating. Similarly we must retain the notion that how, where and when we can enact our own knowledge for the benefit of others is variable, differentiated and, most importantly of all, hierarchically arranged. Utilising our knowledge and skills to run a Polish Sunday school in a Devon market town is significantly different to using these same things to present a lecture at the Royal Academy. They are valued differently in different places, and have profoundly different effects. That is not to be taken lightly. The structures of, and routes for, presenting that which we know are not finitely controlling of the form that presentation may take, let them impose significant pressures (bureaucratic, social, economic or political) that limit the range of possible variations to that form. Thus, whilst we can always employ tactics of resistance, find alternative routes of knowing, we can never ultimately have free reign on the presentation of our knowledge. Similarly, the context of *where* we know fundamentally impacts on 'knowing-in-the-world' in a way we cannot fully hope to comprehend reflexively. Making sense of what we know and how we can present that to others is, therefore, an impossible scenario – our very own knowledge is infinitely deferred.

I have argued throughout this chapter – and, indeed, the thesis as a whole – that knowing is a fluid and dynamic process. I therefore find the term 'knowledge transfer' a problematic descriptor. As I have attempted to illustrate here, the expression of what we know alters constantly, depending on all kinds of considerations which we are rarely aware of. The transfer of knowledge must, therefore, also imply the transformation of knowledge. Even apparently definitive, unchangeable, knowledge, such as the equation symbolising the area of a circle discussed in chapter 1, takes on different meaning dependant on how, why and where it is used. Furthermore, our understanding of the significance of that equation changes dependent on an infinite number and range of factors of which we may only be vaguely aware. Thus we must consider the process of knowing as being just that, a process. It is context-specific, dynamic and tentative. Because of this, we must also consider the assertion that, if knowing is contextual, collective, and subject to change, then it is liable to be influenced by the environment it is expressed in. Thus physical and intellectual mobility suggests an alteration in our *knowing-in-the-world*. We become enmeshed in a site where there

will be new norms of behaviour, new social relations and new avenues for presenting what we know. *Habitus* and tacit ways of knowing thus come to alter the act of knowing.

We may, therefore, understand knowing (in both 'high' and 'low' skill roles) as contextual – in that it is transformed by the site of its actualisation/performance – socially regulated – it is produced by communal interactions and, therefore, its manifestations are determined by modes of normal behaviour and common-sense assumptions – and tentative – it is a process and thus neither stable nor fixed. Therefore, the social roles we find ourselves in post-migration have a powerful influence on the ways we can utilise and perform our knowledge in the future. This is partially structural – academics can do certain things which 'low' skill workers cannot because they are employed as lecturers in a University (such as tutoring students, carrying out large research projects and marking exams) – but also profoundly social, as we explored in the previous chapter.

In terms of our understanding of international migration, knowledge and skills this suggests that we must not simply recreate previous dichotomies between those migrants who know things and those who do not. Rather, it is necessary to begin to reconceptualise knowing and mobility as social, hierarchically formed, contextual and fluid, regardless of the labour market position of the knower. In essence, the spirit of this chapter has been an emergent understanding of knowing as a process that is not simply an instrument of economic advancement, but a dynamic and embodied phenomenon, which embraces every aspect of human *being* and cannot be fully understood in any other way.

### *The complex work of knowing-in-the-world:*

If we consider knowing-in-the-world as an active socialised process which has the potential to alter (and by altered by) our embodied immersion in the world, then we are left with a vast complex of interacting forces which are fundamental to the very way we think (or enact our knowledge). In essence, we are dealing with a complex work of knowing (or even being) in the world. It is the site of internalising knowledge-power, it is where knowing is valued, categorised and shaped by society. The *habitus* we are immersed in, the physical and bureaucratic structures we encounter, our prior experiences, our wants and desires, all collide each and everyday, forcing us to 'make sense of it all'. Knowing in the world is constantly

incorporated into the complex work of migration but never quite subsumed by it – processes of knowing become differentially powered and valued and, in turn, knowing itself is transformed as we internalise elements of how it is normal or acceptable to behave, to think, to be.

This does not imply a single overarching narrative of how we should behave, or even a structuring tyranny that demands our surrender to certain ways of being, but it does differentiate - it values some, disempowers others. Such processes are eye-wateringly complex intersections of 'forces' presented as repeated acts of normalisation. For those whose trajectories of migration have directed them to areas where their knowledge, skills and value have been marginalised this may lead to a variety of tactics – from accepting one's position, to finding value, and expressing one's knowledge, in other domains. Such tactics of resistance are not always conscious, or even successful, but forever have their roots in an urge to activate our knowledge, to find value in ourselves, wherever we are able to.

Knowing in the world can therefore be seen as the site at which we engage with the world, where we make sense of ourselves in interaction with others. It is also where we become *known* – that is, it is where what we know is shaped, valued and comprehended. It is where structure and agent collide. It is complex, messy and never fully resolved. It differentiates but always defers its final petrification, despite a tendency to present itself as set, known, unavoidable. It is where we become immersed in the chaos of life.

## Chapter 8

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### Discussion:

#### The complex work of migrating and knowing

*Everything simple is false. Everything complex is unusable*

- Paul Valery, extract from *Notre Destin et Les Lettres*, 1937.

*One tells a tale best by telling the tale. You see? They way one describes a story, to oneself or the world, is by telling the story. It is a balancing act and it is a dream. The more accurate the map, the more it represents the territory. The most accurate map possible would be the territory, and thus would be perfectly accurate and perfectly useless.*

- Neil Gaiman, extract from *Fragile Things*, 2006.

This final chapter is intended to provide an overview of the thesis presented thus far. In this way, it will consist of an examination of the arguments I have forwarded previously and an attempt to bring together key assertions into a core of salient points. It is not, however, a conclusion as such. Instead, I have approached it as a sort of staging post – an opportunity for reflection on what has been achieved so far, what has been missed or inexactly approached, and what direction it might take in the future. Furthermore, as I have argued repeatedly, conducting research of this kind means that we can never conclude as such, for we can only present partial pictures of a shifting reality.

Bearing this in mind, I do believe that this research has provided some important insights, not only in conceptualising migration, labour markets and knowledge in one corner of the UK, but also in understanding the complex intersections of knowing, migrating and working in many local contexts. The first part of this chapter is therefore given over to recapping the arguments forwarded and illustrating how they are relevant and on what scale. Secondly, I explore some of the limitations and constraints of the research and how these may have impacted on the thesis as a whole. Finally, I turn my attention to some emerging areas of research – those concerns which are suggested by the previous discussions but which, for a variety of reasons, haven't yet been explored – and provide some potential directions for the

onward journey of this particular topic.

### **CONCEPTUALISING THE COMPLEX WORK OF MIGRATION – A RECAP:**

Throughout this thesis I have been developing an argument regarding the ways in which everyday processes of ‘knowing-in-the-world’ interact with both local labour markets and international migration to produce the situations illustrated in this research. In this section I wish to present again the individual ‘pieces of evidence’ which underlie this argument before restating what I have come to understand as ‘the complex work of migration.’ This, as the term suggests, is not a simple process. There are no hard and fast rules about how these processes should interact, or any satisfactory way of predicting how they may change in the future. Therefore, this will only be a partial thesis. However, I do believe the arguments I have forwarded thus far present a way of approaching international migration, local labour markets and practices of knowing which allows for an understanding of the complexity, contextuality and fluidity of these processes without presenting them as purely relative and incomparable, or as fixed and entirely generalisable. Instead, what I have attempted to do is to present an approach to understanding how complex processes interact to produce an edifice that both takes on the *appearance* of fixity – of petrification – and has a profound effect on our everyday lives.

#### ***Foundations – theory and method:***

Firstly, it is helpful to restate some theoretical underpinnings of the research which were presented in the very first chapter of this work. In that chapter, I first turned my attention to understanding international migration. I argued there – and I still hold to the position – that this cannot be understood either as a process driven by the rational choices of individuated economic agents (as broadly ‘neo-classical’ approaches would imply), or as a system entirely driven by overarching macro-structures of control and domination which impel individuals to take certain routes and act in certain ways (as suggested in neo-Marxist approaches). Instead, I argued that we should understand international migration as a fluid process shaped

by numerous factors. Whilst many of these factors were derived from the existence of hierarchies and unequal structures, these alone did not determine individual actions. Indeed, the technological transformations of a globalising world, as well as the social changes they have encouraged, have to some extent undermined existing macro-structures – such as the autonomy of the nation-state – and animated novel new connections and networks. This has allowed for a multiplication of the trajectories, forms and durations of international migrations throughout the world. It has helped to create a world which is more mobile, transnational and fluid than ever before. Therefore, we must no longer see international migration as a journey from *a* to *b* (and possibly back again), but a journey in which we never entirely leave *a* and never become fully subsumed in *b*. Instead we live in both to differing extents at different times.

The second theoretical element I was confronted with in the early stages of this research was how to conceptualise knowledge – initially in terms of its transfer and soon after in broader terms. Without reproducing what I have already written in its entirety, it bears repeating that it quickly became apparent that knowledge was an extremely troublesome concept; it appeared both self-evident that it existed and impossible to define. Furthermore, how this ethereal concept was produced and what this meant for its ‘mobility’ (and indeed mutability) was far from clear. Indeed, the commonly used term ‘knowledge transfer’ seemed to imply that knowledge was a ‘thing’ which could be moved from one place to another rather like a parcel through a mail system. However, through reviewing both the recent literature on knowledge and mobility (in the form of international migration and institutional knowledge management) and key epistemological writings, it became increasingly obvious that one certainty in this sea of doubt was that knowledge was not a *thing* in the sense of being a detachable unit of consistent form. Rather it was something more ethereal (and perhaps ephemeral) whose form waxed and waned dependent on external circumstances. In addition, it seemed apparent that, if we are to recognise how knowledge is activated, we must also consider its social aspects. That is, if we allow that there may exist knowledge which effects how we act – and I suggest that includes pretty much all of it – then we must assume that the stuff we know in our heads extends beyond the confines of our cranium and into the world around us. Furthermore, if we are to avoid slipping into Cartesian dualism, we must also contend that the way this happens is via a phenomenological immersion in the world.



