Volume 8 · Issue 2 · 2022

SOCIAL MOBILITY

intersections

East European Journal of Society and Politics

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:
Margit Feischmidt

EDITORS:
Attila Bartha, Ákos Huszár
Nóra Kovács, Zsolt Körtvélyesi, Bence Ságvári, Gabriella Szabó
Miklós Könczöl (managing editor)

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER:
Arin Agich

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT:
Andrea Demeter

COPY EDITORS:
Simon Milton
Chris Swart

Guest Editors of the thematic issue: Judit Durst, Ákos Huszár and Nóra Kovács.

Conference papers edited by Pál Nyíri and Biao Xiang.

PUBLISHED BY:

Centre for Social Sciences
Zsolt Boda
Director General

https://intersections.tk.hu
E-ISSN: 2416-089X

Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics is an Open Access, double blind peer-reviewed online journal. When citing an article, please use the article's DOI identifier.

Table of Contents

EDITORIAL

Ákos Huszár & Judit Durst
Individual success, collective failure?
The process and consequences of social (im)mobility in neo-liberal times 1

THEMATIC ISSUE: SOCIAL MOBILITY

Judit Durst, Zsanna Nyírő, Fanni Dés & Julianna Boros
Racial glass ceiling: The glass ceiling and the labour-market segmentation of first-in-family Roma graduates in Hungary 12

Zsuzsanna Árendás & Vera Messing
'I was told the position has already been filled': Barriers to mobility and coping strategies of highly qualified Roma youth on their way to the business sector in Hungary 41

Eszter Berényi
Social selection step by step: The case of the Early Selective Grammar Schools in Hungary 59

Zsuzsa Plainer
'Even if we are Roma, we are clean, respectful, and always went to school': Analysing the types, functions, and meanings of capitals that shape the upward educational mobility path of Roma in Romania 80

Krisztina Németh
Cosmopolitans in a farmhouse: Return migration and the adaptation of habitus through the lens of a homemaking process 100

Oksana Žabko
Giving (positive) meaning to downward and horizontal occupational mobility to maintain individual well-being 120

Ákos Huszár, Karolina Balogh & Ágnes Győri
Educational mobility at the top and the bottom of the social structure in Hungary 138

Péter Róbert, Nikolett Geszler & Beáta Nagy
Parental influence on subjective child well-being in Hungary 156

Svetlana Mareeva, Ekaterina Slobodenyuk & Vasiliy Anikin
Support for reducing inequality in the new Russia: Does social mobility matter? 175

BOOK REVIEW

Under the long shadow of working-class origins

Friedman, S. & Laurison, D. (2020). The Class Ceiling: Why it Pays to be Privileged. Policy Press & Bristol University Press
Reviewed by Zsuzsanna Árendás 197

CONFERENCE PAPERS

The re-enchantment of culture and flexible citizenship in a hardening world
Ideology and life strategies in middle-class migration to Europe and beyond

Biao Xiang & Pál Nyíri
Migration and values 201

Balázs Trencsényi
The enchantment of national culture in East Central Europe 207

Biao Xiang, Susana Narotzky & Pei-Chia Lan
Shift in drivers of migration: From economic accumulation to social reproduction and lifestyle consumption 211

Krzysztof Kardaszewicz, Fanni Beck, Anders Sybrandt Hansen & Andrew Kipnis
The role of children and parenting in migration 217

Stephen Davies, Matthew Hayes & Margit Feischmidt
The intersection of lifestyle and ideology in migration 222

Theodoros Rakopoulos, Sarah Kunz & John Osburg
Migration and the global middle class 229

Ákos Huszár* and Judit Durst**

Individual success, collective failure? The process and consequences of social (im)mobility in neo-liberal times

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 1–11.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.1046
https://intersections.tk.hu

* [huszar.akos@tk.hu] (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest)
** [durst.judit@tk.hu] (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest; UCL, Department of Anthropology)

Public dialogue about social mobility in many countries has recently been dominated by the myth of meritocracy and uses a neo-liberal vocabulary of aspiration, ambition, and choice, considering mobility as an individual project of self-advancement involving moving up in the social hierarchy (Lawler & Payne, 2018; Friedman & Laurison, 2020). Meritocracy suggests that whatever your social position at birth, society ought to offer enough opportunity and mobility for 'talent', when combined with 'effort', to 'rise to the top'. This idea is one of the most prevalent social and cultural tropes of our time (Littler, 2017).

In this discourse, social mobility is the new panacea for wider historic and social ills, and the answer to the increase in classed and racialised inequalities. This special issue aims to challenge this widespread public and political discourse by deploying the sociological perspectives of social mobility and asking how (upward but also downward) mobility works, how fluid our contemporary societies are, what mobility means for those experiencing it, and what the social implications are of 'individual […] success at the cost of collective failure' (Reay, 2018). As an educational sociologist and academic with a working-class background, Diane Reay (2013) argues,

> at the collective level, social mobility is no solution to either educational inequalities or wider social and economic injustices. But at the individual level it is also an inadequate solution, particularly for those of us whose social mobility was driven by a desire to 'put things right' and 'make things better' for the communities we came from and the people we left behind. (Reay, 2013, p. 674)

The papers in this issue are testimony to the theoretical stance that upward social mobility cannot be seen as an individual project but needs to be understood and analysed in the wider context of social inequalities (among others, Lawler & Payne, 2018; Friedman & Laurison, 2020; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2019). The authors tackle the topic of social mobility from two perspectives. The first group of the research papers measure and analyse social mobility processes using the conventional occupation and education indexes and the not-so-conventional 'soft' variables of the intergenerational transmission of parental capital(s) on mobility outcomes. Beyond these mainstream mobility studies, the second group of

articles consists of 'marginal research' (Lawler & Payne, 2018), or small-scale investigations that provide readers with insights into how upwardly and downwardly mobile people experience mobility when they have to travel through social spaces, leaving behind one class and adjusting to life in another.

1 The mobility problem

Social mobility in the most general sense means a change in the social position of an individual (or a family: Andorka, 1982) or, to put it another way, a movement in the social space (Bourdieu, 1985). Traditional intergenerational mobility research (using quantitative approaches) examines this phenomenon by measuring and then comparing the social position of respondents and their parents. Social position can be determined in a number of ways, including education, occupation, and income, but in most cases individuals are classified into occupational classes based on their occupation and labour-market situation. International social mobility research is typically based on the so-called EGP scheme (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1993) or the European Socio-economic Classification (Rose & Harrison, 2010). If someone is in the same occupational class as their parents, they are considered immobile, while those who are classified into another one are considered mobile. Mobility may be further broken down by the direction of change of social position: the upwardly mobile are those who move upwards in the occupational hierarchy, while the downwardly mobile are those whose positions change in an unfavourable direction.[1]

Mobility research also makes a distinction between absolute and relative mobility. On the one hand, the basic measure of absolute mobility is the total mobility rate, which shows the share of individuals whose class position is different from that of their parents. The total mobility rate is on the one hand determined dominantly by how much the class structure itself changes. If the size of different occupational classes changes significantly from one generation to the next, this forces individuals to move in the social space: they leave their class of origin and move to another class. A significant share of total mobility is therefore due to structural changes. On the other hand, relative mobility measures filter out the effects of structural changes and show the relative chance of individuals leaving their class of origin. Relative mobility, alternatively called social fluidity, is most often expressed in the form of odds ratios that show the relative chances of someone originating in class A moving to class B, compared to the mobility chances of those who originate in class B. Based on this relative measure of mobility, we can conclude to what extent the principle of equality of opportunity prevails in any given society (e.g. Marshall, Swift & Roberts, 1997; Breen, 2010).

Social mobility is generally seen as a positive phenomenon, although this is not always and necessarily the case. First, it is difficult to imagine or consider desirable a society where the mobility rate is close to one hundred percent. This would presumably result in a rather unstable social formation. Second, it is useless to have a high mobility rate if social mobility basically means downward mobility. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that upward

[1] Most research also uses the concept of horizontal mobility in cases when the class of origin and the class of destination cannot be arranged in a clear hierarchy.

mobility has or may have costs. Social mobility means that someone leaves their social milieu of origin and moves to another one. This movement in the social space, especially when it covers long social distances, may contribute to the deterioration of an individual's previous personal relationships and make it difficult to develop new ones, which can lead to loneliness, stress, and various forms of psychological strain (e.g., Sorokin, 1959; Durst & Nyírő, 2021).

It is much more of a problem if, on the one hand, the total mobility rate shows a declining trend due to a decrease in upward mobility. This would suggest that upper occupational classes are not growing and, as a result, the class structure is becoming more and more rigid. On the other hand, it is also a problem if relative mobility is low or declining. This means that, regardless of structural changes, there is little chance that someone can leave their parents' class position – i.e., that class of origin strongly determines the place of individuals in the class structure.

It is precisely these problems – the decline in upward mobility and the strong association between the class position of parents and children – that have recently brought the issue of social mobility back into the focus of social science research and even public debate, particularly in the United States and Great Britain. In Great Britain a parliamentary committee was even set up in 2011 to monitor recent developments in social mobility and to make related policy recommendations.[2] In Eastern European countries (and especially in Hungary), however, the issue of social mobility is on the agenda only sporadically and marginally, although it deserves much more attention based on the unfavourable results that are available and presented in this issue.

2 Inequality and social mobility

According to early, optimistic expectations, social mobility increases as modernisation and industrialisation progress (Treimann, 1970). With the dissolution of feudal constraints, the significance of parental background and other ascribed factors fades, and the social position of individuals becomes increasingly determined by their effort, especially by their individual achievements in a democratizing educational system. This implies that country-level differences in mobility are mostly due to differences in economic and technological development, but with the unfolding of modernisation countries will converge and these differences decrease. Economic and social change thus move in the direction of an education-based meritocracy (Bell, 1976).

Empirical research on social mobility has not supported this scenario. The results of different investigations are often inconsistent and even contradictory, but the thesis of a steady increase in social mobility cannot be supported at all.

In terms of absolute mobility, in the decades after World War II, the golden age of social mobility in the Western world, the total mobility rate – and within that the rate of

[2] Information on the work of the committee is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-commission/about. For the British debates about social mobility, see e.g., Blanden et al., 2002; Goldthorpe, 2013; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2019. For results on the United States, see above all Krueger, 2012; Chetty et al., 2014; 2017; Putnam, 2015.

upward mobility – indeed increased in most industrialised countries. Today, however, the situation has fundamentally changed, with upward mobility declining in most Western countries, while the proportion of downward mobility is increasing (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1993; Breen, 2004; Bukodi, Paskov & Nolan, 2019; Eurofound, 2017; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2022). This process is particularly true of post-socialist countries, including Hungary, where the total mobility rate has been steadily declining since the 1970s and where the proportion of downward mobility is also increasing (especially for men) (Andorka, 1982; Róbert & Bukodi, 2004; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2010; Jackson & Evans, 2017; Robert, 2018; Huszár et al., 2020; 2022). These changes in absolute mobility are mainly due to structural reasons. In the post-war period, an increasing number of positions were created in the upper segments of the occupational hierarchy that stimulated upward mobility (Ferge, 1969; Andorka, 1982). However, after the transition to market economy, this upgrading of occupational structure slowed down and polarising tendencies were observed (Bukodi & Záhonyi, 2004; Huszár, 2015; Huszár & Záhonyi, 2018).

Changes in relative mobility also do not support the optimistic expectations. Although some examples partly support the thesis of increasing social fluidity, others tend to highlight the high degree of stability of relative mobility. When there is a change, it does not seem to follow a definite direction, but rather seems to involve trendless fluctuation, which may mostly be explained by national characteristics and political factors (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1993; Breen, 2004; Bukodi, Paskov & Nolan, 2019; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2019). For instance, in Hungary social fluidity increased until the 1980s (with slightly different dynamics regarding genders) and Hungary was among the most open countries in international comparison (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1993; Róbert & Bukodi, 2004). However, in the period after the transition to market economy relative mobility clearly decreased in Hungary – similarly to in other post-socialist countries – and today it is among the most closed countries in European comparison (Róbert & Bukodi, 2004; Jackson & Evans, 2017; Bukodi, Paskov & Nolan, 2019; Eurofound, 2017).

Based on the traditional sociological approach to social mobility, comparable time-series results are mainly available only for the Western world. According to estimates, however, in a global context it is not surprising that relative mobility is highest in the Nordic countries, while it can be considered moderate in most European and North American countries (and, for example, also in Japan and South Korea). Among the countries with low relative mobility are primarily Eastern European (Hungary, Poland) and Southern European (Italy, Portugal) societies, as well as emerging countries from Asia, South America and Africa, such as China and India, Mexico and Brazil, and South Africa (OECD, 2018, p. 38). Thus, research on social mobility does not suggest that modern industrial or post-industrial societies are moving in the direction of an education-based meritocracy. However, there is growing consensus among mobility scholars about another issue. Namely, there seems to be an inverse relationship between social inequality and social mobility; that is, the greater the inequalities (of income, wealth, or education), the weaker social mobility is (Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2018). This is especially significant, because the American dream is fuelled precisely by the belief that these two are not closely attached to each other. That is, the latter involves the belief that although there is a significant distance between the lower and upper groups of society in the United States, this distance can be overcome by talent and individual effort. This belief has been strongly questioned by research findings of recent years. Among these, perhaps the greatest attention was paid to the 'Great Gatsby Curve', which provides empirical evidence

that countries with greater income inequality (expressed in terms of the Gini index), have lower intergenerational social mobility (measured by income elasticity) (e.g., Andrews & Leigh, 2009; Corak, 2013; OECD, 2018).

Another study by Hertel and Groh-Samberg (2019) that covered almost forty countries and used the traditional sociological approach of occupational mobility also concluded that the greater the inequalities between the occupational classes, the lower the level of relative mobility is.

In this context, the policy relevance of social mobility research is particularly important. Educational systems are often referred to as the main channel for promoting social mobility. Accordingly, it is also education systems that are typically criticized because of the low degree of social fluidity and their failure to eliminate initial inequalities but rather to contribute to their reproduction. However, these expectations about education systems are exaggerated, and the greater the social inequalities that should be eliminated, the more illusory they are. In fact, education-related policy instruments have limited capacity to promote social mobility or equality of opportunity, but those that aim to reduce pre-existing inequalities may be much more effective. As Anthony B. Atkinson puts it:

> Inequality of outcome among today's generation is the source of the unfair advantage received by the next generation. If we are concerned about equality of opportunity tomorrow, we need to be concerned about inequality of outcome today. (Atkinson, 2015, p. 11)

3 Structure of the thematic issue

The papers in this thematic issue draw attention to the limitations of traditional, one-dimensional mainstream quantitative social mobility studies when trying to understand the factors that contribute to the rather complex processes and consequences of social (im)mobility. The research findings presented here cover the geographical area of some transitional societies in Central Eastern Europe.

Addressing the topic of education-based meritocracy, the study of Judit Durst, Zsanna Nyírő, Fanni Dés, and Julianna Boros shows how the intersection of racial(ised) and class inequalities in the labour market offers insight into the fallacy of individualized explanations about the role of merit in social ascension. Drawing on 103 interviews with first-in-family (FIF) minority Roma graduates in Hungary, and using the lens of intersectionality, they explore the hidden barriers to career advancement for those Roma professionals whose parents do not have a degree. Their paper shows how the intersections of class and racialised differentiation (racial subordination) matter regarding which career one can occupy in the labour market. It illuminates why FIF Roma professionals rarely enter elite occupations and why, career wise, they tend to concentrate in jobs dealing with 'Roma issues'. It explores the effect of the dynamic interaction of structural hidden mechanisms and the Roma's response/adaptation to them that contribute both to Roma professionals' labour-market segmentation and to the phenomenon of the glass ceiling. The paper calls these two characteristics of the labour-market situation of FIF Roma graduates the 'racial glass ceiling'.

Employing a similar line of thinking, Zsuzsa Árendás and Vera Messing's article investigates the reasons for the low proportion of educated Roma in the business sphere; a sector which has the greatest potential for occupational and social mobility. They shed light on

a phenomenon that is also observed among other racialised minorities – the fact that many educated Roma individuals may formally fit job requirements, yet not succeed in taking up the related positions. In other words, they explore how the upward mobility of a racialized minority works, especially through the lens of a sector which emphasizes 'merit' more than any other part of our society. Benefiting from a mixed-method research study that uses a survey dataset of educated young Roma and also relies on in-depth interviews with youth from the same group, the authors identify some of the main barriers to the Roma's employment in the business sector, despite their commensurate educational qualifications. Using a Bourdieusian analytical lens, and drawing on Friedman and Laurison's work (2020), they point out that individuals who belong to different segments of society (e.g. to majority or [racialised] minority groups) have different capacities to 'cash in on' their 'merit' and make full use of their 'talent'. The authors argue that despite having the necessary technical capital (formal education, diplomas, employment experience), companies often perceive young Roma as 'unfit' and 'not matching' their need for ideal candidates. The paper also elucidates different individual mobility strategies and the role of different forms of capitals, such as resilience capital, in the educated Roma youth's early professional careers. One of the authors' main arguments is that the Roma young adults' alternative forms of (cultural) capital often remain unrecognized and unacknowledged by employers in the business sector in situations of job-search or career progression.

Eszter Berényi's article also sheds light on the myth of (education-driven) meritocracy. Education is considered to be one of the most important channels of social mobility, and it is a key question to what extent the educational system is able to compensate for the inequality of opportunity experienced by children from less advantaged family backgrounds. The paper investigates to what degree the education system helps children from poor families move up the social ladder through their academic performance. The author explores the functioning of the education system in Hungary from this perspective. More specifically, she examines those early selective grammar schools that – in contrast to traditional secondary school tracks which last four years – offer six or eight year-long academic periods of study. According to her empirical findings, successful application to these highly competitive schools is the result of a complex selection process that involves several steps, including, among others, the very decision to apply and the proper preparation for the entrance exam that requires both parental and tutorial assistance. The result of this complex selection process is that students from an unfavourable social background have almost no chance of entering these grammar schools. Thus, they serve poorly as a channel for social mobility, but rather contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities.

However, some students from socioeconomically disadvantaged family backgrounds 'against the odds' manage to continue with further study, not only at upper secondary level but also in higher education. In her paper, Zsuzsa Plainer identifies the factors that facilitate some Roma from poor families in Romania becoming educationally mobile. Based on Yosso's (2005) cultural wealth model (a critique of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of cultural capital), she takes stock of the forms of capital that her Romanian Roma sample make use of during their upward educational trajectories. She does this by analysing narrative interviews as a means of generating an improved understanding of the meaning and functioning of capitals. The paper explores the workings of conformist and transformative resistant capital and aspirational and family capital, and highlights the role of institutions in the process of capital acquisition and conversion. It argues that orphanages, religious congregations, and Roma

educational programmes can be considered matrixes of resources that enable not just access to different sources of capital, but also to their conversion, that facilitate upward educational mobility.

Krisztina Németh also applies a Bourdieusian conceptual framework to elucidate the impact of geographical mobility on social mobility and on mobile individuals' habitus. Relying on semi-structured family history interviews, she examines how social and spatial mobility are intertwined in the case of a woman who, after spending almost fifteen years in the UK, bought an old farmhouse and moved back to her birthplace that is located on the periphery of a Hungarian rural town ('*tanyavilág*'). Her paper focuses on the process of change in habitus that occurs as a result of the combined effect of transnational and social mobility. It is a story about how one can reconcile different dispositions and values and create continuity with family background despite migration and social advancement.

It is not only in this special issue but in social mobility studies too that researchers have dedicated overwhelming attention to the question of upward mobility – but, as Oksana Zabko argues, very little academic work has explored the reasons for and consequences of downward mobility. Zabko's paper aims to fill this gap. This is a contribution to our knowledge about the perceptions of downward mobility from the perspective of the downwardly mobile themselves. In accordance with the normative approach to social mobility, scholars tend to describe the detrimental implications of downward mobility, measured by downward movement in the occupational class hierarchy. According to this line of thinking, downward mobility is perceived as a loss of individual status, prestige, income, and social ties. The impact of these negative effects on the downwardly mobile's subjective well-being is usually explained in the light of Sorokin's (1959) dissociative thesis, or Newman's (1999) 'falling-from-grace' concept. Zabko's paper, however, challenges this widespread knowledge. Instead, through analysing personal experiences of downward occupational mobility in Latvia she explores those factors that explain individuals' perceptions of downward occupational mobility as a positive experience, contributing to subjective well-being by increasing work satisfaction through the perception of accomplishing 'meaningful work', and through achieving labour-market security, among other factors.

The topic of downward mobility is not only important in the Latvian context, but also in many Central Eastern European (CEE) countries where downward movement in the social space is more common than upward. Among many CEE countries, in Hungary, according to recent studies, both absolute and relative mobility have declined since the 1970s. Relying on educational data, Ákos Huszár, Karolina Balogh, and Ágnes Győri examine how these processes have evolved in the lower and upper segments of the social structure. In the upper segment of society, immobility means that parents in a more favourable position manage to pass on their privileged social status successfully to their offspring. In the lower segment, however, the decrease in mobility implies that those starting from below are less able to overcome their disadvantages. The authors examine in their study how far these processes have occurred simultaneously in the past almost twenty years, and to what extent have they taken place independently. Is the decline in mobility more due to processes taking place in the upper or rather the lower segment of society? According to the authors' results, a decrease in social mobility can be detected in both the lower and upper segments of society. However, processes at the two poles have not followed the same dynamics over the past nearly two decades.

Going beyond the classic approach to social mobility research that focuses on the transmission of parental capital – that is, on the link between parents' and their offspring's education, occupation, or income – Péter Róbert, Nikolett Geszler and Beáta Nagy examine the impact of 'softer' variables: the effect of the intergenerational transmission of subjective well-being on social mobility outcomes. Their results suggest that family background affects not only the 'hard' variables that are regularly examined in mainstream mobility research, but also 'soft' ones such as personal and behavioural characteristics and the subjective well-being of individuals. They also point out that it is not only the economic or cultural capital of parents that is important in the intergenerational transmission of advantages and disadvantages, but also factors such as the satisfaction of parents with their family and social relationships.

Last but not least, Svetlana Mareeva, Ekaterina Slobodenyuk, and Vasiliy Anikin also address the relationship between inequalities and social mobility through the problem of the 'tunnel effect'. Their research setting is Russia – a country that has undergone significant economic and social change over the past two decades, bringing with it a striking rise in living standards and a rapid decline in poverty. According to the tunnel-effect hypothesis developed by Albert Hirschman, tolerance of social inequalities is greater if the proportion of upward mobility is high in a society. The authors ask whether (actual or expected) social mobility impacts that individuals support the government reducing income inequality in today's Russia. Their results show that despite the rapid and large-scale socioeconomic changes, perceptions of inequality have remained almost constant in Russia. Accordingly, the impact of mobility is also very limited in the country. Neither the mobility experience of the past, nor expected mobility in the near future affect significantly the demand for reducing income inequalities.

Overall, the contributions to this thematic issue highlight the downward mobility trends in the transitional societies in Central Eastern Europe and the fallacy of (the myth of) meritocracy. Instead of individualised explanations of social mobility, they draw attention to the complexity of the socially and historically embedded processes of moving between social strata in the social space. Our editorial manifesto can be summarised as advocating both qualitative and quantitative mobility studies that aid understanding, beyond country-specific, national social mobility trends, of the hidden mechanisms of classed, gendered, and racialized inequalities and factors that drive and hinder the movement of discriminated minorities among social strata that seem to be prevalent in many societies. We also advocate more reflection on the individual consequences of mobility under circumstances of socioeconomic inequality in contemporary Europe.

Acknowledgements

The first drafts of the papers in this thematic issue greatly benefited from insightful suggestions and criticism from our anonymous peer-reviewers. We are grateful for their contributions. We also thank Margit Feischmidt, the journal's editor-in-chief, and Nóra Kovács, our co-editor on this issue, for their valuable comments on this introduction.

The work of Ákos Huszár was supported by the National Research Development and Innovation Office (Grant No. FK131997) and the Hungarian Academy's Cooperation of Excellences Mobility Research Centre project.

References

Andorka, R. (1982). *A társadalmi mobilitás változásai Magyarországon [Changes in Social Mobility in Hungary]*. Gondolat.

Andrews, D. & Leigh, A. (2009). More inequality, less mobility. *Applied Economic Letters*, *16*(15), 1489–1492. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504850701720197

Atkinson, A. B. (2015). *Inequality: What Can Be Done?* Harvard University Press.

Bell, D. (1976). *The Coming of Post-industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*. Basic Books.

Blanden, J., Goodman, A., Gregg, P. & Machin, S. (2002). *Changes in intergenerational mobility in Britain*. Centre for the Economics of Education, London School of Economics and Political Science. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/19507

Bourdieu, P. (1985). The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups. *Theory and Society, 14*(6), 723–744. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00174048

Breen, R. (2004). *Social Mobility in Europe*. Oxford University Press.

Breen, R. (2010). Social Mobility and Equality of Opportunity. *The Economic and Social Review, 41*(4), 413–428.

Bukodi, E. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (2010). Market versus Meritocracy: Hungary as a Critical Case. *European Sociological Review, 26*(6), 655–674. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcp043

Bukodi, E. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (2018). Social Inequality and Social Mobility: Is there an Inverse Relation? https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/jkqne

Bukodi, E. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (2019). *Social mobility and education in Britain: Research, Politics and Policy*. Cambridge University Press.

Bukodi, E. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (2022). Intergenerational class mobility in industrial and post-industrial societies: Towards a general theory. *Rationality and Society*, online first. https://doi.org/10.1177/10434631221093791

Bukodi, E., Paskov, M. & Nolan, B. (2019). Intergenerational Class Mobility in Europe: A new account. *Social Forces*, *98*(3), 941–972, https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soz026

Bukodi, E. & Záhonyi, M. (2004). *A társadalom rétegződése [Stratification of society]*. KSH.

Chetty, R., Hendren, N., Kline, P., Saez, E. & Turner, N. (2014). Is the United States Still a Land of Opportunity? Recent Trends in Intergenerational Mobility. *American Economic Review*, *104*(5). 141–147. https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.104.5.141

Chetty, R., Grusky, D., Hell, M., Hendren, N., Manduca, R. & Narang, J. (2017). The Fading American Dream: Trends in Absolute Income Mobility Since 1940. Science, *356*(6336), 398–406. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aal4617

Corak, M. (2013). Income Inequality, Equality of Opportunity, and Intergenerational Mobility. *Journal of Economic Perspective*, *27*(3), 9–102. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.27.3.79

Durst J. & Nyírő, Zs. (2021). Introduction. Cultural migrants? The consequences of educational mobility and changing social class among first-in-family graduates in Hungary. *Szociológiai Szemle, 31*(3), 4–20. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2021.3.1

Erikson, R. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (1993). *The Constant Flux.* Clarendon Press.

Eurofound (2017). *Social mobility in the EU.* Publications Office of the European Union.

Ferge, Zs. (1969). *Társadalmunk rétegeződése [Stratification of our society].* KJK.

Friedman, S. & Laurison, D. (2020). *The class ceiling: Why it pays to be privileged.* Policy Press & University of Bristol. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv5zftbj

Goldthorpe, J. H. (2013). Understanding – and Misunderstanding – Social Mobility in Britain: The Entry of the Economists, the Confusion of Politicians and the Limits of Educational Policy. *Journal of Social Policy, 42*(3), 431–450. https://doi.org/10.1017/S004727941300024X

Hertel, F. & Groh-Samberg, O. (2019). The Relation between Inequality and Intergenerational Class Mobility in 39 Countries. *American Sociological Review, 84*(6): 1099–1133. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419885094

Huszár Á. (Ed.) (2015). *A társadalom rétegződése [Social Stratification].* KSH.

Huszár, Á., Balogh, K. & Győri, Á. (2020). A társadalmi mobilitás egyenlőtlensége a nők és a férfiak között: Közeledés vagy támogatás? [Inequality of social mobility among men and women: Rapprochement or support?] In I. Kovách (Ed.), *Mobilitás* és *integráció a magyar társadalomban* (pp. 35–57). Argumentum.

Huszár, Á., Balogh K. & Győri, Á. (2022). Resistance to Change: Intergenerational Class Mobility in Hungary, 1973–2018. *Sociological Research Online*, online first, https://doi.org/10.1177/13607804221084727

Huszár, Á. & Záhonyi, M. (2018). *A foglalkozási szerkezet változása* és *jellemzői Magyarországon [Changes and characteristics of professional structure in Hungary].* KSH. https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/mikrocenzus2016/mikrocenzus_2016_9.pdf

Jackson, M. & Evans, G. (2017). Rebuilding Walls: Market Transition and Social Mobility in the Post-Socialist Societies of Europe. *Sociological Science, 4,* 54–79. https://doi.org/10.15195/v4.a3

Krueger, A. B. (2012, January 12). The Rise and Consequences of Inequality in the United States. https://web.archive.org/web/20130627072604/http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/krueger_cap_speech_final_remarks.pdf

Lawler, S. & Payne, G. (2018). Introduction. Everyone a winner? In S. Lawler & G. Payne (Eds.), *Social Mobility for the 21st century. Everyone a winner?* (pp. 1–12). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351996808-1

Littler, J. (2017). *Against meritocracy: Culture, power and myths of mobility.* Taylor & Francis.

Marshall, G., Swift, A. & Roberts, S. (1997). *Against the Odds? Social Class and Social Justice in Industrial Societies.* Clarendon Press.

Newman, K. (1999). *Falling from Grace: Downward Mobility in the Age of Affluence.* University of California Press.

OECD (2018). *A Broken Social Elevator? How to Promote Social Mobility.* OECD. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264301085-en

Putnam, R. D. (2015). *Our Kids. The American Dream in Crisis.* Simon & Schuster.

Reay, D. (2013). Social mobility, a panacea for austere times: Tales of emperors, frogs, and tadpoles. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 34*(5–6), 660–677. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2013.816035

Reay, D. (2018). The cruelty of social mobility. Individual success at the cost of collective failure. In S. Lawler & G. Payne (Eds.), *Social Mobility for the 21st century: Everyone a winner?* (pp. 146–157). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351996808-12

Róbert, P. (2018). Intergenerációs iskolai mobilitás az európai országokban a válság előtt és után [Intergenerational school mobility in European countries before and after the crisis]. In T. Kolosi & I. Gy. Tóth (Eds.), *Társadalmi Riport 2018* (pp. 64–80). TÁRKI.

Róbert, P. & Bukodi E. (2004). Changes in intergenerational class mobility in Hungary, 1973–2000. In R. Breen (Ed.), *Social Mobility in Europe* (pp. 287–315). Oxford University Press.

Rose, D. & Harrison, E. (Eds.) (2010). *Social Class in Europe.* Routledge.

Sorokin, P. A. (1959). *Social and Cultural Mobility.* Free Press.

Treiman, D. J. (1970). Industrialization and social stratification. In E. O. Laumann (Ed.), *Social Stratification: Research and Theory for the 1970s* (pp. 207–234). Bobbs-Merrill.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *8*(1), 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006

Judit Durst,* Zsanna Nyírő,** Fanni Dés***
& Julianna Boros****

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 12–40.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.1048
https://intersections.tk.hu

Racial glass ceiling: The glass ceiling and the labour-market segmentation of first-in-family Roma graduates in Hungary

* [durst.judit@tk.hu] (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest and UCL, Department of Anthropology, UK)
** [nyiro.zsanna@tk.hu] (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest)
*** [fanni.des@stud.uni-corvinus.hu] (Corvinus University, Budapest, Doctoral School of Communication and Sociology)
**** [boros.julianna@pte.hu] (University of Pécs, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Community and Social Studies)

Abstract

According to the neoliberal mantra, anyone who is willing to work hard can get ahead in our society. In an era when belief in the myth of meritocracy has become widespread, greater social mobility would represent the promise of escape from rising social inequality. This paper challenges this myth and offers insight into the fallacy of individualized explanations of the role of merit in social ascension. Drawing on 103 interviews with first-in-family (FIF) minority Roma graduates in Hungary, and using the lens of intersectionality, it explores the hidden barriers to career advancement for those Roma professionals whose parents do not have a degree. The paper shows how the intersections of class and racialized minority status matter in relation to what career one has in the labour market. It illuminates why FIF Roma professionals can rarely enter elite occupations and why, career wise, they tend to concentrate in jobs dealing with Roma issues. It explores the effect of the dynamic interaction of structural hidden mechanisms and the Roma's response/adaptation to them that contribute both to Roma professionals' labour market segmentation and to the phenomenon of the glass ceiling. The paper calls these two characteristics of the labour market situation of the FIF Roma graduates the racial glass ceiling.

Keywords: upward social mobility; first-in-family graduates; Roma first-generation professionals; glass ceiling; racial glass ceiling

1 Introduction

Johnny is the founder-director of an alternative secondary-provision school[1] that was established 15 years ago by him and his colleague as a (tuition-fee-free) church foundation school mainly for Roma students aged 14–18 to prepare them for A-level (final or Abitur) exams. The school's ethos is creating a supportive, inclusive, and nurturing, family-like educational environment in the northern part of Hungary and was inspired by Johnny's own experience of

[1] Names of all people and institutions are pseudonymized to protect the anonymity of our study participants.

institutional racial discrimination during his elementary school years. The school is located in one of the most economically deprived regions of the country where many socially disadvantaged Roma families live, and where only one percent of the Roma population have obtained A-level (upper secondary school) credentials.

> I was 19, a factory worker, with only an eighth grade (primary school) qualification when I was connected to an educational support programme in the nearby town. There I met with my sociologist friends who made me realise what an outrage it is against my Gypsy community that we are discriminated against within the education system. We do not have access to further study, even at the secondary level. This was a turning point in my life. This inclusive, supportive social environment, with a pedagogical team in that city who welcomed and fostered the desire of the Gypsy kids to study further, was the force behind my career path. I soon realised that if we want systematic change in education – that is, for our Gypsy children to be treated like equals in schools – we need to enter politics and also establish our own educational institutions.

Johnny comes from a lower-class Boyash Gypsy family and has six siblings and 35 cousins. They lived on the outskirts of a small village in a Gypsy colony that consisted of 15 houses. He affectionately tells us that it was his parents and his community that enabled him to make this 'big jump' – that is, to get a university degree (his parents did not even manage to finish elementary school). 'The values, support, safety net, and affection I got from my family and Gypsy community made me who I am today. I am proud of what I am: a Gypsy, from Hungary.'

As the first secondary-school graduate of not only his extended family but also of the whole Gypsy settlement where he spent his childhood, Johnny became a role model who fostered studying at the secondary level for the children of his community. Later, after acquiring his teaching degree, he established an alternative secondary 'gymnasium' for Roma children who would not otherwise be competitive in the selective and segregatory public school system in Hungary, much less experience equal opportunity. (See Berényi, 2022). 'We felt the need for a [second-chance] school like this as we realised that even the best educational support programmes could not reach the most disadvantaged students who live in poor families in segregated Gypsy colonies,' he stated, recalling his former motivation.

Despite his 20-year experience in the field of education, it took Johnny until he was 50 that he could acquire a first-time mortgage to buy a flat in a rural small settlement near the school. For the last decades, since he had left his family home, he had either lived in a dormitory while studying or teaching, or in the school itself. 'This is the first time after many years that I have a decent salary. That I can afford a mortgage on my own house. My cousins who earn three times more than me working abroad as manual skilled labourers always laugh at me. "You are the one who has a degree, and you earn peanuts!", they mock. But they are proud of me'.

Given his relatively low salary and the precarity of his job[2] but also the lack of recognition of his occupational expertise by the dominant, non-Roma segment of the labour market, Johnny wonders what kind of social mobility he has actually achieved. He feels that even if he has an extended experience of successfully teaching and mentoring Roma children from marginalised family backgrounds, having established his own foundational

[2] The school's future is dependent on the reigning governments' goodwill as its educational functions are financed by the state budget.

schools and despite his comprehensive overview of the educational system and the difficulties of educating Roma children, no one from majority society has ever invited him to take up a 'big job'. He tells us that despite his 'objective merits' (prestigious educational credentials [two degrees, one of them from a top university where he learnt alternative teaching methods]), strong work ethic and certain skills ('I am like a bulldozer – if I want to achieve something, I'll go 'til I hit the wall to accomplish it'), his expertise and talent have never been recognized in a 'top job':

> Do you think anyone has ever invited me to be the educational expert on an expert committee on one of the government's public education bodies? Or to join any decision-making group? No one, never – we Roma professionals have an assigned place in Hungarian society. Even 20 years ago, when I had my Abitur [final exam at upper secondary school] and became acquainted with my sociologist friends, they dreamt up everything for me that had something to do with helping: e.g., teaching, being a social worker, or a sociologist. I tried to tell them, even then, that I thought this was prejudicial. Why would I become any of these helper-types? Why do they expect me, the first Roma with an Abitur from his Gypsy settlement, to be a teacher or a social worker? To remedy the plight of the Roma who have been damaged over the last few centuries?

