

*Structuring East to West Migration:  
A Case Study of Central and Eastern European Migrants to Britain*

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Focusing on Central and Eastern European migration from accession states to England, this paper seeks to explore how migration has been affected by global level socioeconomic and political transformations that have occurred as part of wider global integration. The study explores Central and Eastern European migrant's experiences of globalisation at a micro level. The argument in this paper seeks to conceptualised East to West migration as a structuration process: using the analytical categories of social structure and human agency, and applying the structuration model to explain the reciprocal influence of migrant's home and host societal structures in shaping their activities and goals (Morawska, 2001). The paper also aims to show that East to West migration is determined by market forces and that EU accession is used as an enabling structure by the migrants to regularise the already existing process of Central and Eastern European migration flows.

Key Words: Migration, EU Accession, Structuration, Globalisation.

## *Introduction*

Migration operates differently in varying opportunity structures, and the European Union's eastward enlargement in 2004 and 2007 can be seen as facilitating the legal regularisation of migration from the accession states<sup>1</sup>. It is important to acknowledge that migration from Central and Eastern Europe has had a long history. Most notably with the peak of Eastern European transatlantic migration to America between 1850 to 1914 (Castles and Miller 2009). This in part induced a pioneering scholarly inquiry into immigrants' adaptation in Thomas and Znaniecki's: *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, which ultimately went on to influence the 'Chicago School' of sociology (Burkpwczyk, 2006). During the Cold War era Eastern and Central European migration took on a new form as migrants claimed asylum as well as it resulting in inter-Soviet-bloc labour and tourist migration. Furthermore, the collapse of the Soviet Union created a surge in migration towards the West from former communist states. Therefore, as Garapich (2008) points out EU accession can be seen partly as an enabling structure that legitimises already established flows of migration.

Nonetheless, EU enlargement on 1 May 2004 allowed immediate access to the British labour markets, to all citizens from the new Accession eight countries. In the first year 345,000 accession eight countries migrants registered their employment under the Worker Registration Scheme. Research by Anderson et al. (2006) 'estimated that up to 30 per cent ha[d] been in the UK prior to 1 May 2004' (p.2). Those migrants that had been in the UK preceding EU enlargement often used enabling resources as a way of maintaining their stay in Britain. These could include: working as self-employed, enrolling on a course to obtain a student visa or simply staying here as an illegal resident (Anderson et al. 2006).

The differential capacity structures have to enable and constrain human agency and the interdependency that exist between them, have an important role in the process of migration and the pursuits of migrants. The analytical categories of social structure and human agency will be used to conceptualise the East to West migration as a structuration process. The paper draws upon the empirical findings of eleven semi-structured qualitative interviews and utilises the structuration model as an explanatory tool to frame the data. The interviews were conducted in 2009, the twenty year anniversary of the collapse of communism.

## *East to West Migration*

### *The Collapse of Communism*

The Soviet Union dominated much of Central and Eastern Europe between 1945 to 1989, (with the exception of Yugoslavia in Tito's 1948 break with the USSR) and partly explains why so often the countries are referred to as a single unit. Of course no one is denying the vast differences in history, culture and traditions that exist between them, but there is a common history experienced by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that can justify the treatment of them as a whole (Swain and Swain, 2003). After 1989 Central and Eastern Europe were rapidly integrated into the global economy. Yet between 1945 and 1989 central and Eastern Europe were

<sup>1</sup> Central and Eastern European 2004 eight accession states include: Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic, and two more countries in 2007: Bulgaria and Romania (Barysch, 2006).

run by Soviet-led communist parties. Volgyes (1995) states ‘The birth and the demise of European communism were two of the most important political events of the twentieth century’ (p.1). In 1956 the Warsaw pact was signed enabling the Soviet Union’s complete rule and authority over the whole of the region (Swain and Swain, 2003). Soviet communism created a homogenous population with similar values, attitudes, behaviour and expectations that differed from those in Western Europe (Curry, 1995).

The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the collapse of communism in the early 1990s ended the 40 year cold war. Hardy (2009,) claims that the transformation of Central and Eastern Europe in the early 1990s should not be seen as a move from communism to capitalism, but should instead be interpreted within the wider processes a global economic integration. The collapse did not only create new political and economic relationships, it impacted directly upon migration flows. The collapse of communism not only brought about a series of regional conflicts which created flows of Central and Eastern European refugees to the west (Gould, 1994) it also added some 20 million people to the international migration scene (Massey and Taylor, 2004). The majority of the population of Central and Eastern Europe had been isolated from the global market for over 40 years and now faced unrestrictive travel.

