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Polish undocumented immigrants, regular high-skilled workers and entrepreneurs in the UK

Franck Düvell

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A comparative analysis of migration patterns, strategies and identity processes

Franck Düvell*

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* Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies/European University Institute;
University of Bremen

email: fduvell@uni-bremen.de

Introduction

In Britain, for ten years, the topic of 'illegal immigration' ranks high on the political agenda. It is mostly associated with illegal entry of asylum seekers, frequently peaking in 'moral panics', or with rejected asylum applicants 'going underground' but less with 'illegal working'. In fact, a thriving and in the same time deregulated economy provides for large-scale shadow activities, and the politics of entrepreneurial freedom that objects too much interferences in business activities allows immigrants of any status to make their living by undocumented working and represents an incentive to chose Britain in the first instance. And an immigration enforcement authority that is low-staffed, and, in order to respect non-discriminatory policies, only keeps a low profile and by prioritising asylum seekers otherwise expresses a 'laissez faire' policy in most other areas. Meanwhile, one can observe a new approach in British immigration policy, that appreciates the positive economic and social contributions of immigrants to society, opens up new channels for migration not at least in order to regulate migration flows and to prevent immigrants from turning to illegal strategies.

The following contribution presents some findings from two consecutive qualitative research projects into regular and undocumented immigrant workers in the United Kingdom[1]. Both have been pioneering in several ways. The first study into Polish and Turkish undocumented immigrant workers in London was conducted between 1997 and 1999 and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC); the second study into Polish and Indian undocumented immigrant workers and work permit holders in Britain[2] was funded under the EC fifth framework programme[3]. The similar design of both projects allowed to identity shifting immigrants' strategies, and to compare documented and undocumented immigrant workers.

1. Polish migration and the Polish community in a historical perspective

Central and East European including Polish immigration is nothing new to Britain, it goes back to the times of the 'Great European Emigration' (Hoerder and Knauf 1992). Such immigrants, about 120.000 predominantly Russian Jews (Lipman 1954, Rees 1978, Holmes 1982) have been absorbed into British society as many others were before, such as Huguenots or Germans. It needs to be remembered that it was East European and Jewish immigration that sparked off the first anti-immigration campaign in modern Britain resulting in the first immigration restrictions in 1905 (Layton-Henry 1989). In social geography places such as London's East End (Whitechapel), West End (Chelsea) or Cheethill in Manchester are associated with 'old' East European migration. Polish post-war immigration followed the traces of the exiled London-based Polish government during the Russian-German occupation. The core were 120.000 members of different Polish units within the allied armed forces also identified with anti-communism and anti-Russian ideologies. Another 20.000 to 30.000 immigrants were mainly Ukrainian prisoners of war and some

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[1] These studies have been jointly conducted by Bill Jordan and Franck Düvell, both University of Exeter

[2] Does implementation matter? Informal administration practices and shifting immigrant strategies in four member states – IAPASIS, for all reports see www.iue.it/RSCAS/Research/IAPASIS/Index.html

[3] 'Improving the human research potential and the socio-economic knowledge base'

Balts fleeing the Russian occupation (Harris 1987). And also amongst the 350.000 immigrants from the European Volunteer Workers scheme many were Poles (Miles and Kay 1990). These were treated as a desirable and wanted replacement population, the government took any measure to integrate these immigrants into the British society (CAB 1946, Rees 1978). Although meanwhile perfectly absorbed in parts of London and Manchester there still exist an infrastructure of social amenities such as ethnic shops, cultural centres and churches serving the particular customs of that group.

New Polish immigration to the UK relates to post-war processes, but has its own causes and needs to be seen as a separate movement. Only when the communist years of isolation from the West came to an end there was an increasing flow of illegal emigration in the 1980's, mainly of educated, prime-age citizens, and mainly to Germany (Okólski 1996). From 1980, the time of the military coup, one can also notice a small stream of asylum applicants into the UK counting for 2.900 applications between 1986 and 1996 peaking in 1995, when asylum applications in general were at its highest (Refugee Council 1997).

That led to the current situation of Polish travel and migration to the UK and represents a fourth separate process, which is related to the break-up up the Eastern bloc (Castles and Miller 1993). But only 2 per cent of the one million Polish regular migrants annually go elsewhere than Germany, USA or Canada, hence only a very small proportion comes to the UK (Okólski 1996). On the other hand, Polish nationals currently have either been identified by the Immigration Service Enforcement Directorate for its illegal strategies or, as most recently by Work Permit UK as a noticeable group. In 1996, Polish nationals came third amongst those being identified for illegal entry (Hansard, 19.12.1996). In 1998, East Europeans counted for 10 % of the cases of the Immigration Service Enforcement Directorate office we have been studying. In general, they are perceived as a group easy to deal with, "we find that the Poles, Bulgarians, Czechs, Slovaks, they tend to be sort of very co-operative, …they will actually be able to be removed within a day or two" (ISED 6 1998). Regarding legal immigration a Work Permit UK's manager stated "Poland at the moment, I think I've seen a lot of applications for Poles coming over" (WP UK 18, 2000). Poles are amongst the 63.000 'Other Europe' category of foreign nationals living and working in the UK, more detailed data is not yet available (Salt and Clark 2001).

The latest census counted the figure of Polish-born residence with 74.000, however, that figure does not give any reliable indication of the number of Polish nationals or Polish-born residents in the UK (OPCS 1991). Whilst the 'old' Polish community is identified with Chelsea and other West London boroughs, the settlement of newcomers is associated with North and East London (Camden, Islington, Newham and Barking) (Düvell 1998).

Media coverage occasionally focuses on irregular Polish workers in service, construction, food processing and agriculture (Channel 4, Panorama 30.9.1998 and again 7.10.1998). The stereotypes that such reports transmit are those of a group of migrants identified with irregular work but otherwise nothing-to-worry about nationality.

From the economic boom in the 1970s well into present days British economy developed some economic links with Poland initially in coal and steel trade, later followed by textile and food processing. Meanwhile, the UK is Poland's fifth largest trade partner and comes sixth in foreign direct investments (EBRD 2001, PAIZ 2000). This also developed into some political-cultural links. Although chain migration occurred within each historical cycle there are no hints for chain migration between the main three distinct migration cycles. Only the third and fourth phase in the 1980s and 1990s could include such features,

but no research is available on that. Such features and our previous research rather indicate the potential for the development of a historically, culturally, politically and economically based migration system (Sassen 1996, Stalker 2000) and of migration networks (Boyd 1989, Fawcett 1989).

2. Methodologies and fieldwork

By and large, the project applied qualitative empirical and analytical methods, such as narrative interviews, game theory and identity theory (Oakes et al. 1994). It follows another pioneering work (Jordan and Vogel 1997), that identified a range of 'accounts' and 'repertoires' used by migrants to conceptualise their decisions.