Johnny's notion of 'assigned places' for the Roma in Hungarian society (as in other CEE countries) takes us to the focus of this paper; namely, the identification of the hidden barriers to career progression. This article contributes to the thread of social mobility studies that draw attention to the fallacy of the 'myth of meritocracy' by exploring the inherent racialized (and gendered) inequalities in the career advancement of FIF Roma professionals.

Johnny is just one of the 174 FIF graduates whom we interviewed in our comprehensive project about the personal experiences of educational mobility.[3] Of the 174 study participants, 103 self-identified as Roma. In some ways, Johnny represents a 'typical case' in our study sample as he works in a racially segmented part of the labour market – in the civil sector that deals with helping disadvantaged Roma people to develop their social positions, either through facilitating their educational or occupational mobility or via human-rights activism. We term this job segmentation dealing with 'Roma issues' (see also Váradi, 2015; Nyírő & Durst, 2018; Gulyás, 2021).

The paper argues that the segmentation of the Roma FIF graduates into Roma-issues-related work is one of the factors – in parallel with the hidden mechanisms of the 'racial glass ceiling' for Roma professionals – that hinders them obtaining top positions in the labour market despite their 'objective merits'. In this paper, we challenge the widespread belief that with educational credentials, hard work, and 'talent' people belonging to racialized minorities can thrive in the labour market in jobs that they aspire to. In line with other social mobility scholars (e. g. Lawler & Payne, 2018; Friedman & Laurison, 2020), we call this belief the 'myth of meritocracy'. The myth of meritocracy is a form of cultural legitimation of neoliberal capitalism that ignores class, gender, and ethno-racial inequalities in society and the resulting structural barriers in the life paths of those from disadvantaged families, such as in education or on the labour market (Litter, 2018, pp. 1–21). It reinforces the individualist

[3] The project '*Social mobility and ethnicity: Trajectories, outcomes and hidden costs of educational success*' was supported by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' (NKFHI) research grant (no. K-125 497) between 2018 and 2021.

myth of neoliberalism that 'if you work hard, you will get ahead in life' (Kóczé, 2017). The public dialogue about social mobility is dominated by this myth and cases are framed as ones of individual failure or success instead of resulting from social processes (Lawler & Payne, 2018).

Instead, by analysing personal experiences of educational upward mobility, we demonstrate how the hidden barriers to career advancement – that is, the glass ceiling – work, and what the factors and hidden mechanisms are that erect and drive it in the case of members of a racialized minority middle class, such as the Roma FIF graduates. Here we build on the work of Ogbu (1978) regarding the phenomenon of the 'job ceiling' with regard to 'visible' and stigmatised minorities. Also, in the Hungarian Roma context, we draw on Szalai's (2014) work on the 'ethnic ceiling' in educational settings.

Through analysing the personal experiences of individual educational mobility trajectories of our Roma interviewees, we argue that we can explore how they perceive the job ceiling – i.e., how Roma professionals have fewer opportunities to use their higher educational qualifications to acquire jobs commensurate with their qualifications than their non-Roma counterparts. Our results also resonate with Árendás and Messing's (2022) work that explains why there are so few Roma in the business sector; despite fair employment laws and diversity employment policies, the development of a Roma business professional occupational class has been slower than that of the non-Roma.

But before we identify and analyse the main drivers of the glass ceiling and the fact that many Roma professionals concentrate in the labour market for jobs dealing with Roma issues (the two social phenomena which together we call a 'racial glass ceiling' (see also Brooks, 2017, for a similar concept for Afro-Americans' racial subordination in law and culture), we first provide the theoretical framework of our research study. Then we delineate the research context, followed by our research method. In the latter we show how we obtained quantitative data about the existence of the racial glass ceiling in the labour market. Finally, before we conclude our empirical findings, we turn our attention to reconstructing the mechanisms that create the glass ceiling in the labour market and contribute to the segmentation of Roma FIF professionals in jobs dealing with Roma issues.

At the end of this introductory section, we also find our language use worth noting. We believe that there is no adequate vocabulary to describe groups such as those Roma that are categorised the way they are in Hungary (Ladányi & Szelényi, 2001). After consulting with Roma colleagues, we call them 'racialized (ethnic) minority'. (See also Kóczé, 2020; Máté, 2021). Following the logic of scholars who speak about diverse forms of (ethno)racial domination (Wacquant, 2022), when we write about the hidden structural barriers that hinder FIF Roma career advancement, we call this phenomenon the racial glass ceiling, referring to a particular form of (ethno)racial domination and racial subordination (Brooks, 2017).

It is also worth mentioning that when we use the analytical notion of 'racial glass ceiling' we draw on scholars' racial domination concepts. Therefore, we do not speak about racism as an individual race prejudice, but we speak about the process of racialization (Gans, 2017). This is in line with Wacquant's (2022) conceptualization of the racialization of ethnic categories, Desmond and Emirbayer's (2009) notion of racial domination, Brooks's (2017) idea of racial subordination, and Rövid (2021) and Kóczé's (2020) argument about the racial oppression of the Roma. According to this thread of thinking, racialization means the encompassing economic, political and social cultural structures, actions, and beliefs that systematize and perpetuate an unequal distribution of privileges, resources, and power between

majority and racialized ethnic minorities.[4] This unequal distribution benefits 'whites' (majorities) and disadvantages 'people of colour' (racialized minorities) overall as a group, or rather as a constructed category. (See also Nyírő & Durst, 2021 for the case of FIF Roma upward mobility in Hungary.)

Lastly, on occasions when we refer to literature associated with the US context, we cite them using their original categories such as 'black' or 'people of colour'. Although these notions might sound strange to European readers, they allow us to refer to similarities in the structural oppression of 'racialized people' and to the historical pervasiveness of colour discrimination against the Roma in Hungary (as in other Eastern European countries; see Grill, 2017).

2 Theoretical background

The metaphor of the glass ceiling describes the invisible yet durable barriers that members of racial-ethnic minority groups and women have historically experienced in the elite segments of the labour market. It draws attention to the fact that what we conventionally understand as the effect of individual merit is not the only or even main determinant of career success. The term 'glass ceiling' was first used by a journalist in 1984 to refer to the phenomenon that women are not able to move beyond the middle management level. In the 1980s it was used mostly to describe women who were left behind in the labour market hierarchy due to social inequalities (Boyd, 2012). It is a product of gender inequalities in society that can be traced back to material inequalities between men and women and to socially expected gender roles (Ridgeway, 2001). Gender roles that contribute to inequalities between men and women include the burden of care work on women that prevents them from progressing in the labour market, as well as the fact that managerial positions are more in line with the gender roles expected of men (Ridgeway, 2001). Women often only have a chance of moving up to higher levels in the labour market if they can afford to outsource the care work that they are expected to do, or if they fulfil the gender roles expected of men (Nagy, 2017).

The glass-ceiling phenomenon refers not only to gender inequalities in the labour market, but also to the fact that women find it increasingly difficult to assert themselves in the workplace hierarchy the higher up they go (Baxter & Wright, 2000). Female employment declines in proportion to the number of children women have (KSH, 2016). Glass and Fodor (2011) draw attention to 'the maternity penalty' – discrimination against women with children in the Hungarian labour market.

The glass ceiling literature also reveals the 'class penalty': women from working-class backgrounds have been historically excluded from elite occupations (Skegg, 1997; Friedman & Laurison, 2020). The same penalty applies to members of ethnoracial minorities. Even when they are just as talented and hardworking as their majority counterparts, they are less likely to get into or flourish in elite jobs; that is, to achieve the same reward for their 'objective merit' as their majority fellows (Ogbu, 1978; Szalai, 2014).

The term 'glass ceiling' is commonly used today to refer to the phenomenon of racialized minorities and oppressed groups in society that are unable to move up the labour mar-

[4] Here again, we refer to ethnicity following Wacquant's (2022, p. 78) suggestion that '("thin") ethnicity is an arbitrary category that is grounded in the vagaries of history and culture.'

ket hierarchy and obtain elite positions despite their high level of educational attainment (Boyd, 2012). Ogbu (1978) speaks about the phenomenon of a 'job ceiling' when referring to the fact that Blacks do not have the same access to jobs as Whites in American society. He points out that the literature tends to attribute the failure of Blacks to succeed in the labour market to their fundamentally different socialization, whereas this is fundamentally due to the different and lower social expectations of Blacks that result from structural inequalities in US society, which do not equalize their access to the labour market. Using a similar line of thinking, the concept of 'ethnic ceiling' (Szalai, 2014) indicates how structural inequalities are decisive in the socialization of ethnic minorities. The ceiling appears in the education system, where discrimination against ethnic minorities through differential grading practices is systemic and continues in the labour market. Discrimination and its subtle version, the presence of the ethnic ceiling in relation to Roma in education and the labour market, is a particular problem in the post-socialist region (Szalai, 2014).

Friedman and Laurison's book *The Class Ceiling* (2020) focuses on the social mobility and labour-market position in Britain of people originating from the lower classes. The book concludes that the phenomenon of a glass ceiling in the labour market in elite occupations can also be applied to people from lower-class backgrounds. People who have lower-class parents often do not get as high up the job ladder, and earn less than their counterparts with elite, highly educated parents. The authors also find that different racial-ethnic groups from lower-class backgrounds are even more disadvantaged on the labour market. Thus, the phenomenon of intersectionality can also be applied to the phenomenon of the class ceiling (Friedman & Laurison, 2020, p. 42).

The concept of intersectionality originally captured the unequal position of Black women in society compared to those of White women. The concept drew attention to structural inequalities in the American second-wave feminist movement between Black and White women (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). The notion highlights that, based on their different economic and social position, the everyday experiences of women from different social classes and racial-ethnic backgrounds are not the same. According to Friedman and Laurison (2020), this phenomenon can also be applied to the intersecting relationship between class and ethnicity in the context of the class ceiling. Friedman and Laurison (2020) identify the hidden mechanisms that drive the class ceiling. The list is extensive, from direct discrimination (in terms of sexism and racism) to the subtler and more insidious effects of 'othering', stereotyping, sponsored mobility, and homophily.

A relatively small body of literature is concerned with the labour-market segmentation of racialized minorities. Collins (2005) showed that those African-Americans who have achieved occupational mobility are shifted into niches in the labour market that are created to meet the needs of African-American people. Such niches can be found in sectors, institutions, and occupations. She highlights that African-American entrepreneurs, professionals and administrators in the public sector work in niches that deal with managing African-Americans, administering policies oriented around African-Americans, and delivering services and products to African-Americans. She concludes that African American '…skills remain "functionally segregated" in [the] labour market' (Collins, 2005, p. 190.). Beasley (2011) demonstrated that a high proportion of African-American college graduates work in racialized and/or community-oriented occupations (in the social service sector); that is, in occupations directed at, or whose services are mainly used by Blacks. The author highlights that African-Americans' labour-market segmentation is associated with considerable pay penalties (i.e. their average earnings are lower than those of their White counterparts).

Last but not least, for the purpose of this paper, we found Brooks' (2017) work on the phenomenon of the racial glass ceiling of Afro-Americans especially influential. Although he focuses on the area of law and culture, he elucidates how the racial glass ceiling, a form of racial subordination, impedes racial progress in the U.S. He argues that the racial glass ceiling is a complex and little understood phenomenon that perplexes even the most well-meaning employers. However, it produces devastating consequences that affect both poor and socio-economically successful Afro-Americans.

With this article, we aim to contribute to the understanding of the working of the racial glass ceiling in the case of our FIF Roma study participants. However, before we turn our attention to exploring the drivers of the racial glass ceiling, we delineate our research context: the educational and labour market situation of Roma in Hungary.

3 Research settings: Roma graduates in the Hungarian labour market

The Roma are the most marginalised and vulnerable racialized minority in Hungary. Their disadvantage is reflected in many spheres of life, including their educational attainment: according to census data from 2011, 5 per cent (10,775 people) of the Roma completed high school with A-level credentials (matriculation or Abitur) (total population 30 per cent), and only 1 per cent (2,607 people) graduated from higher education (total population 17 per cent) (Bernát, 2014). Radó (2000) identifies four interrelated problems that contribute to the failure of Roma students at school: discrimination; the social marginalization of Roma families; the lack of enforcement of minority rights; and problems related to the quality of education. Bernát (2014) emphasises that school segregation and the practice of sending Roma to special classes and schools without justification are the main reasons for the school failure of Roma children. In recent decades, Roma children have significantly caught up with non-Roma students in terms of successfully completing primary school, while the gap between them has significantly risen in terms of finishing secondary school and participation in higher education (Hajdu et al., 2014).

Data about the participation of Roma graduates in tertiary education and the labour market is limited, although the census of 2011 provides some information about these topics that we can compare with the characteristics of all first-generation graduates and the total graduate population.

Roma differ from the total population of first-generation graduates in their choice of subject of study. Roma graduates are overrepresented in the field of humanities and arts and health and social care compared to first-generation graduates. However, they are underrepresented in the field of technical-, industrial-, and construction training, and finance, compared to first-generation graduates (Durst & Nyírő, 2021). These study choices may affect the labour-market outcomes of Roma graduates, as we will demonstrate.

In terms of economic activity, data derived from the 2011 census indicates that the rate of employment was around 70 per cent for both Roma graduates and the total graduate population. In 2011, the unemployment rate was much higher among Roma graduates (10 per cent) than in the total graduate population (4 per cent). The proportion of retirees was only 7 per cent among Roma graduates while it was 19 per cent of the total graduate popula-

tion. According to the main occupational categories, there is not much difference between Roma graduates and FIF graduates: the majority of both populations are managers and professionals or technicians and associate professionals.[5]

The opportunities for Roma graduates in the labour market are influenced by the fact that Roma are exposed to a variety of forms of prejudice and discrimination in Hungary (Csepeli et al., 1998; Vajda & Dupcsik, 2008). Open prejudice decreased in the 1990s and stagnated at the beginning of the 2000s, but after the economic crisis in 2009 xenophobia and anti-Roma attitudes strengthened again (Keresztes-Takács et al., 2016). According to a survey by the Pew Research Center, nearly two-thirds of Hungarian respondents expressed an unfavourable opinion of the Roma in 2016 (Wike et al., 2016).

The prevalence and extent of discrimination are very difficult to determine (Lovász & Telegdy, 2010) as there is no single indicator or method that could provide a reliable estimate of its extent (Sik & Simonovits, 2010). According to the results of an EU-MIDIS survey in 2016, 32 per cent of Roma in Hungary felt they had been discriminated against because of their Roma background at least once in the past five years in at least one area of day-to-day life. In 2014, 51 per cent, while in 2016 one-third of Roma people experienced discrimination during job searching, and in 2014 17 per cent experienced the same at work – the proportion was 11 per cent in 2016 (FRA, 2014; 2016). Sik and Simonovits (2010) point out that being of Roma origin significantly increases the degree of the perception of discrimination in the labour market, education, and access to different services. In a very recent study, Kertesi et al. (2022) showed how ethnic (racial) prejudice turns into occupational discrimination.

4 Methodology

By pairing quantitative data on the glass ceiling and labour-market segmentation with interviews with Roma graduates, we are able to provide generalised evidence about the existence of the glass ceiling and labour-market concentration of Roma graduates and explore some of the factors that lead to these phenomena.

The purpose of the quantitative analysis is to prove that Roma FIF graduates are concentrated in certain segments of the labour market and that the glass ceiling hinders their career advancement. Our quantitative data is derived from a non-representative online survey and a secondary analysis of national, representative statistical data. The online survey asked FIF respondents about their mobility and career paths and the emotional cost of their journey. The target population was those who are the first in their families to graduate from college or university. The questionnaire was anonymous and self-administered. It was disseminated through different channels including Facebook pages (e.g., university alumni pages, and our research project page), paid Facebook advertisements, and social networks.

The questionnaire was available for respondents between October 2019 and July 2020. It was filled out by 6,063 respondents. The gender distribution of our sample significantly differed (women are strongly overrepresented) from the weighted data on first-generation graduates from the micro census in 2016. The age distribution of the survey sample is also

[5] Source: Census 2011, own calculation.

divergent from the micro census data in the case of 40–49 and 50–59-year-olds (who are overrepresented in our sample), and those aged 60 and over (who are underrepresented in our sample). However, the distribution by county of residence is close to that of the micro census.

Although the sample is not representative of the population of FIF graduates in terms of socio-demographic variables, the aim of our analysis is not to generalise our results to this population, but to compare different subgroups from our sample and to reveal typical patterns associated with respondents, for which our database is suitable.

For the purpose of this analysis, we restricted the sample to those respondents who were working at the time of the survey. Thus, the restricted sample consists of 5,372 respondents.

The following question was used to determine the respondents' ethnicity: 'Which nationality do you feel you belong to? Multiple responses are possible!' The list of nationalities provided by the 2011 census was given as the options. All respondents who selected Roma nationality (even if they selected other nationalities as well) were identified as Roma. One hundred and nine Roma respondents filled out the questionnaire, among whom 95 had a job at the time of the survey.

The national, representative data set of the census of 2011 and the micro census of 2016 were also used to obtain statistical evidence about the glass ceiling that impedes Roma FIF graduates from getting into prestigious, top positions in the labour market.

Quantitative data can only tell us whether the labour-market segmentation of Roma FIF graduates and the related glass ceiling exists. However, it cannot explain how and why these phenomena exist. Therefore, the aim of our qualitative analysis is to reveal some of those mechanisms that lead to this labour-market segmentation and drive the phenomenon of the glass ceiling in the case of the Roma FIF graduates. The qualitative part of this study draws upon 103 in-depth life interviews with Roma FIF graduates. The interviews were conducted as part of a four-year research project, as mentioned above, that examined the personal social mobility experiences of FIF college-educated people. One hundred and seventy-four interviews were conducted as part of this project between 2018 and 2021. Among the respondents, there were both majority (non-Roma) and minority (Roma) interviewees, the latter which consisted of those who self-identified as Roma. This study analysed the narratives of the 103 Roma respondents. The participants were recruited using the snowball sampling method, via public advertisements in social media, and through an online survey. The nine interviewers, among them both Roma and non-Roma researchers, recruited Roma respondents by using different networks to find study participants. These latter channels were not used to reach Roma participants in particular, but to identify FIF graduates, among them both Roma and non-Roma. These processes ensured that we avoided recruiting our Roma respondents from only a few homogenous circles. Interviewees in this study were aged between 24 and 64 years old. Sixty interviewees were female, and 43 were male. Interviewees were recruited from both urban and rural locations in Hungary. In order to protect the anonymity of all participants, we have used pseudonyms for the interviewees and for the names of the settlement of their origin in the study. Furthermore, broad categories were used to describe the jobs and workplaces of the respondents to ensure that they are not identifiable.

The first part of the interviews involved a narrative section, and the second part a semi-structured interview. The latter section focused on the following topics: family background, educational attainment, career path, intimate relationships and children, family relationships and friends, self-characterization (identity), life satisfaction, and success. Interviews were audio-recorded, then transcribed and entered into ATLAS.ti 8.

Finally, we believe, along with a few other scholars (among them Németh, 2016; Friedman & Laurison, 2020; Kovács, Gárdos & Vajda, 2020; Máté, 2021), that it is necessary to reflect on our own positionality as it certainly affected not only how comfortable interviewees felt sharing their personal experiences of the sometimes painful road to mobility but also how we interpreted our findings. The diverse positionality of our research team and of the four authors of this paper, among them both young and middle-aged man and woman Roma and non-Roma researchers, hopefully contributed to lessening the bias involved when generating and interpreting our interview data. Our research team was concerned with 'epistemic justice' (Morley, 2020), too: Roma researchers such as one of the authors (Boros) of this article were in the position of being knowledge producers rather than simply objects of inquiry (see also Boros et al., 2021).

5 Findings and discussion

5.1 Occupational segmentation and the underrepresentation of Roma graduates in management

The aim of this section is to provide statistical evidence of the labour-market segmentation and glass ceiling that affect Roma FIF graduates on the Hungarian labour market.

Several approaches were used to reveal whether Roma professionals are concentrated in racialized and/or community-orientated occupations because the available statistical data are limited in this regard.[6] Our online survey contained some questions related to the respondents' sector of employment that we could use to approach this topic. According to the results of our qualitative research, the Roma graduates who work in the field of social services and the non-profit sector, almost without exception, work in the field of Roma issues.

The online survey asked respondents whether their job is related to helping others in the field of social issues.[7] The characteristics of those not working in social services were compared to those of respondents working in this field by using multinominal logistic regression[8] (see Tables 1–8).[9] The reference group of those not working in the social services does not differ significantly according to gender. The odds of working in social services increase slightly with age. According to the type of settlement, those who live in smaller settlements are more likely to have jobs related to social services. Roma are more likely to work in the field of social services than non-Roma respondents.

---

[6] We regarded working in the social service and non-profit sector in the case of Roma graduates as a proxy for working in a racialized and/or community-oriented job because our qualitative results showed that all Roma respondents working in the social service and non-profit sector were dealing with Roma issues. We were not able to use the census of 2011 because that database does not contain any information on the sector (public, private or non-profit) of employment. The micro census of 2016 contains information on the sector of employment, although that database involves a 10 per cent sample of Hungarian households and thus allows for only uncertain claims about the employment sector of Roma graduates due to the small number of cases.

[7] The following question was applied: 'Is it part of your job to help others in the field of social issues?' We regarded those respondents as working in the field of social services if they responded positively.

[8] Multinominal logistic regression was used to filter out the effects of differences in the demographic composition of Roma and non-Roma respondents.

[9] Nagelkerke pseudo R2 = 0,036; McFadden = 0,021.

We also asked respondents in the questionnaire whether they worked in the private, public, or non-profit sector.[10] Three models were built to compare the characteristics of those not working in these areas with those who were working in these spheres (see Tables 3–8).[11] Ethnicity was not a significant predictor variable in the model for working in the public sector, while it was significant in the model that was used to examine the non-profit and private sector. Roma were more likely to be working in the non-profit sector compared to non-Roma respondents. The probability of working in the non-profit sector rises modestly with age. According to gender and settlement type, there is no significant difference between those not working in the non-profit sector and those working there. Roma are less liable to work in the private sector than non-Roma respondents. The chance of working in the private sector slightly decreases with age. Those who live in Budapest are more likely to have a job in this sector than those who live in regional centres, towns, or villages. This shows the role of geographical inequalities in labour market opportunities (Árendás & Messing, 2022; Árendás, Messing & Zentai, 2018). There is no significant difference between the two groups according to gender.

In sum, Roma respondents are more likely to work in the field of social services and the non-profit sector, and less likely to work in the private sector compared to non-Roma participants. These results strengthen what can be inferred from the census data about the Roma graduates' subject of study – that is, their overrepresentation in the fields of humanities, arts, and social care (Durst & Nyírő, 2021).

Working in the non-profit sector is associated with a pay penalty in Hungary. According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, the average annual gross earnings of employees working in the non-profit sphere were 331 thousand forints less than the national average in 2019, 338 thousand forints less in 2020, and 81 thousand forints less in 2021.[12]

According to the results of our qualitative research, nearly half (49 per cent) of those Roma interviewees who had a job at the time of the interview[13] were working full time in the field of Roma issues. More than a quarter (29 per cent) of them had part-time or voluntary work in this area. Meanwhile, only about a fifth (22 per cent) of the Roma respondents were not working at all on Roma issues.

Moving on to the question of the vertical segregation of Roma graduates, the analysis of the census data in 2011 showed that the representation of Roma graduates in management is slightly below that of the total graduate population: while 12.0 per cent of the total graduate population work in managerial positions, the proportion is 9.5 per cent among Roma graduates (see Table 9).[14] This finding may be surprising; however, it is possible that Roma

[10] Multiple responses were allowed regarding the sector of employment because our qualitative research revealed that many Roma FIF graduates often have more than one job. Therefore, we built three models with dummy dependent variables in the case of each sector.

[11] Model of working in the non-profit sector: Nagelkerke pseudo $R2 = 0.018$; McFadden = 0.013,
Model of working in the private sector: Nagelkerke pseudo $R2 = 0.093$; McFadden = 0.055,
Model of working in the public sector: Nagelkerke pseudo $R2 = 0.068$; McFadden = 0.039.

[12] Source: https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/mun/hu/mun0046.html
https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/mun/hu/mun0050.html

[13] Of the 103 Roma respondents, 90 were employed or self-employed at the time of the interview.

[14] It is important to note that belonging to Roma ethnicity is based on self-identification in the census. Therefore, it is possible that some of the Roma respondents did not identify themselves as Roma in the questionnaire situation.

managers' self-identification as Roma in a survey situation is greater than that of non-managers. However, as we will see, there are differences between the distribution of Roma graduates and the total graduate population within the group of managers.

There is one occupational group within management positions where the proportion of Roma graduates and the total graduate population differs greatly: while 24 per cent of the total graduate population work as heads of units assisting in business activities, the same proportion is only 17 per cent in the case of Roma graduates. There is a slight difference between the proportion of Roma graduates and the total graduate population in the case of legislators, heads of administration, and heads of special-interest organisations, where Roma graduates are slightly overrepresented (Roma graduates 12 per cent, total graduate population 8 per cent, see Table 10).

Since most (70 per cent) of the Roma graduates in managerial positions work in production and as specialised services managers, we were only able compare the proportions of the Roma graduates and the total graduate population within this group because case numbers were too low within the other groups. Within this group, Roma graduates are overrepresented compared to the total graduate population in the case of social welfare managers, educational managers, restaurant managers, other services managers, and cultural centre managers. Except for other services managers, these are managerial positions associated with lower average gross earnings (see Table 11). That is, the horizontal segregation of the Roma graduates in these managerial positions also entails vertical segregation in terms of earnings. In other words, this concentration of Roma graduates in managerial positions with lower earnings can be regarded as a sign of a glass ceiling.

The next section reveals some of the mechanisms that contribute to the existence of a racial glass ceiling for Roma FIF graduates in the Hungarian labour market.

5.2 The different drivers of the racial glass ceiling: Findings of a quantitative study

We identified several drivers that contribute to the racial glass ceiling affecting Roma graduates. Our previous study (Nyírő & Durst, 2018) found that an important mechanism that leads to the labour-market segmentation of Roma professionals is participation in training and employment programs for Roma. These programmes, in addition to facilitating mobility, often set the path for Roma graduates in the field of Roma issues. Another important factor is the particular characteristics of their social capital (e.g., their participation in ethnic-specific social networks and a lack of heterogeneous social ties) that contribute to the labour-market segmentation of Roma graduates and can hinder their career advancement. However, due to word limits this paper will only elaborate on the role of the following mechanisms that were frequently recalled in many of our interviewees' narratives: (1) the role of schools and teachers, (2) discrimination on the basis of racialized differentiation, (3) tokenism, (4) the expectation of 'giving back', (5) self-efficacy, and (6) financial insecurity or the lack of 'the bank of Mum and Dad'.

5.2.1 The role of schools and teachers in the development of the racial glass ceiling

The Hungarian education system is one of the most selective in the European context (Radó, 2018; OECD, 2018). Mechanisms of selection are highly complex and include both institu-

tional and informal processes (Radó, 2018; Papp Z. & Neumann, 2021). This selectivity is the general context of Roma (educational) segregation (Radó, 2018). Through gross mechanisms like racialized differentiation, segregation, selective school systems, and inadequate funding and facilities and staffing for schools with Roma students (Fejes & Szűcs, 2018), schools collude in maintaining Roma's inferior status and thus support their historically sustained 'second-hand citizen' status (Szalai, 2014). As Ogbu (1978) explains in the case of lower-caste Blacks in the US, through the repetition of this process through different generations schools contribute to maintaining and rationalizing the job ceiling for those students whom they judge as coming from an inferior social group background. In addition, Roma people are over-represented among those living in poverty and are strongly affected by spatial segregation and ongoing discrimination by social institutions in Hungary, all of which contribute to the degree of educational segregation (Vajda & Dupcsik, 2008; Feischmidt et al., 2013).

Our study of FIF graduates shows that even if Hungarian Roma students attend the same schools as non-Roma Hungarians (sharing facilities, funding and staffing equally with the latter), their performance may be valued as less given the stigmatisation, racialized differentiation and discrimination of teachers against the Roma. Robert's memories of primary school resonate with some of the personal experiences of discrimination of our interviewees:

> By Year 7, I had given up studying. Although I had the nicest handwriting in my class, my Hungarian literature teacher never gave me a better grade than 2, or rarely a 3. [In Hungary the highest grade is 5, and the lowest is 1]. For us, darker-skinned Gypsy kids, we had to perform three or four times as well to get the same grades as the White Hungarian children. The idea of supporting Gypsy students to carry on studying at secondary level did not even come up in our teachers' minds. No one from my Gypsy settlement had ever gone on to study further, before me. (Robert, 42, teacher)

Robert's account of his teacher's subtle and insidious process of grading to differentiate Roma students from non-Roma in such a way that the former are rated as inferior is a hidden mechanism that develops the job ceiling by assigning Roma students a lower educational status. Szalai (2014) also claims that this mechanism contributes to the development of the ethnic ceiling in the labour market. Beyond this discriminative grading practice, Robert's recollection, as cited above, draws our attention to another hidden mechanism that contributes to the construction of the racial glass ceiling; that is, the lower expectations of schoolteachers towards Roma students than non-Roma ones on the basis of ascribing racialized differences in attitudes and behaviours to Roma children who do not identify themselves as such.

We must note, however, that many of our study participants mentioned the highly important role of a protective agent (Stanton & Salazar, 2004; Bereményi & Carrasco, 2017) at some point in their primary school careers. This protective agent was sometimes a supportive teacher who discovered the talent in our interviewees and therefore pushed them to achieve their full potential by encouraging them to further study. It could also have been a civil support programme/initiative or a foundation that aimed to (partially) compensate for the inequality of the education system by fostering the further study of those students who come from socioeconomically disadvantaged family backgrounds through mentoring and stipends (Boros et al., 2021).

As demonstrated in Section 3, Roma graduates are overrepresented in college- and university-level programmes that are related to the helping professions such as social studies and education. This contributes to the fact that many Roma graduates work in the field of

Roma issues. While many students selected these programmes themselves, several interviewees participated in preparation courses for university entry which targeted Roma students, and these courses usually prepared them exclusively for the entrance exams to sociology and social work courses. That is, this former group had no possibility to choose their own fields of study. In a similar vein, another interviewee who studied geography reported that her thesis topic was related to Roma issues because one of her teachers recommended that she choose it since she is Roma:

> R: …when I was writing my thesis, because I studied that topic, social and economic integration…
>
> Q: And why did you opt specifically for that topic?
>
> R: Because the professor whom I really liked and was very close to me advised [me to do it], since I am of Gypsy origin and come from Káposztás [there is a Gypsy settlement there] – that's why. (Aranka, 25, science teacher in a primary school)

These cases refer to the fact that the tacit opinion of some members of the majority society is that Roma people should deal with Roma issues, and this contributed to the career path of some of our interviewees.

5.2.2 Discrimination in the labour market

Another important factor that limits the free career choice and career opportunities of our respondents is discrimination against Roma people on the Hungarian labour market (Bodrogi & Iványi, 2004; Babusik, 2008; Sik & Simonovits, 2009; EU-MIDIS, 2009). Exclusion from mainstream occupations shifts them into 'racialized' (racially oriented) and/or social-service career paths. Furthermore, positive discrimination and affirmative labour-market programmes may also lead to the labour-market segmentation of Roma graduates when employers seek to hire Roma employees for certain racialized workplaces and job positions.

However, the effect of discrimination is not just that employers exclude or include certain employees, but one economic theory suggests that job seekers who experience discrimination will shape their job searches in ways that minimise the chances of encountering a discriminatory employer. That is, self-selection of labour-market opportunities is a strategy for avoiding discrimination. These job-search strategies by racialized minorities can be regarded as a form of adaptation to discrimination that strengthens segmented labour-market placement (Pager, 2015).

Many of our respondents mentioned cases of discrimination during their job search. For instance, Dóra, who graduated in the field of humanities, reported that she was not able to obtain employment as a high-school teacher, but she was welcomed into work in the civil sector:

> Finding a job as a secondary school teacher, which I could have done [which I was qualified for], I applied to a lot of places, but they didn't call me back, and then this sector found me [the NGO]. I also taught at a language school, but I never managed to get a job at a secondary school, although I tried many places – about forty. I had no luck. Some of the schools answered but most did not, and it was a shitty feeling. (Dóra, 32, project manager)

Some interviewees ended up in jobs related to Roma issues because of positive discrimination. Among them there are some interviewees whose previous career paths were a notable distance from the field of Roma issues. To offer an example, Hanga (40) graduated as a language teacher and was employed at a vocational high school when she was invited to work as an equity expert at a public organisation. Our respondents also mentioned cases of vertical discrimination when they were not allowed to advance above a certain level in the organisational hierarchy – but this takes us to the next mechanism that drives the racial glass ceiling; namely, tokenism.

5.2.3 Tokenism

As we have seen so far, the essence of the racial glass ceiling for our Roma professional interviewees is that even though they had equal educational qualifications and expertise to their White fellows, the phenomenon of the job ceiling denied them equal access to jobs commensurate with their training and abilities (Ogbu, 1978). Many of them perceived that they were only allowed to occupy jobs above this ceiling if they could be used as 'token Gypsies' by their employers. As Ogbu (1978) explained, we can speak about tokenism or 'token integration' when firms or institutions employ Blacks (or other visible or racialized minorities, or people of colour: Yosso, 2005) in occupations 'above' the job ceiling in an attempt to comply with 'fair' and 'diversity'-based employment policies or pressure from the Black community and local White liberals. Although there are many variations of tokenism, the motif is always the same: 'People-of-colour' (a racialized minority) college graduates are hired for window-dressing to demonstrate that their firm is an 'equal opportunity employer' (Ogbu, 1978). The excerpt that follows resonates with the experiences of many of our study participants:

> I felt many times, at different workplaces, that they needed a Roma face, they needed a Roma colleague to be able to say that they 'work with Roma'. But they never allowed me into decision-making roles, into management, or the leadership of the institutions. Despite the fact that I have two degrees and I speak advanced-level English, I was always assigned only to coordination tasks. (39-year-old woman, working in a ministry in the field of social services)

Another form of tokenism in Hungary that our study participants complained about is when Roma professionals are assigned by their most well-meaning non-Roma bosses – regardless of whether they want to – to work on projects that deal with Roma topics to legitimise the projects in the eyes of the Roma community. This has happened more often in recent years in parallel with the empowerment of the Roma emancipatory movement with its claim against racial oppression and for shared knowledge production (Bogdán et al., 2015). One of our interviewees recalls why she felt uncomfortable about her assigned roles in her department and therefore decided not to accept her 'token integration':

> Paraphrasing our famous Roma writer, Menyhért Lakatos, my professional desire is to be a researcher Gypsy not a Gypsy researcher. The emphasis is that I want to be an expert, a researcher who happens to be Gypsy. But at my workplace and everywhere in Hungary I have a racialized identity, unlike my Hungarian non-Roma colleagues whose identity is racially unmarked. They

> are just researchers. But I am a Gypsy researcher in their eyes, and therefore I am assigned or nicely pushed to deal with Roma topics. It just does not feel right. They confine me to a role where I can only be a Roma researcher. They deprive me of [the chance to be] a multicultural cosmopolitan scholar. Instead, they pushed me to deliver tokenistic tasks. They shouldn't have needed to show their positive affirmation support this way. They should rather have let me follow my research interests and they should have trusted my professional knowledge. (38-year-old woman, social scientist)

5.2.4 The expectation of 'giving back'

Many of our interviewees reported that they wish to 'give back' to their wider community but several respondents highlighted that this is also expected of them, and this may contribute to the Roma graduates' intention of finding jobs that are related to Roma issues. Our previous study (Nyírő & Durst, 2018) highlighted that ethnic support groups and organizations may strengthen this feeling of responsibility. Some programmes state this expectation, while others do not claim it, but their institutional habitus mediates a value system; a way of thinking that is in line with this direction. Gulyás (2021) found that Roma graduates encounter this expectation from majority society and the Roma community as well. She emphasised that some interviewees accept this requirement, while others reject it, but even members of the latter group do not reject their role as intellectuals in the field of helping the Roma community. Our results also support the claim that Roma graduates meet this expectation of members of the majority society and of the Roma community. Aside from Johnny, whom we already met at the beginning of this paper, many other study participants also talked about this situation. As one of them put it,

> There was moral pressure on us in 2000. There was this expectation that if you are a graduate [which is a rare and privileged position among the Roma] then you should go back to help your community. Where did this moral pressure come from? I don't know. From everywhere. From the Roma, and from the non-Roma. (46-year-old Roma woman, Romany language teacher at a university)

We must note that many Roma FIF graduates, however, chose this field of work as their 'soul work' (Nyírő & Durst, 2018): as a 'calling' to help their community of origin, and to do something meaningful for 'their people' to make the plight of the racially oppressed Roma more bearable and less unjust.