### *EU Enlargement and its Migration Patterns*

The enlargement of the European Union to the East in May 2004 and again in January 2007 brought with it new patterns and forms of migration. The UK allowed citizens from eight Central and Eastern European members the Accession Eight (A8) states unrestricted access to its labour market. A8 included; the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia and Slovenia. Romania and Bulgaria however underwent EU accession in 2007 but have been excluded from the same labour rights (Garapich, 2008). The EU’s eastward enlargement brought one of the largest single waves of migration ever experienced to the UK. At its peak, the allocations of National Insurance Numbers (NINO) showed that an estimated 111,000 NINO were issued to A8 for the first quarter of 2007. The Annual Population Survey (APS) figures also show that for the year 2011 A8 citizens accounted for 872,000 (42%) of the 2,081,000 EU citizens living in the UK (Silva, 2012).

Favell (2008) argues that previous postcolonial theories of migration and settlement and ethnicity and race are outdated and ineffective in analysing the new migration movements in Europe. These new migrants are not subject to the same colonial histories, discourses of civilisation and the oppressions of racial ‘distinctions’ that other ‘subordinate’ voices have had to break with. The new East to West migration in Europe should be theorised and interpreted in its own right. As Favell (2008, p.711) states: ‘Because of EU enlargement, the European migration system is probably the most dramatically evolving and changing context of migration in the developed world’.

The European Union’s accession has meant that the British labour market has been opened up to allow people to come and go as they choose. This has facilitated temporary and multiple migrations. Migration strategies of Central and Eastern migrants are configured by immigration regulations and labour market structures. Often migrants develop multiple strategies in pursuing new employment, educational opportunities and family relationships. Research carried out by Ryan et al. (2008a, 2008b and 2008c) on Polish migrants highlights the contradictory aspects of EU membership. EU eastwards accession facilitates ‘commuter migration’ (Morokvasic, 2004 cited in Ryan et al. 2008, p.6) but at the same time EU citizenship promotes permanent migration. There are now a variety of strategies that migrants have used to developed transnational networks through the enrolment of the migration industry including

agencies, lawyers, recruiters (Garapich, 2008)<sup>2</sup>. Complex family structures have often resulted in many Central and Eastern European migrants becoming uncertain about whether their stay is temporary or permanent (Ryan et al. 2008c). Research by Ryan et al. 2008c also illustrates the increasing normalisation of migration for Polish people. It revealed that often Polish migrants make little preparation when coming to Britain. Many arrive with a limited if at all any knowledge of the English language in an unfamiliar environment in which they either make their own arrangements for accommodation or have to rely on informal networks or migration agencies.

### *Global Integration*

Migration needs to be analysed in terms of the asymmetrical interdependency and internationalisation of nation state's economic functions. Contemporary East to West migration has occurred in a more intensified era of economic globalisation and is often subjected to the continuous push and pull of global market conditions. In today's global world, 'nation states' are increasingly interlinked and no longer experience the same spatial and socio-cultural boundaries they once did. The globalisation of industrial production has resulted in the growth of foreign direct investment, transnational corporations, trade liberalisation as well as a transformation in political economy (Held and McGrew, 2002). No more were these social political shifts more apparent than with the decline of the bi-polar super-power system dominated by the USA and the Soviet Union by the end of the 1980s. Post-communist Central and Eastern European migration to the West is characteristic of the broader global, economic and political restructuring that have occurred because of the transition from a communist to capitalist system and hence wider integration.

By the early 1990s Central and Eastern European countries were undergoing rapid integration into the global economy. The communist's economic reliance on heavy industrial development based on state or "public" ownership became increasingly outdated in a world experiencing a global electronic revolution. Its economic system simply could no longer compete in the era of globalisation (Volgyes, 1995). The transformation in post-communist countries were underpinned by neoliberal policies and soon the effects of widespread privatisation, foreign direct investment (FDI), budget cuts in public spending and decentralisation of state responsibility began to be felt (Hardy, 2009).