That is knowledge is activated – actualised – through an embodied engagement with the world (both physical and psychological; social and natural). Indeed, Changeux’s work on the three-fold development and adaptation of neurological networks implies such embodied engagements are fundamental to the creation and on-going expansion of the very circuitry of knowledge – our synaptic networks. Therefore, drawing on the work of a diverse group of thinkers, particularly Bergson, Polanyi, Merleau-Ponty and Foucault, I outlined what I described, with reference to Heideggerian phenomenology<sup>119</sup>, as ‘knowing-in-the-world.’ This referred to *knowing* as a dynamic, on-going and contextual mode of being. Therefore, knowledge could not be seen as formed by parcels of information ready to be moved between human and institutional depositories, but rather was the fluid product of an active process of knowing. Furthermore, such knowing was not simply a matter of variable perspectives on explicit, codifiable knowledge-as-information, but, following Polanyi (1967), was *always* underlain by on-going processes of tacit knowing. Equally, drawing on Foucault’s notion of power/knowledge (1970), it becomes apparent that such active processes of knowing constitute, and are constituted by, hierarchies of power. In essence, such hierarchies both determine what knowledge we can use where, and are created by the actualisation of such knowledge. Therefore knowledge and power are in a constant state of iteration, and this configures the relative success or failure of *how we know* (and when and where we know it). Such processes are not necessarily obvious in our everyday lives – they are hidden within our common-sense assumptions and habitual behaviours – but they have a fundamental impact on the production and actualisation of knowledge – of how we know-in-the-world. The fundamental importance of such a conceptualisation of knowing in this case is that it changes how the knowledge of international migrants should be considered. Rather than considering them as passive receptacles of information (perhaps partially underlain by tacit ‘know-how’), it is necessary to re-imagine the knowledge of migrants as being actively transformed, re-imagined and re-constituted by the act of migrating. Furthermore, this is not a one-off transformation driven by an exceptional act (i.e. migrating), but rather is indicative of a constant process whereby our knowledge (as an active and activated entity) is *constantly* remade through an embodied engagement with the world. Just how this is adapted and

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<sup>119</sup> By adapting the neologism of ‘being-in-the-world’ for my own purposes, I wish only to reference a certain aspect of Heidegger’s philosophy – that of the sense of being (or, in my adaptation, knowing) as an immediate, immersive and irreducible phenomenon. I do not, however, subscribe to a broader Heideggerian phenomenology, as is no doubt clear from my wider thesis.

adjusted is dependent on a concatenation of events and circumstances, but it is always fluid and dynamic rather than static or predetermined.

This theoretical engagement with notions of migrating and knowing forms the foundations of this thesis, for such an alteration in the understanding of these subjects transforms the ways in which they are approached in the research as a whole. Instead of testing the mechanics of both knowledge and migration as a movement between locations – suggested in the metaphors of networks, pipelines and flows which abound in economic geography – it becomes more important to attempt to gain an understanding of both knowing and migrating as lived experience – a socialised and embodied engagement with the world.

Such an ‘alternative’ approach to the subject was reflected in the heavily qualitative, biographic and narrative research methods used to gain the ‘data’ on which this thesis ultimately rests. Notably, it also led to a concentration on those employed both in putatively ‘high’ and ‘low’ skill work because, if we consider migrating (and particularly knowing) to be a socialised, embodied and politicised process, it becomes vital to look at a range of job types and not only those considered ‘knowledge-intensive.’ Therefore the research coalesced – partly through the series of accidental occurrences and failed beginnings explored in Chapter 3 – into a focus on two groups – academics employed at a variety of levels (from Lecturer up to Professor) at ‘Wessex University’, and a second cohort made up of those who had begun their UK work careers in routine ‘low-skill’ roles.

Additionally, the combination of research methods used and theoretical foundations underlying them in turn impacted on the way the rest of the thesis was written. Rather than attempting to corral the disparate voices of those who were interviewed for this research into neatly defined categories, an attempt was made to present my developing understanding of such apparent diversity in terms of what Georg Hegel described as a ‘coming-to-be of knowledge’ (1977). Therefore, I do not provide hypotheses to be tested, nor do I ever formally present definitive research questions as such. Instead, the focus is on the iterations between what Malinowski called ‘foreshadowed problems’ (2007) – those loose collections of ideas and notions, borne out of past experience and the research of others, which the researcher brings with them into their ‘field’ – and the ‘data’ provided by those participating in the research. Therefore, what came to form the notion of the ‘complex work of

migration' present in this thesis was, in fact, a result of a series of iterations which constantly challenged and refined the pre-existing ideas I had and encouraged me to develop new ways of thinking about the subject. Though an on-going and somewhat 'messy' process – as, following Mol and Law (2002), may be expected when confronted with a highly complex system – there are a number of discernable elements that are vital to my understanding of the subject. I presented these in three broadly thematic chapters – focussed on, in order, trajectories of migration, 'migrant labour markets,' and everyday practices of knowing – which each provided (and challenged) an important conceptual element of the research. Therefore, I turn my attention next to presenting the core arguments I made in each of these chapters and how they fit into the developing notion of a 'complex work of migration.'

*Routes matter – trajectories of migration:*

In the first substantive chapter of the thesis (Chapter 4), I dealt with the routes those participating in the research had taken to get to the UK and what they had done since. By this I did not only mean the physical routes they had followed, but rather referred to their biography prior to, during and after migration. The intention was to introduce their 'stories' and to begin to explore both the diversity of experiences present in their testimonies and any commonalities that began to emerge. Perhaps the most important theme that did emerge through the course of these interviews was the vital significance of what I described as 'trajectories of migration.'

I settled on the term 'trajectory' because I wished to imply a situation in which the initial direction of travel is a vital determinant of eventual destination. Equally, trajectories are influenced by a number of additional factors, including turbulence – the conceptual term used by Papastergiadis (2004) in his influential study of contemporary migrations – a complex input affecting an apparently straight-forward journey from *a* to *b*<sup>120</sup>.

Therefore, trajectories are both central to our final destination – if we followed a different

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<sup>120</sup> Though trajectories may appear simple – think of the classic parabola modelling the flight of a ball from school-level physics textbooks – but without a knowledge of all the factors impacting on the object under consideration, it rapidly becomes near-impossible to accurately predict its route, and thus its ultimate destination, with any degree of certainty (rather like throwing a ball on a blustery day).

trajectory of migration from the same starting point we would end up somewhere else – and complex – in that numerous unpredictable forces can alter its course, making it difficult to definitively model<sup>121</sup>. This appeared to closely reflect what interviewees were experiencing; that is, those who followed broadly one type of trajectory – that of the ‘highly-skilled migrant’ – had very different ‘post-migration’ biographies than those (however highly qualified) who began their working lives in the UK in less skilled occupations. Furthermore, those first working in the latter roles did not seem to be moving ‘up’ the career hierarchy to roles more suiting their abilities and qualifications over time (as human capital theory would suggest). Indeed, such different experiences of working in the UK did not seem to be satisfactorily explained by reference to any ‘obvious’ factor – such as language skill, level of qualification, ethnic background, gender or age – other than the importance of migration ‘routes.’ These, in turn, were conditioned by a variety of external and internal factors – from individual motivations to major geo-political schisms; from a sense of adventure to changes in immigration laws – which produced certain ‘routes’ which were ‘easier’ to travel than others. I described this in terms of variable topographies of migration; at times, certain factors – transnational networks of friends, changes in immigration rules (such as the EU Accession), the recognition of certain qualifications – produce a situation which makes it ‘easier’ for certain migrants to follow certain paths through the migration ‘landscape’ than others. Furthermore, over time, the repeated use of these paths reinforces these highways of mobility and reproduces certain topographical landscapes. Trajectories, therefore, appear to have a tendency to petrify – that is, we could talk of a hardening topography of migration, or, perhaps more accurately, a combination of the development of well-worn routes – which become easier to traverse – and a better map of the landscape. That is, through trial and error, people become increasingly aware of *which routes work* and, in doing so, encourage others – directly or otherwise – to follow these ‘successful’ paths.

***Back to work – revisiting the complex work of migrant labour markets:***

The next stage of the research was to analyse what happened once the research participants

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<sup>121</sup> Interestingly, understanding migration trajectories in this way suggests a kinship with the complex systems found in ‘chaos theory’ – a point also alluded to by Papastergiadis – though I’m not entirely convinced of how far such an analogy could be extended in this research.

entered the labour market. This had already been partially explored through the notion of migration trajectories, but how and why these apparently discrete trajectories and spaces of flows developed in regards to labour market participation was unclear. To recap, the research indicated that, whilst there was significant diversity within each group, those whose initial employment in the UK had been in a relatively low-skilled role appeared to experience significantly different employment prospects than those who had arrived as University academics. On the face of it, this is hardly surprising. However, when we factor in the relatively high levels of qualifications and skills amongst the 'low-skill' cohort in the research, and note their pronounced lack of 'upward' mobility in the labour market, it becomes more so. Furthermore, this did not seem to be related to language acquisition or cultural 'know-how' *per se*, but rather appeared to be the result of a more complex and nuanced process.