5.2.5 Self-efficacy

Our empirical findings shed light on another decisive mechanism that contributes to sustaining the racial glass ceiling in the labour market. Drawing on the psychologist Bandura's (1997) work, we call this factor the lack of belief in self-efficacy. The original meaning of the concept refers to one's belief in one's own capacity to succeed at something and to be able to control their social environment or to execute behaviours necessary for achieving specific tasks or attaining specific goals. A strong sense of self-efficacy strongly influences the kind of challenges a person is disposed to take on, and the choices they are likely to make. We argue, on the basis of some of our interviewees' personal narratives, that many professionally qualified Roma do not even try to apply for promotion to top jobs in majority, non-Roma

dominated occupational fields because they are highly aware of the existence of discrimination and the ensuing racial glass ceiling. Roma professionals have long and widespread experience of their assigned place in the Hungarian labour market, and this perception of their limited control of their social situation and their confined perspectives function as a self-fulfilling prophecy (see also Szalai, 2014) and restrain them from applying to top jobs.

Some of our highest achieving Roma interviewees recollected memories about their own 'failure' to 'dare' or 'shying away' from accepting invitations from their bosses to apply for promotion at their workplace. One of them, Lilly, explains why she did not rise beyond the job ceiling at her university:

> I didn't even try to apply for the position of head of department. I was told by the current head that even if my capabilities, personal qualities, and qualifications made me an ideal fit for this role, our colleagues (all of them of the non-Roma majority) would not feel comfortable seeing a Roma as head of their department. It would be unprecedented. And I knew this, so I decided not to try. I don't need any more rejection. I've had so much already. (Lilly, 45, university lecturer in a social science department)

Freddie's narrative follows a similar vein. He explains that his lack of control over the discriminatory practices of senior colleagues is why finally, after many years of unsuccessfully endeavouring to be promoted to more major roles in his theatre company, he decided to leave and change career paths and become a freelance artist.

> It took me years to realise that all my efforts [to be promoted to major roles in plays] were in vain. Being Roma, I just did not fit the image of a traditional actor in the theatre. So, I just gave up and went away to become a freelance artist. (Freddie, 42, actor)

We interpret both of these rationalisations about 'giving up' trying to scale the job ceiling as mechanisms involving a weak belief in self-efficacy. These beliefs are a consequence of perceived social inequality and discrimination against their Roma community of origin. We consider this self-efficacy to be another significant hidden mechanism that drives the racial glass ceiling in the labour market for our Roma FIF graduates.

However, this explanation should not be misread as individual-level deficits of high aspiration or ambition. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977) concept of 'self-elimination', Friedman and Laurison (2020) remind us how a lower-class origin can guide upwardly mobile people's action through their perceptions of their (poorer) chances in the future. They often commit acts of self-elimination in top jobs, or shy away from promotion opportunities as a reaction to and in anticipation of structural barriers. When it comes to our FIF Roma respondents, many of their narratives illuminate the way in which the intersection of their lower-class and their racialized minority origin affected their anticipation of failure regarding attempts to 'rise above their station'. Through the anticipation of what is 'achievable' and what is 'unachievable' to them as members of a racialized and discriminated minority, they eliminate themselves from applying to promotion/top jobs. This is because they make calculations on the basis of their own and others' former experiences of structural barriers and these former (bad) experiences give them a troubling feeling of insecurity about what challenges they have to overcome. Therefore, unconsciously, in response to the structural barriers (racialized differentiation and discrimination) that they are well aware of, some of our respondents preferred not to strive for the top jobs. In this way, their activity is implicated in the construction of the racial glass ceiling as their self-elimination is another driver of it.

5.2.6 Financial insecurity and the lack of 'the bank of Mum and Dad'

Last but not least, it was salient in the narratives of many of our study participants how the lack of financial security via their parents – that is, the missing 'Bank of Mum and Dad' (Friedman & Laurison, 2020) – held them back from investing in low-paying, entry level jobs such as internships in the private sector. Although they knew that this kind of investment would have returns, and could have led to income rewards in time, they simply could not afford this kind of investment. Mona's case is an eloquent example of this kind of (class of origin related) mechanism that also contributes to perpetuating the glass ceiling in the job market.

Mona's parents always wanted their daughter to become a criminal lawyer. Although they themselves had no further formal education than the then-compulsory eight grades, they dreamt of a brighter future for their two children. To secure a better chance for their kids, they moved to the capital, Budapest, and took up all kinds of menial jobs to be able to send the children to an integrated school with quality education. Their dreams seemed to be coming true: Mona not only managed to get into a good university in Budapest, but also got onto a law course. After her graduation, and in parallel with her volunteering in the field of Roma issues in the NGO sector, she even got an internship with the help of a non-Roma middle class friend's parent in a highly successful private law firm. She did not last long there, however. After two months she decided to leave the company. This is how she explained her decision to us in the interview:

> After a few weeks of working 10 to 12 hours a day for peanuts, I just realized that I could not do it. I sat down with my boss and told him that I was sorry, but I could not manage the job financially. I could not work 10 hours a day and wait another two to three years until I started to earn success fees from the cases that I was working on. I could not sustain myself on the interns' salary. I had to pay my rent and utility bills. And then the owner of the firm said that he was very sorry that I could not 'rise [out of poverty] through them'. There was another partner in the company; he was a bit more normal. He told me that it was a pity that he was not there when I had had my job interview for this internship position because the first question, he would have asked me would have been about my family background. Knowing where I am from, he would have suggested that I did not even try this job. 'This is not for first-generation graduates', he said. (Mona, 35, leader of a Roma NGO)

6 Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that there are two main characteristics of the labour market situation of the first-in-family (FIF) Roma college graduates who participated in our research project. The first is that many of them felt that there was a low ceiling on the Hungarian labour market and in their workplaces beyond which they, as Roma, could not advance. This ceiling, be it called the 'glass ceiling' (Boyd, 2012), 'class ceiling' (Friedman & Laurison, 2020), 'job ceiling' (Ogbu, 1978) or 'ethnic ceiling' (Szalai, 2014), explains why only very few of them managed to obtain and get by in high-salaried, highly prestigious top jobs. Among our interviewees there were hardly any managers, either in the public or in the private business sector, and no doctors, lawyers, or university professors.

We cross-examined the personal experiences of our Roma interviewees about the wide prevalence of the racial glass ceiling with survey data regarding the occupational situation of Roma graduates. Our empirical findings obtained through an online survey among FIF graduates and also from the 2011 census data on Roma professionals and the 2016 micro census data on FIF graduates question the widely held belief that education for racialized minorities is one of the most important channels for achieving upward social mobility; that is, for advancing in occupational and income status.

The second characteristic of the labour-market situation of our Roma study participants is that they are segmented and concentrated in a particular part of this market; namely, in the field of Roma issues. In this field, there are jobs or functions that are created to help the disadvantaged Roma community improve their socioeconomic situation. This segmentation exists for various reasons. It is mainly driven by structural inequalities and by the belief of the non-Roma dominant society that Roma professionals can better help remedy (centuries-long) inequalities (Kóczé, 2011; 2020; Gulyás, 2021). It is, however, also partly driven by personal (constrained) choice and a feeling of collective responsibility for one's disadvantaged community of origin.

These jobs are emotionally and psychologically burdensome, with limited or no career progression and are insecure, precarious, and suffer from a 'pay penalty'. (For the same results in the case of the Black professional middle class, see Collins, 1983; for the Roma middle class Nyírő & Durst, 2018; Gulyás, 2021). The fragility of the social mobility of our interviewees who (used to) work in public administration or the civil sector serving their less privileged Roma fellows was salient in many of their narratives.

All in all, we argue that the dynamic and complex interactions of various structural barriers that hinder Roma from getting into and advancing in highly prestigious top jobs and their response or adaptation to these barriers through their self-elimination from top jobs in the mainstream economy and concentration on Roma issues (the segmented ethno-racially oriented part of the labour market) drive the existence of the racial glass ceiling. With all these empirical findings, the paper demonstrates the fallacy of the myth of meritocracy (see also Lawler & Payne, 2018; Friedman & Laurison, 2020). We argue that instead of considering mobility as an individual project of self-advancement involving moving up in the social hierarchy, where only an individual's 'objective' merits such as their educational qualifications, abilities, and skills matter, we should realize that class and racialized ethnic minority origin 'cast a long shadow over people's lives' (Friedman & Laurison, 2020). We have explored how the intersections of these categories affect career opportunities for Roma FIF graduates.

One of our main arguments is that it is not the 'deficiency culture' of the Roma or the lack of aspiration or the personality flaws of those with disadvantaged family backgrounds but rather the racialization of their minority status that ties them to less prestigious and segmented occupational positions than their White privileged counterparts with similar qualifications. The unequal distribution of occupations happens through the workings of the racial glass ceiling.

Although the intersection of racialized minority status, class, and gender play a role in the existence of the glass ceiling, racial domination seems to be so powerful that it overrides gender inequality in accessing top jobs for our Roma FIF college-graduate study participants. 'It is as if gender was less important in the context of "otherness"' (Szalai, 2014, p. 81) when it comes to the assignment of jobs available to Roma professionals in Hungary. As our research

demonstrates, coming from a Roma family background, and being of (visible) Roma origin impacts one's job opportunities and (structurally constrained) choices (Durst & Nyírő, 2019) and limits advancement in the labour market in a powerful way. Therefore, we call the phenomenon of the glass ceiling (the hidden barriers to career advancement into highly prestigious top jobs in the case of our Roma college graduates) a racial glass ceiling. With this argument, we employ a similar logic to Szalai's (2014) concept of the 'ethnic ceiling' by which she claims that through systematically distributed lower grades and messages about 'lower value' presented to Roma students, teachers (also) contribute to the development of the invisible ethnic ceiling in schools and then in the labour market – a ceiling above which children who belong to (racialized) ethnic minorities can rarely climb.

Finally, we explored six drivers or (not so) hidden mechanisms of the racial glass ceiling in the labour market. These are the following: 1. Schools' and their teachers' covert racialization and discriminative behaviour coupled with their hidden messages about the inferior status of Roma students (See also Szalai, 2014). This hugely impacts the way that Roma students and their parents think about the horizon of possibilities for Roma people in the job market. 2. Overt discrimination in the labour market by employers. 3. Tokenism – which is perceived by some of our interviewees as a covert and unwelcome means of (positive) discrimination. 4. The expectation of the duty to 'give back' to the Roma community. 5. The lack of self-efficacy originating from a long-lasting and ubiquitous experience of discrimination and from the perceived assigned inferior status of the Roma people by the dominant majority society. Last but not least, 6. Financial insecurity involving the lack of a Bank of Mum and Dad (Friedman & Laurison, 2020) to lean on while waiting to reap the income reward of educational attainments associated with taking up low-paying intern positions in highly prestigious, high-salaried private firms.

Our findings show that these are the main mechanisms that keep Roma professionals removed from the opportunities and positions available for their non-Roma majority counterparts with similar educational qualifications. The research results also draw attention to the fragility of the social mobility of a majority of our interviewees who (used to) work in public administration or the civil sector serving their less privileged Roma fellows. The changing priorities of reigning government policies, such as reducing or cancelling publicly funded programs which indirectly assisted Roma middle-class advancement in professional jobs, as we have shown above, have had a direct impact on the shrinking job opportunities of Roma professionals. This is especially concerning in circumstances when even high achieving Roma with a university degree can hardly find their way into jobs in the private, corporate sector (Árendás & Messing, 2022) – that is, into the wider, general economy (Collins, 1983) – which would provide them with a more stable basis for obtaining the rewards for their educational achievements that are measured in income and job security on the labour market.

References

Árendás, Zs. & Messing, V. (2022). 'I was told the position has already been filled': Barriers to mobility and coping strategies of highly qualified Roma youth on their way to the business sector in Hungary. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics*, *8*(2), 41–58. https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.863

Árendás, Zs, Messing, V. & Zentai, V. (2018). With Eyes Wide Shut: Job Searching Qualified Roma and Employee Seeking Companies. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics*, *4*(1), 66–87. https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v4i1.407

Babusik F. (2008). A romák foglalkoztatási diszkriminációja a munkaerő-piacon [Employment discrimination of Roma people on the labour market]. *Esély,* (2), 47–70.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control.* Freeman.

Baxter, J. & Wright, E. O. (2000). The glass ceiling hypothesis: A comparative study of the United States, Sweden, and Australia. *Gender & Society, 14*(2), 275–294. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124300014002004

Beasley, M. A. (2011). Black professionals in racialized and community-oriented occupations: The role of equal opportunity protections and affirmative action in maintaining the status quo. *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts, 4*(2), 285–301. https://doi.org/10.2979/racethmulglocon.4.2.285

Bereményi, Á. & Carrasco, S. (2017). Bittersweet success: The impact of academic achievement among the Spanish Roma after a decade of Roma inclusion. W. T. Pink & G. W. Noblit (Eds.), *Second International Handbook of Urban Education* (pp. 1169–1198). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40317-5_62

Berényi, E. (2022). Social selection step by step: The case of the Early Selective Grammar Schools in Hungary. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics*, *8*(2). https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.848

Bernát, A. (2014). Leszakadóban: a romák társadalmi helyzete a mai Magyarországon [Getting left behind: The social position of Roma in Hungary today]. *Társadalmi riport, 13*(1), 246–267. https://www.tarki.hu/adatbank-h/kutjel/pdf/b333.pdf

Bodrogi, B. & Iványi, K. (2004). *Esélytelenül. Faji alapú megkülönböztetés a munkaerőpiacon [No chance: Racial discrimination on the labour market].* Nemzeti és Etnikai Kisebbség Jogvédő Iroda & Másság Alapítvány.

Bogdán, M., Ryder, A. & Marius, T. (2015). The Roma Spring: Knowledge production and the search for a new humanity. *Roma Rights: Journal of the European Roma Rights Centre,* (2), 33–37.

Boros, J., Bogdán, P. & Durst, J. (2021). Accumulating Roma cultural capital: First-in-family graduates and the role of educational talent support programs in Hungary in mitigating the price of social mobility. *Szociológiai Szemle*, *31*(3), 74–102. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2021.3.4

Boyd, K. S. (2012). Glass Ceiling. In *Encyclopaedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society* (pp. 549–552). Sage.

Brooks, R. L. (2017). *The Racial Glass Ceiling. Subordination in American Law and Culture*. Yale University Press.

Collins, S. M. (1983). The making of the black middle class. *Social Problems*, *30*(4), 369–382. https://doi.org/10.2307/800108

Collins, S. M. (2005). Occupational mobility among African-Americans: Assimilation or resegregation. In L. B. Nielsen & R. L. Nelson (Eds.), *Handbook of Employment Discrimination Research* (pp. 189–200). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-09467-0_9

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex. A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine. Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum,* (1), 139–167.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*(6), 1241–1299.

Csepeli, Gy. & Fábián, Z. & Sik, E. (1998). Xenofóbia és a cigányságról alkotott vélemények [Xenophobia and opinions on the Roma]. In T. Kolosi, I. Gy. Tóth & Gy. Vukovich (Eds.), *Társadalmi riport 1998,* (pp. 458–489). TÁRKI.

Desmond, M. & Emirbayer, M. (2009). What is racial domination? *Du Bois Review, 6*(2), 335–355. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X09990166

Durst, J. & Nyírő, Z. (2021). Introduction. Cultural migrants? The consequences of educational mobility and changing social class among first-in-family graduates in Hungary. *Szociológiai Szemle, 31*(3), 4–20. http://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2021.3.1

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2014). *Poverty and employment: The situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States. Roma survey – Data in focus.* Publications Office of the European Union. https://doi.org/10.2811/413303

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2016). *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey. Roma – Selected findings.* Publications Office of the European Union. https://doi.org/10.2811/469

Feischmidt, M., Szombati, K. & Szuhay, P. (2013). Collective criminalization of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe: Social causes, circumstances and consequences. In S. Body-Gendrot, M. Hough, K. Kerezsi, R. Lévy & S. Snacken (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of European Criminology* (pp. 168–187). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203083505.ch1

Fejes, J. B. & Szűcs, N. (Eds.) (2018). *Én vétkem. Helyzetkép az oktatási szegregációról [My fault: A view on educational segregation].* Motiváció Oktatási Egyesület.

Friedman, S. & Laurison, D. (2020). *The Class Ceiling: Why it Pays to be Privileged.* Policy Press & Bristol University Press.

Gans, H. (2017). Racialisation and racialisation research. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 40*(3), 341–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1238497

Glass, C. & Fodor, E. (2011). Public maternalism goes to market: Recruitment, hiring, and promotion in postsocialist Hungary. *Gender & Society*, *25*(1), 5–26. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243210390518

Grill, J. (2017). 'In England, they don't call you black!' Migrating racialisations and the production of Roma difference across Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44*(7), 1136–1155. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1329007

Gulyás, K. (2021). *Magyarországi roma értelmiségiek szerepei a romák oktatási integrációjában és társadalmi felzárkózásában [The roles of Hungarian Roma intellectuals in the educational integration and social inclusion of the Roma].* PhD thesis, Eszterházy Károly Katolikus Egyetem. https://doi.org/10.15773/EKE.2021.008

Hajdu, T., Kertesi, G. & Kézdi, G. (2014). *Roma fiatalok a középiskolában: Beszámoló a Tárki életpálya-felvételének 2006 és 2012 közötti hullámaiból [Roma youth in secondary school: Report on the 2006–2012 waves of the TÁRKI life course survey].* Budapest Working Papers on the Labour Market, 2014/7. https://www.tarki.hu/adatbank-h/kutjel/pdf/b334.pdf

Keresztes-Takács, O., Lendvai, L. & Kende, A. (2016). Romaellenes előítéletek Magyarországon: Politikai orientációtól, nemzeti identitástól és demográfiai változóktól független nyílt elutasítás [Prejudice against Roma in Hungary: Open rejection independent of political orientation, national identity or demographic variables]. *Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle, 71*(4), 609–627. https://doi.org/10.1556/0016.2016.71.4.2

Kertesi, G., Köllő, J., Károlyi, R., Szabó, L. T. (2022). *Hogyan lesz az etnikai előítéletből foglalkoztatási diszkrimináció? A kisvállalatok szerepe. [How ethnic prejudices make employment discrimination? The role of small enterprises].* KRTK–KTI Working Papers 2022/12. https://kti.krtk.hu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CERSIEWP202212.pdf

Kovács, É., Gárdos, J. & Vajda, R. (2020). Önszociológiák? Új kihívások a kvalitatív módszereket alkalmazó kutatásokban és archiválásukban [Autosociologies? New challenges in qualitative research and archiving]. In A. A. Gergely, Á. Kapitány, G. Kapitány, É. Kovács & V. Paksi (Eds.), *Kultúra, közösség és társadalom: Tanulmányok Tibori Timea tiszteletére* (pp. 123–140). Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont & Magyar Szociológiai Társaság.

Kóczé, A. (2017). Race, migration and neoliberalism: Distorted notions of Romani migration in European public discourses. *Social Identities, 24*(4), 459–473. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2017.1335827

Kóczé, A. (2020). Racialization, Racial Oppression of Roma. In I. Ness & Z. Cope (Eds.), *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism.* Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91206-6_124-1

Ladányi, J. & Szelényi, I. (2001). The Social Contruction of Roma Ethnicity in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary during Market Transition. *Review of Sociology, 7*(2), 79–89. https://doi.org/10.1556/revsoc.7.2001.2.5

Littler, J. (2017). *Against meritocracy: Culture, power and myths of mobility.* Taylor & Francis.

Lovász, A. & Telegdy, Á. (2010). Labour market discrimination – types, measurement issues, empirical solutions. In K. Fazekas, A. Lovász & Á. Telegdy (Eds.), *The Hungarian Labour Market: Review and Analysis 2010* (pp. 46–67). Institute of Economics IE HAS & National Employment Foundation.

Lawler, S. & Payne, G. (2018). Introduction. Everyone a winner? In S. Lawler & G. Payne (Eds.), *Social Mobility for the 21st century: Everyone a winner?* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351996808-1

Máté, D. (2021). *Reziliens romák a felsőoktatásban [Resilient Roma in higher education].* PhD dissertation, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem.

Morley, L. (2020). Thinking Differently about the Roma in Higher Education: Beyond Sex, Slums and Special Schools, and Towards Epistemic Inclusion. In L. Morley, A. Mirga & N. Redzepi (Eds.), *The Roma in European Higher Education: Recasting identities, Re-Imagining Futures* (pp. 17–32). Bloomsbury Academic. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350109667.0006

Mirga, A. & Redzepi, N. (2020). The Roma in European Higher Education: Explaining the Educational Gap of Roma in Higher Education. In L. Morley, A. Mirga & N. Redzepi (Eds.), *The Roma in European Higher Education: Recasting identities, Re-Imagining Futures* (pp. 33–56). Bloomsbury Academic. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350109667.0007

Nagy, B. (2017). Szervezet és nemek [Organisation and gender]. In M. Kovács (Ed.), *Társadalmi nemek: Elméleti megközelítések és kutatási eredmények* (pp. 57–68). ELTE Eötvös Kiadó.

Németh, K. (2016). A terepmunka és a kutatói pozíció reflektálása mint az értelmezés rejtett erőforrása [Reflecting on fieldwork and researcher position: A hidden resource for interpretation]. In T. Virág (Ed.), *Törésvonalak* (pp. 27–44). Gondolat.

Nyírő, Zs. & Durst, J. (2018). Soul work and giving back: Ethnic support groups and the hidden costs of social mobility. Lessons from Hungarian Roma graduates. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics, 4*(1), 88–108. https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v4i1.406

Ogbu, J. U. (1978). *Minority Education and Caste. The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective.* Academic Press.

Pager, D. & Pedulla, D. S. (2015). Race, self-selection, and the job search process. *American Journal of Sociology, 120*(4), 1005–1054. https://doi.org/10.1086/681072

Papp, Z. A. & Neumann, E. (2021). Education of Roma and Educational Resilience in Hungary. In M. M. Mendes, O. Magano & S. Toma, S. (Eds.), *Social and Economic Vulnerability of Roma People: Key Factors for the Success and Contiunity of Schooling Levels* (pp. 79–95). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52588-0_6

Radó, P. (2018). A közoktatás szelektivitása mint a roma szegregáció általános kontextusa [Selectivity of public education as the general context of Roma segregation]. In Fejes, J. B. & Szűcs, N. (Eds.), *Én vétkem. Helyzetkép az oktatási szegregációról* (pp. 31–55). Motiváció Oktatási Egyesület.

Ridgeway C. L. (2009). Framed before we know it: How gender shapes social relations. *Gender & Society, 23*(2), 145–160. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243208330313

Ridgeway C. L. (2001). Gender, Status and Leadership. *Journal of Social Issues, (57)*4, 637–655. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00233

Rövid, M. (2021). From tackling antigypsyism to remedying racial injustice. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 45*(9), 1738-1759. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.1972126

Sik, E. & Simonovits, B. (2010). Measuring discrimination: questionnaires and tests. In K. Fazekas, A. Lovász & Á. Telegdy (Eds.), *The Hungarian Labour Market: Review and Analysis 2010* (pp. 120–134). Institute of Economics IE HAS & National Employment Foundation.

Skeggs B. (1997). *Formations of class and gender.* Sage.

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (2004). Social capital among working-class minority students. In M. A. Gibson, P. Gándara & J. Peterson Koyama (Eds.), *School Connections: U.S. Mexican youth, peers, and school achievement.* Teachers College, Columbia University.

Szalai, J. (2014). The emerging 'ethnic ceiling': Implications of grading on adolescents' educational advancement in comparative perspective. In J. Szalai & C. Schiff (Eds.), *Migrant, Roma and post-colonial youth in education across Europe* (pp. 67–83). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137308634_5

Vajda, R. & Dupcsik, Cs. (2008). *Country report on ethnic relations: Hungary.* EDUMIGROM. http://www.edumigrom.eu/sites/default/files/field_attachment/page/node-1817/edumigrombackgroundpaperhungaryethnicrelations.pdf

Váradi, M. (2015). Roma nők a projekt világban: Portrék [Roma women in the project world: Portraits]. In T. Virág (Ed.), *Törésvonalak: Szegénység és etnicitás vidéki terekben* (pp. 121–140). Argumentum.

Wacquant, L. (2022). Resolving the trouble with 'Race'. *New Left Review, 133/134,* 67–88.

Wike, R., Stokes, B. & Simmons, K. (2016, July 11). *Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs. Sharp ideological divides across EU on views about minorities, diversity and national identity.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/07/Pew-Research-Center-EU-Refugees-and-National-Identity-Report-FINAL-July-11-2016.pdf

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *8*(1), 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006

Appendix

Table 1 Distribution of respondents according to whether they work in the social sector by ethnicity

	Roma		non-Roma		Total	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
not working in the social services sector	29	37,7%	2746	66,2%	2775	65,7%
working in the social services sector	48	62,3%	1399	33,8%	1447	34,3%
Total	77	100,0%	4145	100,0%	4222	100,0%

Source: First Generation Graduates Online Survey, 2019–2020

Table 2 Logistic regression coefficients predicting the odds ratio of the probability of 'working in the field of social services' compared to the probability of 'not working in the field of social services' (dependent variable: not working or working in the field of social services, estimation method: Multinominal Logistic Regression)

Variables		**Exp(B)**
Age		1.01*
Ethnicity: Roma (reference: non-Roma)		3.86*
Gender: woman (reference: man)		1.02
Type of settlement (reference: Budapest)	village	2.10*
	city	1.92*
	chief town of a county	1.50*

Note: * p <0.01

Source: First Generation Graduates Online Survey, 2019–2020

Table 3 Distribution of respondents according to whether they work in the non-profit sector by ethnicity

	Roma		non-Roma		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
not working in the non-profit sector	53	67,1%	3854	89,5%	3907	89,1%
working in the non-profit sector	26	32,9%	453	10,5%	479	10,9%
Total	79	100,0%	4307	100,0%	4386	100,0%

Source: First Generation Graduates Online Survey, 2019–2020

Table 4 Logistic regression coefficients predicting the odds ratio of the probability of 'working in the non-profit sector' compared to the probability of 'not working in the non-profit sector' (dependent variable: not working or working in the non-profit sector, estimation method: Multinominal Logistic Regression)

Variables		**Exp(B)**
Age		1.01*
Ethnicity: Roma (reference: non-Roma)		4.28*
Gender: woman (reference: man)		0.89
Type of settlement (reference: Budapest)	village	0.86
	city	0.83
	chief town of a county	0.86

Note: * $p<0.01$

Source: First Generation Graduates Online Survey, 2019–2020

Table 5 Distribution of respondents according to whether they work in the public sector by ethnicity

	Roma		non-Roma		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
not working in the public sector	36	45,6%	1707	39,6%	1743	39,7%
working in the public sector	43	54,4%	2600	60,4%	2643	60,3%
Total	79	100,0%	4307	100,0%	4386	100,0%

Source: First Generation Graduates Online Survey, 2019–2020

Table 6 Logistic regression coefficients predicting the odds ratio of the probability of 'working in the public sector' compared to the probability of 'not working in the public sector' (dependent variable: not working or working in the public sector, estimation method: Multinominal Logistic Regression)

Variables		**Exp(B)**
Age		1.04*
Ethnicity: Roma (reference: non-Roma)		0.99
Gender: woman (reference: man)		1.07
Type of settlement (reference: Budapest)	village	1.65*
	city	1.75*
	chief town of a county	1.62*

Note: * $p<0.01$

Source: First Generation Graduates Online Survey, 2019–2020

Table 7 Distribution of respondents according to whether they work in the private sector by ethnicity

	Roma		**non-Roma**		**Total**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
not working in the private sector	63	79,7%	2987	69,4%	3050	69,5%
working in the private sector	16	20,3%	1320	30,6%	1336	30,5%
Total	79	100,0%	4307	100,0%	4386	100,0%

Source: First Generation Graduates Online Survey, 2019–2020

Table 8 Logistic regression coefficients predicting the odds ratio of the probability of 'working in the private sector' compared to the probability of 'not working in the private sector' (dependent variable: not working or working in the private sector, estimation method: Multinominal Logistic Regression)

Variables		**Exp(B)**
Age		0.95*
Ethnicity: Roma (reference: non-Roma)		0.42*
Gender: woman (reference: man)		0.91
Type of settlement (reference: Budapest)	village	0.56*
	city	0.55*
	chief town of a county	0.59*

Note: * $p < 0.01$

Source: First Generation Graduates Online Survey, 2019–2020

Table 9 Distribution of employed Roma graduates and total graduate population according to main occupational groups,* 2011

Occupational groups	Roma graduates		Total graduate population	
	N	%	N	%
1 – Managers	179	9.5%	119 742	12.0%
2 – Professionals	1063	56.7%	565 613	56.9%
3 – Technicians and associate professionals	317	16.9%	175 320	17.6%
4 – Office and management (customer services) occupations	75	4.0%	42 255	4.2%
5 – Commercial and services occupations	125	6.7%	50 051	5.0%
6 – Agricultural and forestry occupations	10	0.5%	8 064	0.8%
7 – Industry and construction industry occupations	13	0.7%	10 437	1.0%
8 – Machine operators, assembly workers, drivers of vehicles	22	1.2%	6 094	0.6%
9 – (Elementary) occupations not requiring qualifications	56	3.0%	10 505	1.1%
0 – Armed forces occupations	15	0.8%	6 556	0.7%
Total	1875	99.9%	994 637	100.0%

* Hungarian Standard Classification of Occupations, FEOR-08*

Source: KSH, Census 2011

Table 10 Distribution of employed Roma graduates and total graduate population in occupational group of 1 – managers, 2011

Occupational groups	Roma graduates		Total graduate population	
	N	%	N	%
11 – Legislators, heads of administration, and heads of special-interest organisations	22	12%	9 538	8%
12 – Managing directors and chief executives of business organisations and budgetary institutions	…		2 667	2%
13 – Production and specialized services managers	126	70%	78 484	66%
14 – Heads of units assisting business activities	31	17%	29 053	24%
Total	179	100%	119 742	100%

Source: KSH, Census 2011

… data not disclosable

Table 11 Distribution of employed Roma graduates and total graduate population in the occupational group of 13 – production and specialised services managers, 2011

Occupational groups	Average gross earnings of full-time employees by occupation [HUF/person/month] in 2021	Roma graduates		Total graduate population	
		N	%	N	%
1311 - Agricultural, forestry, fisheries, hunting production manager	595 104	3409	4%	…	
1312 - Manufacturing and mining manager	962 901	11405	15%	11	9%
1313 - Construction manager	597 861	5116	7%	10	8%
1321 - Supply, distribution, storing manager	791 861	5453	7%	3	3%
1322 - Information and communications technology service manager	1 236 077	4292	5%	7	6%
1323 - Banking manager	1 300 424	3114	4%	…	
1324 - Social welfare manager	490 133	2550	3%	10	8%
1325 - Childcare service manager	490 422	308	0%	–	
1326 - Aged care service manager	475 931	355	0%	…	
1327 - Health service manager	1 388 181	4393	6%	7	6%
1328 - Educational manager	651 682	9940	13%	20	17%
1329 - Other services manager	729 743	4410	6%	14	12%
1331 - Hotel manager	584 324	1089	1%	…	
1332 - Restaurant manager	389 002	1794	2%	7	6%
1333 - Sales and marketing manager	605 656	12832	16%	8	7%
1334 - Business service manager	1 051 905	2865	4%	8	7%
1335 - Cultural centre manager	587 741	1793	2%	9	8%
1336 - Sports and recreational centre manager	594 889	467	1%	…	
1339 - Other commercial, catering and similar service manager	521 036	2899	4%	4	3%
Total		78484	100%	118	100%

Source: KSH, Census 2011, https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/mun/hu/mun0059.html

– the observed statistical phenomenon did not occur
… data not disclosable

Zsuzsanna Árendás* & Vera Messing**

'I was told the position has already been filled': Barriers to mobility and coping strategies of highly qualified Roma youth on their way to the business sector in Hungary

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 41–58.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.863
https://intersections.tk.hu

* [arendas.zsuzsanna@tk.hu] (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest; CEU Democracy Institute)
** [messing.vera@tk.hu] (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest; CEU Democracy Institute)

Abstract

The article investigates educational and career paths of educated Roma youth in Hungary as striving to enter quality employment in the business sector. While the employment rate of well-educated Roma youth is high compared to the general Roma population, their sectoral distribution is skewed towards self-employment, and towards the public sector vis-à-vis private sector. Our article investigates the reasons for the low presence of educated Roma in the business sphere, a sector which holds the greatest potential of occupational and social mobility. We use a survey dataset of educated young Roma (N=381), and also rely on in-depth interviews with youth from the same group, which provided us with a better understanding of the individual experiences of social mobility. We identify some of the main barriers linked to business sector employment of the Roma youth. By utilising the Bourdieusian theoretical lens, we focus on the importance of cultural habitus and its misrecognition in professional settings. The paper analyses successful capital mobilizations of those striving towards/ experiencing social mobility, while discussing experiences of failures too. These findings are unique in their nature as they pinpoint individual mobility strategies, the role of different forms of capitals in strive for jobs and later in early professional career.

Keywords: social mobility; Roma in CEE; racialized minority; forms of Bourdieusian capital; barriers to mobility; corporate sector

1 Introduction

The Roma are the most stigmatized and vulnerable ethnic minority in Hungary and the wider Central East European region. Their disadvantages concern all spheres of life, such as education, employment, housing, health. Although the term Roma (or as many call themselves in Hungary, 'cigány' (Gypsy)) embraces a highly heterogeneous, culturally, socially and economically diverse subgroups of people (Tremlett, 2014; McGarry, 2014) and despite the methodological difficulties of obtaining reliable data about their situation (Messing, 2014a; Rughinis, 2010), all available data sources and studies suggest that they possess an exceptionally vulnerable position on the labour market and hit a 'glass ceiling' concerning educational, pro-

fessional and social mobility. The gap between Roma and non-Roma does not seem to be closing despite considerable efforts, policy interventions and funds dedicated to what is referred to by mainstream institutions as 'Roma inclusion'. Labour market exclusion is one of the most important reasons as well as consequences of Roma's social exclusion and derive from a complex web of factors including racial discrimination, inadequate education, geographical disparities, family and gender patterns, lack of political voice and representation to mention the most important ones (Kertesi & Kézdi, 2011; O'Higgins & Ivanov, 2006; Ciaian & Kancs, 2018; Kahanec, 2014; Messing, 2014b; Vermeersch, 2017). A rich pool of studies explain labour market exclusion through the prism of policy interventions and labour market programmes operated by the state or civil actors (Ciaiana & Kancs, 2019; Messing, 2015), however there are very few studies, which would pose the question about the role of the business sphere in the labour market and wider social integration of the Roma. Our study aims to fill in this gap from a particular angle: examining employment opportunities of well-educated Roma youth in the business sector. It is evident that as long as many Roma remain out of the private, for-profit (business) sector, their labour market position will be characterized by vulnerability and exposure to state operated labour market interventions and limited employment opportunities in the public sector.

Our study changes lenses from the 'vulnerable Roma' and investigates those cases, where young Roma are on their way of becoming successful in terms of career and social mobility: after completing upper secondary or tertiary education, as they become formally competitive in the labour market. The paper takes account of the major barriers they encounter and negotiate as approaching quality employment in the private sector. For this end we will use the unique data set that was obtained during Bridge to Business project's impact study[1] including a survey of 381 young (18–35-year-old) Roma with at least upper secondary qualification in Hungary and two dozen of interviews with the same group. Our investigation begins from understanding challenges of accessing and completing quality education. We include spatial inequalities, the presence of helpers or hinderers (including family members, relatives and teachers) while analysing this stage of individual paths. After the section on experiences in education, we shift our focus to examine factors enabling access to a highly prestigious segment of the job market, the corporate sector. We selected this segment of the job market for two reasons: it is heavily understudied although it is the sector potentially enabling the largest 'jump' in social mobility due to its high prestige, well-paid positions, and secondly, there are no studies available on the professional mobility to and within this sector for the Roma. Our analysis closes with a few cases of career progress of young Roma within this sector. These cases enable us to discuss some of the challenges of professional mobility as experienced by the actors themselves.

[1] 'Bridging Young Roma and Business – Intervention for inclusion of Roma youth through employment in the private sector in Bulgaria and Hungary' project has been supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) 2014–2020. The project took place between 2016 and 2019, and was led by the Open Society Foundation, Sofia. Partner institutions were Autonómia Foundation in Budapest responsible for implementing the programme in Hungary and the Center for Policy Studies, CEU in Budapest responsible for the impact evaluation and research.