The consequences for Central and Eastern Europe's integration into the global market have been similar to the consequences for other less powerful countries. Since the 1990s Central and Eastern European countries have adopted the rules and conditions imposed upon them by the EU's body of law and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the prospect of EU and NATO membership (Swain and Swain, 2003, p.235). The conditionality of EU membership required the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to undertake a pre-accession strategy with prominence placed on neoliberal restructuring of Central and Eastern Europe. EU targets in the reduction of public sector deficits meant Central and Eastern European countries have drastically reduced their public spending, and the decentralisation of state controlled social policies and welfare have been particularly hard hit, creating a growing polarisation of income and wealth (Hardy, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Garapich (2008) writes extensively on Polish migration to the UK and the development of the migration industry. The migration industry are profit-driven institutions and a specific sector of the service economy that encourages mobility and facilitate adaptation.

Central and Eastern European migration flows to the west have not emerged in a vacuum. Migratory movements within the EU are determined by today's global economy characterised by the expanding free market (Massey and Taylor, 2004). Central and Eastern European migration should be seen as a continuing process of broader economic integration that was evident before EU enlargement. The collapse of the Soviet Union transformed the organisation of Soviet satellite societies in which millions of workers were displaced from their jobs in previous state-run industries resulting in a wave of international migration towards the West (Massey and Taylor, 2004). As Garapich (2008, p.736) states: 'Our preoccupation with the phenomenon shows a change in perception rather than a qualitatively different reality on the ground'. Britain's ruling to allow unrestricted access of A8 countries to its labour market in fact only regularised an existing migration flow.

### *Structuration*

#### *Structuring Migration*

Morawska's *Structuring Migration: The case of Polish Income-Seeking Travellers to the West* (2001) uses the structuration model as an explanatory framework for East to West migration. Morawska (2001) incorporates the structuration model with Massey et al. (1998) *World in Motion*. Massey et al. (1998) theoretical analysis on international migration argues that any understanding of international migration should include the analysis of macro and micro-level structures.

The theory of structuration was first introduced by Anthony Giddens in the early 1970s but is most significantly associated with his 1984 work: *The Constitution of Society*. Structuration theory accounts for the relation between two processes: the subjective powers that human agents draw upon to shape their social world through their individual actions and the objective powers of structures that human agents are themselves reshaped by. Giddens perceived an interdependency between the objective constraining social structures and the subjective power of the agency and therefore rejects dualism (Parker, 2000). Structuration theory argues that social structures are enveloped in action. Structures are not just constraining and objective to agency; the structure's very own existence is dependent upon the subjective power of agency to produce, reproduce or even change the structure (Craib, 1992, p.112). Therefore, structures can be both enabling as well as constraining.

This paper's research extends Morawska's (2001) Structuration approach to migration to an area which Morawska argues does not receive the attention it deserves. Yet it also reveals the localised effects of globalisation upon central and Eastern European countries (Morawska, 2001). The global structures of socioeconomic, political transformations and the national structure of migration policies impact upon the level and direction of migration flows. However, agents also draw upon their knowledge of schemes and their sociocultural resources which they apply to new situations.

The conception of social structures as rules and resources is one of the key elements of Structuration theory. The actors draw upon their 'practical consciousness' in order to use structures as rules and resources. The enabling and constraining power of the structures is however dependent upon the agents' power to use the structure. The power in turn is dependent upon the agent's knowledgeability about how to draw on the structures and that knowledgeability is past dependent (Parker, 2000, p.59). Rationalisation of action involves the knowledgeability of agency. This is the unnoticed taken-for-granted knowledge (Giddens, 1984). It is the kind of

knowledge that people only notice when it is disrupted. When actors are faced with a range of ‘choices’ they use their ‘discursive consciousness’ to make a decision. This involves the capacity of agents to make conscious decisions and to understand their social conditions (Stones, 2005). Agents can also draw upon their reflexive awareness to help cope with changes. There is an emphasis on the human’s capacity to reflect and modify their behaviour, increasing the agents power to restructure themselves (Craib, 1992).

In Morawska’s (2001) research of Polish migrants to the West it is argued that post-communist migrants to the west draw on their Soviet-style orientations and practices in order to overcome otherwise constraining external structures as a means to an end. Human agency commonly adjust to new environments and different structures by selecting habitual routine responses that have been used in past actions and often formed in a previous system of the migrants home countries. This engagement involves drawing on their intersubjective schemas which are modified and informs the migrants strategies in pursuit of their goals. Agents ability to draw on these schemas and even reshape them when faced with a new situation or environment has the consequence of reproducing the existing social structures, albeit in a slightly altered form. It is important to understand the historical, political and economic conditions in which these schemas have been formed. The schemas that migrants from former Soviet bloc countries bring with them and use in their practices can be referred to as ‘so-called homo sovieticus syndrome’ (Morawska, 2001, p.55). These are practices which were used to often overcome a highly controlled system in which bending the laws of official structures were widespread in the popular attitude.