One element of this subtle process of labour market segmentation and petrification can be presented in the form of the development of common-sense assumptions (Gramsci 1971)<sup>122</sup> about what people can and cannot do. In essence, this meant that the subtle background chatter of our everyday lives begins to produce ideas about what roles are suitable for certain types of people to be carrying out. These common-sense assumptions do not materialise out of thin air, but are the result of a series of dialectic iterations and pre-existing structures that enable and constrain our everyday activities. In practice, this means that what people are able to do (in terms of work) is partially determined by pre-existent and non-negotiable structures, such as border controls, employment legislations and so forth – what we might describe as the 'hard' topography of a landscape – but also through the everyday enacting of social norms and *habitus*. This latter element is neither separate from the first nor a simple matter of the enforced normalisation of outsiders to an acceptable way of behaving. Rather, as McDowell, Batnitzky and Dyer (2007) illustrated in regards to international migrants working in a London hotel, it is comprised of series of iterative engagements between competing discourses, spiralling into entwined performances of an emerging reality – what the authors describe as a 'dual interpellation' – which results in a developing (though always contested) sense of what is reasonable for each group to do. Furthermore, these

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<sup>122</sup> 'Common-sense assumption' is a term derived from the work of Antonio Gramsci, and is vital to his concept of hegemony. The beauty of his work is that, unlike many Marxist writers, he retains a central role for complexity, fluidity and alternative discourses in his writing. Therefore, Gramsci offers much to an understanding of complex processes, particular in regards to how powerful discourses and practices (hegemony) can be drawn from initially multifaceted and oppositional positions without recourse to revolutionary conflict.

engagements rarely occur on an explicit level, but rather inhabit the level of the *habitus*, of the unspoken and common-sense everyday practices which shape our daily lives. Indeed, as they develop they form a sort of feedback loop with migration trajectories – as migrants increasingly travel certain ‘routes’, employers begin to expect certain things from these same migrants and begin to target them to fill certain vacancies (or, equally, social networks mean migrants hear about certain jobs first and can be placed before others). In turn, this tends to strengthen assumptions about what migrants can and should be doing, and effectively petrifies certain trajectories of migration.

This situation holds many parallels with what might be described as the dual (migrant) labour market thesis – that is, migrants are effectively channelled into either the very top or the very bottom of the labour market depending on their assumed qualities and abilities to service the needs of the ‘global city’. However, such an approach lacks some of the subtlety in understanding how a situation, such as the one outlined in this research, developed through nuanced and complex interactions of different ‘forces.’ It was, I felt, both too structural an explanation and somewhat lacking in dynamism. To combat this I attempted to outline, via Michel Foucault’s notion of power/knowledge and Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, an alternative understanding of the development of what I described as the complex work of migration.

It is difficult to summarise this understanding without either engaging in gross oversimplification or by simply repeating previous arguments. However, the essence of it can be understood as follows: Foucault’s notion of power/knowledge introduces the idea that power relations (rather than power-in-itself) are affective, emergent and, of course, relational. Furthermore, they exist between all ‘forces’ (whether these are ‘things’ such as institutions or visible forms, or ‘substances’, such as discourses or functional statements) at all times and regardless of their ability to enact that power. Knowledge, in turn, essentially activates – actualises – these relations, it provides the impetus to effect and be affected. Importantly, such processes of actualisation are not simple impositions of power, nor productions of validating knowledge, but are the result of a complex series of iterations, similar to those discussed previously. Additionally, Foucault also makes the valuable point that the normalisation of such relations of power/knowledge acts to both stratify and to stabilise those relations as something *known* – a logical, rational and natural system, rather

than one determined by the enactment of certain ‘unnatural’ and contested manifestations of power/knowledge.

Secondly, such activations do not happen in a vacuum, but are immersed in a pre-existing landscape of common-sense assumptions, institutional activities and so forth – which are, in themselves, the result of a complex series of actualised relations of power/knowledge. For Deleuze, discussing Foucault, this is the ‘historical strata’ which we inhabit (1988). However, this is arguably one of the less comprehensively outlined aspects of his work and he gives little indication as to how this functions on a day-to-day level<sup>123</sup>. Therefore, I turned instead to the notion of the *habitus* – ‘a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures, predisposed towards acting as structuring structures’ (Bourdieu 1977: 72). In this research, *habitus* illustrates both the ways in which our working and knowing lives are always immersed in everyday ways of being which go beyond the confines of their immediate rationale, and how they incorporate an embodied tacit dimension actively created through social norms, modes of behaviour and common sense assumptions. Furthermore, this stresses the nature of work and ‘the economic’ as a ‘total social fact’ (Mauss 1990); that is, it is both constituted by and productive of *every* aspect of our social lives. Thus ‘the economic’ or ‘the workplace’ should not be treated as a pre-determined or bounded area of study.

This research revealed a situation where different individuals with historical associations with quite different *habitus* were thrown together in a rapidly developing situation. In essence, what was partially witnessed here was the chaotic intersection of a number of often contradictory ways of being and knowing. Equally important though, was the sense that, in a relatively short period of time, such an apparently insurmountable series of interfaces had produced a situation where this new order was becoming ‘known’ and apparently petrified via the interplay of actualised relations of power/knowledge and the historical strata of *habitus*.

Thus, in relation to this research, this means that the actualisations of power/knowledge through the idiom of a *habitus*, whilst complex, multifaceted and open to contestation,

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<sup>123</sup> This is, perhaps, a harsh judgement; after all Foucault does develop the notion of an archaeology of knowledge (1972) which sets out to explore the historical accretions of relations of power/knowledge that make up an episteme. However, what he does not do is to provide an active dynamic of how these play out on the interpersonal and societal level, rather he is concerned with a genealogical historiography of power (as mundane and day-to-day as its origins may be), even as he develops the subjective nature of this in the *History of Sexuality* series (1981, 1990, 1992).

effectively shapes our everyday experience and what it is *normal* for us to do. Therefore, we can speak of a relatively set system which directs us to certain points (or, perhaps more accurate, a limited range of possible positions) in the labour market, depending on our performed and assumed role in society. Furthermore, the singing back and forth of such expectations reinforces these directive forces, in turn strengthening that system and determining what, where and how we should be working and knowing. However, despite appearances, such a system is never truly and definitively set – it is always under siege from the rebellion of the individual, but also from unpredictable and improbable events that go beyond individual actions. Indeed, co-opting Derrida (1982), I suggest that true petrification never occurs – rather the ultimate *knowmess* of power relations are always in a state of constant deferral and immanent differentiation – of *différance*.

*The power to know – knowing in the workplace and beyond:*

Such an approach clearly re-emphasises the importance of ‘knowing-in-the-world’ to the project and firmly roots it in a landscape of powerful forces and socialised ways of being. Indeed, it was this aspect of the research to which I turned in the final substantive chapter of the thesis, exploring how knowing-in-the-world interacts with migrating and working in the lives of those participating in the research.

The substantive elements of the chapter indicated that, just as with both migration trajectories and work roles, what, where and how migrants could enact certain elements of their knowledge – or, rather, what limitations were placed on their potential performances of ‘knowing-in-the-world’ – was fundamentally effected by what roles they occupied (including those at work). This went beyond the instrumental aspects of their roles – such as that lecturers were in a better position to teach university students than manual workers, regardless of their relative abilities – to incorporate the social relations of a role, tacit assumptions about the performance of certain jobs (by workers, colleagues and employers) and the *context* of that role. This led me to argue that, following Amin and Cohendet (2004: 30), knowing was collective, situated and tentative. Furthermore, knowing-in-the-world needs to be understood as dynamic – in that it is both contextual and fluid – social – is that it is enacted through *habitus* and thus incorporates the embodied presentation of social and



cultural capital – and hierarchical – that is, the ‘power to know’ is stratified and unevenly distributed, which in turn alters the locales in which our knowledge can be actualised. Relatedly, this is impacted by trajectories of migration and has a tendency to petrify, making it increasingly difficult to open up new avenues of knowing once certain routes have formed and solidified.

Clearly, such a situation begins to outline how knowing-in-the-world and the complex work of migration are intimately entwined. If how we perform and activate what we know is impacted by (and impacts on) our social and embodied immersion in the world, then both *habitus* and the actualisation of relations of power/knowledge become central to knowing-in-the-world. In fact, it could be argued that knowing-in-the-world becomes a neologism for the personal and everyday enactment of what I have called ‘the complex work of migration.’ Indeed, by extension it seems to act as the idiom by which we resist, embody and negotiate relations of power/knowledge. In Foucauldian terminology it is perhaps the means by which we become the *subjects* of power, rather than simply its objects.

As this formulation implies, knowing-in-the-world involves a contextual transformation of the processes of knowing, but one that is partially determined by individual decisions, yet essentially shaped and constrained by both the topography of migration trajectories and the socialised and embodied performance of *habitus* and relations of power/knowledge. Knowing-in-the-world suggests change but the range of potential transformation is limited by the contextual situation of the knower and, furthermore, the power to alter their circumstances is not always available to them (particularly those in ‘low-skilled’ roles). Therefore, there are limits on the range of variation in processes of knowing-in-the-world that are dependant on pre-existing trajectories of migration, which are themselves conditioned by extant topographies of migration – that is, those ‘structuring-structures’ which act to effect the ease of following certain routes of migration as compared with others. Furthermore, as discussed previously, such limitations on the range of variation have a tendency to self-reinforce and petrify and, though these are not inherently stable or static, they have a profound effect on how, where and when we activate certain elements of ‘what we know.’

*Summary – the complex work of migration:*

So what has this thesis achieved? My essential argument is that the relationship between knowing, migrating and working is one of huge complexity. It can be characterised as dynamic, hierarchical, embodied and social. On reflection, I think this can be expressed in four steps:

- 1) Knowledge is an actively constituted process underlain by tacit and embodied ways of being in the world – thus it is more accurate to write of knowing(-in-the-world) than knowledge *per se*;
- 2) Trajectories of migration are formed by the topography of the migration landscape, which also act to ‘sort’ migrants into different types of work. The interplay of these trajectories and topographies with developing common-sense assumptions about what different types of migrants can and cannot do lends itself to the development and iterative reinforcement of both the routes and common-sense assumptions of migration and work;
- 3) However, this does not lead inexorably towards the creation of a static edifice, but comes about as the result of the dynamic interplay of ‘forces’ – both as relations of power/knowledge and as historical strata, or *habitus*;
- 4) Furthermore, this is played out through everyday processes of knowing-in-the-world. That is, the processes and performances of knowing are both constitutive of, and constituted by, the very structures of power which shape our lives. Thus, the ‘power to know’ is contextual, fluid and yet fundamental to the constitution of our everyday life.