A Polish interviewer conducted all interviewees with undocumented migrants, with the business visa applicants and with a work permit holders, though most work permit holders have been interviewed by the researcher. The interviewer has had access to Polish immigrants in East London through her employment as a health advocate and translator for a solicitor firm. But also a Polish priest had been approached and churches and other meeting places visited to identify interviewees. In this way, several key agencies and key persons in community have been relevant to identify initial interviewees (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). Further interviewees had been identified through snowball sampling. Furthermore, quotas have been specified to ensure the inclusion of key theoretical variables such as age, gender, immigration status, and length of residence (Stein 1981; Leiberson 1996). In that the methodology follows the concept of theoretical sampling. The combination of gatekeepers and quotas, an approach which has been used successfully by others (Bloch 1996), ensured first, that the data collected is more rigorous than is usually the case with research with refugees and asylum seekers and second, that the patterns which emerge from the data are more meaningful in particular to the Polish undocumented migrant workers population as a whole.

However, after six month of using every contact it proved to be unsuccessful to identify Polish work permit holders, these were not known to anybody within these immigrant networks. At the point of realising that work permit holders cannot be identified by the usual strategy it was decided to seek the assistance of Work Permit UK. A process was agreed on to establish contacts between the researchers and businesses and their Polish work permit holders. The mechanism chosen was that Work Permit UK would randomly choose their data base for a numbers of businesses to ask them for approval in co-operation in this matter. This was necessary to operate in conjunction with Data Protection Act and rules of confidentiality, which restricts the passing on of applicants' data on to third parties. About half of the businesses replied, and agreed to take part in the research. Thus four Polish work permit holders have been identified and another one through chain referral. They were working for separate businesses, mostly outside London in small towns identified with the UK's booming IT and service industry.

The sample consists of 25 interviews conducted in 1998 and 10 interviews conducted in 2001. Regarding immigration status, of the 35 Polish interviewees, 28 have been undocumented, four have been work permit holders and three business visa applicants. However, Poles show a considerable degree of status switching. Additionally, nine of the Poles kept coming and going, four made several trips. Polish interviewees are equally distributed in both sexes.

3. Immigration and stay strategies

As we learned from previous research Polish undocumented immigrants rely on the particular shadow economy of East London and the agriculture around the metropolis, such as Kent, Cambridgeshire or Sussex. They also rely on the infrastructure of Polish information brokers and Polish houses (Jordan and Düvell 2002). In contrast, as explained it proved to be impossible even to a well connected Polish interviewer to identify Polish work permit holders. She argued that it would have been easy to interview a hundred undocumented immigrants but even after 6 months of exploiting every possible channel such as community centres, churches, community networks, Polish businesses or hospitals' personnel not one single work permit holder could be found. From our fieldwork we found that Polish work permit holders are not known to these networks and vice versa that these networks obviously are not approached by work permit holders. It was interesting to find why that is.

Through conversation with Work Permit UK we have already understood that Polish work permit holders are not necessarily employed by London-based businesses, just the contrary, they are, as other work permit holders spread across the country. Those legal Polish professionals based in London apparent form a small separate cluster and network. That is supported by the embassy, which hosts a regular round table meeting. Therefore such professions could not have been identified through the main migrants or community networks.

3.1. Polish undocumented immigrants

Polish undocumented immigrants provide for a case study into individuals who break immigration rules to travel to a particular city (London). There are two factors that make the lives of irregular migrants – those without proper immigration status, either to be present, or to be working – more difficult than those of citizens or legal entrants. The first is that they have to remain invisible to the immigration authorities and (presumably) to other officials concerned with law enforcement, and to citizens and legal residents who might perceive them as harmful in some way to their interests. The second is that they have to live without the support of those institutions designed to sustain the lives of lawful members of that society, including welfare systems, regulatory bodies and agencies for the protection of persons and property.

We therefore tried to learn why they did come despite clear immigration regulations; how they managed to enter the UK; how they were able to get employment; and how they were able to stay in irregular employment and in the country, hence how did they evade detection. Additionally, we tried to understand which factors did influence their decisions and which features did support this way of living.

First, we tried to learn why they actually come. All but one basically gave straightforward workers' accounts for migrating, in which it was taken for granted that the UK offered wages and employment that were absent in Poland. A typical answer would be:

'We came to England to earn money' (2: 1)[4].

'cause it's obvious that there aren't such jobs that you could earn money in Poland. My dream is to build a house in Poland, to buy a new car. …It's common knowledge that in Poland it doesn't matter how much you work, you would never earn this kind of money' (8: 1).

As expected, these have been the reason for particular choosing the UK. Most Polish interviewees built into their accounts the assumption that work prospects and earning opportunities were extremely limited in their home country ('a disaster' - 9: 4) and that experience of working in London would be helpful rather than damaging for their longer term prospects. However, some also gave accounts in which travel or learning played a significant part in shaping their migration stories. The latter is explained by the generally good education background, most had at least finish secondary school, and reflect further education aspirations.

In order to understand decision making Stark suggests 'placing the family rather than the individual at the centre of the migration decision', taking it as the decisive unit or coalition of which the individual migrant is a member (Stark 1991: 5). Our research however, cannot fully verify this. Some Polish migrants discussed matters with their family but most did not, for example single mothers, single or divorced men and women, or young students. They appeared to be individual agents on their own rather relating on their networks and social capital (see below).

Another reason for choosing the UK, was that there are no visa requirements, 'you don't need visas to England any more, so it makes it much easier to come' (25: 1). Some Polish undocumented immigrant workers are aware of the situation in other potential destinations or had immigration experiences with staying in another country. Those who compared their opportunities with those in other countries did so rather within the framework of immigration control matters than in relation to labour market opportunities.

'Because you can feel and be free here. Not like in Germany. That is a country based on a police regime. You see I had been to Germany before; the police would stop you everywhere and ask for your passport and ask a lot of questions about you: what you were doing there and so on. You had no problems entering the country but then it would start, you would be watched everywhere' (13: 1).

Because the UK implements immigration control primarily through checks at the point of entry, those arriving in the country faced the moment of maximum jeopardy for their plans to migrate to London when they reached the border. Most interviewees had contacts (either family or friends) to advise and ease their entry to the UK (20 out of 25). The great majority of them were prepared for this moment, had rehearsed the story they would tell immigration officials, and had made sure that their luggage and personal effects were consistent with it.

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[4] Numbers in brackets refer to number of interview.

'She (a friend) also gave us some instructions what to say to the Immigration Officer at the port of entry; that we were students, that we were coming to see some interesting places in England, and we had about £300 to show at the port of entry, so we were prepared' (16: 1).