### *Methodology*

#### *Choice of Methods*

The paper does not set out to investigate a “problem” but instead has adopted an exploratory approach with very loose notions of what will be investigated. For this reason grounded theory<sup>3</sup> methods have been used. Grounded theory increases the flexibility of collecting and analysing qualitative data. Hence, the generated concepts which formed the base of the broader theories in the analysis of this study are ‘grounded in the data itself’ (Charmaz, 2006, p.2).

Semi-structured individual interviews were the main data collection tool. Each interview lasted between one and a half hours to two hours. All interviews were fully transcribed verbatim. In keeping with the grounded theory approach the interview transcriptions were fully coded. Charmaz (2006) argues that ‘coding full transcriptions can bring you to a deeper level of understanding’ (p.70). Coding using grounded theory meant that I did not start off by applying preconceived categories and codes to the data. Coding involved repeated interaction between myself and the data. Therefore, the codes emerged from the data.

<sup>3</sup> Grounded theory methods was first pioneered by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their book: *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Glaser and Strauss (1967) main concern was ‘...how the discovery of theory from data - systematically obtained and analysed in social research – can be furthered’ (p.1). Grounded theory methods advocated developing theories that were grounded in the research data.

### *Sampling*

A purposive sampling rationale was employed for this research project. The population required were migrants from Central and Eastern Europe who had come to live in Britain and were currently living in London or the greater London area. A convenience sample was also used due to the difficulties in accessing the population. In all, fourteen individual interviews were conducted with eleven being used for the majority of the analysis. All participants had migrated from EU accession states since the fall of communism.

The respondents are what is commonly known as Generation Y children. They were born somewhere between the late 1970s to the mid 1980s. They grew up influenced by the Cold War era and were in school (although at a young age) when the Soviet Union collapsed. They were educated in a period of transition often trapped between a crumbling communist system and the influx of capitalism. All respondents were in higher education or had recently completed a higher education course in Britain. Many had gone to university in their home countries before migrating to the UK and came from families where both parents had attended university.

It is important to emphasise the exploratory nature of this research paper. This paper does not claim to report the representativeness of the sample, its intention is to reveal patterns, relations and particular tendencies that were present in the interviews. The sampling rationale ‘aimed for theory construction not for population representativeness’ (Charmaz, 2006, p.26).

### *Findings*

#### *Globalisation*

In order to explore the micro world of the respondents it is important to understand its relationship with macro structures and particularly the collapse of the previous structures that influence actors’ daily routines and practices. The expanding uncertainties of macro institutions in a ‘post-communist’ Eastern and Central European meant that agent’s boundaries were subject to constant change. Many agents counter such situations by drawing on the previous order and creating symbols and language adapted from what is already known to them. It is crucial to acknowledge state-socialism’s legacies on the culture of former satellites of the Soviet Union. This is especially so when looking at societies that have undergone a recent transition in order to understand what impact the past has had on the macro structures of those societies and therefore the micro worlds of its people. This section explores the ways the interviewees absorb and rejected the impact of the new market.

All interviewees expressed a negative attitude about the previous regime and many were keen to point out the benefits of the cradle-to-grave social welfare system that previously existed. Tatiana, age 27 and from Romania, who is a doctoral student studying in England, acknowledges that under communist’ rule many people were guaranteed employment. During the interviews there was a large amount of resentment shown to the economic transformations that occurred in the respondents’ post-communist countries. The effects of global integration and the macro policies of privatisation and liberalisation were expressed through narratives of inequality, polarisation of income and increasing insecurity in the workplace.

Tatiana talked about the impact the collapse of communism had had on her mother’s and father’s careers; both worked as researchers in geology. She tells us that the Romanian government: “*could not invest in research anymore. I mean that was not the priority; the priority was economy, in '89*”. Her father, who had a very high position in Romania, was able to continue working for a

time without pay. His importance also made it difficult for him to be dismissed. However the situation was different for her mother:

It was easier to dismiss the, you know, not top heads. So she was dismissed, she tried to find another job, it was very difficult for us in those days, because my father couldn't help...We were living off my grandfather's pension. It was terrible financially.