However important this articulation of the twin concepts of knowing-in-the-world and the complex work of migration were to this thesis, there remain a number of additional points which do not immediately fit into the above discussion. In the following section, therefore, I seek to address these in relation to both the concepts outlined above and the thesis as a whole.

### **FURTHER REFLECTIONS – CONTEXT, DIFFERENCE AND COMPLEXITY:**

Whilst the concepts of the complex work of migration and knowing-in-the-world remain as the central pillars to this work, some of the surrounding architecture, though perhaps less gaudy, is still worthy of reflection. In this section, therefore, I return my attention to three further themes in the research, each connected to the main arguments of the thesis but not directly related. Firstly, I go all the way back to one the original elements of the research project – the regional skills gap – and discuss how we might begin to understand this in terms of the thesis as a whole, but also how we can begin to conceptualise regionality, relationality and locality in the complex work of migration. Secondly, I pick up the debates about the complex work of migration ‘beyond the global city’, which were featured in Chapter 6, and reconsider these in light of the thesis as a whole. Finally, I turn to another underlying theme in the thesis – that of understanding difference and intersectionality in a complex world.

The regional skills gap was a concept central to the original formulation of the research project from which this thesis grew. However, it was quickly abandoned as the haziness of the notion of skills gaps, let alone regional ones, became apparent. I made the points that skills were both notoriously difficult to measure, and likely to be presented as lacking in areas which might be better described as personal qualities (often termed ‘core competencies’ by writers in this area) such as motivation, work ethic, customer handling skills or team working. These were attributes that were highly personal and tacit in character. They could not be directly assessed by academic proxies, nor understood as skill in the sense of technical ability. Instead they appeared to be extensions of discourses of how it was reasonable for people to behave at work, or, rather, what should be expected (rather than hoped for) from a worker. Instead of providing *labour* to their employer, workers were now expected to provide *self* in the service of their organisation. In essence, this argument connects neatly with a presentation of the labour market, knowledge, and indeed skills, as socially embedded and dependent on the embodied performance of habitus. Thus, a discussion of why a region has a skills gap implies questions about whether workers are appropriately socialised and willing to accept their lot.

Therefore, if the ‘regional skills gap’ is presented in this way for the south-west of England,

then the suitability of international migrants to fill this gap becomes a question of whether they meet the basic personal qualities employers claim to be lacking amongst their current workforce. The answer here is mixed – within the confines of this research, most of those in ‘low-skill’ roles – the ‘target’ migration population if you like – were working in industries which tended to place an emphasis on the ability to provide labour, above any personal qualities the employee may have. Though some of these qualities impacted on the ability to provide that labour effectively (such as team working, commitment and the like), what was important to the employer was the efficiency of their labour. In essence, they wanted ‘warm bodies’ and did not care much for any other abilities. However, it was also clear that the personal qualities of migrant workers in ‘low-skill’ roles were recognised and appreciated – for example, they were often valorised for their work ethic compared to ‘native’ workers. In this sense, therefore, migrant workers were meeting a skills gap in the region. It was just that this gap happened to be at the very bottom end of the labour market and their success in filling it appeared to reinforce their position in that niche. They became *known* as hard-working, committed and thus suited to certain types of, predominately low-skill, work.

I am uncertain, however, whether this is what either the South West RDA, or the migrants themselves, hoped for. Rather, an alternative notion of the skills gap comes into play. This is the idea that – in an economy increasingly dependent on advanced knowledge and high-levels of skills and technical know-how – the workforce needs ‘upskilling’. A cohort of young, highly qualified and ambitious international migrants appear to present an excellent opportunity to give the local workforce a skills boost. In this interpretation of the regional skills gap, the international migrants in this research did not really meet local needs to the extent that their skills and abilities might suggest. The academic cohort certainly brought a high-level of potential skill and ability to their roles, but this was not replicated, despite often high levels of qualifications, amongst those who first entered the UK labour market in low-skill roles. Here, the influence of trajectories of migration was strong – trajectories which directed migrants into low-skill roles appeared also to contribute to them remaining there rather than getting the kinds of employment their skills and qualifications may suggest.

Thus, the perceived success or failure of international migrants in meeting the regional skills gap really depends on how that ‘gap’ is interpreted. In one sense, they filled a need for labour in one area of the labour market (i.e. low-skill roles in the food production sector) and this may have been partially down to their perceived personal ‘skills’ (particularly in

regards to their work ethic). In another sense, these same people did not ‘rise up’ the labour market and take the positions one may have expected given their pre-existing technical or academic qualifications. In this regard, they did not meet the regional skills gap.

However, whether or not these gaps were filled, the notion of the *regional* skills gap raises another point – that of regionality in this research. Exactly what is meant when we write or talk about the region? In this regard, as I outlined in Chapter 2, there is both a very simple and a very complex answer to this. The simple answer is that the region equates to the geographic boundaries of the South West RDA, but this misses the point somewhat. There is not a magic partition between the South West and the rest of the UK – it is subject to the same visa, taxation and employment regimes as the UK, its residents use the same services and international migrants have the same rights and restrictions as elsewhere. There are, of course, differences between this region and others in the UK, but equally there are vast discrepancies within it. In my earlier discussion I noted that the region exists because it is treated as such – without the bureaucratic apparatus of the ‘region’, it dissolves into a geographic descriptor with porous borders. Thus the region becomes essentially relational and, furthermore, its relevance varies dependent on the conceptual boundaries invoked. Therefore, whilst the region is at times the determining site of this research, what is under investigation is a complex of flows where spatial relevance is reconsidered and re-inscribed dependent on context.

A somewhat related topic is the siting of the research outside the realms of major urban areas. As I examined in previous chapters, much research on migrant communities in the UK and elsewhere tends to be focused on big cities, many of which would fall under the rubric of ‘global cities.’ In many ways, this preoccupation is understandable, for large urban areas do tend to have more substantial, and certainly more concentrated, migrant populations. Therefore, much contemporary theorising on the relationships between international migration and labour markets has, indirectly or otherwise, been focused on these large metropolitan areas. In Chapter 5, I wrote at some length about one of these ideas – Saskia Sassen’s ‘global city’ thesis – and questioned the extent to which it might hold beyond these international metropolises. Some aspects – such as an apparent bifurcated labour market in which migrant workers were largely directed to the bottom – held true, but other aspects were understandably harder to ascertain. For example, in Sassen’s books and articles, the

geographic concentration of ultra-high status roles in certain areas produces the need for an army of workers to service their peripheral needs –cleaning their offices, cooking and preparing their food, looking after their children. At both ends of this dual labour market are migrant workers, highly regarded ‘international knowledge elites’ at the top, a mass of workers from all areas of the world at the bottom. In turn migrants at both ends are again sorted by a range of actual and perceived attributes based on their educational qualifications, sense of dress and accent, but also on common-sense assumptions about gender, ‘race’ and ethnicity.

In the confines of this research, however, there are significant apparent differences from a ‘global city’. Job stratification is not so obviously the direct logic of the geographic concentration of high skill work, neither are there high densities of migrants within local communities, nor ‘super-diversity’ within them. A ‘global city’ approach therefore begins to lose its clarity as an explanatory factor in understanding international migration and local labour market forms. However, there are aspects of this approach which are useful to retain, such as the importance of local context in the expression of normatively global processes. That is, to understand the complex work of migration beyond the global city we must ensure that we don’t simply repeat assumptions about the functioning of migrant labour markets in the world’s metropolises, but should concentrate on unveiling the local manifestations of international phenomena. The complex work of migration beyond the global city should not simply be seen as the corollary of its urban equivalent, rather it becomes altered by context in ways which are not immediately obvious or predictable through extension from the ‘local’ global hub.

A final point to stress is that between the lines of this research has been a story of similarities and difference. I have generally divided the research participants into two groups – those in high skill roles and those in low-skill ones. In essence, both groups would recognise a commonality with others in their cohort – academics had a sense of themselves as academics, and as sharing experience with other migrant academics (as well as their non-migrant colleagues), whilst many of those in low-skill roles spoke of a sense of sharing a common experience with others in similar positions. Therefore, these categories are not merely induced. However, beyond this there are differences – some of which were spoken about unprompted by participants, many of which remained unsaid. The nature of the

research meant that there was a concentration on one type of difference – high-skill role versus low-skill role – rather than others. In a sense, these other differences became lost in the analysis – they were not inconsequential, but their relevance becomes hard to ascertain as compared to the ‘main’ difference. This leaves a number of questions – which I explore later in this chapter – about the impact of other forms of difference in the development of a complex work of migration, and all the implications this has in regards to common-sense assumptions about what work roles people can and should be carrying out. However, the thesis I forward here does not dismiss the importance of difference – of gender, ‘race’, educational background and so forth – rather one aspect of it is brought to the forefront, both due to my interest in talking about knowledge and work, and research participants framing of their experiences. However, as Linda McDowell notes in a recent article discussing how migrant workers came to inhabit certain work roles, ‘... the intersection of discourses of categorical difference amongst employers, managers and workers themselves continued to produce and reproduce categorical inequalities’ (2008: 501), thus intersectional differences – of ‘race’, gender and class – interfere and intermingle with the development of ideas about what roles different sorts of migrants can and should be doing. These differences are not necessarily easy to draw out, but neither are they illusory. Difference makes a difference, it is just that it is not always easy to tell how.

In terms of this particular research project, however, we must also ask how the circumstances of carrying out the research – the methods, timescale and context – impacted on the development of this thesis. It is to these constraints and limitations that I turn next.