Undocumented migrants from Poland all tended to come as tourists and to use the same route – the bus – but had two strategies. The most reliable was an invitation from someone in the UK, of these five had letters from a family member (three were to be carers), and five more from friends. Other introduced themselves as tourists.

'I talked, using my poor English, showed him my passport and letter inviting me, and I smiled at the Immigration Officer and showed them my small travel bag and said that was all I had with me. Finally I got my passport stamped and I had a six-month visa' (22: 1).

'When I came here the first time I came with a tourist trip. The other two times I came with invitation letters and had no problems entering the country' (21: 2).

'It needs someone who would agree to write you an invitation or confirm over the phone that they are waiting for you if the Immigration Officer has any doubts' (25: 5).

Some complained that they had been questioned intensively but managed to mislead the immigration officer.

'When I came here for the first time they interrogated me like some bandit, literally. I was nervous. They asked me thousands of questions. …They took me to some special room, …it lasted for about two hours' (7: 5-6).

Only one (3) mentioned false papers, she came to the UK, her attempted deceit was spotted and she was sent back to France. In Calais, she met a man who offered to get her to the UK for £200. She joined a party of French tourists with a borrowed passport, which she returned after getting through immigration control. Others, however, reported that large proportions of bus passengers have been denied entry.

'When our coach arrived in Dover it was only 7 out of 50 people who were allowed to enter the UK' (13: 1).

All but one had some sort of contacts in the UK which encouraged and support them to come. But in terms of social capital these seemed to be rather weak compared with findings from Mexican-US migration strategies (Espinosa and Massey 1997), where first time migrants have about two contacts, and second time-migrants have contacts equivalent to four immediate family ties. In the Polish context they mentioned two parents, five uncles and aunts, and one cousin as initial contact. Otherwise there were six friends, three friends of others and such dubious contacts as boyfriend of neighbour (13) or English teacher from Poland (5). However, most could obtain information about UK and survival strategies from contacts in Poland. And also there is not much risk involved in terms of physical damage, therefore less social capital seems to be acceptable. Three mentioned either contact with the post-war immigration community (7, 20) or a 1980s refugee (23), verifying that there is

some but not much of a chain migration or migration networks stemming from earlier migration processes.

Undocumented Polish immigrants in order to manage their survival and stay relied on a distinct informal network and small commercial systems of partly underground institutions. These range from 'Polish houses' – Polish owned, run and populated premises – Polish corner shops as a source of information, Polish sub-contractors as a source of getting employment to brokers, who provide them with information, with National Insurance numbers or jobs.

> 'The owners, a Polish couple staying here illegally, rent a house and then rent the rooms out to other Poles. And this couple – the man worked at a building site and anyone who lived at their house had to work either at a building site with him, or in that textile factory she was in contact with. So that was their way of getting tenants; finding people work as well as guaranteeing that people had money to pay their rent' (8: 5).

However, staying in the UK was less of a theme than repeated entry. Returning home for a period, for a holiday or to give birth to a child and starting again – often with a new passport – were the main strategies described. Several said that they had come for three or four trips.

> 'I simply was given six month visa every single time I went to Poland and back with a stamp 'employment prohibited'. I have always worked illegally. Six or eight month passed by, I went back to Poland and was coming back here with a six month visa' (5: 8).

> 'I also considered going back to Poland and coming here again with a brand new visa. That's what most people do. When your visa expires, or just before that, you leave England, they don't stamp your visa when you leave the country any more, so nobody knows when you left Britain. When you come back in a week or maybe in a month's time and say at the border that you were in England about a year ago for a week, and now you are coming for a week again to visit your friends or family, whomever' (25: 5).

We also found evidence for return migration, some interviewees mentioned friends who have meanwhile left; others were replacing returning compatriots. That confirms patterns establish in research into undocumented Mexican migration into the US (Portes 1979).

All but one interviewee, a Romany asylum seeker, managed to get into employment within a few days of starting to look (most within a few days of arriving). The first employment was usually found within the framework of either Polish or Turkish and occasionally also at Asian or other foreign shadow economy. Only those who had well established Polish contacts could also get work with English employers.

Table 1. Poles, means of finding work

Recruited by friends or employers (when in Poland)	6
Through friends	12
Agency (one Polish)	2
Own search	1
Advertisement in centre or shop	4
Unemployed (Roma asylum seeker)	1
No information	2

Money, markets and exchange provide a kind of universal language for all kinds of transactions in the age of globalisation. Our Polish interviewees were adept at finding commercial suppliers of information, accommodation, National Insurance numbers and other important items, including employment. They represented themselves primarily as rational market actors, responding to economic opportunities and price signals, it was therefore no surprise to them to have to pay for information about jobs, for National Insurance numbers, and often for the jobs themselves.

'So I found a job there through a gypsy man, I had to pay for it of course' (23: 2).

'He bought the job from some bloke. He had to pay £50 for it. There is a trade like this, and it still exists − selling jobs. But I think that it exists only amongst Polish people, because I saw the ads at the [name of place where Polish people met]. "I am selling cleaning jobs"'. 'Poles don't help one another for free. Poles make money out of each other' (12: 2).

With the help of a few trusted friends from their own countries, and a small initial sum to pay for their induction into UK society, they could find their way through the shadow reaches of London's economy.

Getting into the country and getting into employment was often inter-linked. It is clear from seven of the accounts that the interviewee was recruited for undocumented work by family or friends working in England. One interviewee simply came to replace a returnee. Another, who was made redundant by her employee, was effectively transferred to a job in England.

'My boss offered me a trip to England to work. They were the ones who would arrange everything' (19: 1).

Another, who came on a tourist visa several times but only for short periods always worked for the same employer (21). Pre-arranged contracts were clearest in the case of skilled building workers, men who came to London to work on renovating old houses, usually for Polish subcontractors. They knew before they came that they could earn decent wages (£3.50 - £4.00 per hour, much more than they could get in Poland) from the moment they arrived, and had the contacts to do so. They tended to be older (in their late 30s or early 40s), and several had worked abroad before, but saw the UK as their best option. One respondent even had herself become a recruiter for his employer (11).

Staying in employment indeed included considerable upward mobility. Most of those who stayed were able to increase their earnings, by changing jobs or by being promoted. For

example, a man who started working in a textile factory for £2 an hour in 1994 was by 1998 working as a bricklayer's assistant for £58 a day (4). A woman who started on £1.50 an hour in a fish factory in 1994 was by 1998 earning £3.50 an hour working for a fish wholesaler (5). A man who started sewing in a factory for £2.50 an hour was earning £6 an hour in another textile factory less than 2 years later (11). A women who started washing the dishes made it to a computer operator, 'so in a way I have developed' (5: 10).