Andrus age 30 from Estonia, originally came to Britain to work on a farm in Kent to raise money for his universities studies back in Estonia. He spoke about the employment situation for young people in Estonia in the mid 1990s. He believed that unemployment had increased and that the youth population were the ones who suffered.

Back home, being young, not young but the age of 17/18 for example...a decent paid job was nonexistent, I mean it was...a class divide anyway. It was a league somewhere and you know sub-levels of leagues all the way down to society and was like a huge mass of people who didn't know what to do and how to do it when the Soviet Union broke up, it was like five years' since Estonia had turned independent. I mean it was tough, quite tough at times.

Rapid exposure to the global economy led to an immediate increase in unemployment and full employment associated with the communist regime soon disappeared. (Hardy, 2009). Figures shows that in May 2004, when A8 countries had just joined the EU, youth unemployment was very high. Poland had the highest unemployment of all A8 countries, 39.8% of people under 25 years old were unemployed (Source: Compiled from Eurostat, 2005 and Eurostat, 2008). Barysch (2006, p.65) states:

Almost one-third of the 15-24 year olds in central and Eastern Europe are jobless, twice the rate of the EU (15)...In the larger countries – Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics – wage levels are 20-30 percent of the West European level.

The lack of good jobs and the increase in the polarisation of wages was one of the reasons Minka, age 31, came from Poland to the UK.

I felt that the effort I'm putting in doesn't bring me any outcome. I had a problem with finding a stable job, I had a problem with finding any job I would like, all the jobs I was doing, shop assistant, cleaner whatever, it was a very bad job, usually badly paid, extremely boring, so there was nothing to keep me there.

Tatiana spoke about the devaluation of qualifications on the job market.

Even like now, it has come to this point where I just recently found out from a friend when I was in Romania last month, that they actually put as a requirement in the, in the job ad for, for a desk clerk in a retail shop for clothing that they should have a university degree. They put that in the ad, right! That was the criteria for getting the job, of being a salesperson in a clothing shop. And not any kind of university degree, but in economics.

Morawska (2001) argues that the internationalisation of post-communist economies has increased Consumerism and materialism. In Morawska's (2001) example of Poland, Polish migrants involved in back and forth travels would often use their incomes earned abroad to project a western capitalist lifestyle. Yet this effect of capitalism upon post-communist countries often produced a response of revulsion from many of the interviewees. Dusana, a 27 year old art student living in London came over to England from the Czech Republic to work as an au pair when she was 19 years of age. Dusana spoke at length about the shock she feels when visiting the Czech Republic and witnessing the effect of marketisation with the increasing materialism of attitudes and behaviours. She believed people's material appetite had increased after the borders were opened and the population was exposed to brand merchandising and 'Coca-Colonization'. Most astonishing were the changes Dusana witnessed in her mother's consumption behaviour.

Even my mum now, it's really, really weird. Like my mum buys things because it's on offer, it's on sale rather than if she needs it...I guess in some ways they were in this for so long that they think well we deserve this now, it's completely twisted logic I think, they fall for it, the traps of capitalism, I guess in a way, having things, owning things. People borrow money to buy things for holidays, for new TV sets, for new sofas but before all those people would take care of the things for as long as they lasted. Obviously more goods are available because the border lines are open now and we can receive western goods. We wouldn't have any jeans before, for example, or Coca Cola and things like that. There was no McDonalds, no Burger King

The emergence of a manipulative and exploitative consumer society was expressed by Tatiana. Tatiana believes that employment in multi-nationals has created an emerging middle class earning higher incomes that had not previously existed under the communist system.

In Romania, changes are happening, so now there is high consumerism... It's like somebody just turned the tap on and people just cannot stop spending...once people started having money and having choice... this was the thing, in communism, you had money, but you had no choice what to buy, right. Now, they gradually started having the money to buy and they buy....People start earning money and they start spending and they build all these big malls and there is a whole new mall culture just going there and being seen at the mall and buying good stuff. The people start making gifts only brands and stuff like this.

For the two male respondents from Estonia, Oiev, age 30, and Andrus, age 32, the collapse of Soviet Communism and global integration has resulted in an increased informalisation and criminalisation of the economy. Both saw this increased criminalisation as mirroring western society and producing the inequalities associated with capitalism. Audrus tells us: "*You go there, it's highly developed, with skyscrapers and infrastructure and you know it's really cool and nice but deep inside it's a country in trouble.*" Oiev talked about how the growth of the informal economy has resulted in the development of social class divisions similar to the west.