### **MESSY METHODS REVISITED – THEORY, METHOD & CONTEXT:**

There can be little doubt that *how* we go about researching a question impacts on the answers we will get. Equally we can add *why*, *where* and *when* to the list without, I imagine, too much consternation from the social research community. In this part of the discussion, I wish to turn my attention to a final consideration of how these factors played a role in this research, to consider what limitations and constraints they may have placed on the outcomes, but also to recognise the productive nature of method itself. There is always a danger, however, that

such a retrospective produces a teleological response – that is, the methods used, the places they were used in and the questions they were expected to answer, inevitably led to certain conclusions. Essentially, this is a reformulation of the positivist mantra, that ‘good’ science is replicable (or falsifiable, if we follow Popper) given the same initial starting conditions. I intend to suggest no such thing here. The situation the research took place in was neither a closed system nor a controlled one – it was chaotic, open and changeable, and therefore both sensitive to the slightest alteration in initial conditions and entirely non-replicable. This does not, however, mean that the ‘biography’ of the research is irrelevant, either to the ‘findings’ presented previously or to potential critiques of them, but rather that my findings are not *scientific* in the sense that either a Popperian or a logical positivist would recognise. Rather this research should be understood as critical commentary on the ‘evidence’ available to me. A commentary fundamentally informed by the ‘biography’ of the research – the ‘coming-to-be’ of knowledge I have attempted to present thus far.

***Productive methods and the role of theory:***

One element of this ‘biography’ that may be considered as productive in the sense that it both led to ‘results’ in the form of this dissertation and the interviews it is based on, and effected their form, is the on-going and developing interactions between theory, method and writing. I have attempted to be ‘truthful’ about these developing relationships to the subject by presenting my understanding of the subject as on-going. Therefore, Chapters 1 and 2 present my initial overview of the subject, prior to carrying out any primary research, whilst Chapter 3 explains the ‘logic’ of choosing which methods I did given my understanding of the subject *at that time*. There is no doubt, however, that another researcher with a different background and different pre-existing interests would have carried out a very different project. But that is largely irrelevant here. What is under consideration is the background to *this* research and, specifically, the limitations and constraints this provides.

Perhaps most profound in the shaping of my method (both of research and writing) was the understanding of knowing as dynamic, contextual and fluid that I developed in the very first chapter. This infused everything I did thereafter with a sense of immanency and ethereality – knowledge was both everywhere and yet nowhere. Indeed, researching knowing may be



likened to trying to catch clouds – we can be ‘sure’ they exist as we experience them on a regular basis, yet we can never capture them and they never stay the same for long. This problematic required me to adopt a method that sought to embrace this fluidity and work it into the research itself. I have, inevitably, only been partially successful in this. Interviews of any sort are not happily conducive to seeing such complex processes in action. They are contrived, bounded and unnatural. But, as explored in Chapter 3, I was unable to carry out ethnographic research in this case<sup>124</sup> and, therefore, attempted to develop a ‘next best thing’ – biographic narrative interviews. I am fully aware that these interviews still only provided a partial and mediated introduction to the ‘play’ of knowing in the everyday working lives of those who participated in the research. The approaches I used in the interviews – such as the biographic narrative structuring – was an attempt to ‘open up’ the topic as much as possible, but it could never provide examples of the events discussed ‘in action.’ They were solely the reflections of participants, often many years after the event and, therefore, only a partial illustration of a complex whole. Exactly which parts were left out and what effects this had on the final research are, in essence, impossible to know. That they existed, however, is indisputable.

Equally, the way I wrote this thesis is both borne of theoretical considerations – particularly about the nature of knowing – and methods utilised. Just as the research interviews were an inadequate vehicle for understanding ‘knowing-in-the-world’, so was a conventional thesis for disseminating my analyses of the information gained from them. Any sort of writing can never do justice to its subject, particularly when that subject is as fluid, complex and chaotic as migrating, working and knowing. Following Bonini’s paradox<sup>125</sup> – summarised by the two quotes at the start of the chapter – an ideal presentation of the subject is the subject itself. Unrefined, unmediated, unsullied. But that can also mean unconsidered and unuseable. As Neil Gaiman writes, ‘perfectly accurate and perfectly useless.’ (2006: 10) Therefore, I dared to present an interpretation of the subject, using admittedly imperfect means of research and writing, in order to begin to understand it. An understanding, as I have illustrated, infused with my own theoretical convictions and methods of enquiry, but one that

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<sup>124</sup> A method which has itself long been subject to a number of pertinent critiques (see, e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986), despite its growing popularity as a research method in academic Geography.

<sup>125</sup> The term ‘Bonini’s paradox’ is derived from Starbuck’s discussions of the work of Bonini on modelling the decision making processes of large organisations. Starbuck summarises it thus, ‘[a]s a model grows more realistic it also becomes just as difficult to understand as the real-world processes it represents’ (2006: 13).

nonetheless I feel can be judged favourably, as any critical enquiry should be, on its internal logic and coherence.

*Sampling and relevance:*

During the research I spoke to two main groups – academics working at a University in the South-West of England, and people working (or recently employed) in low-skilled roles in the same region. These were selected because I wished to analyse the relationship between international migration, work and knowing not only in ‘high-skill’ roles but also in the kind of jobs the vast majority of those moving to the UK from overseas carry out – namely ‘low-skill’, poorly paid and routine jobs. In this limited sense, I got the interviews I wanted. But there are some important points to be considered regarding who I interviewed.

In terms of the academic cohort, I am wary of presenting them as a typical group (of ‘high-skill’ workers, or anything else). Academia is a relatively unusual profession, as it is both rationalised and realised in terms of knowledge – not necessarily in terms of knowledge as producing profitable manifestations (though that is undoubtedly changing), but as based on knowledge-in-itself. Perhaps a more accurate way of presenting this is that, historically, there has been a trend in Universities to see knowledge (and its transmission) as a goal in and of itself. That makes academia unique, which could be considered a problem in considering it as representative of ‘high-skill’ work more broadly. Equally, there is an argument – which I presented in earlier chapters – that academia is a particularly cosmopolitan idiom, in that the international movement of scholars is often seen as ‘a good thing,’ and that, to a significant though not all-encompassing extent, University environs are similar throughout the world. Thus the ‘otherness’ of the international migrant is less pronounced in academia than it possible is in other ‘high-skill’ roles. The degree to which either of these points is valid, however, is debateable. There are differences between all ‘high-skill’ roles both within and between sectors. Sampling from a range of sectors may have revealed some differences between them, but would have lost the depth of understanding gained by looking at one institution and one sector. Therefore, whilst it must be recognised that by looking solely at academics as ‘high-skill’ workers coloured my ‘findings’, it must also be presumed that this close focus also provided more depth to these ‘data.’

The 'low-skill' cohort were not, by contrast, selected on the basis of a single workplace, as access via employers proved both extremely difficult and also gave the potentially negative appearance of close association with the employer. Instead, a localised snowballing strategy was used, whereby interviewees were recruited partially by myself but largely via Agnieszka Romaszko and Caroline Nicholson of a local community organisation. This meant that the research participants recruited in this way were largely interconnected and local to the organisation run by Agnieszka and Caroline. Many currently or previously worked in one of a relatively small number of locally based employers, particularly in food processing, warehousing and on production lines. Furthermore, most had been in the area long enough to build up the contacts and connections which led them to being recruited in the research. Equally, as the community organisation used was intended to support the local Polish population, all those recruited via this means were from Poland. Therefore, it is possible that the sample of 'low-skill' workers was biased towards certain types of workers. For example, it is probable that there was an under-representation of very short-term migrants and an over-representation of those staying longer and from certain areas, particularly Poland. Equally, it is possible that this local area was not a good representation of the South-West at large. It is impossible to answer these questions definitively. The available statistics are neither local nor nuanced enough to allow anything more than a rudimentary understanding of the characteristics of the international migrant population in the specific area the research took place within. Both the age range and gender divisions in the sample fit relatively neatly with the wider information available, whilst Poland provides by far the largest number of migrants to both the South West region and the UK as a whole, so would appear a reasonable group to focus on, both in terms of representativeness and ease of access. Finally, it is important to reiterate that this research was never intended to provide a statistically valid sample, rather its concern was to present a 'deep' understanding of the issues under consideration in regards to a relatively small number of people. A concern I believe has been achieved.

*A return to the local context – timescales, specificity and changing landscapes:*

A further point I wish to reflect on is the relevance of timescales and changing 'landscapes.'

Throughout the research I have stressed the importance of context to the understanding of everyday life, whether that is conceived in terms of knowing-in-the-world or otherwise. Thus, it is essential to bear in mind that the research itself took place within a certain context and that this inevitably had a consequence on what I eventually produced.

At the most basic level, the research took place in a confined period of time. In terms of data gathering, this was during the period April to October 2008, four years after the accession of 10 new member states to the UK, and concurrent with the contested introduction of a new points-based system for those moving from outside the EU<sup>126</sup>. Therefore, what is presented in this thesis is based on a snapshot of a changing situation. I sought to partially alleviate this though using a biographical approach which covered an individual's past movements and career. However, this undoubtedly presented specific constraints and limitations to the project. For example, I argue several times over the course of the dissertation that the idea, often forwarded by Human Capital theorists, that, over time, an international migrant will begin to realise the potential of their human capital as they learn the language and customs of their new home, was not borne out by my findings. This, of course, could merely be a reflection of the timescale of the project, rather than a fault of the theory itself – over time, many of the apparent barriers to progression I identified may prove temporary or even illusory.