2 Theoretical background

The paper approaches educational and early career paths of Roma youth as a social inclusion and mobility question. It applies Bourdieu's theoretical approach involving different forms of capital and their role in *social mobility.* As Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) argued knowledge transferred between generations secures status in society and thus reproduces social hierarchy. Yet, Bourdieu speaks not only about reproduction of social position via birth (which would suggest only immobility) but also about social advancement and mobility through knowledge gained through formal schooling. However, findings of research on education's role in mobility paths of racialized minorities indicate that formal education rarely fulfils this potential efficiently. Racialized minority students in formal education are typically falling behind in school and teachers routinely identify them as 'lacking' certain skills or capitals to (be able to) become socially mobile. (Yosso, 2005, p. 70) Invoking the Critical Race Theory lens (CRT), Yosso offers a critical interpretation of Bourdieu's cultural capital theory (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and introduces the concept of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005). The author identifies at least six alternative forms of cultural capital that students from racialized minority communities may bring with them into formal school environment: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance. She argues that many of these alternative forms of capitals go unacknowledged in formal school settings. When discussing Roma's access to business sector jobs, the following types of alternative cultural capitals appear to be the most relevant. (1) *Aspirational capital* refers to the ability to maintain hope in the face of hardship, while (2) *familial capital* refers to strong interpersonal supportive networks coming from extended families in the community. (3) *Navigational capital* is yet another important alternative resource, which refers to skills and abilities to navigate institutions, including educational spaces. The lack of such capital may become a major barrier in educational career and later during entry to competitive jobs. In this study, we analyse capital mobilization and uses of alternative Community Cultural Wealth, which contribute to educational achievements and a successful transition from education to employment. In less successful cases, when barriers occur these alternative forms of cultural capital are being mis/unrecognized by majority institutional actors.

Our approach has important antecedents in Hungary in the research tradition on social mobility of highly educated Roma people. Authors like Nyírő and Durst (2018; 2021), Durst and Bereményi (2021) focus on the upward mobility of the Roma youth and examine the different mobility strategies, the effects of (hidden) costs of upward mobility of Roma professionals. The interviewees Nyírő and Durst (2018) spoke to took up mostly public, or non-profit sector positions connected to the 'Roma issue', thus reconnecting with their communities of origin and the poorer Roma. This however meant fewer career opportunities and limited access to the private sector, where the most financially lucrative positions are located. As they conclude, more opportunities are needed for the high achieving Roma in the corporate sector (Nyirő & Durst, 2018, p. 102). Our study takes up the thread from this point.

Another theoretical inspiration for our article, also emerging from the Bourdeausian tradition, looks at mechanisms of reproduction of privileges through the lens of social class. Friedman and Laurison in their recent book (2020) pay special attention to barriers of social mobility of individuals with working-class origins. They offer a critical take on classical social mobility studies by emphasizing the role of class in getting 'in' to and getting 'on' in

prestigious corporate jobs. The authors argue that in contrast to meritocratic ideas, which emphasize the central role of merit in career achievements (see corporate ethos), *class origin casts a long shadow* on people's lives.

Friedman and Laurison argue that class background is defined by one's parents' stock of three primary forms of capital (economic, cultural, and social). These not only structure one's childhood, but they tend to be inherited. While the passing on of economic (monetary assets) and social capital (networks) seems to be more straightforward, the inheritance of cultural capital is a more complex process. Bourdieu introduces the concept of *habitus* for this end, describing a set of *dispositions* which organize and define how we relate to and understand the world around us.

The real significance of such dispositions and various aspects of symbolic mastery associated with the privileged classes is their direct relevance to social mobility. Such dispositions tend to be (mis)recognized, especially in highly elit(ist) environments such as leading corporate firms. (Friedman & Laurison, 2020) They are assigned with high value and are read as signs of cultural competence and distinctions. This is in short how class privilege becomes reproduced. What is especially problematic about this practice from the point of justice and equality is that while passing on economic assets and social contacts is (relatively) easy to spot, cultural capital is transferred in less obvious ways. Such capacities tend to be (mis)red as signs of talent, 'natural sophistication', innate intelligence, while the lack of such dispositions is misinterpreted as lack of 'merit' and 'talent' (Friedman & Laurison, 2020).

Our analysis takes into account different forms of social and cultural capital, which may contribute to the understanding of the barriers in accessing jobs in the corporate world, and in a broader sense, during social mobilities of young Roma people. The 'capital-focused approach' is important, as it is applied in a sector particularly proud of its meritocratic ethos, often (mis)understood as a 'pure competition of talent'.

We believe that our research can inform the international scholarship of social mobility on two important points. Our research material describes the limited pathways of social mobility for an ethno-racial minority in Hungary through taking account of the various barriers individuals negotiate as trying to access a prestigious segment of the job-market (the private business sector). As we show later, these barriers can be linked to the so-called 'meritocratic' principles and to difficulties in converting non-dominant forms of capital into professional recognition in corporate settings based on cultural capital of the privileged (upper-middle) classes. Despite all odds, we also identify successful cases of minority community capital mobilization.

3 Data and methods

The analysis applies a mixed method approach including qualitative and quantitative research data that mutually supplement each other. A survey of 18–35-year old Roma youth with at least secondary school matriculation forms the basis of the quantitative analysis. The survey includes 381 individuals aged 18–35 with at least matura exam,[2] making the

[2] Matura exam (*érettségi*) is a secondary school leaving exam that is universal (not school specific) and marks graduation from upper secondary education. It is a prerequisite to enter tertiary education.

sample as high as 5 per cent of the relevant population, which is a strong sample in statistical terms.[3] The sample comprises of two subsamples: one includes participants of the Bridge to Business program addressed to Roma youth (N=93), and was collected for each of the ten cohorts when they entered the program (between March 2017 and May 2019),[4] and the other involves Roma youth with matriculation recruited with a snowball sampling method that served as the control group for the impact study of the same program (N=288) (this survey was conducted in 2017).[5] The sample is geographically not focused, but covered the entire country, as programme participants were recruited through NGOs located in the four regional centres with significant Roma population, while the control group was recruited through a snowball sample started from 6 different regional centres.[6] The gender distribution of the combined sample is slightly leaning towards women (41 per cent male vs 59 per cent female). Geographic location is a similarly important aspect when evaluating the sample: 15 per cent of Bridge to Business program participants lived in Budapest (which also served as the main training site), half came from rural towns, and one-third lived in villages. The control group is somewhat different, with a larger share of those living in the capital city and a smaller share of those residing in villages. Although there are no baseline data against which the representativity of the sample of this very small and specific group could be established, looking at the distribution of the respondents across geographical regions, settlement type and gender it can be considered as a sample describing educated Roma youth in Hungary fairly well. The survey inquired about their education background, employment history, family/household settings, their personal network, skills, future plans concerning career and personal life.

Our research is unique due to the specific sample of a subgroup of the Roma: the young elite in terms of educational qualification and potentials of successful labour market career. Half of the respondents were in employment and a fifth were still in education at the time of the survey. However, if we look at where these youth work, we see that it is skewed to self-employment and employment in the public sector, especially when compared to non-Roma. There is a much higher rate of those who are self-employed or work in a family business (30 per cent), or in the public sector (39 per cent), while employment in the business sphere is quite marginal: only a fifth worked in the private sector (excluding family business). These data call for an explanation of the highly slanted distributions of sectors when it comes to employment of qualified Roma.

Last but not least, we also conducted over two dozen qualitative interviews with young Roma from the same group involved in the survey. Interviews were conducted throughout the entire time-span of the Bridge to Business programme (between March 2017 and May

---

3 Based on the census data (KSH, 2011) 5684 individuals aged 20–29, and 3274 individuals aged 30–39 having at least upper secondary certificate identified themselves as Roma (self-identification, and dual identification is allowed). We may presume that the number of those in the age group of 18–35 is approximately 7000–7500 and thus our sample covers over 5 per cent of the population.

4 And also a follow-up to their programme participation a survey has been filled at a later stage in order to measure impact, but this is not used in this analysis.

5 As in fn. 4.

6 The geographical distribution of the sample (who provided with their zip code) is as follows: 38 per cent Budapest, 14 per cent Central Hungary, 11 per cent North East HU, 16 per cent Alföld regions, 11 per cent South West HU, 11 per cent Western HU.

2019), with participants from each cohort when they entered the programme (2–4 persons/ cohort). With a dozen of our respondents the interviews were repeated within a year, in some cases, we have followed up on our interviewees' career developments and life events beyond the first year of the research. Interviews discussed family background, childhood history, school experiences, educational paths, motivations as well as employment experiences, failures and successes, career plans, and job preferences.

In the following sections we examine mechanisms of the social production of inequalities. Stages of an individual life course laced together with defining institutional encounters (such as schooling) and further social factors (spatial inequalities) provide the context for interpreting the intricacies of social mobilities of individuals belonging to a racialized minority. These contexts and factors explain the most important barriers preventing young Roma to access prestigious employment in the business sector or making their way to it extremely challenging. The analysis of barriers is complemented with coping techniques, shedding light on the importance of individual agencies and the role of individual predispositions. The latter directs us to the Bourdeusian lens, to the role of capitals (mostly cultural and social), including non-dominant capitals (such as community capital) from the critical stream of this scholarly tradition.

4 On the road to the corporate workplace

4.1 Troubled experience during compulsory schooling and its long shadow

Formal schooling is a place of knowledge-making, or in a Bourdeusian wording, a space of capital formation. It is also a place for pre-existing norms, behaviors, cultural codes to get reconfirmed and built upon, while alternative codes, behaviours and norms are pushed aside, denied, or they are straight away penalized. Scholarship about racialized minority children's school trajectories point out that the mis/unrecognition of alternative forms of cultural capital, including minority community capital takes place in the early, formative years of schooling, which has a long-lasting effect on these children's school performance, on transition from education to work, and on their job search and employment.

Confirming findings of earlier research (Ercse, 2019; Kertesi & Kézdi, 2014; Zolnay, 2018), we can read from our survey that th*e greatest barrier for young Roma is to enter and complete upper secondary school offering matriculation.*[7] Data show that once successfully graduated from upper secondary education and gained Matura, the educational trajectories of Roma youth are comparable to non-Roma. 24 per cent have tertiary degree (MA 3 per cent and BA 21 per cent, and a further 4 per cent other types of post-secondary degrees), in addition 25 per cent of them pursued tertiary studies during the research.[8] These data suggest that a similar share of Roma and non-Roma youth who achieved upper secondary diploma

[7] Based on census data only 12 per cent of the 20–24 cohort, 10 per cent of the 25–29 cohort, 7 per cent of the 30–39 cohort and 5 per cent of the 40–70 cohort reached the level of matricula, while these shares are significantly more favourable for non-Roma (62 per cent of the 20–24 cohort, 42 per cent for the 25–29 cohort, 34 per cent for the 30–39 cohort).

[8] These data are in accord with the data of the 2011 census: 24 per cent of 25–40 years' old Roma with matricula (N=5739) have graduated from university (N=1387).

(matriculation) are likely to continue education towards tertiary or other post-secondary education.[9] Nevertheless, as presented later, educational careers of the few who successfully completed upper secondary school are linked to several positive conditions – we identify these as different (often alternative) forms of capital. These may result in successfully negotiating barriers.

So, what are the barriers linked to minority experiences that mainstream middle class institutions tend to misread? One is certainly the *scattered school trajectory* that characterizes most Roma students who reach the level of upper secondary education. While non-Roma typically pursue their secondary school studies in the same school unless the family moves to another geographical location most of our Roma respondents (72 per cent) reported changing schools at least once during the 4 years of upper secondary education. Scattered school trajectory is likely to be misread by middle class institutional actors (school principals or corporate HR professionals) as a lack of persistence and focus. However, interviews point out that in addition to personal life-events, changing schools has two typical motives directly linked to being a member of a racialized minority: either it is a response to the quality of the school or to discriminatory behaviour of teachers. Many Roma young people are systematically ushered into schools of the lowest quality, which do not prepare them for matriculation (érettségi). This later becomes a formal barrier to continuing education beyond compulsory schooling. Several of our interviewees gave account that changing school was motivated by its low quality and inability to prepare for matriculation, which is a prerequisite to continuing education beyond compulsory schooling. Leaving school was frequently motivated also to escape from discriminatory school practices. Several of our interviewees reported enduring verbal harassment during secondary school studies from some of their teachers or peers.

Such experiences have built into their behaviour, self-esteem, ambitions and emerged in the form of cultural 'incompatibilities', 'incompetence', 'inadequacies' during the schooling career and transition from school to work. The example of L tells how such insults may have a long-lasting effect on self-esteem and function as a barrier to perform well in competitive situations such as a job interview or exam:

> I had a teacher, who taught literature and grammar. She picked on me. Would she sit in front of me now, and tell 'you smelly Gypsy' I wouldn't care. Unless she hit me, just verbally abuse, I wouldn't care, anymore. It is her problem, not mine […] But it was different back then. Our class was preparing a recital and she would not allow me to join. She either bullied me or would not notice me at all. My literature grades started to drop, and while I still had excellent grades in other subjects a mental block built up with which I struggle up to date. If I am tossed out of my comfort zone – for example in an examination or interview situation – my mind blocks and I can't find words, can't continue speaking, I become speechless. I think, the source of this psychological block dates back to this teacher.

Beyond the clear evidence of racially motivated abuse taking place in the school, the long-term consequences and their impact on one's personal life and professional career decades later needs to be emphasized here. This latter takes place through the bodily incorporation of the experience of being shamed, which returns in situations of social selection and classification, e.g. school or job admissions.

---

[9] According to the 2016 microcensus 46 per cent of those who have matriculated continued to tertiary education in the total population.

Another important factor affecting life and career chances for Roma youth is the presence or the lack of strong and diverse familial and community support that is decisive in escaping segregated schooling. According to a comprehensive scholarship on this issue, segregated schooling is a major barrier to successful educational career for Roma. (for example (Hajdú et al., 2019; Fejes & Szűcs, 2019; Messing, 2017) Our data support these finding and indicate the devastating role of segregated schooling in primary school. While over half of Roma children in Hungarian compulsory education (6–15 years) attend either segregated schools or segregated classes of mixed schools (EU FRA, 2018),[10] only 10 per cent of the respondents of our survey – all of whom passed Matura exam – have signalled the segregated environment in primary school. Our research indicates that using alternative community capitals they were able to prevent segregated schooling. Many explained how the choice of a non-segregated primary school in contrast to going along the 'obvious way', that is into the local segregated school environment, has been a conscious parental choice or effort. Strong parental agency and awareness of the significance of quality schooling for our interviewees proved to be crucial in secondary school level too. Interviews indicate how much the parental motivation – often paired up with some sort of social capital and information regarding which school to choose or whom to ask – to set the child on the right track defines later educational outcomes and professional consequences.

This choice/effort is similarly important when transitioning from general primary school to secondary school. The most typical trajectory for young Roma people is vocational training (Kende & Szalai, 2018; Messing, 2017). Enrolling to a gymnasium (upper secondary school with academic track) is atypical even though the final exam (matriculation) decides which segments of the job market one can access later. When talking to young Roma, most mentioned the family as the most important source of inspiration to continue education on an academic track. In some cases that family (parents) made this decision against the advice of the head teacher, who suggested the child not to aspire too high. In other cases, another significant adult played a great influence on educational career choices. This may be a teacher or other adult in the direct environment of the child. For example, an interviewee who hailed from a dysfunctional family, was not only convinced by friend's parents to continue education in an upper secondary school, but they also supported him financially. Interestingly, there were very few mentions of NGOs or extracurricular programs, such as the after school club (*Tanoda*) network (Messing, 2014; Fejes, 2014) formed to support young Roma in their education and career choices, while almost all of the survey respondents gave account of benefiting from some kind of scholarship program at certain stage of their educational careers. These cases all stand for the importance of community resources or capitals, as forms of non-dominant capitals. Their potential to put someone on a mobility track, or to keep one there should not be underestimated.

[10] The FRA EU MIDIS survey overrepresents Roma living in marginalization, therefor the data on school segregation is likely to overestimate the reality, but school segregation is significant according to Hungarian national data sources too.

4.2 Post-secondary education and graduation: Gaining employment relevant skills and qualifications

The relevance of various forms of capitals, including minority cultural wealth is extremely relevant during transition from compulsory to post-secondary education; when choosing a profession and applying to an institution of tertiary education. When firms argue about the lack of Roma in the corporate sector they point out the mismatch of qualification and skills between what the companies are looking for and what young Roma can deliver. (Árendás, Messing & Zentai, 2018) This is a complex issue since it involves several factors mutually reinforcing each other. It includes the general discontent of employers with the educational outcomes of the school system in general, that it does not prepare young people for the current needs of the job market irrespective of ethnic minority background. Secondly, it is about misrecognition of skills and cultural dispositions of most of the minority candidates by employers who belong to the upper-middle class. They often read them as 'unfit' and 'not matching' the positions they want to fill up.

There is a widely shared belief among HR professionals in the corporate sphere about a sectoral 'mismatch' between young Roma candidates and employers: according to this belief educated Roma typically gain qualifications, which are not functional in the private sector, such as social care, teacher training and nursing rather than professions sought after in the business sector (Árendás, Messing & Zentai, 2018). The analysis of the professional tracks in our sample does not support this 'shared knowledge'. The majority of post-secondary, non-tertiary trainings (ISCED 4) are highly compatible with the business sphere's demands (administration, project coordination, service sphere professions).[11] What we have observed during our fieldwork is that the multiple qualifications are common among highly educated young Roma, as an answer to better 'fit' the employers' expectations and a clear sign of the presence and use of navigational capital. We recognize this as part of young Roma people's successful coping strategies. Whenever a window of opportunity 'closes', they look for another path. This results in a diverse portfolio, which is often read by the HR professionals as lack of focus of career ambitions rather than what it is: a sign of young people's ability to change, to react swiftly, a non-dominant type of capital enabling young people to 'moving ahead'. People brought up in marginalized situations often acquire this type of capital early on, while for an HR person with an upper-middle class background it is uninterpretable, or worse, misread as a disadvantage.

As part of formal qualification, most business sector employers look for specific skills; user-level IT and foreign language communication skills are required for most business sector jobs. Our survey data suggest that Roma youth with secondary school diploma have major disadvantages in these areas. This is a result of the public education system being unfit to

[11] A third of the survey respondents had qualifications in administration, project coordination, approximately a quarter gained qualification in service sphere professions, and only a fifth in the social sector professions (mediator, social worker, community coordinator). It is conspicuous that many respondents reported pursuing multiple, unrelated professional trainings (such as for example agricultural machine technician – community developer – masseur; or salesperson – tourism manager – nursery assistant).

provide for these skills. In addition, Roma families lack financial capital to counter-balance low-quality schooling with private tuitions (only 20 per cent have English skills that qualify them for jobs in the business sphere).

Regarding the sectoral 'mismatch' concerning tertiary education (ISCED 5 and 6), survey data suggest that Roma youth's choices in tertiary education are diverse: 27 per cent indicated studying (or graduating from) economics and law, a similar share studied to become a teacher, and 9 per cent indicated each of the following five categories: engineering, social sciences, healthcare, culture and religious studies, social worker. Certainly, professions sought for in the public sphere, such as education, social and health care are more frequent among Roma university students and graduates than among the non-Roma, still, presuming that these professions dominate over the competitive ones is far from reality. What makes Roma less competitive in the job market of the business sector is the fact that many graduate from low-ranked institutions of upper secondary and tertiary education: from rural non-prestigious secondary schools and small colleges, where the quality of education is meagre and infrastructure significantly poorer than in large urban institutions. On the one hand, this is a direct consequence of the lack of economic and social capital and follows from the fact that most Roma live in marginalized regions, where only lower quality tertiary education is accessible. The lack of financial capital and social network outside their home-region makes it very difficult for young aspiring Roma to move to the capital or to an urban centre with higher education opportunities. On the other hand, this situation is a result of the community inspired aspirational capital and expectations to learn a profession that the community considers meaningful, such as teaching, child-care, social service related profession, while more distant professions, such as economist, lawyer or professions in humanities do not make much sense in these communities. And finally, a significant factor in these decisions points to gender inequalities in some Roma communities, which we will discuss in the next section.

4.3 Intersecting racial and gender inequalities impacting schooling trajectories and school-to-work transition

Since we only interviewed high achieving young Roma, we were able to collect only partial information on the gender related barriers in schooling. Yet, some of the data suggest that gender inequalities are present, and these create a clear division between opportunities for young Roma men and women.

A noteworthy dimension of gender disparities relates to the type of qualifications young Roma obtain: young women are more likely to choose supporting professions (social worker, health care, teacher and other pedagogical tracks) that are not or rarely sought for in the business sector. But gender inequalities start much earlier. Several interviewees mentioned that parents wouldn't let girls to study in secondary schools if that meant moving away from the family (to a dormitory). As explained below, most Roma people in Hungary live in small settlements situated further away from regional centres, where quality schools of secondary education are to be found. A similar phenomenon was mentioned with reference to tertiary education by interviewees who come from 'traditional', patriarchal Roma families: parents were reluctant to let their daughters to study further away from home and to stay in a dormitory, which in these patriarchal settings means 'slipping out' from the family (male) control. B's story describes these dilemmas in a traditional Vlah Roma family:

> It was very difficult for my parents to let me go. It took two years until they accepted it. First, they wanted me to commute daily, but when they saw that this was extremely difficult for me, time consuming and also, I could not participate in any program that started after 5 pm. They finally agreed that I should move to the dorm.

The possibility to move to a Christian Roma Advanced College Dorm[12] was decisive in her case. Parents were more relaxed about their daughter moving to a dorm, where most of the students were Roma and some were acquittance of the family. Her cousins were less lucky, they had to stay home and get married.

> I have two cousins, girls. Not that they would be dull, they have matricula, but they had to get married because of the traditions (they are Vlah Roma). Traditions are so much more compelling for us (Vlah) than for the Romungros. […] There are girls in the family, who would have preferred to go to university, but they were not allowed to. They had to get married, end of story.

Since Roma in Hungary form an extremely diverse community (or communities), generalized statements about parental behaviours and the impacts of family settings on women mobilities would be over-generalizing. We encountered and heard about different patterns, oppressive patriarchal and emancipatory ones too, where girls had equal chances for education as their male peers. However, if we need to sum up the chances of Roma girls for better education and quality employment, the intersectionality is evident in these cases. Most girls and women need to negotiate multiple barriers due to their gender and belonging to a racialized minority group.

4.4 Geographical distance as a major contributing factor to inequalities in schooling trajectories and school-to-work transition

Geographical barriers are among the most important structural factors affecting employment chances of young Roma people on the labour market, especially in the corporate sector. (Árendás, Messing & Zentai, 2018; Berescu at al., 2013). This barrier emerges as early as entering education as quality of schools may be highly different in villages and urban areas. The highly selective and inequitable educational system in Hungary (see for example Radó et al., 2021) results in low quality schooling for most Roma, who live predominantly in remote (far from the capital or other major urban centre), small villages. Geographical distance is often a barrier to highly educated Roma too: only 36 per cent of our survey respondents lived either in Budapest or in the county seats or settlements where jobs in the private sector concentrate. Based on distance data and travel time data, we calculated the average time to reach the centre of the micro region, the county seat and the capital city[13] by public transportation for our respondents.[14] These three types of urban centres and the corresponding

---

[12] Christian Roma Advanced Colleges are a network of Advanced Colleges run by Christian churches offering accommodation, scholarship and special classes to Roma students.

[13] This was determined on the basis of the postal code of their residence and the closest regional center and public data on public transport schedules

[14] As most of the participants are young and come from socially disadvantaged families, owning a personal vehicle would be unlikely for them.

distances are significant in terms of access to public services, education and jobs as most private-sector jobs (except agricultural ones) and institutions of tertiary education are situated in regional/ county seats, or in the wider capital area.

The survey data highlight the relative labour market disadvantage of those Roma youth who live in rural Hungary: living in a village means – on the average – a daily commute of 90 minutes by public transportation to the micro-region centre, where most public services and institutions of secondary educational are located, while it takes on average over three hours to commute to the nearest county seat, where most of post-secondary educational institutions and business-sector jobs are located. The interviews revealed three types of situations that characterize labour-related mobility decisions.

The broadest category of Roma youth is geographically mobile. This is an extremely important type of capital when it comes of employability, ability to access certain job types (particularly corporate ones). Interviews revealed that many – especially those living in the east and northeast of Hungary – were not only ready to move from the place of residence but they preferred to do so. For an individual belonging to a racialized minority group, moving to a bigger settlement can be a game-changer, requiring 'survival' skills and an aptitude for mobility, non-dominant capitals often emerging in vulnerable minority settings. As a thin, but very relevant literature from the Hungarian mobility research points out (Árendás et al., 2022) mobility is not a kind of knowledge supported or recognized in Hungarian schools, to the contrary, it is looked down, silenced, or considered as a disadvantage.

The greatest challenge in a cross-regional geographic mobility is to set foot, to find accommodation in large cities with high rental prices. The public housing sector is tiny, substandard and essentially unavailable (Hegedűs, 2017), while job-related housing arrangements do not exist with a few exceptions of temp workers. The following example represents these difficulties, as a significant barrier to most young Roma.

R has post-secondary degree and found a job opportunity at a multinational retail chain headquarter near the capital city. She lived in a town 200 km away from Budapest thus had to move for the job. The salary she was offered as a junior manager did not cover the initial costs of relocation such as deposits, advance payments. These costs emerge as an important obstacle to employment related mobility of socially disadvantaged individuals, as neither they, nor their families have financial reserves which would cover such expenses.

Most of our interviewees, who managed to move for a quality job in the business sector were able to do so with the support of friends and/or family members, who shared their homes for the initial few months. The above stands as a clear example of efficient alternative capital mobilization: in situations of need, when lacking economic capital, other forms such as community capital, are being utilized. Yet, not everyone is fortunate enough to have friends or relatives in a position to help. This can be especially true for the most vulnerable, marginalized members of a minority community.

The second category among Roma youth represents those willing to relocate for work, but not too far, to stay connected to their families and closer community. The case of V, a university graduate with work experience in the public sector shows this dilemma. He was ready to move for a business sector job but wanted to stay in the same macro-region. For him, his existing network of friends and acquaintances in the region he lived and worked in, his 'rootedness' represented the most important form of capital, which he was not willing to exchange for other possible prospects. Nevertheless, this turned out to be a significant limitation regarding his employment opportunities: he turned down a job he was offered by

a MNC retail company in Budapest. Even though he was intensively applying for jobs in his region, he could not find employment. Finally had to accept a job in a meat factory and to work in three shifts.

The third category of people includes those who cannot move from their communities and/or family for objective reasons like care responsibilities or simply, who are not willing to do so. Many of them do not find employment locally or are confined to poorly paid public sector jobs or public work programs. In these cases, immobility (often in highly gendered forms, as discussed earlier too) translate into serious disadvantages regarding job prospects, further exacerbating their socio-economic position.

The opportunities that arise with more geographic mobility are highly gendered. It is the women who are more restricted in their geographic mobility as they are the ones, who are automatically assigned the care-giver's role (taking care of children and elderly/disabled). They are not only restricted in moving away from their homes, but daily commute is also extremely challenging, if not impossible for many. Given the strong gender disparities in the division of labour at home and in care responsibilities, and the fact that most of the corporate sector jobs require regular overtime. Mothers with young children, irrespective of ethnicity have significant disadvantage in joining corporate sector employment in a full-time capacity. Geographical barriers and other socio-economic disadvantages are built on each other, when it comes to women's access to corporate sector jobs.

5 Getting employed and 'getting ahead' in the company

In the following part of the paper, we scrutinize barriers and coping strategies (capital mobilizations) of young Roma, who reached the doorsteps of the corporate sector. While conducting empirical research on their perceptions about obstacles and ways of coping, we tried to understand the underlying social mechanisms of capital mobilization.

The primary level of perceived barriers to getting employed is racial discrimination that has long-lasting effects on young Roma's aspirations. Negative, and often humiliating experiences from the past (not necessarily from the corporate sector, but from any job-related situation) often restrain young Roma people even from trying for quality jobs at prestigious companies. Our survey pointed out that racial discrimination is widespread in Hungary. 21 per cent of all respondents experienced discrimination personally related to one or more traits linked to being Roma ('race' and/or 'ethnicity' and/or 'nationality' and or 'appearance'). Considering that only half of the respondents were in employment (including those who studied in addition to work), the unsettling picture is that half of young Roma in employment experienced racial discrimination in spite of their short employment career. Research interviews highlight typical situations in which these experiences occur. The most frequent account explains discrimination when entering a job selection process:

> I submitted my CV to a number of job announcements. I was invited to the workplace [her family name does not refer to her Roma origin] but as soon as I walked through the door, I was told the position had already been filled. I had work experience relevant to the job, in the financial sector and in retail. For example, I applied for a shop assistant position in one of Budapest's large shopping centres: I went for a trial day, but after the first hour, when they recognised that I was a Roma girl, […] you know, people in Pest have an expression on their face: 'Who is this Gypsy girl?' – they thanked me and said the position had been filled.

Even though she graduated from upper secondary school, speaks English, and has work experience in sales and administration, she could only get a cleaners' job.

Experience of discrimination do not end with unsuccessful job applications. Explicit and implicit forms of discrimination may work in the workplace too. These often feed into feelings of inadequacy and self-blame on one side and contribute to those perceived capital 'deficits' which racialized minority employees (or applicants) are associated with by ethnic majority employers.

In our research, we came across a handful of companies with diversity measures at place that were supportive of hiring and including Roma. Yet, their diversity-oriented measures (more on these in Árendás et al., 2022) are often unable to tackle the different cultural dispositions of minority applicants, and they usually misread these as 'deficits'. 'Soft elements' such as self-presentation, way of speaking, or self-confidence play an important role in corporate decisions on who gets hired. It is evident that minority candidates underperform in these areas due to their minority position related experiences. Their weaker performance is (mis) interpreted by employers as 'lack of merit' or 'talent' for that matter. Our findings resonate directly with the work of Friedman and Laurison (2020) discussing the long shadow of working-class background on career development and social mobility. They argue that cultural capital is inherited and passed on in less obvious ways than economic assets or social contacts, yet those belonging to privileged strata of society benefitting from these directly. In all the cases we followed closely in our research, we could detect disadvantages stemming from such 'inadequacies'.

Friedman and Laurison (2020) suggest that the corporate sector is set on upper-middle class values and cultural capitals, though this environment is considered as purely 'meritocratic' and thus egalitarian. To the contrary, the competition is uneven, since it is rooted in privileged class settings and upbringing. As a result, it reproduces the class privileges of those being highly educated and coming from a privileged family settings and elite school environment (Friedman & Laurison, 2020).

Language use and vocabulary are good examples of a finely coded cultural capital in action, incorporated in each individual by upbringing and schooling. It is promptly and mistakenly translated by employers and colleagues into professional competence, 'skills' or 'merit'. Certain regional dialects or the way some Roma people speak accompanied with certain body language (another example of carefully nurtured cultural capital), is also often translated by co-workers and supervisors as a sign of professional incompetence. During our interviews we hear references to employers (or superiors) reminding young Roma people about (in)appropriate dressing and appearance.

We are not suggesting that a non-dominant cultural capital embodied in various bodily appearances, behaviours and aesthetic forms is the main and only reason for the lack of presence of young Roma in the business sector jobs, but it certainly contributes to the intricate mechanisms of self-presentation and perception during the entire hiring process, often referred to as 'chemistry' by HR people. And we have no doubts that this 'chemistry' among employees, and between employees and superiors continues during the entire trajectory of employment, feeding into decisions on promotions and entire career developments.

6 Concluding thoughts

Our aim was to analyse the barriers Roma youth encounter when striving for jobs in the business sector, whereas we also tried to interpret their cases in the broader theoretical framework of social mobility. As we presented a detailed account of the major barriers, based on our survey data and personal narratives of young, educated Roma, we wanted to arrive at more than just a diagnosis of a problem. We aimed to understand what the main drivers behind the phenomenon are, why are educated individuals formally fitting job requirements not making it, or only a very few of them. In other words, we aimed to know how upward mobility of individuals belonging to a racialized mobility works, especially through the lens of a sector which emphasizes 'merit' more than any other part of our society. As we presented in the analysis of our findings, the answer is in the idea of 'merit' itself and in 'matching' capitals. While conventional measures of 'merit' such as professional expertise, qualification, skills do play a decisive role in hiring practices and in career progress, 'merit' has further dimensions too. As Friedman and Laurison (2020) point out, individuals belonging to different segments of society (e.g. to different class in their study, or a different racialized group) have the capacity to 'cash in' their 'merit' and realize their 'talent' differently. 'Merit' does not hang in a social vacuum, instead it heavily dependent on the socio-economic circumstance it emerges from. Merit needs to be given its opportunity, it has to be demonstrated or performed. And this is where privileged have a head start, and a racialized minority job-seeker may experience a real disadvantage.

When focussing on highly educated Roma youth on their road of applying for jobs in the corporate sector, we could single out and analyse barriers, which potentially prevent them from 'cashing in' or converting their 'merit' and 'talent' into actual jobs. The evaluation of this context took us way back in time, travelling back to their childhoods peppered with negative educational experiences, with experiences of early discrimination, to spatial inequalities and barriers related to gender, horizontal selection within the system (diverting many of ambitious young Roma to less lucrative, thus less competitive professional fields) and to experiences of not 'fitting in' when trying for corporate jobs.

Our analysis was organized around two key elements, that of barriers (of social mobility), and coping strategies as an individual response to barriers. We relied on the Bourdieusian concept of capital, critically re-examined in works of Yosso (2005), Durst and Nyirő (2018), Durst and Bereményi (2021), and Friedman and Laurison (2020). We have focussed on the role of different capital forms in case of minority youth making their way towards quality employment. Often, despite having the necessary technical capital (formal education, diplomas, employment experience), companies perceived these young Roma as 'unfit', 'not matching' their needs related to an ideal candidate. We interpreted these situations via alternative forms of cultural capitals. Assessing by the fact that in contrast to the vast majority of Roma youth our interviewees were able to reach and successfully pass matriculation they were able to 'cope' and to overcome the most significant barriers their cohort typically encounters. Coping involved mobilization of alternative forms of (cultural) capital, however these capitals stayed often unrecognized and unacknowledged by the employers in situations of job-search or career progress.

Though a large number of studies related to labour market opportunities of the Roma are being published about the Hungarian context and the CEE region, most of them focus on the less educated, lower strata of job-seekers, for instance on the public work scheme. Highly

educated Roma, and especially their link to the business world has not been established in any of the existing studies so far. We consider it important to fill in this gap for a number of reasons: due to the fact that the number of highly educated Roma is increasing in Hungary and in other CEE countries, and their access to prestigious and competitive jobs in the business sphere is crucial in terms of social mobility, recognition and justice. Moreover, it is clear that educated Roma in lucrative jobs may bring along a multiplicator effect, inspiring other Roma to step on the path of mobility, projecting an image of a successful Roma person, suggesting that mobility, despite all odds, is a feasible social project. The latter one is especially important in case of a racialized minority in CEE, in a social context where mobility is not clearly part of the social imaginary.

Finally, the cases we analysed in our study inform not only the Hungarian scholarship on Roma and/or social mobility research but point beyond the national context. They shed light on processes – such as mobility patterns and pathways of racialized minorities, such as the Roma – beyond Hungary, with a broader relevance to the CEE region.

References

Adamecz, A., Czafit, B., Bördős, K., Nagy, E., Lévai, P. & Scharle, Á. (2013). *Roma inclusion and impact evaluation of two mainstream EU-funded active labour market programmes. Executive Summary.* Budapest Institute. https://www.budapestinstitute.eu/uploads/BI_almp_eval_20130924_summary.pdf

Árendás, Zs., Messing, V. & Zentai, V. (2018). With Eyes Wide Shut. Job Searching Qualified Roma and Employee Seeking Companies. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics*, *4*(1), 66–87. https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v4i1.407

Árendás, Zs., Durst, J., Katona, N. & Messing, V. (2022). The Limits of Trading Cultural Capital: Returning Migrant Children and Their Educational Trajectory in Hungary. In A. L. Atterberry, D. G. McCallum, S. Tu, A. Lutz & L. E. Bass (Eds.), *Children and Youths' Migration in a Global Landscape* (pp. 115–139). Emerald. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1537-466120220000029008

Berescu, C., Petrović, M. & Teller, N. (2013). Housing Exclusion of the Roma. *Living on the Edge, in Social Housing in Transition Countries* (pp. 98–116). Routledge.

Bourdieu, P., Passeron, J-C. & Nice, R. (1977). Education, society and culture. Sage.

CEU CPS (2019). Roma Civil Monitor. A synthesis of civil society's reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union. https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/basicpage/3172/rcm-civil-society-monitoring-report-synthesis27-2019-eprint-fin.pdf

Ciaian, P. & Kancs, D. (2019). Marginalisation of Roma: root causes and possible policy actions. *European Review, 27*(1), 115–130. https://doi.org/10.1017/S106279871800056X

Ciaian, P. & Kancs, D. (2018) Social mobility barriers for Roma: Discrimination and informal institutions. *European Review, 26* (4), 670–685. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798718000352

Durst, J. & Bereményi, Á. (2021). 'I Felt I Arrived Home': The Minority Trajectory of Mobility for First-in-Family Hungarian Roma Graduates. In M. M. Mendes, O. Magano & S. Toma (Eds.), *Social and Economic Vulnerability of Roma People* (pp. 229–249). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52588-0_14

Ercse, K. (2019). Az egyházi fenntartású iskolák és a szelekció, szegregáció kapcsolata [Connections between church-run schools, selection, and segregation]. *Iskolakultúra*, *29*(7), 50–72. https://doi.org/10.14232/ISKKULT.2019.7.50

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2018). *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey. Roma – Selected Findings*. Publications Office of the European Union.