In Estonia now, it's like people who had become rich as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, you know, they were involved in lots of illegal

activities but somehow they've become rich so... now they see themselves as upper class.

### *Migration*

By proposing the conceptualization of migration as a structuration process it's important to understand the role the EU has in shaping the flows and strategies of East to West migration. Migrants as other individuals and groups often evaluate their situations and adapt their strategies in pursuing their goals in different local and macrostructural circumstances (Morawska, 2001). It has already been acknowledged that East to West migration was in operation before the European Union's eastward enlargement. The collapse of the Soviet bloc as well as the demand for cheap labour in Western economies created a large reserve of undocumented labour migrants in the UK. Anderson et al. (2006) point out that before eastward enlargement; there were more Central and Eastern European migrants in Britain legally than illegally. However, many legal migrants were violating their visa conditions. Research by Anderson et al. (2006) revealed that twenty-two percent of the surveyed Central and Eastern European migrants in their study who were here illegally were on expired visas (p. 2). Minka, came here before EU accession and first worked as a self-employed decorator with her soon-to-be-ex-husband.

My husband started to work as a decorator, not officially because we had no right to work, we've been on a tourist visa. So I have to come back to Poland during the summer just to break the period of being here and then come back and when I came back they gave me only two weeks' visa so actually for the period up to May, August to May, I was here illegally. My husband had six months' visa again but without the right to work.

Minka's example also corroborates research by Garapich (2008) who points out that since the 1990s, self-employment schemes have been commonly used by Poles in London. Garapich states: 'In the years 2001-2004 tens of thousands of Polish migrants obtained the so-called 'self-employed visa" (p. 741). Hence EU accession simply enabled those Central and Eastern European migrants from the A8 states to regularise their status (Anderson, et al. 2006). Indeed many of the interviewees were here before EU enlargement. Research conducted by Anderson et al. (2006) also revealed that 'Three-quarters of the respondents [were] on student visas' (p.2). This was another method used by other respondents before EU accession. Andrus' coping strategy when he first decided he wanted to stay in London was to become a student doing various English language courses.

It was just a contract job for six months working on a farm but after we obviously went to London and find out about how you can extend your stay in UK and all that so the language college was just next logical step. So after we enrolled it was just literally go there, apply for a student Visa, find a place to live and find a job. It was like that.

Agency has the potential to transform structures in response to problems. Rather than migrants being completely constrained by visa conditions, they have the creative capacity to manipulate structural constraints and hence affect the social conditions of their existence. Migrants modify their coping strategies to changing situations. Morawska's (2001) gives the example of undocumented Polish tourist-workers in the United States. In the early 1990s Polish citizens were

granted multiple-entry visas for periods of six-month visits to the United States. Just as in Anderson et al. (2006) research, Morawska's example tells us that migrants often overstayed their visa, violating its conditions. In 1996 penalties from migrants on expired visas in the United States were increased. To avoid undocumented political status, Polish migrants simply increased their back and forth travel (Morawska, 2001, p.65).

The violation of tourist visas by Eastern European migrants dates back to the 1970s in which intra-Soviet-bloc vacations were used for large scale illegal commercial trading between the Soviet bloc countries. Furthermore, staying beyond the period of a work visa and working unofficially was also common place for Polish construction workers in Germany during the 1980s. As such this type of 'beat the system' behaviour from a previous era became a deeply habituated sociocultural "tool kit" which would become an operative resource used in international migration and everyday practices once the Soviet system collapsed (Morawska, 2001).

The incorporation of Eastern and Central Europe into the EU transformed immigration policies in the collaborating and receiving states. Again, macrostructures are used as a resource by migrants as practical evaluative knowledge of the destination countries. For Central and Eastern European migrants/immigrants already resident in Britain before May 2004, EU accession simply regularises their employment and resident status. For others in the (A8) Central and Eastern European countries, it provided an opportunity to migrate to Britain as Britain was one of only three countries to allow A8 accession states unrestricted access to its labour markets (Ryan et al. 2008).

Andrus's example supports the argument of Anderson et al (2006), Garapich (2008) and Ryan et al (2008) that becoming an EU citizen enabled someone already here to stay in London legally:

it's OK for us, because now we're in European Union but back in 2001 for us to stay legally in the United Kingdom you will need to have either a student visa or self-employed visa so we all went for college and student visas.