Equally, there are wider politico-legal frameworks in place which shape the 'trajectories of migration' I write about in the research. Some, particularly border controls and immigration regimes, tend to change relatively often, and fundamentally alter the topography of migration – just as the accession (and the relatively liberal approach the UK government took in regards to labour movement) did for those in the A8 nations. These too will alter over time and have unpredictable effects on the future development of migrating, working and knowing in the UK and elsewhere. Indeed, though the research happened a little too early to measure its effects, there have been suggestions that a Europe-wide recession, the devaluation of the UK pound against the Polish zloty, and increasing relative wages in Poland, may be both encouraging more Poles back home and discouraging others from

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<sup>126</sup> The UK government introduced a new points-based immigration system on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2006 replacing, amongst other things, the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP) which had itself only begun four years previously. The main significance of the change here was that new programme altered points regarding English language proficiency, prior savings (or maintenance arrangements) and extended the time taken to gain Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) from four to five years. The latter point was contested in the High Court and only settled on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009, producing a sense of uncertainty for those without ILR.

taking their place (see, e.g. Easton 2008). The impacts of this on what has been researched here are not clear, but could reasonably be considered to be potentially significant.

Finally, there is also the question of the geographic context of the research and its broader relevance. I made the point in previous chapters that the research here was concerned with a different sort of geographic region than the majority of research on migrant workers in the UK – namely it took place ‘beyond the global city.’ Furthermore, it wasn’t directly concerned with the very rural, agricultural labour covered elsewhere (see, e.g. Rogaly 2006). Instead, the focus was on the hinterland between the two; market towns and small cities which provided employment in a limited range of high-skill roles (academia, medicine, a smattering of professional ‘knowledge-intensive’ firms, such as Reuters and the Met Office) and a network of routine occupations (especially intensive food production and preparation). Therefore, it can be questioned whether this research has any relevance outside this peculiar locale. What I have attempted to provide in response to this is a way of thinking about how complex processes ‘come to be.’ Whilst this stresses the importance of context and local ‘spaces of flows’ (Massey 1994), it is not bound by them. That is, such an approach can be deployed in a variety of local contexts. This does not mean that everything I explored here will occur in the same way elsewhere (in fact, it would imply it will not), but that the approach I take to understanding it bears relevance beyond the specific borders of this research. Thus, whilst the local context of this research is fundamentally constitutive of it, it does not negate the significance of what is written here to other areas.

### **EMERGING RESEARCH THEMES:**

This research has, perhaps unsurprisingly, raised as many questions as it has answered. If we are to understand the subject of this research as complex, fluid and subject to change, then we can only *ever* present partial pictures of an ever-changing reality. Thus no research question – emergent or pre-defined – can ever be fully answered. However, this is not to deny that there are certain aspects of the subject matter that have either been somewhat neglected in my analysis, or are crying out for further study. There will undoubtedly be far more than I outline here, but I hope to go some way to providing a rationale for my chosen few.

*Looking to the future – change and development:*

As I suggested in the previous section of this chapter, one of the most interesting aspects of this research may be in how things develop in the future. A number of the arguments raised – the idea of petrification and knowness of migration topographies and trajectories, the development of common-sense assumptions about migrants and the work they do, the ‘blocked mobility’ of workers in ‘low-skill’ roles to all but a very select set of non-routine roles – will all be put to the test over the next few years and decades. How migrant labour (and communities, ‘routes’ and individuals) evolves will be a fascinating example of the contextual development of ‘knowing-in-the-world.’ Much of this, of course, depends on those turbulent events that we cannot currently predict, yet *how* migration in the South West of England develops will tell us much about the relationships between working, migrating and knowing. For example, in the previous chapter, I referred to some tantalising suggestions in the research about the development of ‘alternative sites of knowing’ amongst workers in low-skill roles in response to the relative lack of ability to activate their knowledge in their present jobs (and to get better ones through routes currently open to them). These included the community organisation through which I recruited many of my interviewees, as well as a local ‘Polish’ Sunday school, not to mention a growing nexus of community translators, Polish cinema clubs and websites catering to the needs of local migrant communities. This ‘knowing beyond the workplace’ is both an under-researched and a hugely important area of study. If we are to understand the economy as a ‘total social fact’, following Mauss and Bourdieu, then we cannot reasonably delimit the bounds of our research as the workplace. Indeed, such a research project could happily draw on many of the contacts already developed through the current programme of research, as well as beginning to bring together research on ‘ethnic entrepreneurship,’ transnational communities and labour migration.

*The role of difference – gender, ‘race’, class and life-course:*

As I discussed above, difference makes a difference. In this research, my focus was largely on defining how one aspect of that difference played out. That is, how and why migrants ended up in particular jobs at the ‘top’ and ‘bottom’ of the labour market. This analysis investigated how this was impacted by (and impacted on) trajectories of migration, work experiences and processes of knowing-in-the-world. However, if we consider the development of ‘knowledge’ about what jobs certain migrants could and should do to be influenced by the complex intersection of numerous social and structural forces, then we must also ask how, and in what way, could other conceptualisations of difference impact on these processes. In the following paragraphs, I consider some additional forms of ‘difference’ and consider the extent to which they may be more centrally incorporated into future research on this subject.

In terms of gender, I presented a paper at the AAG 2009 conference<sup>127</sup> outlining the relationship between mobility and masculine hegemony. My broad argument was that the notion of hyper-mobility (in terms of physical migration between countries, but also understood as a certain attitude to work and life in general) is closely tied to what we could call, following Gramsci as much as Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity. This is not to say that mobility (or indeed masculinity) is an exclusively *male* domain, but that certain ways of being are reified as more successful, better rewarded and more worthy of respect than others. Therefore, there is a powerful drive to adopt such successful (and mobile) lifestyles, regardless of the often negative effects they may have on people. Reifying the hyper-mobile as positive does nothing for our critical understanding of it. There are numerous ways in which this research theme could be furthered – both in regards to migration, but also in terms of a huge swath of contemporary work and non-work practices. Furthermore, how such a masculine hegemony ‘sorts’ certain values, people and types of work as more or less valuable is clearly of great interest and close relation to the current research. Equally, such an approach again encourages the understanding of work and the economy as a total social fact, rather than exclusive domains, necessitating ‘special’ approaches or allowing us to ignore the

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<sup>127</sup> I am currently in the process of editing this paper for publication in *Gender, Space and Culture* (subject to acceptance by the editors).

social impacts (and impacts of society) of work and ‘the economic.’

It may seem odd that a research project concerned with international migration and work should apparently neglect the role of notions of ‘race’ to the degree some may be inclined to suggest this does. However, though ‘race’ is only rarely addressed in itself, the idea of distinction, and how perceptions about what different types of people can and should be doing affects our everyday lives, is at the very centre of the research project. Part of the reason ‘race’, in its normative interpretation, may appear so absent from the research, is that it was rarely an idiom through which people spoke to me about their experiences. Partly this may have been due to the fact that the only participants that may have conventionally be classified as ‘non-white’ (i.e. either they or their family was of non-European origin) were anglicised (and often anglophile), erudite and employed in academia. Therefore, they did not fit (either in their own minds or those of others) the common conception of a ‘non-white’ ‘ethnic minority.’ Forwarding ‘race’ as a conceptual tool for understanding this research therefore seemed like something of an imposition. It would, to some extent, smack of introducing an etic dialectic (‘white’/‘non-white’) to understanding work and migration in the UK without direct evidence as to its relevance. However, the fact that the vast majority of those migrants working in low-skilled roles were seen (and would certainly see themselves) as ‘white’ raises some very interesting questions that would undoubtedly benefit from further investigation. Exactly how did the ‘whiteness’ of A8 migrants impact on their working lives in the UK? Indeed, exactly how was that ‘whiteness’ constructed by migrants, employees and others? Asking such questions begin to blur the, previously commonplace, rhetoric about the link between migration to the UK (and other countries), ‘colour’ and discrimination against ‘ethnic minorities.’ Equally, what role does the way people dress, eat, talk and so forth play on how they are conceived by employers and local communities, and how they conceive of themselves. Is this conceptualised in terms of ‘race’ at all? Indeed, following the ground-breaking work on ‘race,’ ‘whiteness’ and work in the US (see, esp. Roediger 2005), are similar processes at work here?

In a related way, we can ask questions about class and social hierarchies in this research. One issue here is that class is an extraordinarily difficult concept to relate transnationally – the implied position one holds in one society does not necessarily translate to the one at home.



Certainly they may be linked, but rarely are they coterminous. Equally, just as with the concept of 'race,' 'class' was not a conceptual tool any of my research participants chose to utilise. Some spoke of poorly defined social hierarchies (and perhaps the view that migration was a good thing for social mobility at 'home'), but none defined this in terms of 'class' as such. Indeed, I doubt the utility of this term in understanding contemporary migrations. Whilst social hierarchies, both within and between groups, locally and trans-nationally, are central to any understanding of the complex work of migration, it is doubtful whether the notion of 'class' with all its clunky associations of 'class consciousness' and solidarity, adds much to our understanding that is not provided through concepts such as relations of power/knowledge, *habitus* and hegemony based on common-sense assumptions<sup>128</sup>. I would argue, therefore, that although 'class' in itself may be largely absent from this thesis, a critical understanding of the social, political and economic hierarchies inherent in the term are most definitely present, and will remain at the heart of any future analysis. Indeed, the ways in which internal social hierarchies are adopted, transformed and conceptualised in 'migrant communities' and how these relate to external relations, working roles and so forth, would constitute a significant element of any future research project.

One final 'difference' that I feel is relevant to prospective research in this area is that of the life-course. By this I refer to how, as we age, mature and our circumstances change, so do our motivations, views of the world and ways we are viewed by others. One element that was often brought up by research participants during the research were what we might call trans-national caring relationships – the way interactions with family and friends alter and change both through the migration process and as our personal circumstances transform. For example, the motivations of a young single man is significantly different to that of a man or woman with a young family, or a middle-aged person beginning to think about how to care for ageing relatives as they become more frail and potentially more dependent. Such changes appeared to have a deep impact on how people managed and related to their work and life. It changed what was important to them and *where* was important to them. Sometimes, such caring relationships could happily exist at a distant, sometimes a more proximal relationship

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<sup>128</sup> Of course, following Skeggs' (2004) insightful analysis of the making and remaking of 'class', it could be argued that this is simply a case of writing about class without naming it as such. However, I remain keen to avoid the simplistic division of people into 'classes' without reference to the complexity and intersectionality – the mess – of everyday life.

was seen to be required. Indeed, despite what many studies of work, knowledge and trans-national migration appear to imply, the management of these relationships seem to be *as important* to people as a drive to maximise their potential (in terms of social prestige, financial gain or educational qualifications). Just how such life-course developments, especially in terms of trans-national relationships of caring, affect the everyday practice of working, migrating and knowing is of huge interest and importance.