Being able to present a National Insurance number (NIN) is crucial to disguise irregular status, it is no surprise that there is a market for that. Five Polish respondents had bought or paid to borrow National Insurance numbers, one even from his employer.

> '…these Polish guys …said they know a guy who was selling NINs …I met him and I bought it. I paid £260 for it' (4: 9).
>
> 'We needed NINs to work there. The boss gave it to me. It belonged to some Spanish guy. Naturally I had to pay for it' (23: 2-3).

Narratives about evading detection show a range of experiences and strategies. Poles are less likely to mention risk of detection at work than by home visits of immigration officials or for suspected criminal offences. Regarding home visits it was feared that 'the Home Office might come here to look for somebody else and find us as well. You don't know what other tenants do. The police might be after them if they come and look around. We might be found out like this' (3: 11).

However, when interviewees were picked up by the police for suspected criminal offences, Home Office responses were usually less than dynamic or decisive. One man had been arrested when walking down the street, holding a piece of glass he had found in a nearby garden. He had dirty hands and was carrying the tools of his (building) trade, both indications that he could be either a burglar (the original reason for arresting him) or an undocumented worker. Having no further evidence to support the former suspicion, the police held him at the station while they tried to check his (manifestly irregular) immigration status. His account reads as followed,

> 'I said …that I had lost my Home Office paper, and that I had tried to go to the Home Office to get a replacement …I told them a different name as well …She [policewoman] said that she would check it, and she told that she would come back at midnight to see the passports. An officer came in and asked who that criminal was, pointing at me, and she said, "Polish glazier". …And she also said that I didn't have any papers, couldn't speak any English, so all I deserved was to be sent back to Poland. I said nothing at all. Finally she told me I could go home and I should go to the Home Office to get a new paper, and that they would come to check up on me after Christmas. And nobody has turned up ever since' (6: 7).
>
> "A policeman walked into XY burger. When I saw him for the first time my heart stopped, I didn't know why he was there. A policeman. But my boss was smiling and started talking to him, very friendly. And he introduced me as a new worker. And then we became friends. So it was a stress that passed very quickly' (5: 7).

These example shows how the stay of irregular migrants is related to inefficient implementation and cooperation between police and immigration authorities; and also to the relatively low priority the police gives to immigration offences (see Jordan and Düvell 2002).

As might be expected, these irregular migrants were conscious of the need to make themselves invisible, to avoid drawing the authorities' attention to them, and to be careful not to infringe against minor rules. Polish interviewees were either blithely relaxed or nervous, more by temperament and in general response to the environment than from specific information.

'I don't know if I'm so stupid, but I never thought about it. Because I thought no immigration people would get as far as [outer London borough]. So that wasn't a problem at all' (5: 7).

'Rafal [husband] is careful, when he goes to work. …After work he comes straight home. He doesn't go anywhere, to any pubs. We don't go out in the evenings. …We avoid situations, places, where we might be asked for documents' (2: 7).

In fact, as other interviewees were aware the possibility of being stopped in the street or randomly asked for immigration status was negligible in London.

'Here in England this is good that nobody cares if you have a work permit or not. For example policemen were coming to my restaurant and they never cared who I was, they never made me feel nervous' (27: 10).

What we had instead was massive evidence from Poles that denunciation was part of a culture of unrestrained competition among this group. Without any prompting by the interviewer, many respondents spoke of fearing denunciation, knowing others who had been denounced, or directly experiencing being denounced, even by family members. 'My friend's brother was deported. Somebody grassed on him' (8: 8), 'in the beginning we lived with my uncle. The one who eventually called the police on us.' (6: 1), 'Poles envy you for having something, for having a good job and so on' (4: 11), 'too many people looking for work.' (10: 5).

In order to regularise a stay, three means have been identified, applying for asylum, marriage and applying for a business visa under EEC agreements. One interview confirms, that there are cases where economic migrants facing a lack of a legal status draw to the opportunities of asylum in order to regularise their stay at least temporarily; and also to get over a period of economic hardship. Even asylum opportunities were in one case evaluated within the framework of economic opportunities.

'Darek (husband) had known about asylum for some time, but that evening he somehow realised that it would help us financially. You see it was difficult to make ends meet that time. He said that way we could rent a flat and have it paid and get some money to spend as well. That we would stay here for some time as we knew there was no chance to get leave to remain here. Why shouldn't we take advantage of that possibility? And that's what we did. I was on asylum for a year' (3: 6).

Regarding marriage, only two out of 16 married Polish nationals have an English husband and both are genuine relationships. Otherwise no indication for a strategic marriage have been found.

3.2. Polish business visa holders

All three business visa holders (one interviewed in 1998, the other two in 2001), came to London as undocumented workers, and used the business visa as a strategy for legalising their status. The man interviewed in 1998 had submitted a business plan to the Home Office, claiming to provide 'culturally-sensitive funerals for Polish war veterans'. He said that this required no capital, as all he did was supply a Polish flag and translation; the actual funeral arrangements were done by a British firm. He had not actually conducted any funeral – he was living from undocumented work as a minicab driver. One business visa holder interviewed in 2001 was an entrepreneur who had worked in the Soviet Union and the USA, and who had owned a building firm in Poland that went bankrupt. He came to London as an undocumented building worker, and his boss and former landlord had persuaded him to apply for a business visa. The boss had paid the solicitor for the work, and was deducting the £500 fees from his wages.

'My boss suggested I should do it to be here legally, to be able to go back to Poland any time I like, to have some rights. I will pay taxes; I'll have some rights. I got impression that he wanted me to apply for a business visa for his own good because he realises that he employs people illegally and he might face consequences. Whereas when I pay for getting business visa myself, he will be safe as well.' (26: 8 and 10).

Asked about his business plan, he replied:

'It's all fiction. I have never seen the my business plan myself. I don't even know what's written there. …I did tell them I wanted to be in the building game, but they know that' (26: 10).

The third interviewee had come as an undocumented workers, with her husband, who did undocumented building work. They both now had been accepted for business visas, and were awaiting their final documents from the Home office. Both were simply legitimating their previous work, and their 'business plans' were elaborations of this.

'I for example had to get letters from all the people that I worked for stating how many hours, what work I did and how much I got paid. Jacek had to do the same, because I'm not in his business visa and he is not in mine; everyone has an independent visa. …I think there is some requirement of how much you have to earn in order to be able to apply for a business visa so I'm sure the accountant stretched our earnings a bit so that we qualified, but that's the way it is' (31, 2001: 8).

She also emphasised how slow the process was partly because it took her five visits to the DSS office to get a National Insurance number (8), but also because of Home Office processes.