Fejes, J. B. & Szűcs, N. (2019). Egyházi iskolák és oktatási szegregáció – előszó [Church-run schools and educational segregation – Introduction]. *Iskolakultúra*, *29*(7), 3–7. https://doi.org/10.14232/ISKKULT.2019.7.3

Friedman, S. & Laurison, D. (2020). *The Class Ceiling: Why it Pays to be Privileged*. Polity Press.

Hajdú, T., Hermann, Z., Horn, D. & Varga, J. (2019). *A közoktatás indikátorrendszere [Indicators of public education].* KRTK KTI. https://kti.krtk.hu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/A_kozoktatas_indikatorrendszere_2019.pdf

Hegedüs, J. (2017). Social housing in post-crisis Hungary: A reshaping of the housing regime under 'unorthodox' economic and social policy. *Critical Housing Analysis*, *4*(1), 90–101. https://doi.org/10.13060/23362839.2017.4.1.328

Kahanec, M. (2014) *Roma integration in European labor markets*. IZA World of Labour. https://wol.iza.org/articles/roma-integration-in-European-labor-markets.pdf

Kende, A. (2007) Success stories? Roma university students overcoming social exclusion in Hungary. In H. Colley, P. Boetzelen, B. Hoskins & T. Parveva (Eds.), *Social inclusion for young people: breaking down the barriers* (pp. 133–144). Council of Europe.

Kende, Á. & Szalai, J. (2018). Pathways to early school leaving in Hungary: Ethnicised inequalities in education and the case of Roma youth. In L. Van Praag, W. Nouwen, R. Van Caudenberg, N. Clycq & C. Timmerman (Eds.), *Comparative perspectives on early school leaving in the European Union* (pp. 33–46). Routledge.

Kertesi, G & Kézdi, G. (2014). Iskolai szegregáció, szabad iskolaválasztás és helyi oktatáspolitika 100 magyar városban [School segregation, free choice of school and local educational policy in 100 Hungarian towns]. *Budapest Working Papers on The Labour Market,* 2014/6. https://www.econ.core.hu/file/download/bwp/bwp1406.pdf

Kertesi, G, & Kézdi, G. (2011) Roma employment in Hungary after the post-communist transition 1. *Economics of Transition*, *19*(3), 563–610. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0351.2011.00410.x

Kešelová, D., Ondrušová, D. & Udrziková, J. (2018). Kvalita služieb zamestnanosti: Individualizované služby zamestnanosti a vybrané skupiny uchádzačov o zamestnanie [Quality of Employment Services: Individualised Employment Services and Specific Groups of Jobseekers]. Institute for Labour and Family Research. https://ivpr.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/kvalita_sluzieb_zamestnanosti_keselova_2018.pdf

KSH (2011). *Népszámlálás, roma népesség korcsoport és iskolai végzettség szerinti megoszlása [Population census: distribution of the Roma population according to age group and education].* http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tablak_nemzetiseg

Magazzini, T., Chiozza, E. & Rossi, M. (2019). Conformism or Inadequacy of Roma Inclusion Policies? Missed Opportunities at the European and Local Levels. In T. Magazzini & S. Piemontese (Eds.), *Constructing Roma Migrants: European Narratives and Local Governance* (pp. 51–67), Springer.

McGarry, A. (2014). Roma as a political identity: Exploring representations of Roma in Europe. *Ethnicities*, *14*(6), 756–774. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796814542182

Messing, V. & Bereményi, B. Á. (2017). Is ethnicity a meaningful category of employment policies for Roma? A comparative case study of Hungary and Spain. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *40*(10), 1623–1642. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1213402

Messing, V. (2014a). Methodological puzzles of surveying Roma/Gypsy populations. *Ethnicities*, *14*(6), 811–829. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796814542180

Messing, V. (2014b). Apart or together: motivations behind ethnic segregation in education across Europe. In J. Szalai & C. Schiff (Eds.), *Migrant, Roma and post-colonial youth in education across Europe: Being 'visibly different'* (pp. 17–33). Palgrave Macmillan.

Messing, V. (2015) Policy puzzles with the employment of Roma. In M. Beblavy, I. Maselli & M. Veselkova (Eds.), *Green, Pink & Silver? The Future of Labour in Europe,* Vol. 2. (pp 174–196). Centre for European Policy Studies.

Messing, V. (2017). Differentiation in the making: Consequences of school segregation of Roma in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia. *European Education*, *49*(1), 89–103. https://doi.org/10.1080/10564934.2017.1280336

Mikić, H. (2019). Creative Entrepreneurship of Young Roma Women: An Exploratory Study from Middle Banat Region, Serbia. In V. Ramadani, L. P. Dana, V. Ratten & A. Bexheti (Eds.), *Informal Ethnic Entrepreneurship* (pp. 195–209). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-99064-4_13

Nyírő, Zs. & Durst, J. (2018). Soul work and giving back: Ethnic support groups and the hidden costs of social mobility. Lessons from Hungarian Roma graduates. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics*, *4*(1), 88–108. https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v4i1.406

Nyírő, Zs. & Durst, J. (2021). Racialization rules: The effects of education upward mobility on habitus. *Szociológiai Szemle, 31*(3), 21–50. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2021.3.2

O'Higgins, N. & Ivanov, A. (2006). Education and employment opportunities for the Roma. *Comparative Economic Studies*, *48*(1), 6–19. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.ces.8100147

Radó, P. (2018). A közoktatás szelektivitása mint a roma szegregáció általános kontextusa [The selectivity of public education as the general context of Roma segregation]. In J. B. Fejes & N. Szűcs (Eds.), *Én vétkem. Helyzetkép az oktatási szegregációról* (pp. 31–55). Motiváció Oktatási Egyesület.

Rughiniş, C. (2010). The forest behind the bar charts: Bridging quantitative and qualitative research on Roma/Ţigani in contemporary Romania. *Patterns of Prejudice, 44*(4), 337–367. https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2010.510716

Tremlett, A. (2014). Making a difference without creating a difference: Super-diversity as a new direction for research on Roma minorities. *Ethnicities*, *14*(6), 830–848. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796814542183

Varga, J., Hajdú, T., Hermann, Z. & Horn, D. (Eds.) (2018). *A magyar közoktatás indikátorrendszere 2017 [Indicators of Hungarian public education 2017].* MTA KRTK.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *8*(1), 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006

Zolnay, J. (2018). Commuting to segregation. The role of pupil commuting in a Hungarian city: between school segregation and inequality. *Szociológiai Szemle, 28*(4), 133–151. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2018.4.6

Eszter Berényi*

Social selection step by step: The case of the Early Selective Grammar Schools in Hungary

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 59–79.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.848
https://intersections.tk.hu

* [berenyi.eszter@tatk.elte.hu] (Eötvös Loránd University)

Abstract

The article scrutinises the application process and its consequences in terms of educational inequalities in early selective grammar schools in Hungary. The focus is on the almost one-year-long process of preparation for the entrance exams to these grammar schools. Its main aim is to depict how the gradual nature of getting into secondary education intensifies social selection within the educational sector. The analysis is based upon the findings of a mixed method research, of which the results of the two waves of the survey and the consecutive interviews will be analysed.

The article provides evidence of successful practices during the preparation process to these schools, as well as evidence of self-exclusion mechanisms for socially disadvantaged families. Overall, the results suggest that the most important selection factors are not the written or oral entrance exams themselves, but the decision to enter and remain in the preparation process, as well as the strategic decisions made by the parents during the preparation process.

Keywords: secondary school, school choice, tracking, self-exclusion, entrance exam, educational inequalities

1 Introduction: tracking, school choice and early educational selection

This article presents the findings of the research 'Entrance to the ESGS: inequality of chances and resilience' which scrutinises how educational selection takes place in the case of early selective grammar schools (ESGS) in Hungary, and what happens during the process of preparation for the entrance exams to these grammar school tracks. It also wishes to deliver evidence whether this particular type of grammar school track can serve as a mobility channel for students coming from the lower strata of society or, on the contrary, it rather contributes to the educational reproduction of social inequalities.

The approximately school-year-long preparation process for the entrance exams to these schools will be scrutinised as a long step-by-step process, using the analytical logic of Mare (Mare, 1981) who conceptualised the educational structure as hierarchically con-

structed. Mare emphasised that educational attainment is a result of dependent probabilities where entrance into the next step is always the consequence of earlier steps. The subject of Mare's analysis is the (in)equality of chances in the educational system through the different educational levels. In this article this logic will be adapted to the analysis of the almost one-year-long preparation process for the Early Selective Grammar Schools.

After an 8-year-long elementary school education, Hungarian students enter the secondary school system, which consists of very different tracks ranging from the academic 'grammar schools' or Gymnasium to vocational schools. A special type within the academic schools offers early tracks for those who wish to leave elementary school after the 4th or the 6th grades. These Early Selective Grammar School Tracks are the most prestigious tracks within the academic school type, and applicants have to enter into competition and pass an exam if they want to get selected. Most of these schools are state-maintained, but there are also many church schools and, to a lesser extent, private schools that charge tuition fees.

Since these schools exist within the already tracked secondary school system, and one must take an entrance exam for these tracks, the selection process in many ways bears the hallmarks of secondary school tracking. At the same time however, it can in several respects be seen as a school choice phenomenon that appears at the elementary school level. The most important characteristic of this type of choice is that the possibility to apply to these schools crosses the 8-year primary school period, hence participation is optional and the majority of the potential choosers remain, in fact, non-choosers.

2 Theoretical framework: Tracking, school choice and inequalities

Literature on both tracking and school choice deliver a wide range of evidence on how social inequalities are magnified by educational differentiation. I will discuss here the research experiences on school choice and tracking that relate to the phenomena that are also important in the Hungarian case: the effects of early tracking; the advantages of the middle-class families when it comes to choosing a school; and the realisation of avoidance strategies made possible by school choice.

Regarding between-school ability tracking most criticism concerns the age when tracking occurs. Buchmann and Park (Park, 2009), when they analysed the PISA 2003 results of five national educational systems (including Hungary) with highly differentiated tracks in secondary schooling, found that students' social origins were highly predictive of the types of schools they attended.

Hanuschek and Wössman (2006), also from the PISA results, found that early tracking increases inequalities in educational achievement: countries that track their students before the age of 15 show a statistically significant larger inequality. According to Gamoran (2010) most research evidence shows that tracking tends to exacerbate inequality with little or no contribution to overall productivity. Werfhorst (2019) proved how postponing the age of tracking contributed to the reduction of inequalities by parental occupational class in several European societies.

Horn (2013) found that social background and the type of tracks where students are accepted to are interrelated and also that the earlier tracking happens, the more influential the family background is. The effect of the family background manifests itself also in the

fact that among those who have better grades, students from middle- and upper-class families are more likely to apply to academic tracks than their peers from lower social strata (Lannert, 2009).

The most important arguments for the introduction of school choice into public educational systems at the elementary school level were that it creates a quasi-market environment for schools. According to these opinions, the parents are consumers who can choose rationally between schools as different service providers, which in turn encourages schools to raise their 'quality' as they are competing against each other. Beside the pro-marketisation arguments, the most eminent proponents of school choice argue that school choice improves the possibility for upward social mobility from lower social strata (Chubb & Moe, 1988).

Research evidence on its impact, focusing both on the 'quality' and 'efficiency' of schools, as well as on social segregation in education, is far from unanimous (e.g. Hoxby, 2003; Berends, 2015; Burgess et al., 2011; Reay & Ball, 1997), first and foremost because of the very different social and educational contexts where school choice was introduced.

Many arguments against school choice contradict the 'quasi market' argument and emphasise the non-rational (emotional) components of these decisions, while others declare that being rational does not have the same meaning for families of different social backgrounds (Riedel et al., 2010). Therefore, these arguments suggest that systems with school choice will always be biased towards the interests of those social groups who consider schooling, and especially the academic tracks of the educational system, to be of crucial importance.

The literature on school choice identifies a number of factors that contribute to the fact that free school choice further increases the educational advantages of the middle classes.

Burgess and colleagues (Burgess et al., 2019), in their analysis on the administrative data on school choices made by parents in England found that poor families are just as active users of the school choice system as rich families in terms of the number of schools they apply to or the proximity of the chosen schools. However, since more poor families live closer to low performing schools they end up having less real access to high performing ones. Yoon and Lubienski (2017), in the American context, arrive at a similar conclusion: even though low-income families choose for the same reasons as parents from upper strata of the society, they end up choosing schools close to where they live for proximity and comfort – which are also the schools with students coming from similar background to theirs.

Beyond socio-spatial reasons, the social, cultural and economic capital of the family also plays a crucial role in the school choice process.

Research relying on the Bourdieusian concept about cultural reproduction through education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) and the conversion of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to educational success, also deliver evidence on how social class of the family and patterns of school choice are interrelated. Knowledge about the educational system is seen as a key factor in the choice process – and not only official, but also informal information. Access to and interpretation of informal information ('grapevine knowledge', Ball & Vincent, 1998) happens through and is facilitated by the parents' social network. The access to and the efficient use of informal knowledge about a school's reputation reflects the amount of parental social, cultural and economic capital (Kosunen, 2014). Middle-class parents can 'navigate' the complex process of choice 'better' (Yoon, 2019); moreover, in contrasted with middle-class families, lower-class families tend to leave the decision to their kids as they are (and not the parents) considered the educational experts in the family (Reay & Ball, 1998).

Activities that can be very useful in a school choice process such as early decision-making or attending open days and information sessions are also more common among upper middle-class parents than among working-class parents (Seghers et al., 2019).

Middle-class families also turn to strategies that include using prep schools and private tutoring in order to facilitate the admission to selective schools (Roda, 2017). Social inequalities are increased not only by what middle-class families can and want to do in order to succeed in the school choice process, but also by what they try to avoid: and it is often a school with an unfavourable social composition, which can even be used by them as a main proxy for their decisions in the French case (Van Zanten, 2013). The ethnically mixed composition of a school can be among the most important reasons of the rejection of a given school (Bagley et al., 2001) in England also.

Even middle-class families who are explicitly committed to mixing and social desegregation, can end up making school choices in a way that will magnify social inequalities. This happens because these families are, at the same time, anxious about their child's schooling. Many among these parents share the general belief that an important guarantee for a good school is the presence of affluent parents. So, after all, the children of these middle-class families are likely to apply, and be admitted to gifted and talented programmes, with students mostly from an advantageous (white and upper-income) social background (Roda & Wells, 2013). Anxiety as a driver for choosing a selective class against the explicitly egalitarian view of the family is present in Finland also, where 'the possibility of ending up in a neighbourhood school with a bad reputation was described as a fate to avoid' (Kosunen, 2014, p. 16). It is worth mentioning that in the same research, it was found that avoidance strategies are less characteristic in the school choice process in the case of localities where parents do not feel a strong hierarchy of reputation between the locally available schools (Kosunen, 2014).

Charter schools in the USA are among the most intensively studied school choice programmes. Charter schools are publicly funded but operate independently from the state and can accept students upon application and not upon their residence. Research evidence of both Dee and Fu (2004) and Ross (2005) show that by the introduction of charter schools, the social composition of the neighbouring traditional public schools – with 'non chooser students' left behind—becomes less favourable.

A reason for that phenomenon could be that although charter schools could, at least theoretically, enhance racial and social integration in schools, in reality, in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, advantaged or relatively advantaged students are always more likely to use the choice option than the other, more disadvantaged students (Bifulco et al., 2009). Yongmei (2012) also found that more advantaged or moderately disadvantaged students tend to opt for charter schools, therefore, severely disadvantaged students – low-income students of colour – become ever more isolated in ineffective urban schools serving high percentages of low-income students of colour. When it is just an option, school choice increases the likeliness of self-exclusion practices (Chen & Pereyra, 2019) also, and therefore, it reinforces the already existing stratification patterns.

The problems in terms of the reproduction of social inequalities by tracking or school choice is more important than ever, since the growing importance of school choice is obvious in both Western and Eastern societies (Musset, 2012). Butler and van Zanten (2007) also found that the practice of school choice is present in a growing number of European countries, but, unlike in the USA, 'across Europe people are not meant to choose, but increasingly do.

The mixture of an official policy of "no choice" with a de facto exercise of an option of choice albeit by a minority of parents is leading to inequalities between school districts. These are at least as great, and arguably greater, than in pro-choice countries such as the UK and the USA, where the constraints of transparency or cash impose limits on the extent to which even the best informed parents can achieve their preferred strategies for their children.' (Butler & van Zanten, 2007, p. 3). The lack of transparency and under-regulation is always a factor that widens the gap between advantageous and disadvantageous families. Cobb and Glass (2009) suggest to distinguish school choice programs according to the extent they control the social intake of the schools involved. Uncontrolled or unregulated school choice programmes do not monitor the distribution of students in terms of their family background. In their overview about the different choice programs in the USA, Cobb and Glass found that unregulated school choice programmes that heavily rely on families to exercise choice tend to increase stratification of students among schools by family background, whereas controlled programmes can be effective at serving disadvantaged students (Cobb & Glass, 2009).

3 Early selective grammar schools within the Hungarian educational system

In Hungary, after the end of the Second World War general and compulsory eight-year-long elementary schools were established. This homogeneous eight-year-long elementary phase is followed by highly tracked secondary schooling after the 8th grade. Secondary school level offers three, highly different educational tracks, from vocational schools to academic grammar schools.

The comprehensive eight years of primary schooling was also partially undermined by the appearance of the so called early selective grammar schools (ESGS) at the end of the 1980s.

Instead of traditional secondary schools which last four years, these schools offer six- or eight year-long tracks. After having taken the centrally organised written test, elementary school students can apply to the chosen ESGSs – most of which organise oral entry exams too. Successful students can already enter into these tracks after the 4th or 6th grade, whereas the 'rest' (around 87–89 per cent of the population) remain in elementary school until the end of the 8th grade.

On average, ESGSs produce the best results in the PISA-like annual National Assessment of Basic Competences, and public opinion sees these institutions as secondary schools that are the best at preparing for good universities. Already, the first thorough research on the topic (Liskó & Fehérvári, 1996), demonstrated that this kind of early academic tracking strengthened social selection. The calculations of Horn (2010) on efficiency strengthen the hypothesis that lowering the age of selection has contributed to inequalities in the Hungarian education system, and pupils from more affluent social backgrounds are more likely to be selected into these schools. Contrasted to the average of 10–12 per cent of student population who attend these tracks, severely disadvantaged students are almost invisible in the six- or eight-year-long tracks: fewer than 1 per cent of them attend such schools (Varga, 2019, p. 191).

And although it is generally true in most countries that pupils with the least educated parents are more likely to select the least prestigious secondary schools, this effect seems to be stronger than average in Hungary and in Germany and Czechia, which are all countries that had installed this kind of early academic tracking (Kogan, et al., 2012).

However, no research has been conducted so far on *how* this very unequal distribution among the different secondary schools comes into being and how exactly do ESGSs skim the best pupils from elementary schools. This article has the ambition to fill this gap. Beside an analysis of what happens during the preparation process and at the exams themselves, the paper sets forth important factors other than the entrance exams that influence the social composition of the ESGSs.

4 Description of the research

During the research, a mixed methodology was used. The quantitative pillar consisted of a panel survey, of targeted sampling. Respondents were parents of 4th and 6th graders who considered at the moment of the first wave of the survey – which took place between October and early December – that their child would apply to an ESGS.

The main topics of the questionnaire included basic attitudes to education, everyday experiences on the quality of education in the elementary school, sources of information used, and the kinds of practice done in order to prepare for the exams. Socio-economic status was measured by questions inquiring about the educational degrees of the parents and the financial situation of the family. During the analysis these variables were used as background variables for measuring the family background of the respondents.

The questionnaire included a GDPR statement and respondents were asked to give their e-mail addresses if they wished to answer the questions of the second questionnaire.

The second wave of the questionnaire was sent to the respondents in April, when most of the students would presumably already know if they got accepted to an ESGS or not. It contained questions inquiring about the last weeks of preparation, the experiences of the exams, preparation for the oral exams; the eventual result of the process; and reasons for opting out of the process at the different stages.

During data collection, all (approximately: 200) of the ESGS schools and a 10% sample of the primary schools that 'send' an above average number of their students to such schools were contacted and asked to send the link of the questionnaire to the parents they could reach. The questionnaire was also spread in the social media (Facebook) among potential choosers and in two important electronic media with a wide but different reading public (index.hu and noklapja.hu).

In the school year 2019/2020, the first questionnaire was filled in by 606 respondents. All of them were parents of 4 or 6 graders who stated that they considered to apply to an ESGS. Among them, 292 parents filled the second questionnaire also. The sample thus collected is not representative of the population of 'parents considering application to an ESGS' since there is no available knowledge of the magnitude and the social composition of such a population – in fact, we lack public and transparent knowledge on the social composition of those who take the central written exam and also, on those who do apply to at least one of the ESGS after the central written exam.

Table 1 Basic features of the sample

	initial respondents (N = 606)	respondents of both waves (N = 292)
Proportion of 6th graders	57.8%	62.3%
Proportion of 4th graders	42.2%	37.7%
Educational background: lowest	9.5%	7.9%
Educational background: middle	23.0%	22.1%
Educational background: highest	67.5%	70.0%
Financial situation: relatively best	51.0%	55.1%
Financial situation: middle	31.1%	30.1%
Financial situation: relatively worst	17.9%	14.7%
Settlement: Budapest	48.5%	49.7%
Settlement: county capital	19.6%	18.8%
Settlement: town	21.0%	20.2%
Settlement: village	10.6%	11.0%

The other important pillar of the research was a series of interviews conducted with parents. As for scrutinising parental strategies and parental practices, in accordance with the views denying school choice as a simple rational choice at a given moment, I considered school choice to be a long process that starts much before the completion of exams. Therefore, I decided to conduct a panel of semi-structured interviews with parents who were considering an application to an ESGS, starting at the beginning of the given school year, which is two months before the deadline of the application for the central written exam. In the school year 2018/2019, 22 families from schools that usually produce a higher-than average number of applications to ESGSs were contacted. The first interviews were followed by a second, and in half of the cases by a third one. Altogether 22 first, 14 second, and 6 third interviews were made.

In addition, 15 interviews were conducted with teachers who work in early selective grammar schools, eight in such schools in Budapest, one in a county capital, and six in other towns. Eight interviews were conducted also with teachers from elementary schools with an above average proportion of applications to ESGS in order to get an insight into the narratives of the elementary teachers.

5 Results

5.1 Basic data on the ESGS

Grammar schools offering early academic tracking after grades four and six attract around 10–13 per cent of the population: for example, in the academic year 2015/16, more than 9 per cent of 7th grade children attended such schools. The yearly National Assessment of Basic Competences delivers data both on the mathematical and reading competences and also on the socioeconomical background of the students of each school. According to these, the average scores of students attending ESGS tracks are notably higher than their peers' in all the other different school types both in the 8th and the 10th grades. The same is true for the average socioeconomic background of the different schools and tracks.

Beside the average numbers, the social composition of the ESGS schools is quite homogeneous also. The proportion of the highest educational degrees of the mothers of the students in ESGS in the 10th grade is 31 per cent, contrasted with 11 per cent for mothers all 10th grade students. This also suggests that ESGSs skim the best elementary school students from favourable social backgrounds.

5.2 Early selective grammar schools and elementary schools

In the case of the ESGS, the whole application procedure is to be done by the family alone, whereas 'traditional' secondary application procedures contain many more centrally or institutionally assisted elements.

For example, the paperwork for the traditional secondary application process for each pupil is done by the classroom teacher (after consulting with the family about the chosen schools). As for information gathering during the process, elementary schools actively promote open days of the four year-long secondary tracks, and are in contact with at least some of these schools; classroom headteachers usually meet the families of 8th grade children to offer consultations and advice on choosing a secondary school.

The opposite is true in the case of the ESGSs. In most cases, elementary schools do not spread information on the school choice process, there is no consultation, nor is there counselling for pupils and their families about this option. According to the interviews with the parents and with elementary teachers, teachers do not like to interfere with the process. The most common reason emphasised by the teachers is that it is 'none of their business', and it is 'up to the parents' to decide. The resulting situation is that unless the parents are especially proactive, a child can start and finish elementary school without ever hearing about ESGS. With the lack of any sources of information in elementary schools, informal 'grapevine knowledge' (Ball & Vincent, 1998) becomes indispensable. The most important source about the ESGS for parents are other parents and the websites of the ESGS themselves, and definitely not the elementary schools.

When the possibility arises in the fourth and sixth grades, less than one fifth of the whole school population consider applying.

The following figure shows the differences among the elementary schools in terms of the proportion of their students who apply to an ESGS.

Table 2 Some characteristics of the elementary schools and the proportions of ESGS applications[1]

Applications from elementary school to ESGS (6 and 8 years) in the school year 2016/17	**the proportion of Roma pupils in the school (%) (F: 61.737; sign: 0.000 eta2: 0.151)**	**the proportion of parents with HE degree (%) (F: 82.525; sign: 0.000. eta2: 0.195)**	**SES average in the 6th grade in the school (F: 97.481; sign: 0.000. eta2: 0.294)**	**Maths average scores in the 6th grade in the school (F: 44.819; sign: 0.000. eta2: 0.111)**
none	30.29	11.00	−0.552	1429
few (less than 5%)	16.43	16.12	−0.232	1461
some (less than 10%)	8.29	22.68	0.178	1502
few to 8-year-long track, many to 6-year-long track	11.18	24.94	0.033	1496
many to 8-year- long track, few to 6-year-long track	14.07	18.81	−0.179	1464
many (10% and more)	4.15	35.10	0.495	1531
average	18.67	18.86	−0.159	1468

Sources: National Assessment of Basic Competences and Secondary School Application Information System; computation of the author

In more than 40 per cent of the elementary schools, there were no applications to either the eight or the six year-long tracks in the year under examination (2016/17), whereas in 15 per cent of the schools the proportion is above 15 per cent.

The differences in the social composition of the 'sending' schools in Table 2 highlight the fact that it is mostly from schools with an advantageous school population that the ESGS can get within the viewing range of families. On the other hand, many students who attend schools with a less advantageous student intake in smaller settlements are practically excluded from the process of application. In fact, it seems that this (and what has happened before in the educational career of the pupil) can be considered as 'step zero' in the school choice process for an ESGS.

5.3 The application process: Selection and self-selection

The survey to be analysed here involved parents who had evidently overcome this 'step zero' and considered applying to an ESGS by the time of the first phase of the survey.

[1] Data were prepared by merging the school-site data of the yearly National Assessment of Basic Competences and the database of the Secondary School Application System.

According to the estimate of the survey respondents, an average of 29 per cent (median = 24 per cent) from the class where their child went were also about to apply to an ESGS. This strengthens the impression that personal networks and everyday experiences with regard to the visibility of the ESGS play an important role in the application process.

The same assumption can be made from the findings of the interviews, which testify that a strong reason for an application is because it is the sort of thing done by one's peers. This sample-tracking is particularly true for how, according to the interviewees, the number of potential applicants grows from week to week during the autumn semester. According to many accounts, the original number of pupils in a class who wish to apply doubles from September to December. Some families learn about the possibility from others, and some, who had decided against applying a year earlier re-consider when they learn of others who are considering applying. Sometimes families (and the children) are afraid that 'everybody will leave', and therefore feel they have to make an effort as well. Many parents talked about how they had not devoted much energy at the beginning, but after seeing the extent of others' preparation, panicked and increased their efforts.

However, according to the results of the survey, not everyone actually got to the point of writing the test among those who had considered it before. 5 per cent of those who responded to both phases of the survey said that their child had not taken the test (due in January) after all. The number of cases is very low, but this kind of 'self-selection' is more frequent among those with the lowest educational background among the survey respondents. If having the ESGS on the mental horizon can be considered as 'step zero' in the process this certainly is step one – and those who self-deselected themselves at this stage still remain more or less invisible in the eyes of the official system of application.

Pupils who complete the written exam arrive at the next step, after which they can decide whether or not to actually apply to one or more ESGSs. Hence there is a further risk for self-exclusion from the process at this point.

A further 7 per cent of those having taken the exam decide here, at this step two, not to apply to any of the schools. This is the first step where we have exact numbers from the yearly statistics of the Educational Office[2] showing similar (3–10 per cent) proportion dropout rates at this stage.

Most parents who reported dropping out at this stage said that the reason for that is either that the test had not gone as well as they had anticipated, or some said that the written examination served rather to gain experience for later tests. Be that as it may, at this step, 26 (out of the 292) parents said that they quit the process. Despite the low numbers of cases, it is worth mentioning that the proportion of self-selectors at this step is much higher among respondents from the lowest educational level than among the highest educated parents.

Most – 87 per cent – of those who had previously considered the application to the ESGS during the autumn end up actually applying, thus leading us to step three.

As it turns out, by the end of the process, out of these applicants, 69 per cent got accepted to one of the ESGSs after all. However, because of the self-exclusion practices during the earlier steps, this proportion is only 60 per cent of the total number of original survey

[2] https://www.oktatas.hu/pub_bin/dload/kozoktatas/beiskolazas/prezentaciok/kifir_felveteli_20200603.pptx

respondents. These results call attention to the disparity between the widespread element of the public discourse about the competition being too harsh and the written exams being excessively difficult. Irrespective of the actual difficulty of the exams, the majority of those who participate do in fact get admitted to one of the schools. The major decisive element of getting into an ESGS is in fact whether one overcomes what I have called 'step zero' and has the ESGS on the mental horizon.

On the other hand, according to the survey results, a less sharp but constant social selection takes place throughout the months of the application process among those who successfully overcome 'step zero'.

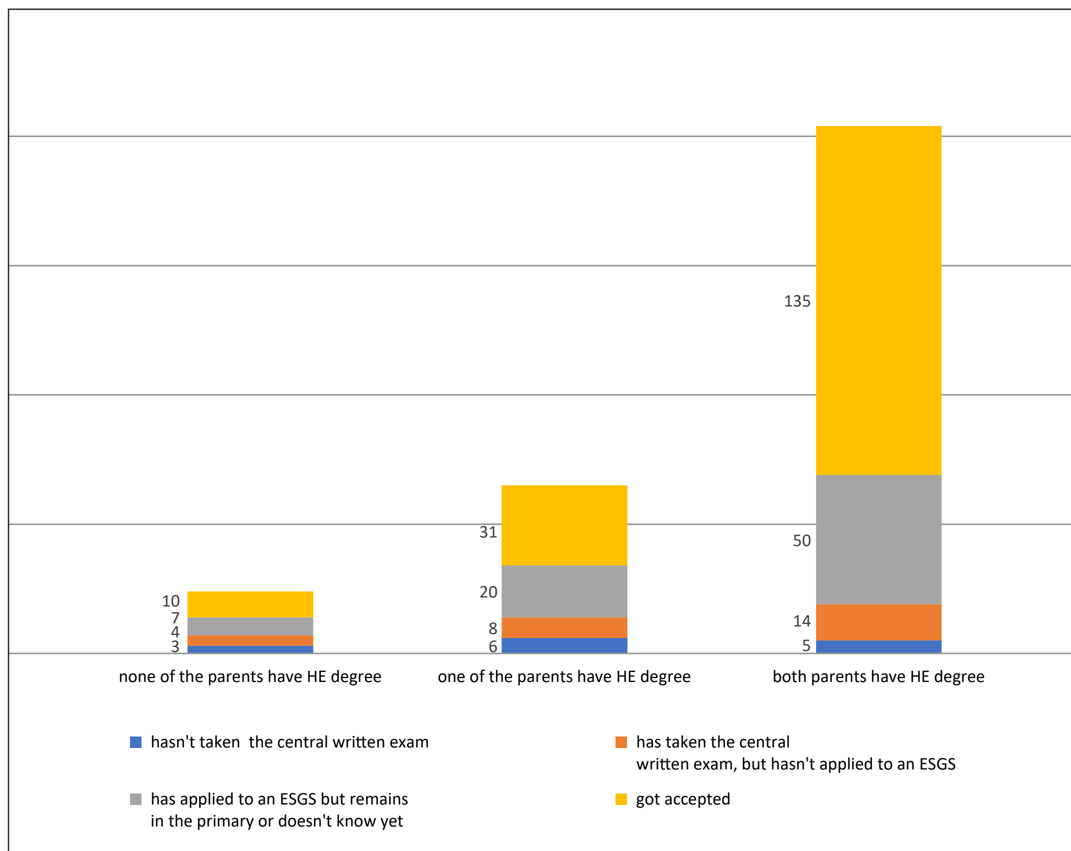

Figure 1 From thinking about the application to getting accepted to the ESGS – Steps of the procedure by educational background (N = survey respondents to both phases of the survey)

Source: survey questionnaire

Figure 1 summarises what happens during the process of preparation for the written exam and the application to the ESGS. Some social selection is present through steps 1 to 3 also and dropout rates are, even if only to a small extent, higher among those coming from less educated backgrounds at each step. The proportion of the highest educated parents among

the original survey respondents was 67 per cent, and 70 per cent among respondents to both waves of the survey. This increased to 77 per cent during the process among those accepted to an ESGS at the end of the process.

This further widens the gap between the least and the most educated parents in terms of their children's chances of becoming an ESGS student.

5.4 Successful practices

Most applicants and their families devote time, energy and money to the procedure throughout the first semester of the school year, but preparation can start even before.

Many of the respondents of the survey had long been preparing consciously for the application to a six- or eight-year-long grammar school.

Table 3 Educational background of the family and the first time of considering ESGS as an option

			acceptance	
			yes	**no**
at least one parent doesn't have a HE degree	When did the family start thinking about the ESGS as an option?	before last year	54.5%	45,5%
		later	40.0%	60,0%
	average		47.6%	52.4%
both parents have a HE degree	When did the family start thinking about the ESGS as an option?	before last year	77.6%	22,4%
		later	63.4%	36,6%
	average		72.2%	27.8%
average	When did the family start thinking about the ESGS as an option?	before last year	71.3%	28,8%
		later	55.0%	45,0%
	average		64.6%	35.4%

Source: survey questionnaire, own calculations

The figure shows that the higher the educational background is, the earlier the family started thinking about ESGS, the more likely they are to succeed in the end, but future success is more frequent among lower educated families who had also made an early decision about participation.

There is an unambiguous agreement among all actors that taking the entrance exam successfully requires knowledge and skills that are usually not taught in elementary school. This is not only the opinion of the parents, but also of the teachers interviewed. Paraphrasing Pierre Bourdieu's thoughts about how the school reproduces social inequalities, it can be assumed that in order to successfully take the entrance exam to the ESGS, one has to have

knowledge learned somewhere else, but not in the elementary school. However, in the case of the ESGS, bringing cultural capital from home does not seem to be enough. Every actor agrees that weekly practice is necessary in order to succeed. Practice is available mainly through many forms of shadow education, the most common ones being (a) afternoon (or weekend) classes offered by several private preparatory schools that were created to meet this demand; (b) paying classes offered by many of the ESGS; (c) private tutors.

Table 4 Forms of preparation

	no parent with a HE degree	**one HE degree**	**Both with HE degree**	**all**
with a family member	37.5%	35.8%	29.6%	31.8%
family member + prep school	14.3%	19.7%	21.6%	20.5%
family member + private tutor	14.3%	12.4%	13.4%	13.3%
all three kinds	3.6%	9.5%	12.2%	10.8%
none	14.3%	9.5%	9.7%	10.1%
prep school	5.4%	5.8%	6.0%	5.9%
private tutor	8.9%	4.4%	3.5%	4.2%
prep school + private tutor	1.8%	2.9%	3.7%	3.4%

Source: survey questionnaire

According to the survey, 65 per cent of the respondents paid for these services during the months of preparation. The average money paid by them varied between HUF 5,000 and 6,000 per week. This is not much for a middle-class family but can be out of reach for a family of lower social background, or for families who habitually resent paying for an education service – in Hungary, education is often still thought of as a service provided free of charge by the state.

Beside the paid preparatory courses, many parents use their own embodied cultural capital in order to help their children. They actively participate in the preparation themselves: according to the interviewees, the usual routine is that a family devotes one weekend morning for practice: the child does one test as a simulation of the 'real' exam, which the parent then marks and goes over with the child. This altogether usually takes at least two and a half hours, and families complain that they have to sacrifice many other important activities for the practice, and sometimes feel, especially if there is a sibling, as if family life revolves too much around the exams due to take place in January.

According to the survey results, both the use of shadow education and that of the tutoring of a family member is very characteristic of the preparation. Only 10 per cent of the survey respondents did not do a weekly practice. The relative majority, almost one-third of the respondents used 'only' one of the family members as tutors. However, the majority not

only paid for shadow education services but used two types of preparation. Altogether, 80 per cent of the respondents regularly used a family member *combined* with one of the shadow education forms.