In the structuration model agents actions are influenced by structures however these actions can often end up having unintended consequences and hence affecting and transforming those structures in the structured-praxis process. Therefore, a once enabling structure can easily become a constraining structure.

For Tatiana, EU accession has been both enabling and constraining. Tatiana, who has to pay her tuition fees out of her scholarship money, tells us that Romania joined the EU in 2007, the same year she came to Britain to study. This changed her fee status from international student to EU student, cutting her fees by two thirds. On EU accession, Tatiana said, *'It was exactly the right moment for me...I wouldn't have been able to be here if Romania hadn't joined.* Nonetheless, after less than a year of Bulgaria and Romania joining the EU the UK government made a decision to impose restrictions for low-skilled Bulgarian and Romanian nationals and those who are not seasonal agricultural workers. This created problems in her plans for her partner to come to live with her in Britain.

After eleven months of open borders, they suddenly decide well, you know; let's put some regulations because this is not working. I had plans for my partner to come here...Now there is a huge complication because he had to find a job and going to school because part of the criteria for getting this permission to work was either you are a student like I was or you work in agriculture, which he didn't work in agriculture, or you have your own

business, which he didn't have. So, he had now, in order to come here, he had to enrol in a... to become a student so that he could come and get a job.

By Eastern and Central Europeans drawing on the EU accession as structures of domination, they engage in the process of its reproduction. In pursuing their life goals, they not only reproduce East to West migration, but change it. Hence, when the new regulations were introduced for the Bulgarian and Romanian nationals, Tatiana's partner (a Romanian national) simply used the same strategies that the previous A8 respondents used before accession in 2004 – such as becoming a student in order to obtain a visa. Therefore neither the structure nor the agent was given primacy.

### *Conclusion*

There is no doubt that the European migration system is continually evolving. Migration from Central and Eastern Europe have played a key role in changing the face of intra European migration flows. EU Eastward enlargement in 2004 and 2007 has opened the borders, facilitating circular mobility. EU enlargement and the British government's decision to allow unrestricted access to its labour markets was a legal move that legitimised the already-established flows of Central and Eastern European migrants. The research in this study revealed that the majority of the respondents were in fact resident in Britain before 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004. Many of the respondent's decision to migrate to the UK had been influenced by the increasing polarisation and insecure low skilled and badly paid employment that have occurred as part of wider global integration. Therefore, an analysis of this migration necessitates an assessment of the global macro-structural socioeconomic and political transformations that respondents are subjected to.

The interviewees displayed a large amount of insight into the interaction between their individual experiences, decisions and the historical changes of their 'home' countries. The interplay of self and society were shown through the narratives of Dusana from Slovakia, Tatiana from Romania, Minka from Poland, Andrus from Estonia, and so on, as we are told about the impact the social and economic restructuring have had on their everyday life in their post-communist countries. The stories included: the increased privatisation, development of materialism, to growing polarisation of income, rising unemployment and mounting de-skilling of labour. The ability for these individuals to understand their own biography as intersected with the larger historical scene, may in part result from their high level of education. The majority of interviewees had gone to university in their home countries before migrating to the UK, or were currently studying in the UK and came from families where both parents had attended university.

The differential capacity structures have to enable and constrain human agency and the interdependency that exist between them were illustrated through the respondents wilful goals and actions and the ways in which tourist, work and student visas were used (often violated) to prolong their stay in the UK. Interviewees told of the relief that EU accession brought in making their stay less complicated. However, once EU regulations were restricted for Bulgarian and Romanian migrants, respondents once again bent visa regulations.

This research was an explorative project which attempted to extent Morawska's (2001) incorporation of the structuration model as an explanatory framework for East to West migration to the large-scale Eastern and Central European that was occurring in the UK preceding 2008-2009. This wave of migration was viewed by the popular press as resulting from EU eastward accession. EU accession certainly offers one explanation. Nevertheless, it was essentially the social and economic changes in post-communist countries which occurred as part of wider global

integration that impacted on migration flows and a factor that played a part in encouraging the respondent's emigration. Ultimately, this small scale project has turned out to be a validation of Morawska's approach. However, understanding the problems of individuals and their intersections with history and society is one of the most important intellectual jobs of sociologists. As C. Wright Mills (1959, p.3) once stated: 'Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both'. In this case the adaption of the structuration model to migration does that. And most interesting was the finding that the majority of respondents actually possess the sociological imagination.

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