'And Jacek got his visa is six months time, and my documents got lost somewhere. I had to deal with everything again. … I remember the solicitor telling us that some of his clients have been waiting for over a year, some for even longer' (31, 2001: 9-10).

These examples have been given at some length, because they illustrate that the business visa strategy is directly related to irregular migration rather than to labour market recruitment through the work permit system. It also shows how UK systems that deal directly with migrants (DSS, Home Office) are far more characterised with delays and frustrations than those who deal with employers.

3.3. Polish work permit holders

The four interviewees represent a high-skilled and demanded section of the global workforce. Two were employed because of language skills and familiarity with Polish markets, but two were chosen because of their professional skills. Correspondingly, they represented themselves as kind of ideal typical rational choice agents and pure economic actors, as consciously responding to market signals and market laws. They reflected a concept of the world as a 'me and the market' relation; the 'who pays best' strategy has been accepted as central to their role as individual agents. An IT-expert explained 'you have to keep looking around and seeing in the way the market it developing, where the money is and what gives you the better perspective for the future' (31: 11). Job opportunities were identified all over the world, 'the first job offer was in South Africa' (33: 6); 'I had some job offers in Poland, but they weren't very good, and this job offer was very good compared to the ones I had in the country' (ibid.: 7). Consequently, they represented themselves as players in a flexible global economy:

'…we are not in the nineteenth-century economy where you are finding a job, …staying till the end of your life. It's, you are coming there for six months, three months depending on how long the job will last' (31: 12).
'We have people working in the US, Australia, France, so it's really global, …this is really a global company' (34: 1 and 7).

Although they argued that for them employment opportunities and earnings in Poland would be excellent; and calculating salaries against price levels they found that working in Poland would pay either they migrated to the UK for working. All argued with the lack of opportunities either of employment or as self-employed.

Migration networks were of some relevance, two interviewees kept contacts to school mates who went to the UK for working, 'I have a few friends that used to work, or were working in London, in different banks, and I knew them pretty well. I was talking with them on a daily basis' (33: 7). But two did not know anybody in the UK prior entry and contacts to earlier Polish immigrants did not play any role in their decision making. No-one did in any way indicate that their families played a role in their decision making, which is confirmed as non mentioned any kind of remittances. That shows that our interviewees act as individual agents. Otherwise, there are specific migration channels – head hunters,

business networks, company merger – that facilitate finding employment and the migration of Polish professionals.

Table 2. Poles, means of finding employment mentioned

Headhunter/agency	2
Result of business take-over	1
Approached by company	1
Own search/advertisement	1

The relevance of headhunters and business take-overs reveal two different mechanisms. The activities of headhunters show that (Polish) experts are actively searched for for posts on the global labour market; whilst mobility as a result of transnational companies taking over national businesses leaves the individuals as the passive agent.

Polish work permit holders too reflect a workers account, 'I earn money. That's what I'm here for; I'm here for money and for nothing else' (30: 2). Their strategies or rather explanations why they came to the UK varied. One only came because his Polish bank has been taken over by a multinational (33). Faced with the alternatives to either being made redundant or being transferred to another branch he opted for the later and had been placed at the London headquarter. It was also argued that working abroad is a feature or even career requirement in particular professions such as banking. He wants to go back as soon as there are opportunities for him in Poland. An IT-expert has been working all over the world, Belgium, Netherlands, Australia, Turkey, Italy and now he is in the UK. He worked self-employed or as a subcontractor but now appreciates being an employee with a comparably safe unlimited contract. Meanwhile, with wife and child he seems to be ready to get settled and thinks about where that could be. England may or may not become the last stop of his global mobile life. The forth has been a trainee with his present company in the UK, whilst he was a student. Afterwards, he started his own small business in Poland but when the opportunity came up to apply for a regular post with his previous UK employer he did not hesitate. One interviewee seeks to adjust to global capitalist working environment and add value to his human capital, '[to] get to know how it is working in …the real capitalistic country where you have to work very hard and where you are judged by the results' (33: 6-7). It is also part of their return perspectives (see below), 'in fact I have one friend who came here, worked a year and now he came back to Poland already, and found a job' (ibid.: 8). That – also reflecting a learners account - is a theme running through to all accounts, learning from working in an international environment, learning about the culture of a multinational business, building a network of contacts etc., has all been interpreted as improving human and social capital.

Dealings with UK authorities were mainly limited to immigration officers and to benefits agencies' staff. Pre-Entry-Clearance was not an issue as Polish nationals, they are not subject to visa requirements. In consequence, they do not have any dealings with the UK embassies, after having obtained a work permit they simply turn up at the border. However, three informants complained about what has been perceived as a longish, suspicious and therefore discriminating interview by immigration officers at the airport. In that they share some experiences with their undocumented compatriots.

'What I don't like is that when I come to the UK they ask lots of questions….What kind of questions are these? It annoys everyone. All my friends are fed up with it. And when my girlfriend comes here, it's not that she is maltreated but it's not pleasant that she is asked lots of questions, that she is questioned like a child: why, what, for what purpose? …But still the way they talk to Poles is… Well, as a Pole you can feel that you are not treated the way you should be treated' (30: 7).

'…they were really suspicious, I think that the way that the English immigration is still very suspicious' (34: 10).

One was irritated about the work permit procedure too, and complaint that he was treated differently than his Polish colleagues, 'there are three of us from Poland, they didn't have to supply nothing, and I had to supply lots of different things, so I don't know how it works' (34: 9).

Dealings with Benefits Agencies regarding NINus varied greatly. Whilst one employee did not even know whether he has got one because everything has been dealt with by his company, another had to visit his local BA office for an intensive interview but still after six month waits for the number to be issued (31).

One, who had previous migration experiences in several countries compared the UK work permit system with those of other countries. Germany was found impossible:

'I already signed the contract. …But the problem is that German law is saying that if anybody wants to hire people, this company …has to have a registered office in Germany …I couldn't find a reasonable way of sorting it out. So I just dropped it and went to Istanbul' (31: 6-7).

Also the UK regulations have been found too complicated, hence comparably less competitive,

'In Europe, when you are in Schengen countries, you can just travel freely, if anybody asks you can say 'I'm a tourist', yeah? But in the UK, it's not a part of Schengen and the customs is asking you stupid questions, …so I think that, because of this the UK is a bit more closed, people are not so keen on coming here. …It's much easier to go to Holland, Belgium or Italy' (31: 12).

Consequently, it has been argued 'I don't understand why the procedure is different in different European countries. It should be the same' (31: 23).