Because of the low case numbers, it is not possible to assert any causal relation about the forms of practice and the successful application. However, those not preparing for the exams at all or only participating in one kind of preparation are underrepresented among those who eventually got accepted, whereas almost everyone among those who used three types of preparation (family; group; private tutor) got accepted.

Parents on average devote about 90 minutes per week to the preparation as tutors. Interestingly, in the case of the families where both parents hold a higher education degree there is no difference between the amount of time devoted by those who did and those who did not get accepted (around 83 minutes in average per week) eventually. However, in the families with a less favourable social background, this factor seems to be important: the average time spent on tutoring by the parent per week is much more (127 minutes) in the case of those who got accepted, than in the case of those who eventually remained in primary school (87 minutes on average). Preparing more with one's child thus seems to be a viable way of coping with the original sociocultural disadvantages here.

Applicants can apply to as many ESGS as they want at 'step 3' of the process. A further quantifiable difference emerges from the survey results also regarding the number of applications: parents with the most favourable educational background are, as if they want to play it safe, likely to apply to more grammar schools than others. And they might be right: among them, those who eventually got accepted, applied to an average of 2.8; and those, who did not get into any of the ESGS, applied to an average of 2.4 schools.

Considering more than one option can be a key to understanding the construction process of 'success' and 'failure' in the application process.

The consecutive interviews with the parents also bear witness that 'success' and 'failure' are far from objective and have no absolute meaning.

Similarly to the findings of many qualitative researches on school choice (for example, Reay & Ball, 1998, p. 433) parents themselves having had a prestigious educational career tend to behave more like an 'educational expert' when it comes to school choice matter, whereas parents with a relatively lower educational background are more likely to 'leave it to the kid'.

In the case of K, an economist herself with a good educational background, urging her daughter to participate in educational competitions already by the first years of primary school, paved the way years before the actual application process for success. Moreover, an important part of her tactics was to manage things in a way that her daughter would drive her attention to the desired school: 'We pushed her that way […] I directed her smoothly where to go, we liked the Smithsonian School[3], so it was there that we wanted her to go for the prep course. It was a way of making her connected to the school.'

She did not only go to the prep-course of the wished grammar school but had a weekly private tutor also. Eventually, she did well on the written exam, and applied to 4 different grammar schools. She was not accepted to the track they had originally wanted the most,

[3] All the names of the schools used here are pseudonyms.

but to the other track offered by the same school. Eventually she reached enough points for getting accepted to 2 classes out of the 5 she applied to. However, since she got accepted to at least one, at the end, the family perceived of the result as a clear success and a proof of the talent of their daughter.

Quite a contrast is the case of L. L wanted her son to go to an ESGS because she herself had attended a vocational secondary school and always felt she missed the possibilities a high demanding grammar school could have offered her. However, she and her husband did not want to push their son too much: 'We thought that we have a talented kid, and so, he deserves better than the one he attends [...] I think he knows how much he wants to practice [...] I think, if that is the way he wants it, then I shouldn't ruin it by forcing him.'

The son eventually did not reach enough points on the written exam to get invited to the oral exams of the desired couple of grammar schools. This failure contributes to the ways parents started to see the abilities of their son as less outstanding than they had seen him earlier.

> It is just crystallised now… but I am not disappointed. …but now I see, now I realise that, yes, this is the place for those who are really brainiacs. And well, we were not, L has never been eminent, he has never been sent to any competitions, so we were in the tepid water, one among those who thought that their kid is smart and can get in, but it's not like that.

An advantageous social position, especially in terms of financial situation creates an increased number of options for families to turn possible failures into success, since they can opt for private schools that require a tuition fee. This is the case of S and his family. His mother emphasised that both she and her husband earn enough money to pay the tuition fee if necessary: 'Who else should I spend my money on, if not on my kid. I'd rather not go on holiday. I earn money because I want to be able to provide him with this.'

In such cases, families have a bigger pool of schools to consider than families who do not or cannot pay a tuition fee. S applied to 4 grammar schools, 2 state maintained and 2 private ones. Eventually, the family could convert this diversity into success: he got accepted to one of the six-year-long private grammar schools.

5.5 Reflections on social composition and exit strategies

Are the competing and eventually successful families aware of their privileged status? Some of them are prone to naturalise the privileged social status of their children as 'good skills'. However, several of the applicants' families express their dilemmas concerning the fact that they want 'the best for their children', but their exit from the mediocre standard of general education only reinforces the school segregation process going on in the upper grades of the elementary school.

> I think it is very unjust. ...I expect the six-year-long track to be a selected class, I am not naive, this is the reason I want her to go there… But there are no equal chances… and I find this very bad, that we don't give chances to those who come from lower strata… this is bad for everyone, bad for those kids, bad for the country ... (mother of a sixth grader)
>
> [A]nd the worst is that the whole system is so bad that I don't really feel ashamed that I, as a parent, use a strategy that is against what I really think about being public good. (mother of a sixth grader)

Furthermore, beside the clear elitist aspirations, trying to switch to an ESGS is just as many times a flight from the experiences of a bad school. This flight is often clearly a 'white flight' – especially in the case of the ESGSs maintained by the church – in the eastern regions of the country. Although ESGSs maintained by the church are not necessarily as prestigious as those ESGS that are maintained by universities, parents usually feel church-maintained ESGSs to be safe havens since these institutions usually exclude Roma pupils with problematic behaviour. Although Hungarian literature usually detects this kind of white flight at the school choice for elementary school (Kertesi & Kézdi, 2013), this research shows that this motivation is still present at the secondary school choice stage. This is illustrated by the case of D, who lives in a small village, in fact a suburban area of a big county capital. The parents both have a higher education BA degree, and they started to think about sending their daughter to an ESGS as early as at the 2nd grade.

> There are three eight-year-long grammar schools in the city. There is the 'Bolyai' which is the only state-maintained one, and it is too strong. There is another Catholic school, which is located very far. So that leaves the third one, the 'Szapolyai', also Catholic. I think it is the weakest of all three eight-year-long ones, but it is not weak! It is a relatively strong school, but the weakest of these three schools. And I want a school that is stronger than the one he attends now but not too strong.

The family opted for the church-run school not because of its religious feature, rather because of its relative, but not at all absolute elite nature. And leaving the problematic students in the primary school behind seems to be an important factor also for her:

> When it comes to choosing a school, parents consider church schools as well because, well, here there are many minorities [usually used codename for Roma], and church schools filter them... they let in very few, if at all. And this is a very important factor. I wouldn't let her into a school where there are five or six such pupils in a class...

This illustrates that under certain circumstances (e.g. in the bigger towns of Eastern-Hungary) the ESGS is a means that is used to protect or reinforce the middle-class status of the family by the exclusion of the problematic (many times implicitly: the Roma) pupils from such schools.

5.6 The lack of disadvantaged applicants perceived by the teachers

Teachers in early selective grammar school tracks are quite aware of the social composition of their school of course, but most of them do not see it as a structural problem. In some cases, being 'gifted' is mentioned as a must-have for a student in order to get into the school, and using it as an argument against controlling for the social background of the students.

> Well the family is not important here, because we do not enrol students on the basis of their social background. It is obviously not an aspect to be considered. I don't think you can get into this school without talent. We don't examine the social background and I think that is right. (small town, ESGS teacher)

In a similar school in another settlement, the family background is named as *the* most important and necessary factor:

> If the family background is such that they don't care what their child does, they don't check if the homework is ready, then this whole system falls apart… so we would like to have students who have the right kind of family support.

These accounts show little reflection on how such notions as the 'family's support' regarding educational matters is related to the social status or how such notions as 'talent' or 'being gifted' are socially constructed.

However, expressions of more reflective views on the importance of social status from the part of some teachers occurred also. This is illustrated by the following view, from a similar medium-sized town teacher:

> One question is whether theoretically they [children from disadvantaged backgrounds] can get admitted, but another question is about where do, in general, we get our students from. And in our school, 70 per cent of our students are from a good average or even a better than average background, their parents have at least a secondary degree but in many cases higher education degree. […] this doesn't mean that we lack absolutely talented and smart children who come from lower background. Those who are disadvantaged from a financial point of view can be helped by our foundation. […] The other type, when parents are not so educated, is not easy…

In fact, this is one of the rare examples when a teacher reflects on the distinction between being disadvantaged from a financial or from an educational point of view. In most interviews, disadvantage was solely conceived of as a financial problem and therefore it was easy to state that the school can help in managing problems deriving from financial problems, especially temporary ones.

The non-presence of the 'disadvantaged students' are perceived as a structural problem only in the most elite schools in Budapest, although the teachers here also have some stories of disadvantaged pupils in their schools, but they clearly see them as very rare exceptions.

> We are a really middle-class school, full middle-class I think, it is very seldom that someone from a less good background can get in […] we are looking for skills, not even what the child had learnt about Petőfi, … so it leaves open the way for talented children from any social background if they were to apply. But maybe they couldn't even score high enough on the central written exam, it is possible that for this exam, you do need that kind of cultural background that is much easier to absorb in an intellectual family. (Budapest, university maintained school)

> This gap cannot be closed. When a disadvantaged child arrives to a grammar school then the school can help. But the problem is that they don't arrive. (Budapest, school district maintained school)

These interviews strengthen the assumption about the importance of what was called 'step zero' earlier, which calls attention to the fact that the biggest barrier to the ESGS being a mobility channel is that the overwhelming majority of disadvantaged students remain excluded from the application process from the beginning.

6 Conclusions

A successful application to one of the Early Selective Grammar Schools is the result of a complex and gradual educational selection process.

By borrowing Mare's (1981) concept, that in education, the entrance into the next step is always the consequence of earlier steps and one should view the social composition of an educational level as a result of dependent probabilities of all the important steps. This research identified four steps that influence the future composition of the early selective tracks.

The main decisive step precedes the application process itself: personal networks and everyday experiences in elementary school influence whether the ESGS can appear on the mental horizon of the potential school choosers. And although elementary schools are seemingly passive actors in the process, they have a crucial influence on whether one will pass 'step zero'. In other words, those who attend an elementary school where the social composition of the students is favourable and/or a class from where several pupils consider applying to an ESGS are much more likely to consider the application themselves than their peers in very different schools.

The data about the exclusive nature of the 'sending' elementary schools to the ESGSs, and the very advantageous social composition of the survey respondents indirectly also suggest that many potential applicants among the 4th and 6th graders remain non choosers mostly due to factors such as the socio-economic composition of their primary school, socio-geographical factors (whether an ESGS is available nearby) and whether they see their peers applying to an ESGS or not – factors that are either contextual, structural or institutional ones, but none of them are intrinsic individual characteristics of the given pupil.

These findings call attention to how this kind of gradual, non-compulsory school selection intrinsically involves high levels of early self-selection and self-exclusion strategies, that lead to non-involvement in the process for members from lower strata of society.

Furthermore, elementary schools do not encourage students to participate in the process, and nor do other actors. In the meantime, the application process is generally seen as complex and demanding. As a result of all this, the significance of the family background is as crucial as it can get in this process. The analysis testifies how the cultural, economic and social capital of the family is heavily used during the preparation process from step 1: private tutors, different forms of shadow education and the time and cultural capital of the parents are used (and services are paid for). Although the centrally organised written exam itself gives the impression that it assesses the 'skills' of the applicants purely and objectively, the research identified elements of the preparation process that exclusively rely upon parental tactics: an early decision about the application to the selective tracks (step 0), the use of more than one kind of preparation, devoting parental time on a regular basis during the preparation period (steps 1–2), and applying to more than one school seem to be important factors that contribute to success (step 3).

Social selection is present through the different steps of the actual preparation process, however it is never nearly as important as it is at 'step zero'.

In fact, the majority of those considering the application to the ESGS eventually gets accepted. The homogeneously favourable social composition of the ESGS students comes into being thus more by preceding facts and strategic decisions than by the competitive entrance exam itself. Furthermore, this homogeneity derives also from the fact that this school choice process is a particularly unregulated one regarding the social composition of the applicants.

The existence of the early selective grammar school tracks makes the entrance into secondary education a *gradual process*, where the earliest step is not compulsory nor is it emphasised by official education communication. Mere participation in the application process to the ESGS is entrusted to the decision of the parents.

In most school choice programmes around the world, where school choice happens when the whole cohort starts a new school level, active choosers come on average from a more favourable social background than non-choosers. The ESGS intersects the elementary school grades which further widens this social gap between choosers and non-choosers. Studies on school choice and ability tracking have already identified many different characteristics of both types of educational selection that contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities. In the case of the ESGS entrance process, a common set of such characteristics can be detected simultaneously, and altogether they produce a particularly elevated level of social selection in the case of the ESGS.

This leads to the fact that students from an unfavourable social background almost inevitably become non-choosers, and this is the main reason why the ESGS contributes extremely to the reproduction of social inequalities and cases when it serves as a channel for upward social mobility remain almost invisible.

Acknowledgements

This article is based on data collection and field work made possible by the grant No bo_352_19 of the Bolyai Research Fund of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the FK-135215 research project funded by the Hungarian National Research, Development and Innovation Office. The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions, which helped to improve the text.

References

Bagley, C., Woods, Ph. A. & Glatter, R. (2001). Rejecting Schools: Towards a fuller understanding of the process of parental choice. *School Leadership & Management: Formerly School Organisation. 21*(3), 309–325. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430120074455

Ball, S. J. & Vincent, C. (1998). 'I Heard It on the Grapevine': 'Hot' knowledge and school choice. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *19*(3), 377–400. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142569980190307

Bifulco, R., Ladd, H. F. & Ross, S. L. (2009). Public school choice and integration evidence from Durham, North Carolina. *Social Science Research, 38*(1), 71–85. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2008.10.001

Berends, M. (2015). Sociology and School Choice: What We Know After Two Decades of Charter Schools. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *41*(4), 159–180. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073014-112340

Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J-C. (1990). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture.* Sage.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J.G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.

Buchmann, C. & Park, H (2009). Stratification and the formation of expectations in highly differentiated educational systems. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility, 27*(4), 245–267. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2009.10.003

Burgess, S., Greaves, E., Vignoles, A. & Wilson, D. (2011). Parental choice of primary school in England: What types of school do different types of family really have available to them? *Policy Studies*, *32*(5), 531–547. https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2011.601215

Burgess, S, Greaves, E. & Vignoles, A. (2019). School choice in England: evidence from national administrative data. *Oxford Review of Education, 45*(5) 690–710. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2019.1604332

Butler, T. & van Zanten, A. (2007). School choice: a European perspective. *Journal of Education Policy*, *22*(1), 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930601065692

Chen, L. & Pereyra, J. (2019). Self-selection in school choice. *Games and Economic Behavior*, *117*, 59–81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geb.2019.06.004

Chubb, J. & Moe, T. (1988). Politics, Markets, and the Organization of Schools. *American Political Science Review*, *82*(4), 1065–1087. https://doi.org/10.2307/1961750

Cobb, C. D. & Glass, G. V. (2009). School Choice in a Post-Desegregation World. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *84*(2), 262–278. https://doi.org/10.1080/01619560902810187

Gamoran, A. (2010). Tracking and inequality. New directions for research and practice. In M. Apple, S. Ball & L. A. Gandin (Eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of the Sociology of Education* (pp. 213–228). Routledge.

Hanushek, E. & Wößmann, L. (2006). Does Educational Tracking Affect Performance and Inequality? Differences-in-Differences Evidence Across Countries. *Economic Journal, 116*(510), C63-C76. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0297.2006.01076.x

Horn, D. (2013). Diverging performances: the detrimental effects of early educational selection on equality of opportunity in Hungary. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, *32*, 25–43. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2013.01.002

Hoxby, C. M. (2003). School Choice and Productivity: Could School Choice Be a Tide that Lifts All Boats? In C. M. Hoxby (Ed.), *The Economics of School Choice* (pp. 287–341). University of Chicago Press.

Kertesi, G. & Kézdi, G. (2013). *School segregation, school choice and educational policies in 100 Hungarian towns.* Budapest Working Papers on The Labour Market (BWP), 2013/12. https://www.econ.core.hu/file/download/bwp/bwp1312.pdf

Kogan, I., Gebel, M. & Noelke, C. (2012). Educational Systems and Inequalities in Educational Attainment in Central and Eastern European Countries. *Studies of Transition States and Societies 4*(1), 69–83. https://publications.tlu.ee/index.php/stss/article/view/91/81

Kosunen, S. (2014). Reputation and parental logics of action in local school choice space in Finland. *Journal of Education Policy*, *29*(4), 443–466. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2013.844859

Lannert, J (2009). *A továbbtanulási aspirációk társadalmi meghatározottsága [The social factors behind educational aspiration].* OFI. https://ofi.oh.gov.hu/tovabbtanulasi-aspiraciok-tarsadalmi-meghatarozottsaga

Liskó, I. & Fehérvári, A. (1996). *Szerkezetváltó iskolák a kilencvenes években [Schools changing their structure in the 1990ies].* Institute for Educational Research. https://ofi.oh.gov.hu/sites/default/files/attachments/212_lisko-fehervari_szerkezetvalto_iskolak_a_kilencvenes_e.pdf

Mare, R. D. (1981). Change and stability in educational stratification. *American Sociological Review, 46*, 72–87. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095027

Musset, P. (2012). *School choice and equity: Current policies in OECD countries and literature review.* OECD Education Working Papers, No. 66. https://doi.org/10.1787/5k9fq23507vc-en

Reay, D. & Ball, S. J. (1998). 'Making Their Minds up': Family Dynamics of School Choice. *British Educational Research Journal*, *24*(4), 431–448. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192980240405

Reay, D. & Ball, S. J. (1997). Spoilt for Choice: The Working Classes and Educational Markets. *Oxford Review of Education*, *23*(1), 89–101. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305498970230108

Riedel, A., Schneider, K., Schuchart, C. & Weishaupt, H. (2010). School Choice in German Primary Schools. How binding are school districts? *Journal of Educational Research Online*, *2*(1), 94–120. https://doi.org/10.25656/01:4569

Roda, A. & Wells, A. S. (2013). School Choice Policies and Racial Segregation: Where White Parents' Good Intentions, Anxiety, and Privilege Collide. *American Journal of Education*, *119*(2), 261–293. https://doi.org/10.1086/668753

Roda, A. (2017). Parenting in the age of high-stakes testing: Gifted and talented admissions and the meaning of parenthood. *Teachers College Record*, *119*(8), 1–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811711900804

Seghers, M., Boone, S. & Van Avermaet, P. (2019). Social class and educational decision-making in a choice-driven education system: a mixed-methods study. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 40*(5), 696–714. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2019.1581051

Yongmei, Ni (2010). The Sorting Effect of Charter Schools on Student Composition in Traditional Public Schools. *Educational Policy*, *26*(2), 215–242. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904810386598

Yoon, E. & Lubienski, C. (2017). How do marginalized families engage in school choice in inequitable urban landscapes? A critical geographic approach. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *25*(42). https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.25.2655

Van de Werfhorst, H. G. (2019). Early Tracking and Social Inequality in Educational Attainment: Educational Reforms in 21 European Countries. *American Journal of Education*, *126*(1), 65–99. https://doi.org/10.1086/705500

Van Zanten, A. (2013). A Good Match: Appraising Worth and Estimating Quality in School Choice. In J. Beckert & C. Musselin (Eds.), *Constructing Quality: The Classification of Goods in Markets* (pp. 77–102). Oxford University Press.

Varga, J. (Ed.) (2019). *A közoktatás indikátorrendszere [Indicators of public education].* KRTK. https://kti.krtk.hu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/A_kozoktatas_indikatorrendszere_2019.pdf

Zsuzsa Plainer*

‘Even if we are Roma, we are clean, respectful, and always went to school’: Analysing the types, functions, and meanings of capitals that shape the upward educational mobility path of Roma in Romania

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 80–99.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.838
https://intersections.tk.hu

* [plainerzsuzsa@gmail.com] (Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities)

Abstract

The aim of the present research is to analyse how some Roma in Romania become educationally mobile. Based on the cultural wealth model and the constructivist approaches to ethnicity and scholarship in relation to cultural racism, I intended to take stock of the forms of capital Roma persons make use of when ascending. I considered that the narrative type of interviews could be a successful means of generating a better understanding of the meaning and functioning of capitals.

Narratives inform us that the same type of capital may appear in different forms: family capital may denote not ‘just’ the transmission of the importance of education to children but protection from racial insults, too. Institutional agents (as sources of social capital acquisition) – despite their good will – may equally facilitate the inclusion of and reproduce unequal racial categorization.

Behaving differently, in opposition to the stereotypes associated with the Roma (low educational attainment, early marriage, poverty), is a conscious choice that may help many of the Roma to resist racial attacks.

Keywords: Roma in Romania; upward educational mobility; cultural wealth model

1 Introduction

Reasons for the low educational attainment (and persisting economic disadvantages) of the European Roma have been a major focus for contemporary scholarship. However, relatively little attention is paid to the factors that have already helped some members of this marginal community to succeed ‘against the odds’. The issue of upward mobility, especially upward educational mobility, is even less discussed in research on Romania; however, the gap between Roma and non-Roma in terms of school attendance (too) is quite large in this country.

Thus, the aim of this paper is to investigate some aspects of Roma educational upward mobility in Romania. In doing so, in-depth interviews were conducted to gather details about the experiences of Roma people whose educational attainment is higher than their parents’ (and is above the nationally assessed minimum of ten classes [years of schooling]). The empirical material is processed with a well-defined aim: in line with literature on resilient

ethno-racial minorities, I assume that the Roma face a series of problems when they ascend: not only social and economic hardships but racial discrimination, too. Thus, like other non-dominant ethnic groups, they may follow a special minority mobility path when they move upward in the social structure. The aim of this paper is to describe the most important features of this path in the case of the Roma living in Romania.

2 Literature review

Compared to the problem of marginality, the upward educational mobility of dominant ethnic groups is a phenomenon less discussed in the literature. Older approaches to examining high educational attainment (of working-class people) identify three types of factors that contribute to success. Goldthorpe and Lockwood consider that aspiration (as an individual but socially bounded phenomenon) is a major trigger for upward educational mobility. Turner considers educational systems an important means for success, while other scholars focus on those macro social contexts (e.g., structure of the labour market) that facilitate social ascension. Recent scholarship pays attention to the role of parents and the socialization of working-class families whose children graduate from higher educational institutions (for a detailed presentation of the literature, see Kupfer, 2015, pp. 3–29). An important item among recent approaches is Kupfer's research, which compares the upward educational mobility of the working class in Austria and in the UK, applying Bourdieu's concept of habitus to identify the social factors, personal skills and attitudes that lead to social climbing (Kupfer, 2015).

Another area of scholarship addresses the ascension of ethnic minorities from the perspective of the minority culture of mobility (see especially Neckermann et al., 1999; Valejo, 2012; Shahrokni, 2015),[1] stating that 'the minority middle classes possess distinctive cultural elements which we call the "minority culture of mobility" … This culture of mobility is not a complete culture but a set of cultural elements within the larger framework of a given minority culture' (Neckermann et al., 1999, p. 949). 'These cultural elements provide strategies for economic mobility in the context of discrimination and group disadvantage and respond to distinctive problems that usually accompany minority middle-class status' (Neckermann et al., 1999, p. 946).

Ethnic minorities' social ascension is grasped through cultural wealth theory model too (Yosso, 2005), based either on the perspective of critical race theory or on the Bourdieusian concept of capital. The cultural wealth model shifts the focus from the disadvantages of ethno-racial minority groups to the specific knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts (capitals) that members of these groups make use of in order to survive and resist macro and micro forms of oppression (Yosso, 2005, p. 77).

A different body of literature deals with (Eastern European) Roma educational and social mobility. Regardless of the theoretical approach these accounts apply (resilience: Máté, 2015; minority culture of mobility: Durst & Bereményi, 2021; etc.), all of them identify a set of

[1] The literature on resilient ethnic minorities is, of course much broader. For a review see Bereményi and Carrasco (2017).

conditions, resources, and contexts that help minority Roma people to succeed. Bereményi and Durst affirm that the ambivalent lived experience of upwardly mobile Roma is diminished by reliance on ethnic networks (which reduces mobility costs). Nyírő and Durst (2018) conclude that a set of human and cultural resources facilitate the process of ascension: a strong work ethic, emotional support from extended families, etc. Bereményi and Carrasco (2017) take stock of the types of capital the upwardly mobile Roma in Spain are endowed with. Óhidy (2013) lists the supportive factors necessary for completing the process of social ascension: family connections, scholarships, and supportive educational programmes. Kende (2007) underpins the role of community members' assistance to upwardly mobile Roma.

Literature on the upward mobility of the Roma in Romania is not very rich. A small number of studies deal with the aspects of affirmative action designed and implemented to facilitate Roma social ascension (special university and school places) (see, for instance, Cismaru et al., 2015; Surdu & Sira, 2009; Garaz & Torotcoi, 2017). Meanwhile, Surdu and Sira turn their attention (mainly) to the objective components of mobility (in the case of the beneficiaries), while Pantea (2015a; 2015b) discusses the ambivalences of subjectively lived ascension by the Roma. One of her findings is that Roma persons enrolled in affirmative action programmes regard it a source of dignity for Roma, while for others it is a source of stigmatization.

Being the first attempt to frame the empirical material, this study examines but one aspect of the educational mobility of the Roma in Romania: the resources, skills, and knowledge responsible for educational mobility. The present investigation does not address objectively measured differences between the upwardly mobile Roma and their families, nor subjective perceptions of ascension.

3 Theoretical perspective

Although my research was inspired by the reviewed approaches, I hesitated to apply the above-presented concepts directly to my empirical material.

In contrast to the previously listed literature, I do not consider that (in my case) upward educational mobility goes hand in hand with social ascension. My research also includes those Roma who (as first-in-family university graduates) undertake manual work. Similarly, I conducted interviews with Roma individuals who do come from economically stable, even privileged families, but their parents' educational attainment is very low. (Except in four cases all the respondents' mothers and fathers are/were employed as semi-skilled or skilled workers. There were only two cases when the parents were involved in trade in the informal economy (buying and selling antiques or other goods). The highest level of parents' educational attainment was high school. Thus, I do not consider the concept of habitus (which somehow presumes the existence of a class-specific dispositions) adequate for framing my findings.

It obvious that the notion of ethnic culture is not adequate for analysing the Roma living in Romania; a minority consisting of various sub-ethnic groups. How can 'Hungarian Gypsies' (to use the endonym for a group assimilated into the minority Hungarian society in Romania) be compared to the Gabors (who have specific customs, clothes, language, and tradition)? As the variety of Roma groups makes it difficult to select and identify cultural elements 'associated [with the Roma] minority', I prefer to use the term 'mobility path' for the

Roma instead of culture of mobility in the case of the Roma described in the following sections. By doing so, I acknowledge the presence of those specific hardships that shape the minority strategies of mobility.

Therefore, my theoretical framework relies on two pillars: the concept of capital (coined by Bourdieu and reframed mainly by Yosso) and post-Barthian (constructivist) theories on ethnicity, completed with more or less recent accounts about racism.

Although the notion of capital is – in Bourdieusian theory – a means of framing social stratification, this aspect will be put aside in the following sections. Capital – for the present study – is used (mostly) in line with its initial definition: accumulated labour objectified in knowledge, property, or social relations (Bourdieu in Richardson, 1986, pp. 15–16). Cultural capital is embodied in knowledge, credentials, or cultural goods. Economic capital denotes all sorts of material assets, while social capital refers to social connections, possession of a social network (Bourdieu in Richardson, 1986, p. 16), and membership in a group (Bourdieu in Richardson, 1986, p. 21). Apart from these three basic forms, Bourdieu identified other non-material types of capital such as symbolical capital (Bourdieu, 1993), which initially referred to positions in the field of high culture but later became applicable to other social contexts, too. Symbolical capital – in its broader sense – denotes individual or family prestige, celebrity, honour, and recognition (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 7).

Yosso (and her fellow researchers) reframes this concept of capital, adjusting it to the condition of ethno-racial minority groups. She states that non-dominant communities are endowed with some specific sort of knowledge, skills, and abilities (overlooked in the Bourdieusian model) that help them 'to face and resist macro- and micro form of oppression' (Yosso, 2005, p. 77).

Yosso and her followers identify the following types of capital(s):[2]

Aspirational capital denotes the ability to maintain hope and to dream even in underprivileged social and economic conditions (Yosso, 2005, pp. 78–79). However, in Samuelson and Litztler's view, it also refers to the capacity to find motivation to 'raise high': to get a good job or achieve a better life (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016, p. 102).

Family capital – according to Yosso – derives from the experience of living in large families. But in Samuelson and Litzler's view, this also denotes individual aspiration and emotional support received from family members (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016, p. 106).

Social capital – in this context of cultural wealth theory – refers to belonging to networks (peer groups or of older persons) that facilitate a minority person's access to community resources (scholarships, healthcare, etc.) by providing the emotional and instrumental support necessary to get along (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Among the many types of relations, Stanton-Salazar (2011) place special emphasis on institutional agents; i.e., persons with higher institutional status who provide the following types of support: socialization into institutional discourses, bridging (acting as contacts between the minority person and mainstream institutions), advocacy (providing personal intervention to help students from disadvantaged environments), the provision of evaluative feedback, guidance, advice, or role modelling (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Navigational capital – according to Yosso – denotes the capacity of minority persons to survive in racially hostile institutions (Yosso, 2005, p. 80).

---

[2] Yosso includes linguistic capital in her model. At this stage of research, I could not see its relevance, thus it is not listed in this section.

Resistant capital (the skill of minority persons to resist racism) is of different types in this model. Solorzano and Delgado Bernal define conformist resistance as when the minority person seeks individual success (for instance, in school) but does not want to reframe the racist practices of the institutions. Transformative resistance is a type of minority practice that goes against the dominant racist oppression (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 318).

Although according to Yosso cultural capital is a result of these above-mentioned resources, sometimes (when facilitating ascension) I treat it as a separate means of achieving success.

The term ethnic capital is another path to reinterpreting the Bourdieusian framework. According to Jaeeun Kim, ethnic capital does not merely involve tapping into certain resources through membership in an ethnic group. If ethnicity is understood as a category (rather than a group), then Kim states that ethnic capital denotes the different treatment of persons who are classified differently in the process of (ethno-racial) categorization (Kim, 2018, p. 2).

A few studies have applied the community wealth model to understand Roma person's mobility. John Doyle (2022) listed the types of capitals which help Roma youth to ascend in Slovakia. His research – completed with ethnographic observation – (only) stock-takes the types of capitals without offering deep understanding of their function. Gulyás (2019) analyses the life narratives of Roma persons who migrated from Hungary to Canada and pursued non-compulsory education. She applies Yosso's framework only when addressing the issue of social capital. Bereményi and Carrasco (Bereményi & Carrasco, 2017) reveal some new aspects when applying the cultural wealth perspective to the mobility path of Roma living in Spain. They conclude that family provides not only emotional support to young Roma, but helps them to acquire resistant capital, too. Bereményi and Carrasco also state that the group of institutional agents is much larger than captured by Salazar's definition: it includes non-school-based persons, too (NGO mentors, politically active family friends, parents' middle-class employers, etc.).

Post-Barthian approaches to ethnicity and the theories on cultural racism were also relevant for this investigation. Accordingly, ethnicity is a matter of categorization; a moving border between 'us' and 'them' (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). In line with theories on cultural racism, racial belonging is understood in this study as stigma associated not necessarily with skin complexion or physical appearance but with certain (negatively labelled) attitudes and behaviours (Modood & Wrebner, eds., 2015). The contextuality of Roma identity and the changing Roma-non-Roma ethno-racial classification constitute the subjects of a great many publications (for a few examples, see Kovács, 2006; Kovai, 2017; Ladányi & Szelényi, 2006; Dunajeva, 2017).

Changes in the ethnic categorization of upwardly mobile young Roma is a an area of research that has already been addressed by a few scholars. Abajo and Carrasco (eds., 2004) define two strategies for ascension in the case of Roma in Spain. Ethnic invisibility refers to a coping strategy of the Roma in secondary education. It helps these young persons to hide their identity from classmates and teachers in order to avoid othering (Abajo & Carrasco, eds., 2004, pp. 105–106, as cited in Brüggemann, 2014, p. 442). Apayamiento refers to peer pressure within the Roma community, stating that the behaviour of upwardly mobile persons is not in line with the attitude expected from Roma (Abajo & Carrasco, eds., 2004, p. 38 as cited in Brüggemann, 2014, p. 442).

Brüggemann's findings partly confirm Abajo and Carrasco's: some young Roma in Spain hide their ethnic identity and are accused by their (Roma peers) of 'not being Roma'.

However, others openly admit that they are Roma and use this confession as a strategy to resist racist attacks (Brüggemann, 2014, p. 445). Some Roma peer group members even express pride related to high achieving (Brüggemann, 2014, p. 446).[3]

4 Methods and research design

The empirical body of this research is made up of in-depth interviews. Although these were frequently interrupted with questions, they may show certain similarities with narrative interviews. My interlocutors were asked to narrate their lives as educated Roma persons; all questions were addressed in a way that encouraged 'story telling' (Rosenthal, 2018). Similarly to Kupfer, I consider these sorts of 'narrative' interviews suitable for my research purpose, inasmuch as they reveal the unconscious factors responsible for upward mobility, and they link agency to the broader social context (Kupfer, 2005, pp. 43–44). In addition, in my view, narratives can also inform about capital acquisition 'in motion': how certain forms of capitals are converted into each other during the individual life course. Moreover, narrative structures are able to disclose the content given to certain forms of capitals by the agents.

Unlike the assigned methodology for narrative interviews, I refused to undertake the task of case reconstruction or comparison (Rosenthal, 2018, pp. 166–168). As the empirical material is not so vast, I merely intend to verify which types of capital are presented in the narratives and what their role was in facilitating ascension. In accordance with the rules of analysing qualitative data, I do not insist on providing data on frequency (i.e., to show in each case how many respondents made use of certain strategies, skills, or knowledge) (Kovács, ed., 2007).

4.1 The educational situation of Roma in Romania: some data

According to the official statistics, in Romania, 621,573 people declared themselves to be Roma during the last census in 2011; however, through a more refined framework (external classification by bureaucrats dealing with Roma problems at local institutions), the number of Roma was estimated to be much higher: 1,215,846 in 2016 (Horváth, ed., 2017, p. 36).

According to the 2002 national census data, 7.1 per cent of the Romanian population graduated from a higher-education institute: 7.3 per cent of Romanians, 4.9 per cent of Hungarians, and only 0.2 per cent of Romanian Roma. Further, 3 per cent of Romanians, 2.9 per cent of Hungarians, and only 0.1 per cent of the Roma graduated from a post-secondary education institute (Surdu & Sira, 2009, p. 24).

In 2012, more than half of the Roma children in Romania did not attend kindergarten, while this proportion was approximately 25 per cent for the non-Roma (FRA–UNDP, 2012, p. 13). More than 22 per cent of Roma children in Romania between 7 and 15 years of age did

[3] The question of Roma identity appears in many pieces of research. For my investigation, the making and remaking of ethnic borders was more relevant.

not attend school compared to less than 15 per cent of the non-Roma (UNDP, p. 14). Only about 30 per cent of the Roma in Romania were in paid employment (excluding self-employment) compared to about 45 per cent among the non-Roma (FRA–UNDP, 2012, p. 16).

Survey data suggest that in 2012 the proportion of Roma between 26 and 32 years of age in European countries with completed university education did not exceed one per cent (Brüggemann, 2012, p. 24). The situation in Romania is similar. According to the last census in 2011, 0.14 per cent of university graduates are Roma, while another 0.13 per cent of individuals with an MA or PHD degree are Roma (Recensământ, 2011).

The position of Roma school mediators emerged in Romania after 1990, initially through transnational projects aimed at the Roma's social integration, but later the initiative was taken over by the national system of education. School mediators are part of the auxiliary teaching staff, are paid by the education system, and have the main task of supporting the participation of all children in the community in compulsory education (Szasz & Csesznek 2019, p. 437). In 2015, there were 520 active school mediators, of whom only 306 were full-time employees, with the others having other jobs, too: mostly (form) teachers of the Romany language, librarians, community mediators, etc. In the period 2005–2012, the number of active Roma school mediators was between 420 and 510, of whom 85 per cent were Roma (Sarău, 2013, p. 31). According to the new Law of Education, their minimum level of education should be a bachelor's degree (Sarău, 2013, p. 32).

According to the legal definition, Romany language teachers should be university graduates. Since the 1998/1999 academic year, a minor for Romany language and culture has been introduced at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, which later, after 2005, gained the status of a major. Since 1999 it was possible to teach the Romany language as a native tongue in schools (if requested). In the 2010s, about 460 and 530 teachers were teaching in the Romanian educational system, 95 per cent of whom considered themselves Roma (Sarău, 2013, p. 32).