There are, of course, no smooth barriers between these emerging research themes – for example, any analysis of mobility, work and masculine hegemony would have to confront life-course and relations of care, compassion and consanguinity. These should not, therefore, be seen as exclusive categories for research, but inter-linked themes for development from the current research. Equally, how the neologisms of ‘knowing-in-the-world’ and ‘the complex work of migration’ interact with more nuanced investigations of these emerging research themes has the potential to be very enlightening (or downright bewildering) in terms of the broader usefulness of these approaches to understanding complex and messy processes.

#### **AFTERWORD – PARTIAL PICTURES AND NEVER-ENDING STORIES:**

In this thesis I have attempted to build up an understanding of migrating, knowing and working in the South-West of England. Where that understanding ended up is, of course, a long way from where it began, and its development has not always been straightforward or proceeded as planned. Nor, perhaps, should I ever have expected it to have. Instead what I have attempted to present over the course of the previous seven chapters has been what I have come to understand as a ‘coming-to-be’ of knowledge. That is, the explorations and explanations given here are contextual conceptualisations of a changing landscape. This is, I understand, not a ‘positivist’ work of economic geography – I have not attempted to produce a testable hypothesis, nor can I be said to have realistically provided any predictions for future developments in the areas I was concerned. Rather I place before you an investigation and a thesis that presents an unashamedly partial picture of a never-ending story. It would have been a denial of the very thesis I forward to do anything else. However,

that is not to say that I have nothing to say, or that I have descended into a hermeneutic vortex of endless relativity. Rather, it is an attempt to illustrate the complexity, changeability and sheer 'unknowableness' of the subject at hand. To impose rigid structures of explanation onto such a situation is not only pointless, it is disingenuous. Therefore, I have tried to produce some sort of map of the territory which remains useful to future travellers, without either producing something so complex as to be unuseable, or so simple as to be false. Of course, this is a paradox all social research faces and we each must decide how to combat it. I believe that what I have presented here, whilst perhaps not an orthodox approach to the subject, both stays true to the logic of method I present and provides a useful guide to approaching and understanding complex forms in a way which does not dilute their multiplicity, fluidity or contextuality.

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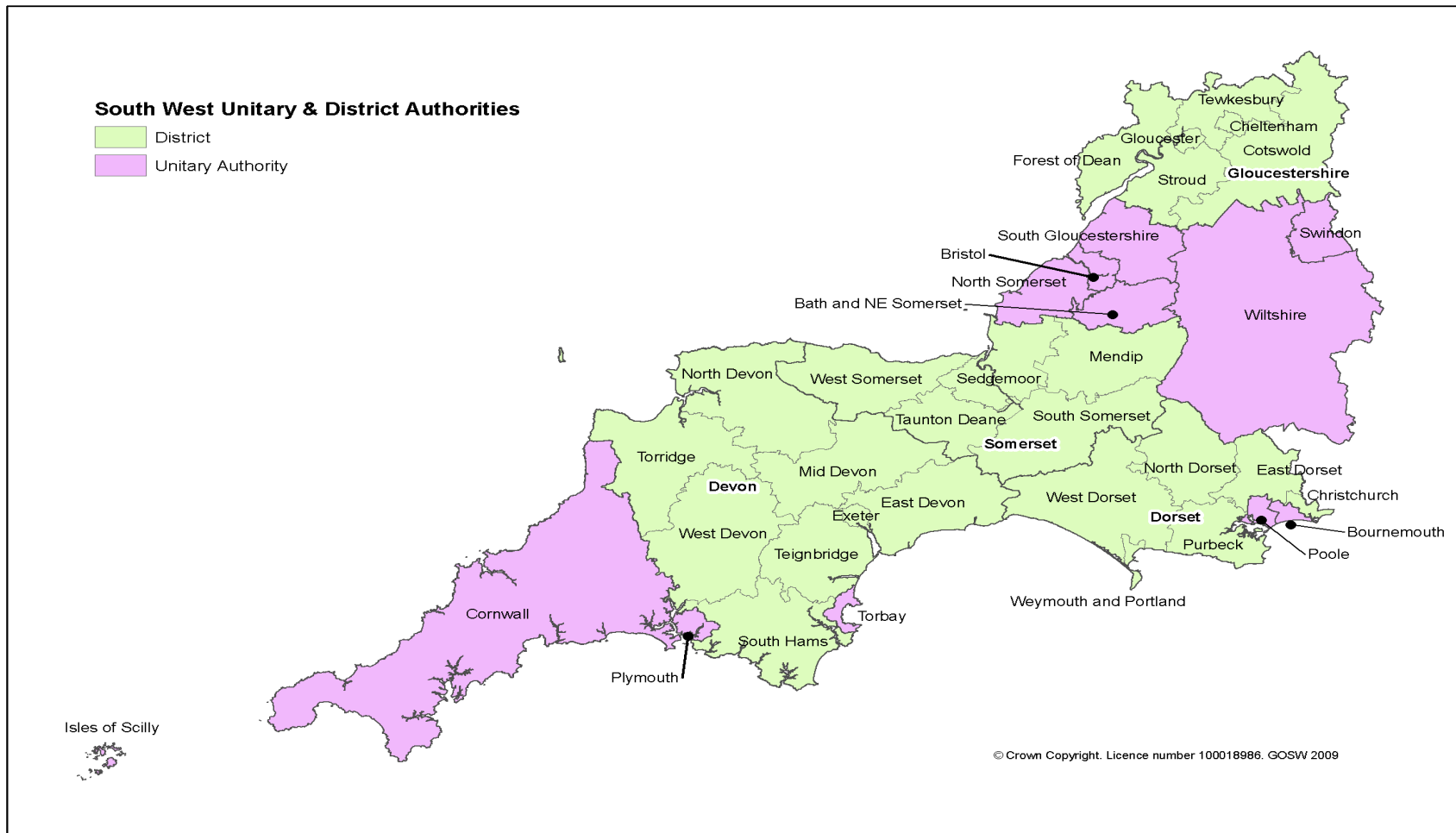
### Appendix 1:

### Map of Government Office Regions in England



## Appendix 2:

### Map of the South West Government Office Region



### Appendix 3:

#### Rationale for focus on Aerospace (extract from 'upgrade' report)

With limited resources, these considerations produced a research design focused on an industry that would allow for access to international migrants working in both 'high' and 'low' skilled occupations at a small number of sites. This makes it possible to combine ethnographic research amongst a cross-section of international migrants employed at one site, with additional in-depth interviews with key informants and broader questionnaire surveying. However, there are other reasons why studying the regional aerospace industry is pertinent;

It is of key importance to the South West economy, directly and indirectly providing employment for a large number of people<sup>129</sup> across the skills spectrum, from 'highly skilled' roles, such as avionics, design and engineering, through to 'unskilled' roles, such as basic cleaning and process operative positions<sup>130</sup>.

The employment of both 'high' skilled knowledge workers and 'less' skilled manual and process workers in the industry allows for the research to investigate international migrants and their colleagues working in the 'knowledge-intensive' design and marketing offices, in the manufacturing sections of the organisation, and their counterparts providing for their workplace needs, as well as in the interaction between workers from different occupations.

The Skills Sector Council (SSC) for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (SEMTA) has recognised a number of skills gaps in this sector, most notably Level 3 and 4 technical and engineering skills (Skills and Learning Intelligence Module 2007: 39). One

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<sup>129</sup> The Society of British Aerospace Companies (SBAC) reports that 124, 233 people were directly employed by the aerospace industry in the U.K. in 2006 (Society of British Aerospace Companies 2007: 40). Global sales for the same year were recorded as £19.81bn (ibid). Earlier research by the same organisation suggested the South West region accounted for some 27% of U.K. aerospace employment (Society of British Aerospace Companies 2005: 18); if consistent this would indicate 33, 543 people employed in the regional aerospace sector and global sales of £5.35bn. Additionally, SBAC has estimated a further 140, 000 people are 'indirectly supported by the aerospace industry' (ibid: 17), suggesting a regional figure of 37, 800. Figures from the Annual Population Survey for the period Oct 2005 – Sept 2006 show a regional workplace-based employment rate of 2,326,900 [data accessed via NOMIS, 21/09/2007] suggested that the aerospace industry accounts for between 1.44% and 3.07% of regional employment.

<sup>130</sup> SBAC data indicates that, in 2004, 33% of those employed in aerospace were 'academics, engineers and managers', with a further 41% employed as 'manual workers' (SBAC, 2005: 18).

possible way to fill these positions effectively would be through the use of migrants who already hold the relevant skills but are not currently engaged in this work in the U.K. (an exogenous solution). However, it is necessary to understand how international migrants already working in the sector are using their knowledge and skills and how organisational structures and management techniques help and/or hinder knowledge transfer and skills maximisation at both 'high' and 'low' skills levels, in order to start to think whether this would be an effective solution and, if so, what changes may be needed to make this process as effective as possible. There may also be the possibility that international migrants working in 'low skilled' roles in this sector have the skills and knowledge to move into skills shortage areas but have faced cultural, linguistic or structural barriers to fully realising their potential<sup>131</sup>.