Strategies for staying and getting settled have been straight forward as all interviewees have been provided with accommodation and other benefits by their employers, 'it's an excellent service, …it's perfect' (33, p. 10). One even got a car (34); and two private health insurance arrangements. Such migration channels represent comfortable means for global mobility. Most Polish work permit holders then turn to migrants' networks, such as the embassy's monthly meetings. They form kind of a cluster in London, which is deliberately seen as different from the post-war communities. However, they did *not* intend to stay for good. An IT-expert only intends to stay in the UK for a year or two and then move on to another country, where his company has a branch. A banker argued, 'Great Britain doesn't appeal to me as a place you could stay till the end of your life' (30: 2).

Interestingly, all without having been encouraged by the interviewers spoke intensively about illegal work by themselves, their compatriots and mates. A stockbroker told how he financed his studies by working illegally in Germany. It is perceived an integral and undisputed part of his live story and is justified by final success and career.

'I used to work illegally in Germany; I went there and worked at a building site when I was still at High School, then I went again, I went to work because I had to pay my student fees. I had to work abroad during holidays; otherwise I wouldn't be able to study' (30: 7).

An IT-expert referred to inefficiency and regulations no longer adequate to serve the flexible markets as a reason for working illegally. 'Sometimes, nobody will wait for you for three months because the application procedure must be sorted out. So you either take the risk of working not completely legally until you are entitled to work' (31: 12). This reflects that also Polish professionals accepted illegal work as a natural, legitimate and necessary choice where no legal opportunities are available.

4. The immigrants' identities

The interviewees aimed to make sense of their experience by reflecting on their relation to UK society and its social fabric; to other foreigners and their position in a multi-ethnic society; to their position in society and to their gains. They asked themselves 'Where I am?', 'Who I am?', 'What I am?' and 'How I am?'. There were a few main themes running through Polish identities drawn from their experiences in the host country.

First and foremost, Polish migrants represented themselves primarily as workers and rational market actors, responding to economic opportunities. They relied on a rather small number of contacts, tended to build relationships on market forces rather than personal values and thereby tended to develop an individualistic identity. That is true for undocumented workers as well as for work permit holders. In the most extreme version a woman argued 'you are here to earn some money not to socialise with English people' (3: 10). They also proudly present themselves as competitive, 'I think that we Polish people have very good attitude to work. We know that we work abroad, that we have to show that we work well' (5: 4). In one case a man build his identity around his contribution to UK society.

'So why are Polish people put on the spot for working here, working hard for the money their earn? And they produce some goods here. For this country. I always ask "What would happen if all Polish people were sent away from London?" All the building sites would stop working. Who would work in London then?' (12: 11).

Secondly, they interpreted their host country quite favourably. Some emphasised the freedom their enjoyed, 'you see, when I came here from communist Poland I felt free here' (7: 3).

Others in-build into their accounts what they saw as English character and characteristics, such as 'more honest', 'decent', 'more pleasant', or 'more polite'. It became part of their identities that they were privileged enough to enjoy that.

Work permit holders by and large did not have English friends or socialise with English organisations or sports clubs. They either stick to their family or they meet with other Polish professionals. That shows strong individualistic identities and also the emergence of another generation of Polonia, the Polish diaspora.

> '…we stick together. We are a close group of five people. …I also went to a meeting [Polish Economic and Business Association], …There also is a 'list' on Yahoo where you can ask all the members of that group anything you like. …They all are Poles living abroad, doing all kind of things; …so here you go – that's your Polish community' (30: 5).

> 'I have some friends here, the guys from Poland, or the girls from Poland who are working, just like myself. I mean we just meet, go to a football match or the pub or whatever. So it's probably, there is not much different, difference in spending the time from what I had in Poland' (33: 11).

> 'Those centres [community centres in West London] are more for people who came here during the second World War or after the second World War and are living here. …What I'm talking about [meeting of Polish Economic and Business Association] is more like for people who came from Poland and work here in different companies' (33: 13).

Only a young single man from outside London, where there is no Polish cluster mentioned that he frequently goes out with his English colleagues (35).

Thirdly, undocumented Poles, foreigners they are in the UK were trying to make sense of themselves by exerting the framework of nationality and ethnicity. They were really struggling with defining their place in such a setting. Some expressed their irritation about the fact that they mainly met or worked with other foreigners. Part of their stories also showed an outsiders identity whilst their worker's accounts served to justify that. 'I haven't met any English people. I only meet Russians, Indians. I didn't have any opportunity to meet any English people. So you hear Russian all day long, nothing else' (10: 2 and 6). Polish work permit holders showed a completely different approach as they appreciated joining a multi-national staff. Working in such a globalised environment has been rather integrated into their learning and human capital concept. However, the concept provides for a whole complex set of identities ranging from

    (a) being victims of English discrimination ('Why are we treated differently?' (7: 5) to being bluntly racist themselves ('Every nationality is of a different nature. But Indian people are the worst.' (7: 9);

    (b) from critical distance from their countrymen ('It's terrible that Poles are like that to one another' (2: 10). to proudly pointing to what is perceived as Polish qualities ('I think that we Polish people have very good attitude to work (5: 4);

    (c) or from presenting themselves as outsiders in the UK context to appreciating the multi-national society ('There is so many foreigners here in London so it's not suspicious when someone is a foreigner and lives here. In other countries where there aren't so many foreigners everyone asks immediately is that person a resident here or

not. In here it's normal, people come, stay, live, work; lots of them doesn't speak English and it's normal (4: 11);

(d) in some instances, a Pole would throw his workers identity into the competition with other types of immigrants to justify his rights to do what he does. 'You know, they talk about Polish people coming to work here and at the same time they don't see Black people selling drugs. They don't see people who don't work at all, just drain English people's money. People waiting for political asylum. For example, gypsies who are here as asylum seekers' (12: 10). One man also combined his workers identity with some racism. In that he in the same time reflected some English work ethos and what is perceived as common sense. 'You see, you want to work and you can't and there are people coming from other countries, getting benefits, hanging around, doing nothing and the government pays for everything. They work off the books and that's supposed to be fair? And when you openly go and ask because you want to work and to pay taxes, you have work, you are a good worker and you can't' (4: 10);

(e) On the other hand one interpret their membership in a multi-ethnic, multi-national society in a positive way. 'I like that people are tolerant here. I like freedom, that you can be yourself, you don't have to pretend; if you are dirty you are dirty, if you are dressed up you are dressed up and you can't do this in Poland cause they would call you odd at once. Nobody is bothered by the fact that someone is culturally different. There is everyone here; Indian, Black, other nationalities. I used to live in Ealing and there were four different temples on one street and the children were playing together, they all went to different churches were dressed differently and they skin was of different colour as well' (20: 2);

(f) Another interviewee even revealed an emerging European identity when questioning discrimination, 'why are we treated differently? We are supposed to join European Community and what. We don't steel; we work honestly and very hard. We pay for everything' (7: 5).