Concerning the number of Roma experts in local councils, Law No 430/2001 provides that one out of every three or four employees has to be 'a member of Roma minority' (Hotărâre nr. 430, 2001, p. 6).

4.2 Study sample

The empirical body for this investigation consists of 20 in-depth interviews with persons who identified as Roma and whose educational attainment is higher than their parents' and than the compulsory national minimum of ten classes. Accordingly, respondents with the lowest level of education had completed vocational school (11 classes), and those with the highest had post-graduate degrees (MA). Fieldwork was conducted in 2016 and 2017, and thus all of the findings reveal the situation at that time. Eight interlocutors were female and 12 male, the youngest of them being 20–21 years old and the oldest over 50. Except for two individuals, all of them were beneficiaries of educational policies and projects that explicitly targeted the Roma population in Romania: Roma school mediators (3), Romany language teachers and/or form teachers for Roma-only classes (3), students or graduates occupying special university places for Roma (12), and experts on Roma issues in local or county councils (2).

The Roma school mediators, Romany language teachers (form teachers), the school mediators and the local expert were in charge of (according to their job descriptions) solving problems associated with their co-ethnics: Roma children in schools, and Roma citizens who ask for the authorities' help. No wonder these people had well-developed discourses about their role as 'helpers'.

Beneficiaries of the Roma special educational places are tied less strongly to the world of ethnic entrepreneurs. Although about half of them were doing volunteering (and later) paid work for a Roma NGO that issued them with a certificate of ethnicity (necessary for eligibility for the reserved places), these connections were temporary. By the time of the fieldwork, only two or three of them were active members of organizations serving the Roma. Thus, these respondents did not have a well-developed self-presentation of themselves as Roma 'helpers'.

All respondents lived in Transylvania, Romania. Eleven were born and grew up in villages or small towns, two in orphanages, and the others in cities. Except for one person, who identified himself as a musician of Roma ethnicity (Hu: zenész cigány, Ro: lăutar), the others categorized themselves as Romanian or Hungarian Roma (assimilated into Romanian or Hungarian society). None of them could tell what Roma subethnic group they belonged to; four of them spoke some Romany, but none of them used it at home or with friends. Fifteen persons had Romanian as their first language, two were bilingual (Romanians and Hungarians), and the others had Hungarian as their first language.

Beneficiaries of special programmes were selected both for ethical and practical reasons. Enrolment in such projects usually demands a certificate attesting ethnic affiliation issued by a 'Roma organization'. Thus, for these persons it was not problematic to be categorized as Roma by the majority, and this outward label was identical with their self-definition. These respondents were in contact with – actually, were recommended by – Roma student organizations or NGOs with projects targeting Roma communities.

The question of ethnicity and race was not directly addressed during the interviews. Interlocutors felt free to introduce the topic of Roma identity whenever they deemed it relevant. However, all of the interviewees were aware that they had been invited in as 'highly educated Roma persons', and none of them refused this categorization. There was one respondent who admitted that they did not always disclose their Roma identity in all social encounters, but they considered the interview process a 'safe place' and were open to sharing experiences.

All names and personal data were anonymized.

To sum up, the aim of this research is to identify the types of capital that assisted these Roma persons to become educationally upwardly mobile. After processing the 'narrative interviews', I intended not only to distinguish between the different kinds of capitals but to also look into how these 'work': what meanings are associated with them, and how they are interrelated and converted.

In order to do this, similarly to Kupfer (2015, p. 86) and Abajo and Carrasco (eds., 2014) I made a distinction between certain types of possibilities/modalities enabling ascension Thus, in view of the subsequent sections, I delineated the following: (1) acquisition of skills and capacities, aspirations and traits that helped Roma persons to succeed; (2) connection with agents that helped to ascend; (3) institutional contexts promoting success.

5 Findings

5.1 Skills, capacities, aspirations

5.1.1 Resistant capital

All respondents were aware of racial oppression. Some had been subjected directly and personally to insults because of their identity, while others not – however, all of them had worked out a series of skills and techniques to resist in racially hostile environments. Therefore, analysing resistant capital is extremely important when understanding upward educational mobility. Since with one exception all the unpleasant encounters took place in institutions, resistant capital could also be labelled navigational capital in these interviews.

Conformist resistant capital

The respondents enumerated various strategies that they make use of when facing racist attacks. Only one of them turned to passive ignorance:

> Being a Roma, my classmates insulted me, saying I was a crow, and things like this. But my parents always said I should not pay attention to them. (woman, 22)[4]

Others choose a certain type of behaviour to avoid racist insults:

> I made friends in the elementary school. They hid their prejudices if they had any at all. Why was I able to make friends? It was my attitude that enabled this. I was a respectable person, open, got along well with everyone. (man, 45–50 years)

It may be questionable why this skill is discussed as conformist resistance. This is because since all Roma who act in a friendly and open way somehow accept the existence of such a classification – they only try to negotiate it through individual strategies but do not explicitly question its existence.

Transformative resistant capital

Attitudes, skills, and strategies were classified as transformative if fuelled by a desire to reject the Roma–non-Roma classification according to which the latter are associated with negative stereotypes.

Transformative capital – in the interviews – may be of different types. As the following excerpt shows, it may consist of revealing 'what you are'. It probably seeks to draw the attention of the non-Roma to the fact that (in contrast to the stereotypes), a Roma person can attend a prestigious high school:

> I was the only Roma person in the class in this high school, which was a well-known one. And I told this to my colleagues even on the first day. I went out with my classmates, and we all introduced ourselves. I told them my name, the village I had come from, the marks I got on the en-

[4] All the translations of the interview texts were made by the author of the present study.

> trance exam (9.43 out of 10), and many other things. Among these, I also told them that I was a Rom. I was waiting for their reaction, but there was none, so we went on. For me, the most important is to assume what you are. And if you can do this, then others will do, too. It is very important to be honest. (woman, 23)

Transformative capital as a skill or strategy for confronting racist attacks may also take the form of the verbal rejection of insults. A respondent reacted when Roma were depicted with negative stereotypes in a classroom. I consider this transformative behaviour because it intends to dislocate the Roma (as negative) – non-Roma (as positive) classification:

> The teachers were using negative examples when speaking about the Roma in the class. We, the Roma students, let them know that this was an insult. (man, 46)

Narratives reveal that conformist and transformative resistance are – sometimes – inseparable. Reacting informally to unjust institutional treatment (such as erasing an inscription that unlawfully introduced Roma identity into a document) is a form of transformative resistance. However, this is also an example of the acquisition of resilient capital. In this case, the respondent erased a reference to their ethnic affiliation because it could have created problems for them. By doing so, they accepted the Roma–non-Roma dichotomy ('Roma are problematic; non-Roma are decent', as a ticket seller confirmed to her); the interviewee only wanted to 'cross the ethnic border' and no longer be defined as being in the group of despised persons (who are looked at with anger):

> It was written in my course report book [leckekönyv] that I was a Roma person. This is illegal! It annoyed me! Anywhere I go, it is in my student certificate. When I showed my card to get a student pass, the ticket seller gave me a dirty look. So, I erased the inscription. (woman, 22)

5.1.2 Aspirational capital

This is yet another source of upward mobility. Respondents enrol in educational programmes or continue their education because 'I thought I could do better' or 'after a while, I thought I would like to graduate from university… I was wondering what sort of life would await me in my village'.

5.2 Agents and groups whose connection to Roma individuals could be an asset: Acquiring family and social capital

Respondents named a number of individuals or groups who had helped them to ascend: family, peer-group members (friends), Roma, and non-Roma 'helpers'.

5.2.1 Family

Family is one of the most important communities that can help a person to become upwardly mobile. Being a member of a family provides these Roma persons with family capital, as

defined in Samuelson and Litzler's (2016, p. 106) terms.[5] A family helps its members in their aspirations, socializes them through education, and gives them positive feedback when needed:

> My father was an intelligent man. [...] He travelled a lot, as he was doing business with antiques. I cannot say he was good with languages, although he had German and Italian clients, but he was intelligent, despite the fact that he had completed only four classes. He seconded us, encouraged us to go on with education, and paid attention to how we would grow up. (woman, 28)

But the family is not only a supportive environment. It conveys certain values, too.

> In our family, everyone tried to aim high. Even if we are Roma, we are clean, respectful, and we always tried to go to school. And we are respected by the community [...] I am the first university graduate in my village among the Roma. They are proud of me. My parents gave me support, and they said: 'you can do better'. See, what can become of someone who gets pregnant at the age of fourteen? (woman, 24)

Family did not always provide the motivation for attending school. Sometimes the role of parents consisted 'only' of protecting their children from anti-Gypsyism.

> I remember once during secondary school we went to the public pool [strand/fürdő]. The Gypsies were forbidden to enter, as some local [Roma] children had been jumping into the water, which disturbed the others. Besides, they had no swimsuits on them, just their casual clothes. This was the reason why my sisters and I were not allowed to enter. We started to cry because we did not understand why. Is it because we were Gypsies? But we were not stinky and we had swimsuits and floats like anyone else. Then Dad put us in the car and drove 20 kilometres to the managers' house and entered. He said to the manager: 'I can't believe you're doing this! I built your house (my father had welded the fence for his new house) and you will not let us enter the pool?' And then the manager got into our car, came with us to the pool, and said to his employees: 'I told you not to let the Gypsies in, but I did not order you to stop these people'. So, they let us in because of my father.
>
> [later on, in the same narrative]:
>
> When I said I want to attend a university, my parents were not very happy. They said I could do whatever I want, but they were not very happy. (woman, 25)

5.2.2 Social mobility, peer group contacts and institutional agents

Upward mobility was in many interviews facilitated through connections with others. The helping persons these Roma respondents are connected to were of two types: peer groups, and institutional agents (Stanton-Salazar, 2011).[6] The social capital acquired through being in

[5] Yosso's definition of family capital could not be found in any of the 20 interviews that were processed. This may be because the respondents had not grown up in large families – they had two or three siblings at most. Thus, they probably could not acquire the experience of belonging or caring, which – according to Yosso – is the essence of family capital.

[6] Institutional agents in Stanton-Salazar's understanding are those persons who hold important positions in various institutions. In this research, institutional agents are those individuals who occupy positions vital in terms of ascension (no matter how 'high' they are in the institutional hierarchy).

contact with these latter is differentiated in line with Stanton-Salazar's typology. In this sense, institutional helpers aid socialization into institutional discourses act as a bridge between the person and the institution and as advocates for the minority person when they are prevented from accessing certain institutional resources, as well as provide emotional and moral support for the minority persons, and act as role models (Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

The only fragment about the assistance of a peer reveals that the social capital obtained from this relationship was at the same time help in meeting the criteria of the university entrance exam, but it also provided motivation and support for the Roma person:

> I did not want to attend university. But I met a guy who said I should go. He wrote my essay for the entrance exam for the special places, and he submitted my application. He is here, too, at the university, but we are not together. We were friends but he wanted more, and I did not want that. (woman, 22)

Advocacy was an important task of the institutional agents. Here, the non-Roma teacher (together with her family) restored justice as s/he helped the Roma child to obtain the diploma she deserved:

> I was the best pupil in the first grade; I only had the best grades (10 out of 10). But the headmistress did not let my form teacher give me a diploma for excellence, saying that a Gypsy child cannot be the best among the twelve non-Roma. [...] And I told this to my parents, who came to the school and made a complaint. A huge scandal arose, and my form teacher supported us. For me, it was very inspiring that she had put her job at risk just to help us. Later, she openly admitted that she would not be allowed to give me a diploma. This was because (in the eyes of the headmistress) it would have diminished the value of the class if a Gypsy girl had done better than the Hungarian children. After this scandal, the headmistress was dismissed. (woman, 25)

The connection with institutional agents may consist of receiving positive feedback, emotional and moral support. But, in contrast with the previous example, in this case a 'helper' (also a non-Roma teacher), although encouraging the student not to give up, unconsciously rebuilt the frame of racial categorization. In his view, it was unusual (and unexpected) for a Roma girl to attend high school (instead of marrying at an early age):

> I got 4 out of 10 for my first test in mathematics in high school. It was unusual for me, as I had got only 9s and 10s before, at secondary school. The math teacher saw me crying because of my poor performance, so he said he was sorry but I had got the grade I deserved. And he also said he saw I was a Rom, and he was very proud of me. He said in public that everybody should pay attention to me because I got here at the age of 14–15, while others got married and had children. Because this is what people think: the Roma marry at an early age. And he encouraged me many times, which helped me to grow strong and show that I could do more.

Social capital acquired from relations with institutional agents may also serve as a bridge between the Roma person and the institution. Roma and non-Roma 'helpers' may assist with getting into affirmative action programmes: non-Roma school secretaries draw the attention of Roma children to special places, and form teachers and secondary school teachers help their Roma students to fill in application forms. (See the following sections for details). But it can also happen that non-Roma 'helpers' (involuntarily or driven by honest conviction) change the track of their students and suggest to them that it is safer not to reach too high. In the following excerpt, the local Orthodox priest dissuaded the young Roma per-

son from applying to a faculty of orthodox theology. Although it is well known that such a profession confers high status and much respect on its practitioners, the priest suggested that the respondent take up Romany language and culture at university as it is 'more safe' inasmuch it would protect the student from racist attacks. However, the path this person had been suggested to take led to success. Thus, defining who can be considered an institutional agent and what role an institutional agent has is not an easy task:

> I applied successfully to the Orthodox theology [course] and simultaneously to the university – to the specialization on Romany language and culture. It was difficult, as the former was in Cluj and the latter in Bucharest. After a year, I started to teach as an unqualified form teacher in our school at the village. One day, the Orthodox priest came to me and told me: 'Look, I think it is better for you to choose the career of a teacher. I know a person who graduated from theology and was not accepted in the congregation because the topic of race is an issue in the church. It is better for you to be a teacher because this is the path for you. You can come and sing at the services whenever you want to.' (man, 35)

5.3 The role of institutions (programmes) in capital acquisition

Institutions (training programmes) were considered special 'places' of capital acquisition. As the following excerpts inform, they act as a 'matrix' of resources; an interrelated set of different types of capitals. Three kinds of institutions were identified in the interviews: the orphanage, the church, and Roma educational policies – all offering support in the process of social climbing.

5.3.1 Orphanage

Two of the respondents were brought up in communist-type orphanages (when there was no possibility of living in a foster family). According to the experiences, teachers and educators (as institutional agents) acted there as bridges and socializers: 'dropping out of school was out of the question at the orphanage. They simply handed the application forms to us, and we had to fill them in' (woman, 54).

But, similarly to the non-Roma schoolteachers, the social capital acquired through the relations with educators served as a source of motivation. According to the 'helpers', educational attainment is key to not living a 'Roma' life: 'We were told we had to study. Otherwise – they said – we would end up where our parents had'.

Social capital embodied in peer-group membership with other children in the orphanage might serve as a role model and be a driving force for continuing education: 'I applied to the university, as many of my friends from the orphanage did' (man, 35).

5.3.2 Churches

Three of the respondents were members of religious communities. Two of them attended neo-Protestant congregations, and one belonged to a small, Orthodox one.

The social capital (in Bourdieusian terms: denoting only membership) acquired from being in a religious community was converted in various ways. For one person, this social capital was turned into family capital, as the neo-Protestant church was the place where she met her husband who 'convinced me to attend a vocational school. He said if I did not continue with it, I would regret it later' (woman, 45). But the social capital obtained there did not come down to this relation alone. It was the neo-Protestant kindergarten educator who let the same person know about the Roma school mediator programme, which she would later successfully graduate from.

Attending a small religious community enabled another interviewee to get in touch with a person who later became a school inspector assigned to Roma education (a person in charge of all the issues of Roma education at the county level). This social capital was converted into cultural and economic capital (as Bourdieu frames it), as the inspector helped the respondent to get employment as an unqualified form teacher in a school with predominantly Roma children (after his unsuccessful attempts to find a job as a secondary school teacher with a university degree):

> I could not find a job, as there were no vacancies with my specialization. I met S., the inspector in the congregation. During those times I had no financial possibilities, and I had to work during my university years. So, S. invited me to work at a Roma kindergarten. After graduation, I could not find a job, as there were no vacancies in my field, so S. offered me this position of an unqualified form teacher at this school. (man, 35)

5.3.3 Roma affirmative action; educational programmes for Roma

Although an evaluation of affirmative action for Roma is not among the objectives of the research, it must be mentioned that attending courses for Roma school mediators/experts on Roma issues at the local council, completing a specialization on the Romany language and literature, or occupying reserved university places for the Roma may be opportunities to acquire different types of capital for the same person.

It is also important to mention that accessing such programmes enables the possession of ethnic capital: according to the official documents, the applicant usually has to prove their Roma identity in order to become eligible. Self-declared Roma identity (in other words: categorization as a Roma) as a condition of accessing such training programmes or university places may be considered a form of ethnic capital, as defined by Kim.

Interviews demonstrate that this ethnic capital is just a starting point that enables the persons attending these programmes to acquire new forms of capital or convert old forms into new ones within the life course of the same person.

All the interviews with Roma university students or graduates confirm that shortly after the university year had started they were 'spotted' by the Roma student organization, which offered them a REF (Roma Education Fund) scholarship (facilitating ethnic capital conversion into economic capital in Bourdieu's understanding). The newly recruited Roma students were invited to participate in transnational projects aimed at improving the conditions of the Roma. Such opportunities initially meant volunteer work or internships, but later these were turned into paid jobs. If not, such occasions provided the necessary work experience to the young Roma that enabled them to find a job on the labour market. Thus, ethnic

capital (in a Bourdieusian sense) could easily be converted into cultural capital (knowledge) or even economic capital (in a Bourdieusian sense) (workplace):

> As soon as I started my first year as a student, I became a member of the Roma student organization. […] This membership and the possibilities at the university helped me to participate in many projects such as Soros's OSI [Open Society Institute], and many others that had projects for Roma community development. […] We, my colleagues and I, all agreed to pick up on such opportunities. Initially, we participated as volunteers. […] We did fieldwork in communities to gain experience, and this is how I got experience in Roma community programmes. Later, we obtained REF scholarships. But the condition was to participate in community work. (man, 45, local council expert on Roma problems)

Sometimes graduation from one programme was completed with an application to another better recognized one. Eligibility for the school mediator course did not just involve training but the possibility to meet like-minded colleagues, and the connection with them led to a new opportunity (Romany language teacher with a university diploma). This new path allowed the respondent to obtain a better job (employment in a school as a teacher). Thus, the ethnic capital opened up the possibility to acquire social capital, which later was converted into cultural (and economic) capital:

> I met Mary on the Roma school mediator course. We decided together to apply for the university places, the special ones for Roma on teaching Romany language. I finished that, so I am now employed both as a school mediator and as a Romany language teacher. (woman, 47)

Conversion of ethnic capital into social capital may also consist of finding Roma role models during internship years or later on, when the person is hired at an NGO for Roma projects:

> I got along well with my boss, who is also a Roma. She always dressed modestly. After a while, I decided to take off my big golden earrings. I gave them to my sisters. (woman, working at an NGO)

Almost all the people who had graduated from the educational programmes for Roma confessed that they had met their spouses in these institutions and training events. Thus, ethnic capital was transformed into social capital in this way: 'I met my wife there. She is Roma, too, and she had one of the reserved places, too' (man, 32). 'My wife is now a stay-at-home mum, but she graduated in theatre and psychology and taught in Chicago and Roehampton. She was a volunteer at the NGO for Roma where I was working as an ∂i [assistant]' (man, 42).

6 Discussion

Roma (respondents) seem to be convinced that racist attacks are related to certain behaviour or attitudes: the friendly, 'open', non-conflictual ones, who 'get along well with everyone' can avoid discriminatory treatment – and this attitude is not an inborn trait; it may be a matter of choice. Therefore, conformist resistant capital in this context refers to a knowledge or strategy; a choice to adopt a certain behaviour (that proved to be successful in the process of mobility) in order to avoid negative labelling.

Transformative resistant capital is the skill of combatting actively, face to face, racist insults. One such strategy is the technique of overcommunicating one's Roma ethnic identity (Eriksen, 2010); others take a stand against those who attack them. Transformative resistant capital consists of reminding the non-Roma world that labelling the Roma negatively is unjust and wrong. The non-Roma may believe that Roma are not capable of attending good schools or that they can be humiliated in the classroom, but persons endowed with transformative resistant capital remind them that this classification is entirely wrong.

The analysed narratives offer us an improved understanding of how family capital works. Interviews do not just reveal the fact that families transmit values to their children, but they also specify what values are conveyed. Parents do not only encourage their Roma children to 'look high'; they also teach them how to resist racist attacks. The older ones seemed to have socialized their kids to adopt behaviour associated with the non-Roma, like not starting a family at an early age. In other words, these parents inspired their children to live a life associated by the non-Roma with the dominant group 'even if they are Roma'; and school was considered a proper means for doing this. In this way, family capital – as the following fragments reveal – consists of raising awareness that education helps to erase the Roma stigma.

The source of the power to confront racial attacks lies in the symbolic and economic capital of the family. The father featured in the excerpt about the pool was able to intervene and negotiate entrance for his children because he occupied an important position in the local labour market (working for the non-Roma pool manager), which conferred high status on him, too (enough to convince the manager to let the family enter the pool).

Institutional agents play an important role in facilitating upward mobility. Advocacy was an important task of theirs. As the excerpt about the diploma shows, the advocacy of the form teacher did not take the form of informal negotiation: s/he officially seconded the family in their complaint. To go even further, advocacy here achieves far more than helping an individual: it (consciously or not) attacks the frames of institutional racism, too (questioning the practice that 'Gypsy girls cannot be better than the Hungarian children' in the local school).

7 Instead of conclusions

The aim of this research was to identify the factors shaping the minority's path that facilitate the Roma in Romania becoming educationally mobile. Based on the cultural wealth model as well as constructivist approaches on ethnicity and scholarship that discuss cultural racism, I intended to take stock of the forms of capital these Roma persons make use of when ascending. Inspired by the works of Kupfer, I considered that interviews (similarly to narrative interviews) could be a successful means of generating an improved understanding of the meaning and functioning of capitals.

Narratives confirm that acquiring resistant capital is an important vehicle of success. The respondents had to face and fight against (or avoid) racial attacks on their paths. But narratives also specify the content of this resistant capital: the skill of engaging in certain types of behaviours and taking on certain types of attitudes. Unlike Abajo and Carrasco's findings (Abajo & Carrasco, eds., 2014), the respondents did not intend to hide their ethnic identity, although it was linked by non-Roma to negative stereotypes. Unlike Brüggemann

(2014), my respondents (except for one) did not disclose it to surprise others in order to attack systems of racial classifications. Members of their non-Roma environment know that they are Roma. The Roma persons I interviewed deliberately chose behaviour associated by the dominant group with the 'non-Roma'. To go further, these Roma persons do not feel 'angry and sad' (Brüggemann, 2014) when adopting this behaviour. The ambivalence and confusion mentioned so frequently in the literature was not present in this empirical material.

Family capital in these narratives – similarly to Bereményi and Carrasco's conclusions – did not only involve the support given by the family. Families (or some family members) do not (necessarily) transmit the importance of education to their children. Sometimes the family protects the upwardly mobile person from racist insults, but this protective power is obtained from the symbolic capital some family members possess.

Narratives inform that the role and function of institutional agents is very different. Performing the task of bridging and advocacy is always based on the intention of the institutional agents to provide help and facilitate the upward mobility path. However, despite their honest intentions and firm beliefs, these persons may reinforce the unequal systems of categorizations and may rebuild the racial stigma aimed at the Roma.

Interviews draw attention to the role of institutions in the process of capital acquisition and conversion. Orphanages, religious congregations, and Roma educational programmes can be considered matrixes of resources that enable not just access to different sources of capitals but their conversion too.

Finally, let us get back to the issue of racial classification. Narratives confirm that negotiating the 'position' of the Roma in a non-Roma world sometimes remains in the realm of individual actions and strategies: the agents seem to succeed in erasing the stigma aimed at them from the non-Roma, but – in all cases, except with transformative resistance – they leave the system of oppression untouched. The upwardly mobile just do not want to live a life that is associated with the Roma, and that is labelled negatively by the dominant groups: one involving low educational attainment, early marriage, and poverty. One can say – in line with Dunajeva (2017) – that the mobility path for these Roma respondents consists of escaping the category of 'dirty Gypsy'. But learning where these high achievers end up is the subject of further investigation.

References

Abajo, J. E. & Carrasco, S. (Eds.) (2004). *Experiencias y trayectorias de éxito escolar de gitanas y gitanos en España. Encrucijadas sobre educación, género y cambio cultural [Experiences and Trajectories of the Educational Success of Gitanas and Gitanos in Spain. Crossroads of Education, Gender and Cultural Change].* Instituto de la Mujer (MTAS) & CIDE (MEC), Colección Mujeres en la Educación.

Bereményi, Á. & Carrasco, S. (2017). Bittersweet Success. The Impact of Academic Achievement among the Spanish Roma after a Decade of Roma Inclusion. In W. T. Pink & G. W. Noblit (Eds.), *International Handbook of Urban Education* (pp. 1169–1198). Springer,

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production.* Columbia University Press.

Brüggemann, C. (2012). Roma Education in Comparative Perspective. Analysis of the UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011. *Roma Inclusion Working Papers.* United Nations Development Programme. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/eurasia/Roma-education-in-comparative-perspective.pdf

Brüggemann, C. (2014). Romani culture and academic success: Arguments against the belief in a contradiction. *Intercultural Education, 25*(6), 439–452. https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2014.990229

Cismaru, D.-M., Fiţ, C. & Gologan, D. (2015). Premises of Inclusive Access and Success of Roma People in the Romanian Higher Education. In A. Curaj, L. Matei, R. Pricopie, J. Salmi & P. Scott (Eds.), *The European Higher Education Area Between Critical Reflections and Future Policies* (pp. 521–541). Springer.

Cornell, S. & Hartmann D. (2007). *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World.* Pine Forge Press.

Doyle, J. (2022). So Much to Offer: An Exploration of Learning and Cultural Wealth with Roma Slovak post-16 Students. *Ethnography and Education, 17*(1), 49–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2021.1998786

Dunajeva, J. (2017). Education of Roma Youth in Hungary: Schools, Identities and Belonging. *European Education, 49*(1), 56–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/10564934.2017.1280332

Durst, J. & Bereményi, Á. (2021). "I Felt I Arrived Home": The Minority Trajectory of Mobility for First-in-Family Hungarian Roma Graduates. In M. M. Mendes, O. Magano & S. Toma (Eds.), *Social and Economic Vulnerability of the Roma People: Key Factors for the Success and Continuity of Schooling Levels* (pp. 229–251). Springer.

Eriksen, T. H. (2010). *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspective.* Pluto Press.

FRA & UNDP (2012) *The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States: Survey Results at a Glance.* https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf

Garaz, S. & Torotcoi, S. (2017). Increasing Access to Higher Education and the Reproduction of Social Inequalities: The Case of Roma University Students in Eastern and Central Europe. *European Education, 49*(1), 10–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/10564934.2017.1280334

Gulyás, I. (2019). *A Critical Exploration of the Educational Trajectories of Six Hungarian Refugee Roma in Canada: Navigating Whiteness and Ethnic Identity.* MA thesis, University of Toronto. https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/96127/1/Gulyas_Ildiko_201906_MA_thesis.pdf

Horváth, I. (Ed.) (2017). *Raport de cercetare SocioRoMap. O cartografie a comunităților de romi din România [SocioRoMap Research Report: Mapping of Roma Communities in Romania].* ISPMN. https://ispmn.gov.ro/carte/preview/9786068377513

Hotărâre Nr. 430 din 25 aprilie 2001 [Law No 430 of 25 April 2001]. https://uti.eu.com/posdru-centru-multiregional/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/5_HG430-2001.pdf

Kende, A. (2007). Success stories? Roma university students overcoming social exclusion in Hungary. In H. Colley et al. (Eds.), *Social inclusion for young people: Breaking down the barriers* (pp. 133–144). Council of Europe Publications.

Kim, J. (2018). Ethnic Capital, Migration, and Citizenship: A Bourdieusian Perspective. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 42*(3), 357–385. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1535131

Kovács, É. (2006). Mari és az ő cigánysága [Mari and Her Gypsyness]. *Tabula, 9*(1), 41–52.

Kovács, É. (Ed.) (2007). *Közösségkutatás. Módszertani jegyzet [Community research: Methods].* Néprajzi Múzeum & PTE BTK Kommunikáció és Médiatudományi Tanszék.

Kovai, C. (2017). *A cigány–magyar különbségtétel és a rokonság [The Roma–Hungarian Distinction and Kinship].* L'Harmattan.

Kupfer, A. (2015). *Educational Upward Mobility: Practices of Social Changes.* MacMillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137355317

Ladányi, J. & Szelényi, I. (2006). *Patterns of Exclusion: Constructing Gypsy Ethnicity and the Making of an Underclass in Transitional Societies in Europe.* Columbia University Press.

Máté, D. (2015). Reziliens romák identitáskonstrukciói [Identity construction of the resilient Roma]. *Erdélyi társadalom, 13*(1), 43–55. https://doi.org/10.17177/77171.3

Modood, T. & Wrebner, P. (Eds.) (2015). *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Racism.* Zed Books.

Neckermann, K. M., Carter, P. & Lee, J. (1999) Segmented Assimilation and Minority Cultures of Mobility. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 6*(22), 945–965. https://doi.org/10.1080/014198799329198

Nyírő, Zs. & Durst, J. (2018). Soul Work and Giving Back: Ethnic Support Groups and the Hidden Costs of Social Mobility. Lessons from Hungarian Roma Graduates. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics, 4(*1), 88–108. https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v4i1.406

Óhidy, A. (2013). From multiple deprivation to success – Educational careers of ten Roma and Gypsy women. *Hungarian Educational Research Journal, 3*(3), 33–40.

Pantea, C. M. (2015a). Persuading Others: Young Roma Women Negotiating Access to University. *Education as Change, 19*(3), 91–112. https://doi.org/10.1080/16823206.2015.1024151

Pantea, C. M. (2015b). Affirmative Action in Romania's Higher Education: Roma Students' Perceived Meanings and Dilemmas. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 36*(6), 896–914. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2013.869172

Pop, F. & Balea, B. (2016). School Mediators in the Romanian Education System. A Discussion on Their Role in Addressing Educational Inequalities. *Social Change Review, 14*(2), 149–176. https://doi.org/10.1515/scr-2016-0026

Recensământul populației și a locuințelor 2011 [Census of the Population and Households 2011]. https://www.recensamantromania.ro/noutati/volumul-iii-populatia-stabila-rezidenta-structura-social-economica/

Rosenthal, G. (2018). *Interpretive Social Research: An Introduction.* Göttingen University Press.

Samuelson, C. C. & Litzler, E. (2016). Community Cultural Wealth: An Assets-Based Approach to Persistence of Engineering Students of Color. *Journal of Engineering Education, 105*(1), 93–117. https://doi.org/10.1002/jee.20110

Sarău, Gh. (2013). Istoricul studiului limbi rromani și al școlarizării rromilor în România 1990–2012 [History of Learning the Romany Language and the Schooling of Roma in Romania 1990–2012]. *ISPMN Working Paper Series,* 46. ISPMN. https://www.ispmn.gov.ro/uploads/51d17342-8324-4e7d-b7a4-41484e604109-WP46%20cor.pdf

Shahrokni, S. (2015). The Minority Culture of Mobility of France's Upwardly Mobile Descendants of North African Immigrants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 38*(7), 1050–1066. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.964280

Solorzano, D. G. & Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Examining Transformational Resistance Through a Critical Race and Latcrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context. *Urban Education, 36*(3), 308–342. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085901363002

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (1997). A Social Capital Framework for Understanding the Socialization of Racial Minority Children and Youths. *Harvard Educational Review, 67*(1), 1–41. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.67.1.140676g74018u73k

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (2011). A Social Capital Framework for the Study of Institutional Agents and Their Role in the Empowerment of Low-Status Students and Youth. *Youth & Society, 41*(3): 1066–1109. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X10382877

Surdu, M. & Szira, J. (Eds.) (2009). Analysis of the Impact of Affirmative Action for Roma in High Schools, Vocational Schools and Universities. *Working Paper* 3. Roma Education Fund and Gallup Romania. http://www.oportunitatiegale.ro/pdf_files/gallup_romania_english.pdf

Szasz, D. & Csesznek, C. (2019). School Mediators as a Mechanism for Increasing Educational Level and Social Integration in Roma Communities. *Revista Română de Sociologie, 30*(5–6), 435–446.

Vallejo, J. A. (2012). Socially Mobile Mexican Americans and the Minority Culture of Mobility. *American Behavioral Scientist, 56*(5), 666–681. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211433807

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 1*(8), 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006

Krisztina Németh*

Cosmopolitans in a farmhouse: Return migration and the adaptation of habitus through the lens of a homemaking process

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 100–119.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.840
https://intersections.tk.hu

* [nemeth.krisztina@krtk.hu] (Research Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Budapest)

'It is as if the place tied and restrained the one who leaves'.[1]
(Andrea Tompa, *Haza [Home]*, p. 156)

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to offer a specific perspective on the interrelation and complexity of the spatial and social mobility trajectory and its multi-layered effects on habitus. This family case study is based on two semi-structured family history interviews. Its protagonist is a return migrant who is deeply embedded in the periphery (*tanyavilág*) of a Hungarian rural town. After spending almost fifteen years in the UK, she moved back to this relatively marginalised micro-place and bought an old farmhouse. The interpretation of her periodical migration trajectory focuses on the process of change in habitus and interprets the question of the 'emotional cost' of migration through the interrelation of spatial and social mobility. This perspective emphasises the spatial aspects of how mobility can dynamize the practical and emotional aspects of dislocation and belonging, while offering an insight into the adaptation of habitus. It is primarily examined through a homemaking process, which reveals the reconciliation of different place-based, family-inherited, and newly developed (migration-related) dispositions. This Bourdieusian interpretation shows that this home is a materialised reality as well as a symbol of social and spatial position. This harmonious 'sense of (social) place' (Hillier & Rocksby, 2002) can be grasped in terms of taste and lifestyle, revealing that 'freedom of choice' is the lived meaning of this intergenerational social mobility trajectory, which was fuelled by transnational migration.

Keywords: migration; social and spatial mobility; adaptation of habitus; homemaking; sense of (social) place; marginalised place

1 Introduction

Growing scholarly interest in (social) mobility is inextricably bound up with the wider social context: namely, how mobility paths have been influenced by the circumstances of late capitalism, which has been modifying forms of wage work (see for example Standing, 2011;

[1] Translation by the author.

Kovai, 2019; Kovai & Vigvári, 2020; Melegh et al., 2018; Szombati, 2018). The worldwide restructuring of mobility chances is interrelated with changes in living strategies, of which an increasing number are based on different kinds of spatial mobilities framed by global migration (see for example de Haas, 2010; Parreñas, 2001; Durst, 2018; Melegh et al., 2018; Toma & Fosztó, 2018; Váradi et al., 2017; Váradi, 2019). Complex and ambivalent effects of these global changes in migration patterns have become visible in Hungary and the CEE region in variable and 'fluid' forms (de Haas, 2010) of spatial mobilities. Transnational employment-based mobilities that are either long or short term, formal or informal appear in forms of commuting, as well as in circular, periodical, or long-term transnational migration (Durst, 2018; Durst & Nyírő, 2018a; Toma & Fosztó, 2018; Melegh et al., 2018; Váradi et al., 2017; Váradi, 2018). All these spatial mobility (and living) strategies have complex effects on social mobility aspirations and trajectories, and vice versa. These interrelated mobilities can change over time, partly due to their 'fluidity', which stems from changing structural constraints and economic periods, and is partly due to the fact that they are interrelated with changes in family life (de Haas, 2010; Durst, 2018; Kovai & Vigvári, 2020; Melegh et al., 2018; Váradi, 2018).

These spatial-mobility-based living strategies require significant effort from individuals and families; a wide range of costs can arise even if the aim of transnational mobility/migration is not necessarily social advancement or social mobility, but the maintaining of one's current social status. Not only are these more or less 'constrained choices' strongly affected by emotions (Durst & Nyírő, 2018a; 2018b; Melegh et al., 2018; Parreñas, 2001; Váradi et al., 2017; Váradi, 2018), but there can also be 'emotional costs' to social mobility that may accompany spatial mobility/migration. The loosening of social ties and resulting social isolation can lead to lasting personal crises, while adaptation to a new social milieu can require significant effort from individuals (Bourdieu, 2000; 2002; Bereményi & Durst, 2021; Durst & Nyírő, 2018b; Durst & Nyírő, 2021; Naudet, 2018).