Finally, Aerospace is a truly trans-national industry; the South-West may have numerous SMEs working in this area, but the sector is dominated by the demands of a handful of international corporations, such as BAe (formerly British Aerospace) and General Electric, who own many of the local companies in the region. Therefore, Aerospace can be seen as an example of the ways in which communication and knowledge-sharing is required between disparate sets of people in geographically distant parts of the globe, as well as between different nationalities within the local site. In addition to this, it has been suggested, by theorists such as Saskia Sassen (2006), that 'high-level' international migration linked to transnational corporations actually creates the need (or at least the opportunity) for international migrants to move into 'low-skilled' employment to service their 'high-skilled' equivalents. However, this 'dual-migration' thesis has largely been used as an analytic tool for 'global cities', rather than for individual organisations and areas outside of the immediate environs of these international hotspots. Does such a theory resonate in the South-West and, if so, why? Are these effects rippling out from the global cities, internationalising and bifurcating as they go? What would such a situation mean for the knowledge and skills production and articulation, both for migrants and the local population?

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<sup>131</sup> Recent research has provided evidence that international migrants are often significantly overqualified for their current occupation (see, e.g. Anderson et al. 2006: 34-9; Bryant et al. 2006: 75).

## **Appendix 4:**

### **Memorandum of agreement**

This document outlines the terms of the agreement made between Mr. Huw Vasey of the University of Exeter and Ms. Agnieszka Romaszko and Dr. Caroline Nicholson of the Anglo-Polish Organisation of Tiverton on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 2008.

#### **Work to be completed:**

It has been agreed that the following work shall be conducted by Ms. Agnieszka Romaszko and Dr. Caroline Nicholson:

- Contacting and interviewing 15 people from the Devon and Somerset area, following the interview guidelines provided by Mr. Huw Vasey. These interviews will be conducted, where possible, with non-UK nationals with limited or no conversational English, who are in paid employment in any of the following areas of work: agricultural workers, including fruit and vegetable pickers; process operatives in manufacturing or processing roles; cleaners and domestic staff; caterers and service staff; agency workers.
- Translating and transcribing the 15 interviews. These should be supplied entirely in clear English, except where words or phrases have a specific meaning in the original language, which would be lost should they be translated. In these circumstances a brief note should be attached interpreting the contextual meaning of the word or phrase. Electronic recordings of the original interviews should be supplied with the transcriptions.

#### **Costs and Payments:**

The following costs have been agreed between the named parties:

- £100 shall be paid for each completed transcript up to a maximum of £1500. This cost shall include all work involved in recruitment of interviewees, in addition to conducting the interviews and their translation and transcription.
- Refreshments of up to £10 per interview shall be paid, up to a maximum of £150.
- Additional reasonable costs for travel and materials shall be met by the University. Travel costs shall be paid at 40p per mile.
- Upon completion of the work, an invoice detailing the work completed and any necessary evidence thereof should be sent to Mr. Huw Vasey, Department of Geography, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RJ. Payment of this invoice will be made on receipt and in accordance to the work being carried out to the agreed standard.

**Timescale:**

It is agreed that all interviews will be completed, translated, transcribed and delivered to Mr. Huw Vasey by 17:00 on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2008. Failure to do so will effectively terminate the agreement, unless an extension has been formally accepted and confirmed by both parties.

I agree to the above terms and conditions:

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Huw Vasey



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Agnieszka Romaszko

Date

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## Appendix 5:

### Interview schedule

Text to be followed ad verbatim is given in italics. Key questions are marked with a star\*. Other questions are optional and may be omitted depending on circumstances.

- **Introductions and formalities:**

Introduce myself, make sure I have the correct information about them [e.g. name (inc. spelling/pronunciation)]. Get comfortable – tea/coffee, seating arrangements, etc... Test recorder [ask them to say something like ‘Hello, my name is...’]

- **Consent and Confidentiality:**

*Before we begin, I just want to tell you about how the interview works and how I'm going to use what we discuss today.*

*My name is [name]. I am working on a project carrying out research into international migration and work in the UK. During this interview, I will be asking you to explore your experiences of work in the UK. The interview is designed to last about an hour. However, feel free to expand on any of the questions asked and to talk about other topics. If you do not wish to answer any questions, you do not have to.*

*All information you give in this interview will remain confidential. You can have a copy of the transcript of the interview if you wish and can withdraw consent at any time.*

*Are you happy for me to interview you?* [Verbal Consent]

*Are you happy for me to record this interview?* [Verbal Consent]

- **Ice-breakers:**

- Where are you from originally?
- What's it like?

▪ **Pre-migration labour market history:**

- \*What did you do there?
- [If not covering work] What about for work?
- [If not working] Were you in education?
- Did you get any qualifications? What were they?
  
- \*So, why did you decide to come to the UK?
- [restate main point if necessary – So you came to the UK to find work / go to Uni / have an adventure / for family reasons etc...]
- Where there any other reasons for you to move?
- Why did you decide to come to the UK, rather than another country?
- How did you feel about moving to the UK?

▪ **Arrival in the UK:**

- Where did you first stay when you moved to the UK? [When? Where? With whom?]
- Why did you go to [town]?
- What did you think of the UK when you first arrived?
- Was it like you had expected?
- [If no] How was it different?
  
- \*What was your first job in the UK?
- [If appropriate] Where is that?
- \*How did you get that job? [Arranged before or after migration?]
- What would a normal day's work involve?
- [If not covered above] What did you think of it?

▪ **UK labour market history:**

- [If not in original job] So what have you done since then?
- Can you tell me about those jobs? [inc. timescales – How long did you do that for?]
- So why did you move jobs?
- How did you go about finding a new job?
- \*Were you getting the kind of jobs you were expecting before you came to the UK?

▪ **Skills and 'attributes':**

- \*Do you feel you are using all your skills and knowledge in your current job?
- \*Do you feel you've been able to pass on these skills and this knowledge to the people you work with? [If not, why not?]
- [Where applicable] What about your previous jobs?
- \*Do you think work in the UK is different from work at home?
- [If Yes] How is it different? [Focus on 'country-specific' skills; embodied attributes; ways of 'doing business']
  
- [Where applicable] Could you speak English when you first came to the UK?
- Do you think speaking English makes a difference in the workplace?
- [Where applicable] Did it make a difference to you?

▪ **Knowledge and learning:**

- \*How did you learn about how to do your current job? [Informal vs. Formal methods]
- Have you learnt any additional skills whilst in the UK? [What? Where? How?]

▪ **Future Plans:**

- \*What do you plan to do in the future?
- [Where applicable] What about work?
- [Where applicable] Do you think you'll go back to [country of origin]? [When?]
- Why?
- What about moving again – somewhere else in the UK, or another country?  
[When? Where?]

▪ **Endings...**

- Would you recommend for other people from your country to come and work in the UK?

Why?

## Appendix 6:

Demographic information  
regarding 'migrant  
workers' interviewed

	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Work Role</b>	<b>Level of Qualification (NQF)</b>
1	Alex	M	DE	Academic	8
2	Anna	F	PL	Community Worker	6
3	Artur	M	PL	Process Operative	6
4	Ayna	F	AZ	Academic	8
5	Barbara	F	PL	Au Pair	6
6	Denise	F	MY	Academic	8
7	Elżbieta	F	PL	Receptionist	3
8	Esin	F	TR	Community Worker	7
9	Ewa	F	PL	Recruitment Agent (now Community Worker)	7
10	Fatima	F	IN	Academic	8
11	Giulia	F	IT	Academic	8
12	Jan	M	PL	Process Operative	6
13	Jereon	M	NL	Academic	8
14	Józef	M	PL	Process Operative	3
15	Katarzyna	F	PL	Process Operative	4
16	Krystyna	F	PL	Dental Technician	5
17	Krzysztof	M	PL	Process Operative	4
18	Leon	M	DE	Academic	8
19	Madeline	F	MY	Academic	8
20	Małgorzata	F	PL	Process Operative	6

21	Marcin	M	PL	Process Operative	3
22	Marek	M	SK	Process Operative	6
23	Maria	F	PL	Process Operative	2
24	Marie	F	DE	Community Worker	7
25	Mathilde	F	DK	Academic	8
26	Max	M	DE	Academic	8
27	Miroslav	M	RS	Academic	8
28	Paulo	M	PT	Academic	8
29	Pawel	M	PL	Warehouseman	6
30	Stanisław	M	PL	Process Operative	7
31	Tomasz	M	PL	Process Operative	6
32	Zoran	M	RS	Academic	8

Note: All names have been changed.

**Country Codes:**

Code	Country	Status
AZ	Azerbaijan	Non-EU
DK	Denmark	EU
DE	Germany	EU
IN	India	Non-EU
IT	Italy	EU
MY	Malaysia	Non-EU
NL	Holland	EU
PL	Poland	EU – A8
PT	Portugal	EU
RS	Serbia	Non-EU
SK	Slovakia	EU – A8
TR	Turkey	Non-EU

**Notes on status:**

**EU:** National of a European Union member state with full freedom of employment and movement within the EU zone.

**EU – A8:** National of a European Union member state with full freedom of movement within the EU zone BUT with more limited employment rights within the UK; must be registered on the Worker’s Registration Scheme (WRS) to work in the UK.

**Non-EU:** National of a state not part of the European Union; apart from exceptional circumstances will require a Work Permit to work and reside in the UK.

**National Qualification Framework (NQF) Levels:**

<b>NQF Level</b>	<b>Relevant Equivalent UK Qualifications</b>
8	Doctorates – PhD, DPhil
7	Masters Degrees – MA, MSc, MPhil, PGCE, PGDip, PGCert
6	Honours Degrees – BA, BSc, Graduate Diplomas and Certificates
5	Intermediate – Foundation and ordinary degrees, HND, DipHE
4	CertHE, C&G Licentiate
3	‘A’ Level, NVQ/C&G Level 3
2	GCSEs (A* - C), NVQ/C&G Level 2
1	GCSEs (D – G), NVQ/C&G Level 1

Note: Based on information available at [www.qcda.gov.uk](http://www.qcda.gov.uk) accessed 10/08/09