Part of their identity seems to be that although they all rely on the particular market structure of social relations (including unrestrained competition for jobs and other advantages) they are in the same time ashamed of it. Some used that to distance themselves from being Polish.

'I don't really have much contact with Polish people because Poles are not kind for one another here. I prefer to have foreign, English friends than Poles' (4: 11).

'You see, it's better to work for English than it is for Polish because an English person treats you like a normal person. And a Pole takes advantage of another Pole' (4: 8).

And a women explained that that is how Poles make sense of the environment in the UK, whilst in Poland things are different.

'…soon after my arrival to England she told me that Polish people didn't help one another abroad, just the opposite they would try to make their fellow country men's life as hard as possible. …Other nationals help one another; they support one another, whereas Polish people are not friendly, not tolerant at all. It's common knowledge that everyone comes to earn money. If my situation in Poland were different I wouldn't come here. What for? To live at somebody else's places, to be humiliated. I'm sorry but I was treated very well in Poland until my work place closed. I was respected at work and I had to respect others. It was totally different and now it's very difficult to switch and be so dependent on others. It's terrible for me' (28: 5).

Another theme running through was how they managed to survive the risks and adventures of the underground, there were talks of Mafioso, of alcoholics (6), of sexual harassment or drug trafficking (3), being locked up and exploited (8), or troubled by crazy folks (11). Otherwise, Polish interviewees left few grounds for disappointment, because their accounts were so narrowly economistic, their aim from the start was to work and save. Some emphasised their success. Others would even not complain about low wages or obvious exploitation. They enjoyed presenting themselves as successful in that sense.

'I don't work as a finisher any more. As you can see I climb up; I work at a machine again doing pleats. But I still supervise the work of finishers' (11: 6).

'I don't think it's using people. I accept the fact that I have come here to earn money not for holiday so it's obvious that you have to work. Nobody will give you money for nothing. I definitely don't feel like being taken advantage of' (9: 6).

'It [job and payment] was good comparing with Polish reality' (7: 2).

'I don't feel abused working and living here. You see, it's my choice to work illegally and everyone knows what it means to work illegally. Anyway I think I have done quite well for a person who is here illegally' (11: 7).

Also their reputation back in Poland was effected positively.

'I went home for two weeks. …I had so many presents for everyone back at home. My sister called me a god aunt from America. I had a big suitcase of gifts for everyone. …I was so happy that I could get something for them from London' (5: 7).

Meanwhile, others gave critical reflections on humiliating conditions, their rank in the social hierarchy and admitted to themselves that they socially moved downwards, 'I am a person who graduated from university. I cannot keep hoovering all my life. I form here... Cleaners are the lowest layer, the lowest caste of working people' (12: 10). One man, who owned his own small sewing business in Poland, but was invited to London by a friend who promised high earnings, found himself sewing in a textile factory for £2.50 an hour. 'I could have earned that money in Poland; …I was shocked, well, very unpleasantly surprised. …I was terribly disappointed' (11: 2-3). Others too gave depressing accounts:

'We lived in a caravan, four of us there. There was no heating there, no toilet, bathroom or cooking facilities. It was only after a few days that we were told that we could use nearby bathrooms, which were very dirty. We had to phone and then someone would come and open these bathroom for us. The working and living conditions very terribly' (13: 4).

'It was very humiliating. I mean working for £1 an hour; I don't know who is paid so little; it really was very humiliating' (5: 4).

'He used and abused me' (27: 5).

One of the more cynical comments on how some Polish undocumented immigrants see themselves shall not be disclosed.

'But from English people's point of view I would never give visa to anyone. Seriously. And I definitely wouldn't give visas to Polish people. Everyone knows that they don't come to study or to be tourists here. …I don't think that out of hundred self declared tourists as many as ten really are tourists. We take people's jobs. We keep or even make the wages low. The standard of live is lower because of us. I'm not one of those people of course. Everyone is bad apart from me. But I'm sure that people like me do no good for this country, we are only cheap labour' (11: 9).

5. Comparison and conclusion

The interviews with work permit holders and business visa holders in comparison with patterns identified from studying illegal immigrants did not only allow to evaluate administration practices in the light of immigrants strategies but also offer a whole new range of migration patterns and challenges to existing analytical frameworks. What was most striking was, that the overwhelming majority of our interviewees who have been chosen for their participation in the labour market presented themselves as rational market actors, indeed they argued as if they have read rational choice theory before making their comments. The interviews expose shortcomings in immigration policy and also help to understand the game between immigrants and immigration authorities.

(i) The Work Permit Scheme

In course of the other parts of our study we found that the work permit scheme serves the UK based businesses efficiently and successful. In the opinion of their clients they are easy to deal with, approachable and client-friendly (Düvell and Jordan 2003). On the other hand, the Polish work permit holders too strongly appreciate that scheme. In their view the way it is implemented reflects that they are wanted and welcomed instead of being the applicants. They were not yet confronted with the downside of the system, such as breach of contract, exploitation, negligence, lack of training, unequal treatment and discrimination, as our interviews with their Indian counterparts revealed (Düvell and Jordan 2002).

(ii) <u>Undocumented migrants' strategies and immigration enforcement</u>

Undocumented Polish workers respond to clear labour market demands and to the incentives of what is perceived as good earning opportunities. They represent a, nevertheless, tiny proportion of the otherwise appreciated stream of visitors to the UK. There are established strategies to disguise their intents to immigration officials, however, only a proportion is successful but many are refused entry, too. Such immigrants usually find accommodation, support and employment through immigrants' networks and informal brokers. Employment is frequently waiting for them and there are well established channels into the UK's shadow economy. In immigration enforcement we found that the ISED knows pretty well about the variety of illegal immigrants strategies how to stay and how to evade detection, whilst on the other hand the immigrants too showed awareness of enforcement strategies and developed adequate responses (see Jordan and Düvell 2001).

In social security matters it does not seem to be the same.

'…there is a problem with National Insurance numbers; the key to employment is a National Insurance number issued by the Benefits Agency, and they've lost control over that, there are a vast number of these numbers in the system that are unlawfully issued.' (Interview 3, 1998: 7).

Meanwhile undocumented Polish immigrants explained that they tend to use NINs of legitimate members of their community, either borrowed or bought, but not so much falsified.

(iii) <u>Migration strategies and labour markets</u>

Studies into strategies of labour market participation of migrants of different status, different culture and ethnicity also must take into account the kind of labour market migrants enter. Migrants 'are not randomly dispersed across the absorbing economy nor are they all concentrated in one single labour market. Migrants tend to form clusters', there are specific patterns to be identified of the interaction between migrants and markets and specific features applying to each individual market (Stark 1991: 32). From the findings it becomes obvious that there are considerable differences between the ethnic niches that for example Turkish and Kurdish refugees enter; the open global labour market for IT-experts Indian work permit holders for example move on; the kind of internal labour market of transnational businesses employee move within; or the shadow strata of the UK labour market undocumented Poles make use of. That may become clear by comparing the two extremes. Internal labour markets have been understood as one within a company, where employees move from one branch to another, based in another part of a country (Johnson and Salt 1990). Meanwhile, with transnational companies increasingly moving staff from branch to branch based in different countries, the concept of internal labour markets needs to be reconsidered within the framework of the global economy (Stalker 2000). It is the market a company acts on that is globalised but its in-company labour market nevertheless remains internal. In labour market theory such employees would be labelled mobile workforce as they move within the organisational structure of the same company but in migration theory they would be labelled international migrants because border crossing is involved. And equally, in politics and immigration policy they would be taken as migrants. From the perspective that migration involves moving from one functional system to another

(Bommes 1999), these migrants remain in the same functional system, the businesses internal labour market, whilst in the same time they move from on functional system to another, the different national contexts. As one can see, there is considerable tension involved, which some of the interviewees actually reflected. Some intra-company transferees already experience hassle-free entry controls and appreciated that, but others still complained about treated the same way as any other foreigner (6).

Interestingly, irregular labour markets reflect some border-crossing but nevertheless internal structures as well. These are provided by migration networks, by friends and kin who recruit new staff across borders, and migrants vice versa often know in advance where they will find work and accommodation. Such structures readily integrate newcomers in existing economic niches build by previous generations of migrants, all together they represent migration systems. Migration systems combined with migration networks provide for the emergence of transnational communities including their internal markets for information, accommodation and labour (Pries 1999, Sassen 1996, Faist 2000 etc).

The other extreme however, is for example those Polish migrants trying to enter section of the UK labour market either from the beginning or as a step in their strategy of stay. In that case the labour market is in no way internal, the migrant rather aims to move from one functional system to another (Bommes 1999). Obviously, that involves far more uncertainties and risks than the other two types, even though the migrant also may well have some previous information about the how to do that and where to start from. It is no surprise that it is those migrants who do not need to travel long distances and who do not pay a fortune to get here find it acceptable to opt for this strategy, such as Poles.

(iv) <u>Migration strategies evaluated in the light of new approaches in migration theories</u>
'The decision for border-crossing migration is almost always realised within the framework of network structures of inter-personal relations' (Pries 1999: 33). Whilst this can be verified for undocumented migrants from Poland, the case of work permit holders is different. Whilst some did point to university mates or colleagues, who have already migrated to the UK, others did come without prior relevant contacts in the receiving country. They acted within migration channels provided by multinationals, by company links or by recruitment agencies. In this light, network structures and migration channels represent separate and alternative provisions for migration, sometimes adding to each other.

That also effects the kind of communities emerging. Undocumented migrants from Poland, pendeling between two countries and in the same time members of a new type of a migrants community in the UK confirm the concept of transnational communities (Glick-Schiller et all 1992). Though this is still a dual, two-country pattern, whilst the geographical space remains the same the migration pattern between two countries has changed. In contrast, Polish work permit holders, when referring to the networks they have, frequently refer to global contacts. That indicates a version which stretched beyond transnationalism. It spread about multiple countries covering a far larger geographical space and is transglobal.

(v) <u>Shifting immigrants strategies</u>
Interviews with Polish migrants, most of them irregular and business visa applicants in 2001-2 suggested that strategies have only changed in some ways in the three years since our earlier research. Getting invitations from friends, coming on the bus as a tourist, living in multi-occupation Polish houses, working in textile factories, construction, or as cleaners,

exploitation by Poles of fellow Poles, all feature in these accounts. Two aspects suggest a development of the systems by which those who have been in the UK for longer come to occupy new niches within immigration chains, either as brokers for new arrivals, or bridging with older Polish communities. However, it seems as if business visa, then a rather knew feature has been gaining relevance as a migration and stay strategy, whilst clearly work permit holders are a completely new feature for Poles, which is indeed interpreted within the context of avoiding an illegal status.

Regarding undocumented work brokerage 'buying and selling' jobs now seems more relevant than during our first study. Another new finding shows some links with post-war migrants and refugees. A man in his late 40s was living with a 70-year-old Polish pensioner, and also caring for another elderly man. He originally came as a tourist, with a friend who was working, and drifted into undocumented work in a restaurant. He met the older people through attending a church, one was providing very cheap accommodation, the other paying him a small sum for providing care (27, 2001: 8).

Both these cases seem to indicate a 'deepening' of the infrastructure of Polish social relations in London (the establishment of 'services' by Poles for fellow undocumented workers). However, these still exist within a culture of exploitation, resentment and unrestrained competition.

(vi) <u>Comparing documented and undocumented immigrants narratives.</u>

Other than one might expect, undocumented Polish workers are not in every aspect different from their work permit holding counterparts. In both cases they respond to clear labour market demands for the man power and skills they offer. In their narratives the Polish undocumented immigrants in particular show strong referrals to that, they explain fare more about the opportunities in the UK, than their chances back in Poland. In that, expressing the forces at work with the push-and-pull model, the pull factor seems to be the driving force in this game. Consequently, they show a clear workers account, they come because of the labour market opportunities and for the money. In both categories one finds individuals who aim to invest in themselves through improving their language or by working abroad. They reflect a strong preference for temporary stay and the strategy of coming repeatedly could be found with both groups. Polish undocumented migrants did often know in advance, as the work permit holders, where to work and what the conditions would be, as there are also developed channels into London's shadow economy.

Surprisingly, migration narratives, strategies and aspirations reflect some similarities. The main differences though are language (better with work permit holders) and skills-level (higher with work permit holders, though undocumented Poles show some examples of well-educated workers), human capital (higher with work permit holders) and social capital (higher with irregular immigrants).

A comparison rather points to the question why such individuals as yet are treated differently? In theory, that is because one category is acknowledged as shortage-skills workers and comes under the work permit provisions, whilst the other group is not acknowledged under any such provisions, though obviously the labour market demand is there, too.

(vii) <u>The migration experience and identity developing</u>

When it comes to the construction of identities Poles most clearly emphasise kind of 'whiteness' (Phoenix 1998) in order to construct some belonging to the UK host society. They do that in particular by drawing a demarcation line between themselves and what is perceived 'non-white' migrants and ethnic minorities. That however, did not safe them from a form of discrimination that Sivanandan defined as xeno-racism (Sivanandan 2001). Beyond that, one could say that irregular Poles carved out for themselves a kind of ruthless economic niche, in which they could get higher rewards the longer they stayed.

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