This paper is an attempt to offer a specific perspective on the interrelation and complexity of spatial and social mobility and their multi-layered effects on habitus. The protagonist of this family case-study is a woman deeply embedded in the periphery (*tanyavilág*) of a rural Hungarian town. She migrated to London periodically while also buying and renovating an old farmhouse in this relatively marginalised micro-place where her ancestors once lived. The interpretation of her recurring (and eventually returning) mobility trajectory illustrates the importance of spatial dimensions in social mobility. Drawing on the Bourdieusian notion of habitus, I scrutinise how different lived places shaped this woman's habitus. Habitus conceptualised as an '(embodied) social space' (Hillier & Rocksby, 2002, pp. 4–5) provides insight into the complexity of the adaptation of habitus by revealing how different dispositions and everyday practices related to different places can be reconciled. The range of this spatial mobility trajectory as well as its return character shed light on how spatial and emotional dimensions of mobility are intertwined through dislocation and homemaking[2] and how a harmonious 'sense of (social) place' can be materialised through a homemaking process.

[2] This paper's theoretical framework is primarily sociological. Dislocation and homemaking, however, can be related to loss of place, place attachment, and place making. For these notions of environmental psychology which this paper does not treat, see for example Dúll, 2015.

2 Theoretical framework

Habitus is a relatively stable system of dispositions; it is a 'structuring' and a 'structured' structure, which is in dialectic relationship with objective structures. It is both a mode of operation and the (constantly changing) result of this mode of operation. Habitus is a specific way of being and seeing things as it predetermines specific modes of perception, thinking, and action. Although its mode of operation has a strong tendency to reproduce pre-existing social structures through social action, it is still not entirely fixed and deterministic. In fact, it is a 'practical systemacy' (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 28): 'a combination of constancy and variation, flexibility and rigidity' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 160). Generated practices are never based on mere repetition, thus habitus always allows the possibility of unexpected reactions and individual improvisation (Bourdieu, 2000; 2002; 2009[2000]).

Nevertheless, it presupposes a strong 'coincidence' between social position and predispositions. This 'homology is never perfect' (Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 147, 157); however, different 'misfits' (Bourdieu 2002, p. 18) can occur. Although habitus can change within its limits, abrupt structural changes can make it dysfunctional (Bourdieu, 2000; 2002). Social or spatial mobility (dislocation) can also subvert 'the never perfect' homology between social position and dispositions, and cause temporary or enduring 'misfits' between objective and formerly interiorised structures.[3] Stable and significant misfits can lead to dysfunctional (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 162), destabilised habitus (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 160), which may imply a specific 'sense of place' – among others, a 'habitus of disbelonging' (Gale cited by Hillier & Rocksby, 2002, p. 10) or 'habitus dislocation' (Lehmann cited by Naudet, 2018, p. 9).

Parreñas (2001) described the situation and role of Filipina women in global care migration with the term 'dislocation'. This refers to the change in one's geographical location and structural position due to migration. It involves many structural and lived ambiguities from what is, to a varying extent, a 'forced' migration decision motivated by the need to provide financial support for family left behind, through the contradictions of past and present social positions that come from occupying a lower social status, such as being a domestic worker in a remote country, to de-skilling. The meaning of dislocation, according to Parreñas, therefore contains elements of low labour force status and 'partial citizenship' in a foreign country, and the emotional burdens of family separation, social exclusion, and (dis) belonging. Although dislocation stems from the ambivalences of a social and spatial position, it means far more: it is a framework of the latter women's everyday (social) experiences, which is constituted by 'thoughts, emotions, sense of self, way[s] of understanding the world' (Weedon, cited by Parreñas, 2001, p. 197). Nevertheless, dislocation includes some potential for resistance and a limited ability to shape situations.

Research that examines the consequences of social mobility is rather polarised. While quantitative analyses generally put emphasis on the advantages of obtaining a higher social position and its integrative function, qualitative investigations tend to focus on individual struggles, the emotional costs of social mobility, and the difficulties of social integration, drawing on, for example, Bourdieu's split habitus, or Lahire's conception of the 'splitting of

[3] Albeit this change can be delayed which is called the 'hysteresis effect' (Bourdieu, 2000; 2002; 2009[2000]; Fáber, 2018).

the self' (Naudet, 2018, p. 8). At the same time, qualitative empirical evidence reveals the significant emotional difficulties that can accompany upward social mobility, but also illustrates various individual coping strategies (Bereményi & Durst, 2021; Durst & Nyírő, 2018a; 2018b; Durst & Nyírő, 2021; Fejős, 2019; Naudet, 2018) putting emphasis on the adaptation that can be grasped, for example, by the term 'reconciled habitus' (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Ingram & Abrahams, 2016).

Naudet (2018) examined the diverse effects of social mobility on individuals, especially in terms of social integration, problematizing their relations with the communities they leave behind. His cross-country comparison based on interviews revealed that significant tensions accompany intergenerational (upward) mobility, which can be difficult to resolve. These multi-layered tensions, which are structural, social, cultural, emotional, and moral, strongly motivate individuals to find ways to reconcile clashing expectations found in different social positions. 'Class defectors' (Bourdieu cited by Naudet, 2018, p. 7) indeed struggle with the question of how to fit into their new (elite) positions and accept their social dominance without 'betraying' their social origin. A coherent self-narrative can be an effective means of reducing these tensions since it prompts one to find a meaning behind mobility efforts that can legitimize one's new social position. This re-interpreted self-narrative makes it possible that, 'despite displacement, [one] can express [their] position in the social place' (Naudet, 2018, p. 15). Putting the focus on the evolving coherence of self-narratives and 'meaning-making' (Bereményi & Durst, 2021) enables one to interpret the diverse and ambivalent effects of social mobility 'in terms of equilibrium rather than an analysis based on "costs and benefits"' (Naudet, 2018, p. 15).

This shift in analytical focus can provide insight into the complicated (and sometimes stuck) process of reconciling different dispositions, which may entail the adaptation of habitus (Ingram & Abrahams, 2016) rather than displaying a 'split' or 'cleft' habitus. Habitus can be conceptualised as a 'sense of place': a 'sense of the social place of oneself and others' (Hillier & Rocksby, 2002, pp. 9–10) This definition not only underlines the phenomenon of relationality, but it seems to be suitable for revealing 'misfits' (Hillier & Rocksby, 2002, p. 18) of social and spatial positions that stem from mobility. This perspective can reveal how habitus can change within its limits (Bourdieu, 2000; 2002), pointing out which 'elements of habitual repertoire are chosen to be maintained or rejected' (Hillier & Rocksby, 2002, p. 22).

This conceptualisation of habitus opens up the analysis to aesthetic reflexivity; more specifically, of one's relationship towards the built environment and practices of place-making (Hillier & Rocksby, 2002). At this point, home-making is of great importance given that dwelling is 'the way we exist in the world' (Heidegger, cited by Creswell 2009, p. 172). To feel at home is related to the subjective feeling of 'fitting in' a social position (Berger, 2018), but it also presupposes a 'quasi-perfect coincidence of habitus and habitat' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 147). Homemaking is a multi-layered process, since home is both the symbol and the materialised reality of our place in the social and physical world; it is the representation of one's social position, but also a lived place (Creswell, 2009; Toma & Fosztó, 2018; Tuitjer, 2018). As a consequence, homemaking is at the crossroads of newly developed and family-inherited dispositions, mobilising and blending different class-based preferences, practices and tastes, especially in cases of socially or spatially mobile individuals (Bourdieu, 1984; 2000; 2002).

3 Methodology

The main empirical bases of this analysis are two semi-structured interviews that I conducted on the periphery of a rural town in Hungary. The interviews were done in Hungarian and transcribed verbatim. One interview was conducted with the protagonist of this family case study, Sarah, a woman in her mid-forties, together with her husband who she met in London. Their migration experiences and Sarah's homemaking process were placed in the foreground of this three-hour-long interview, which was an open-ended process in which the respondents could thematise their 'concerns' and were able to 'show' themselves (Rácz et al., 2016). Showing their cultivated and landscaped garden and telling their story may be the way they chose to adjust my impressions about their neighbourhood *(Tanyavilág)*, demonstrating that not only elderly or socially vulnerable people live there. Later, I conducted a two-hour long semi-structured family history interview with Sarah's mother in her home, which was located nearby, on the edge of the town. For the interpretation of the attributed and lived meanings of this specific periphery, I draw on additional interviews made with other locals living either in the same town or on its periphery.

The family case study approach is widely used in the social sciences in various forms, and this analysis of the interviews was inspired by two methods: hermeneutic case reconstruction (Rosenthal, 1993; Kovács & Vajda, 2002; Kovács, 2006; Vajda, 2003; 2007) and interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Rácz et al., 2016); both based on a hermeneutic attitude towards interview transcriptions. The first step of the analysis involved an attempt to reconstruct the family history by collecting biographical data; this borrows from the hermeneutic case reconstruction method, and the first part of 'the analysis of biography' (see Rosenthal, 1993; Kovács, 2006; Kovács & Vajda, 2002; Vajda, 2003; 2007). In the second step I focus on specific places and place-based experiences, including dislocation and homemaking, using IPA. Since the 'emerging themes' (Rácz et al., 2016) such as attachment to *tanyavilág,* feeling at home, homemaking, expertise and job experience, experiences of migration, changes in taste, and attitudes towards tradition are highly experiential and practice-oriented as well as cognitive, they allow one to grasp changes in habitus. Because of the experiential focus, this part of the analysis is primarily phenomenological and comes close to 'raw' empirics (Creswell, 2009; Rácz et al., 2016). Then, in the third step, I scrutinise different interpretations of homemaking, focusing not only on how this process altered the meanings of traditional farm life, but also its significance in Sarah's life story and family history. This step, which dynamizes the reconstructed family history and the place-related meanings that evolve through narration, is also inspired by hermeneutic case reconstruction and is called 'fine analysis' (see Rosenthal, 1993; Kovács, 2006; Kovács & Vajda, 2002; Vajda, 2003; 2007). At this point, however, I also use the interview with Sarah's mother to reveal intergenerational patterns of meaning. This part of the analysis focuses more on the constitution of meanings, since it (re-)interprets certain parts of Sarah's story in the light of their family history and vice versa; here the analysis enters a hermeneutic circle. Finally, I scrutinize the renovated farmhouse as a home and a symbol of the latter's social position as well as their lived place.

The analysis is primarily based on the themes that 'emerged' from interviews (Rácz et al., 2016), but also on the researcher'ssecondary (scientific) constructs in the Schützian sense (Schütz, 1984 [1963]) which involved attempts to interpret how (lived) meanings and changes

in habitus are related to each other, and how they shape everyday practices. An important limit of this analysis arises here, given that it is text-focused, and cannot directly observe everyday practices (cf. Feischmidt, 2007; Kovács, 2006). Focusing on home-making, however, permits scrutiny of the house as a *materialised* result of different embodied practices. Although the case study is fundamentally idiographic, as it interprets a particular family history it takes theoretical advantage of the fact that habitus is 'transindividual' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 157), and it deliberately looks for possibilities for abstraction and analytical generalisation (Kvale, 1994).

4 Meanings of *Tanyavilág*

My field-site, a micro-locality that I refer to as *Tanyavilág*,[4] is a traditional periphery of a specific type of rural town on the Hungarian Great Plain *(tanyás város)*, consisting of separate individual farmhouses with small plots of land located relatively far from each other. This form of settlement is strongly rooted in Hungarian social history and is characterised by a specific relationship of the 'town and its surrounding area' *(város és vidéke)* and a lifestyle traditionally based on self-sustaining agricultural production and on residing simultaneously in town and on its periphery *(kétlakiság)* (Erdei, 1971). Before WWII, this dual form of residence meant not only a dual lifestyle (rural [agricultural] and semi-urban) but drew on a specific social mobility trajectory called 'peasant embourgeoisement', which continued in a modified form during the socialist 'second economy' in the form of farming small domestic plots of land *(háztáji gazdálkodás)*. 'House-plot farming' as a mobility strategy, however, was based on overwork and self-exploitation. It facilitated the next generation's social mobility, implying inland migration from the town from the 1980s onwards (Andorka, 2006; Erdei, 1971; Juhász, 2006; Vigvári & Gerőcs, 2017), which was followed by a moderate level of international migration from the 2000s, causing a long-term trend to demographic shrinkage (Jelinek & Virág, 2020). Nowadays, polytunnels as places of intensive vegetable cultivation are still parts of the Tanyavilág landscape. They are seen as a way 'at hand' for making some additional income, but ever fewer people are willing to do such a demanding physical job.

The expression 'tanyavilág' refers to this kind of rural periphery in general, which presupposes a self-sustaining agricultural lifestyle. But it is also used by local people to refer to *their* particular rural town's periphery; here, I have used it in this sense. *This* Tanyavilág, as with this type of rural town periphery in general, has constantly changed. It has become more heterogeneous both in social and in functional terms over time; it used to be place exclusively for agricultural production (cf. Kovács & Vidra, 2012; Timár, 1990; Jelinek & Virág, 2020; Vasárus, Bajmóczy & Lennert, 2017; Vigvári, 2016). Many people living there are currently pensioners; they were raised in line with self-sufficient agricultural or subsequent large-scale farming traditions. They live in their old but tidy farmhouses, still cultivate their vegetable gardens, and live on small pensions. Despite experiencing some disadvantages and difficulties – such as living in old houses lacking full comfort, relative physical and social isolation, and living alone – elderly people are strongly attached to Tanyavilág, and do not wish to leave. Newcomers form a socially heterogeneous group: a few better-off families run

[4] All names in this paper are anonymised through the use of pseudonyms.

highly mechanised agricultural businesses; they live in Tanyavilág in bigger, renovated houses or they live in town. Some middle-class families have deliberately chosen to live in Tanyavilág because of its close proximity to nature, and the freedom and seclusion it offers; while other inhabitants who belong to the lower social strata are simply 'stuck' there. Some of them have abandoned agricultural work in the polytunnels and looked for other low prestige jobs outside of Tanyavilág. Lower (middle) class people usually come with children to Tanyavilág; they are attracted to the lower cost of living and housing. They are usually much less attached to the agricultural tradition. The most vulnerable people struggling with poverty, unstable family relations, or mental health problems have been gradually forced out of town – they live in old ruined farmhouses, sometimes lacking all comforts.

This social heterogeneity implies *relative* marginalisation (see Wacquant, 2007; Wacquant, Slater & Perreira, 2014; Váradi & Virág 2015; Vigvári 2016), which can be grasped in the almost complete absence of institutions (with the exception of a carer *[tanyagondnok]*) and the partial lack of infrastructure (lack of public lighting and transportation, and while it is relatively close to town, decrepit roads on which emergency vehicles cannot drive). As the farm has been a strong symbol of self-reliance and self-sufficiency in local public discourse, town leaders were quite unaware of the social problems of the periphery. It was only following the start of a specific social service *(tanyagondnoki szolgálat)* when the problems of isolation, the social vulnerability of the elderly, and poverty became apparent. The carer is a key figure in Tanyavilág, since he mediates the needs of people living here in relation to the town, and plays an important role as a social service manager. Some old people can rely on him for help with everyday tasks and getting to the town.

The carer is in his late 30s and grew up in Tanyavilág. He says that as long as the daily services and personal assistance can meet elderly people's needs, the local government tends to neglect this periphery, especially when it comes to infrastructural development. However, his position and opinion highlight another meaning of relative marginalisation. He said that people needed to work more in order to live in Tanyavilág than those who live in town. According to him, this is generally true in relation to the Hungarian countryside and Budapest.[5] It is therefore not surprising that he has more work and very little free time, as he also runs a small agricultural business: 'you have to work a lot in order to meet social expectations and live from a countryside wage'. This social experience of relative, but persistent spatial and social disadvantage seems to not only be rooted in Tanyavilág, but in rural life in general. The ethic of hard work and self-exploitation are also reflected in his speech. These claims were echoed by Sarah's mother too: 'Because our salaries were so small, it was necessary to go to the polytunnel [after work]. There were no stories. We had to. My husband worked additional jobs *[elment maszekolni]* alongside his three shifts'.

5 An outline of family history

Sarah's family history is deeply embedded in Tanyavilág: her paternal great-grandparents and grandparents also lived there. Her maternal ancestors also resided in a farm in a neighbouring county. Sarah's grandparents gradually abandoned farm life; her maternal grand-

5 See further in the context of the Hungarian countryside: Szombati, 2018.

parents abandoned their farm in the 1970s, while her paternal grandparents moved to the edge of this rural town, but they stayed very close to Tanyavilág. Although her grandparents had gradually loosened their ties to Tanyavilág and oriented themselves toward a more 'urban' life through their jobs connected to the processing industry, they had preserved some elements of farm life such as maintaining a vegetable garden. This spatial and social mobility trajectory was typical of 'socialist modernisation', which also shaped Sarah's parents' mobility trajectory and aspirations.

Although Sarah's parents continued to disembed themselves from Tanyavilág, the area had never entirely faded from their family history. At the beginning of the 1970s, her parents started their family life in a small adobe house at the edge of this rural town, close to the paternal grandparents' house and not far from Sarah's new farmhouse in Tanyavilág. A year later, they started to build a typical socialist family ('cube') house *(kockaház)* by hand on the same plot. After finishing construction work, they took down the adobe house where they had lived for the duration of the work. They were both skilled labourers; Sarah's father worked as a craftsman and later found a job in a local factory as a repairman. Before his retirement, he was working three shifts, which ruined his health. He died in 2008. Sarah's mother was born in 1950. She worked in the glove industry from the early 1970s until the mid-2000s, when she was unemployed for a short period. She then worked in a cold store for three years until her retirement in 2007. Although they had worked full time in their active years, they still needed to take on extra work in retirement: Sarah's father undertook additional or informal jobs as a craftsman *(maszekol),* while her mother worked in the polytunnels.

Sarah was born in 1976. Tanyavilág was a significant place in her childhood. Although her parents lived a more urban life at the edge of town, she spent a lot of time here with her grandfather. She attended the local primary and secondary school; she was an apprentice. She obtained a professional qualification as a dressmaker. She met her boyfriend when she was 20. They were among the first to leave the town for England. Initially, Sarah had a temporary job in rural England. Later, the couple moved to London where, with the help of her friends, Sarah found a job and became an appreciated member of an interior design team. A year after their migration to London, they bought an old farmhouse in Tanyavilág, which was bigger and more 'bourgeois' than the other traditional farmhouses there since it served as a central building that had hosted different public functions over time. Some years later, they returned to Hungary from London and moved into this run-down farmhouse, which they started to renovate. This renovation consumed their savings, so they decided that Sarah should return to London alone, where she could immediately start work with her former design team. The couple's relationship ended soon afterwards. While Sarah stayed in London and continued working, the renovation continued and was almost finished when Sarah's father died. Some years after, Sarah met her present husband, Robert, during her second stay in London, and they finally returned to Hungary in 2015. Since then they have been living in the renovated farmhouse in Tanyavilág, where the interview was conducted. Now both of them work in middle-class positions, and Robert has taken an office in town, while Sarah participates in a local development project.

Deep attachment to farm and agricultural life are less apparent in the family history of Robert, whose ancestors belonged to the agrarian proletariat. His parents were highly ambitious – their mobility trajectories were shaped by 'socialist modernisation', and they gradually moved from smaller villages to bigger towns, indicating social (occupational) mobility.

Robert's father had worked as an accountant, and after the transition he started his own small business. Just like Sarah's parents, Robert's father took on diverse additional agricultural jobs. Robert's mother worked as a teacher. When their children were attending school, the family moved to a bigger town, which provided them with better educational opportunities. Their children are highly qualified and obtained university degrees. Robert is a doctor.

After university, Robert went to rural England for seasonal work, after which he moved to London where he spent more than five years. He obtained significant expertise in catering, which may be the basis for his own enterprise in the future.

6 Migration experiences: lived meanings of dislocation

Robert spent almost six years in London, while Sarah spent almost fifteen and these lived experiences of migration strongly shaped their habitus. These experiences included difficulties and challenges, as well as some coping mechanisms which can be grasped by the notion of dislocation (Parreñas, 2001). Their overwhelmingly positive migration story includes effective coping based on a feeling of success and the internalising of new experiences, marking a sharp contrast between their stories and those of others from disadvantaged rural areas that were primarily framed by reference to structural constraints and 'constrained choices' (Durst, 2018; Durst & Nyírő, 2018a; Melegh et al., 2018; Váradi, 2018; Váradi et al., 2017).

Although their decision to migrate was not entirely without constraints, such constraints were much less evident when they spoke of their experiences. Both of them wished to 'see the world' and they consider migration to be an experience that leads to self-development. Robert's spontaneous migration decision, made immediately after finishing university, was primarily motivated by the desire to learn a language and his sense of adventure. After a short-term seasonal job in rural England, he worked in the catering sector in London for a number of years. In terms of social and occupational mobility, these jobs can both be considered a downward trajectory with some deskilling, although these experiences have very different meanings in Robert's migration story. His story reveals his wide range of potential for self-development and coping strategies in the context of dislocation (cf. Parreñas, 2001; Németh & Váradi, 2018). The latter are manifested in subjective feelings of persistence and ability and a willingness to work hard, while self-development is demonstrated by a self-made career with possibilities for rapid advancement which made him feel as if he was taking control of his life. (Even though his parents had previously oriented him to be an intellectual, he wished to try out something else.) While he was climbing the career ladder, he moved between jobs in search of better opportunities, as well as new inspiration and challenges. Meanwhile, certain areas of the catering industry have since become his passion.

> …and everybody [in my family said] oh, you are a doctor and you err… [work with] drinking glasses, oh. Well, I learnt the standard, the way you handle guests and anyway, everybody else. And I enjoyed it. I still feel lucky about how this turned out. And then, since I was working hard, they promoted me, then I was no longer the one bringing the ice, but I was preparing delicacies. Later on, it generally happened that when I could not see that it [my career] was advancing, or I was given a better salary or I could climb up the ladder, I could afford the luxury of quitting, and I looked for another job. Then [I got] a different perspective or different ingredients, always something new.

Structural constraints that shaped migration decisions are more apparent in Sarah's story, but the desire to 'see the world' is present in it from the very beginning.

> …and umm… we wished [she and her former boyfriend] to have a bourgeois house […] by all means, but there, in the town, it was so expensive even at the beginning of the 2000s that we could not buy one. Anyway, this was one of our aims of going abroad, to get on track financially. But as a matter of fact, workplaces were also disappearing, there was the cyanide contamination in the Tisza from the very north of the river at that time, and um… well… we just got fed up in a way. We had had enough of the place, umm, Hungary and everything. And there was an opportunity to go abroad, to see another world there. This seemed [like a] very good [chance to be] refreshed, forget…

This migration decision was motivated less by an everyday struggle to get by, and more by a limited set of opportunities to move forward either in social or financial terms. However, although aspirations for social mobility seemed to be less articulated and reflected at this time, they already existed in the form of desire, and are symbolised by the desire for the bourgeois house. This goal could not be achieved, however, by their wage work in Hungary.

In Sarah's migration story, the experience of dislocation is barely linked with downward (occupational) mobility, since she found a job appropriate to her professional skills soon after employment in a temporary job. She not only fulfilled her professional aspirations in the interior design team, but she also enjoyed her job. This does not mean, however, that her migration experience was free from lived difficulties. She wished to be appreciated and recognised as a person. Sarah, just like Robert, eventually began to feel at home in London; this feeling originated from their professional advancement, particularly from personal recognition and appreciation, and from their respective and supportive social relationships. Because of these elements, Robert even considered settling there. Sarah talked about her second migration period as the time of an important revelation, and when she realised her power: despite the breakup with her boyfriend and grief over her father's death she could stand on her two feet and reaffirm herself in terms of competencies, independence, self-esteem, and self-reliance. She also had friends who helped her get through these difficulties. After these personal crises, she was able to embrace the diverse social experiences offered by a multicultural city. Although she had never planned to settle, she postponed her return to Hungary due to her enjoyment of her London life as an independent woman.

Sarah's story illustrates how dislocation can make one reveal and reinterpret one's values, dispositions, and belongings. Dislocation highlighted the values of the never completely abandoned farm life, and made hard work and farm life a constitutive element of her family history; it also showed how these values were reinterpreted in the light of new impulses experienced in London. She often characterised London as a 'cosmopolitan' place; her own open-mindedness helped her to embrace diverse values like respect for one's roots and past, and elements of environmental awareness. The following interview excerpt illustrates the personal rediscovery of family history, which is expressed by the idea that a barren land has value, and shows how a family's past is connected to the present; that farm life is interconnected with the cosmopolitan values interiorised by migration.

> And I was coming home [from England] in this autumn weather, at the very end of October, and the sun was setting, and there is a part of the Kunság area, this absolutely saline soil that you plough in vain, since nothing grows on it, so it is left as barren grassland. And it was so beautiful,

> it reminded me of Sándor Petőfi's poem about the Hungarian Plains[6] *[Az alföld]*. And then I thought that peasants *[parasztember]* are the biggest gift from God, in my opinion. Because the peasant does not produce waste at all. And he reuses everything in the world. And uses only organic materials. [...] And um... this is what I try to do.

This visit took place shortly after her father's death; meanwhile, the renovation of the farmhouse, in which her father had helped a lot, was almost complete. This sudden revelation seemed to be a symbolic homecoming in terms of family history, even if the real return did not occur for a few years. The symbolic and cultural meanings shed light on the complexity of dislocation, which is not simply a process of physical disembedding due to migration, but also provokes a kind of mental and symbolic re-embedding in the same place through the rediscovery of social roots and the reinterpretation of farm life. Tanyavilág and London are directly connected, given that the renovation was financed by savings accumulated by migration. But re-embedding took place at a less conscious level too; the farmhouse is the symbol of the would-be bourgeois home, which happened to have been found in Tanyavilág, the home of her ancestors. This shows how a practical spatial navigation between places provokes a kind of social localisation process (dynamizing the question of mobility), while also being a symbolic, self-reflective process in which meanings, experiences, and practices related to these places are crystallised. As Sarah noted at the very beginning of the interview, homemaking in Tanyavilág and migration 'are interconnected, indeed, this is what is really interesting about it'.

On the one hand, homemaking is a projective surface which reveals how different dispositions stemming from family history and migration (home place and dislocation) are reconciled, and how the complex process of adaptation of habitus is realised – which is not always an easy thing to express in words (Bourdieu, 2000; 2002; Fáber, 2018). On the other hand, this perspective allows for an analysis of the symbolic meanings of homemaking, highlighting how a 'sense of (social) place' (Hillier & Rocksby, 2002) may be constituted through homemaking.

7 Homemaking: embodied meanings of dislocation and family history

Similar to the migration story, a fine interrelation of structural constraints and 'free' choices was manifested in the farmhouse renovation process. According to Sarah, she was 'destined' to find this farmhouse, believing that the house had somehow attracted her, and she simply recognised that it was what she had always wanted. This 'inexplicable' affinity, which represents habitually pre-determined choice as a 'destiny', is interpreted as *amor fati* by Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1984; 2000; 2009[2000]).

> Actually, at some level it came as a constraint to have it. But then, um... it was a sign from God, indeed this house wanted me, this door *[porta]* wanted me. The English say 'don't let the house rule you, you rule the house' [said in English] [...] But I think exactly the contrary – in my opinion, this house chose me, I wouldn't have come here of my own accord. And we are in total harmony with each other.

[6] For an English translation see https://archive.org/stream/translationsfrom00peto/translationsfrom00peto_djvu.txt

During the renovation, Sarah kept as many old pieces of the house as she could, and put these renovated elements back in their places. She had interiorised this attitude in England. 'I saw there for the first time how much one can respect the past and the culture of the past; much more than ever happens here [in Hungary], and in my opinion one can make a house even from a pigsty with will and diligence'. This attitude on the one hand echoes the ethic of hard work. On the other hand, however, keeping old pieces and renovating them did not fit with either the routines or the aesthetic sense of local craftsmen. For its implementation she had to cope with the incomprehension and aversion of the social environment. Her mother said that she just wanted to protect her from overworking and the risk-taking that accompanies such a renovation. But when, for example, she kept the old, non-standard window frames and put them back in after the renovation, the craftsmen looked at her as if 'she was out of her mind', although in the end they also came to understand Sarah's vision, agreeing that 'it was good that they were not new […] and not perfect. Because they simply fit there'.

She did not simply give orders to the craftsmen, but occasionally worked with them due to how unusual the project was, while Sarah had always had an *affinity* for this kind of work. 'Well, this rose pergola was inspired by an English idea, I was building it with the craftsmen, because they did not dare to do it without me [laugh], they called me boss lady [laugh], because if I had not liked something, if the bricks weren't level, I would have made them take them off and do it again. And they did not dare to do it, so I did it with them'.

The bricks were the last of some supplies from one of the old local brick factories before it closed down, and using them was a way to preserve some local heritage. There was also a degree of tension around the term 'boss lady'. This came from the unusual situation of a determined young woman, having recently returned from abroad, continuing the renovation 'without a man by her side', while expecting a high standard of work, and not only overseeing everything, but if necessary demonstrating her own competence. This situation highlights not only how migration experiences are internalised and mobilised, but reveals deeper, embodied elements of Sarah's habitus. Sarah emphasised her practical mind-set and that she learned things easily, even by observation. Her parents were skilled labourers who worked with their hands, so this practical mind-set was 'inherent' (cf. Bourdieu, 1984). While her 'affinity' had been continuously developed as a professional dressmaker in the design team, Sarah also had a strong connection with her father and grandfather. In her own words, she had 'played with a trowel' in her childhood, and 'learnt the profession' from her father. He was the one who had discovered the old farmhouse, and the one who called her attention to it. He also helped a lot with the renovation. Sarah spent a lot of her childhood in Tanyavilág: she often returned to the old farm with her grandfather, where she enjoyed the freedom and closeness to nature. All these internalised dispositions were 'naturally' realised during the renovation. On the one hand, financial constraints fostered traditional and 'home-made' solutions at the beginning of the job; Sarah and her former boyfriend had actually moved into a substandard house which lacked proper heating and running water at the time. When Sarah continued the renovation by herself, traditional techniques and authenticity still remained highly important but financial constraints had gradually eased. Meanwhile, the rediscovered traditional practices related to farm life gained meaning, eventually finding their place in her story as they resonated with the environmentally and aesthetically conscious dispositions 'brought home' from London.

While gradually moving away from being (financially) constrained, Sarah was moving closer to her social origin as well as the lived history of Tanyavilág, given that these traditional techniques mobilised the embodied know-how of her ancestors. As the farmhouse is made of adobe, Sarah decided to apply traditional 'sticking' techniques *(tapasztás)* in the interior. The practical-professional know-how about sticking was in possession of her father, who was a craftsman, while Sarah's mother also had it in the form of embodied practice from her childhood spent on a farm. Thus, not only did the 'secret ingredient' (horse manure) and its subsequent shortage make them laugh while they worked together, but the old and natural technique brought generations closer together. The process of 'sticking' made an aspect of traditional farm-life knowledge valuable and respected, mobilised old embodied practices, and deepened the family's bonds through cooperation and the giving and receiving of support.

Sarah's mother's story reveals another layer of meaning in this family history. Due to harsh financial constraints, Sarah's parents had started their life in a remarkably similar way to Sarah and her former boyfriend in the old farmhouse. They had lived in a small adobe house, while they built their family ('cube') house *(kockaház)* with their own two hands. This small adobe house had also required renovation before they had moved in; Sarah's parents brought construction material, old doors, and window frames from Sarah's maternal grandparents' farm, which had been abandoned by the family. The re-use of old elements in construction is thus an intergenerational pattern in this family, but it has highly different meanings for each generation. The mobility trajectory of Sarah's parents was framed by 'socialist modernisation', which means they were able to get rid of old 'junk' with relief when they took the old adobe house down. For them, this might have symbolised their social advancement. For Sarah and Robert, the preservation and renovation of the old is a symbol of reinterpreted and reframed family history, in which something old might contain something of value worth keeping. This reflected attitude toward the past is based on selection and the recombination of values; more importantly, it condenses the meaning of their mobility trajectory: the revelation of the 'old' as something valuable and the 'personally suited' pursuit of tradition is indeed the lived freedom of choice.

8 A harmonious sense of social place

The renovation preserved old features of the farmhouse, but it was suited to their modern lifestyle: their cultivated and landscaped garden is a place for relaxation and aesthetic pleasure rather than production. The bourgeois house, which had been Sarah's dream, is reflected in their home's functions and aesthetics. This dream, however, presupposes a wish to adapt this lifestyle, while their homemaking also reveals that creating a home involves more than the purchase of certain objects. As Sarah noted, much fantasy and creativity was required for 'making this bourgeois place homely', while she emphasised that a 'bourgeois [style] did not necessarily make a place homelike'. This awareness illustrates the logic of their homemaking, given that its aim was not merely the attainment of a bourgeois lifestyle, but also the preservation of certain elements of farm life and one's social roots; it involved creating a kind of continuity with the past while also including the experiences of migration. 'You come [home], you go [abroad], you enjoy this and that, and you can identify with both'.

Accordingly, Sarah and Robert were reluctant to put stylistic 'labels' on their home; they emphasised that each of their objects has a story – just like Tanyavilág. Their home is a 'mix': 'there is peasantry, bourgeoisie, there is England and Hungary in it'. As a consequence, this farm is 'entirely different from any other', given that it is the materialised essence of internalised cosmopolitan attitudes and rediscovered farm life dispositions. The 'homeness' of this farmhouse is based on it expressing the owners' place, and 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger, cited by Creswell, 2009, p. 172) which corresponds to their social origins as well as their current social position, obtained through migration. This is their home in which a 'quasi-perfect coincidence of habitus and habitat' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 147) is realised.

The materiality of their home expresses their social position (Bourdieu, 1984; Toma & Fosztó, 2018; Tuitjer, 2018), which is apparently higher than their neighbours', but is also the lived reality of it, which is constituted by the routines as well as the meaningful formality of everyday practices. It is the pleasure of these small formalities that reinforces their decision to live the way they do in the place they do. As Robert summarised in the garden pavilion while we were having tea: 'When we spread butter on a slice of bread, the butter is in a butter dish, it is real butter, [and we use a] butter knife… small details like this make our daily life a little aristocratic in a way'. This harmony, expressed in formalised routines and aesthetics, reinforces the identification with this chosen lifestyle, while it creates and reproduces a harmonious 'sense of social place' (Hillier & Rocksby, 2002). On the one hand, harmony comes from these formalities of practice constituting habitus and lifestyle that while tending to manifest themselves as natural, are always acquired (Bourdieu, 1984; 2000; 2002). On the other hand, harmony stems from the reconciliation of different dispositions (cf. Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Ingram & Abrahams, 2016), which deepens the meaning of migration and the social place thus obtained, given that this house would not be the way it is without the experiences and the financial means created by migration.

Nevertheless, this materialised and lived harmony seems more ambivalent when viewed from an outside perspective. Sarah, who is more embedded in Tanyavilág, said that they may have been considered 'farm-life snobs' in other's eyes. This reveals the misfit of their social and spatial position as well as the contrast between their home and lifestyle and Tanyavilág as a relatively marginalised place, but it also highlights the lived meanings of their harmonious sense of place. As Sarah explained: '… this farm-life-snobbery is that… I can… and… if someone is a snob, he can do what he wants. Not entirely, but one is his own master *[a maga ura]*. He can do what he wants. And it's like this: if I want, I [can] leave and I don't care, and I [can] come here and I live in my world. And this is a luxury in my opinion.'

Robert, however, was reluctant to describe their position here as one of snobbery, and emphasised only the sophistication of their lifestyle. Both definitions embrace the freedom of choice as an important attribute of a bourgeois lifestyle (Bourdieu, 1984), which is actually considered a 'luxury' in their eyes. This undermines its subjective importance and intergenerational novelty, as well as its relative rarity and peculiarity in this social place. At the same time, expressions describing their current lifestyle such as *cosmopolitan* and *sophisticated* first came to their mind in English, implying that they had been interiorised or realized during their stay in London.

Their house and garden fit, yet also do not fit in Tanyavilág. Whereas the latter contrast with their neighbours' places, the careful renovation 'makes them fit', producing continuity with the place's and Sarah's family's past. Despite the mismatch, their house demon-

strates an alternative lifestyle in Tanyavilág. The way they cultivate their garden and live in their house while focusing on the aesthetics of everyday life serves as a model for their neighbours who try to copy some elements of it, within the limits of their life conditions. It has a limited, but actual transformative power on this place, while other newcomers in middle-class positions also contribute to this change.

Although their house is the terrain of private life (the interview was completed in the garden), their garden is open to the public: it is a pleasant place designed for creative enterprises and for social gatherings. Sarah and Robert have already invited people from Tanyavilág and are trying to organise a community from the socially heterogeneous neighbourhood. Even if they may feel that some consider them 'farm-life snobs', they are respected by locals. They have many acquaintances, even from decades ago, since there are some old people in Tanyavilág who know Sarah not personally, but through her family. This illustrates their multi-layered embeddedness in Tanyavilág. They are embedded in the physical place by their home and social place by their 'homeness' and social relations (cf. Creswell, 2009). A layer of their embeddedness is also habitual, stemming from family history and traditions, which can be grasped in embodied practices – for example, in the way they combine family-inherited peasant know-how with modern environmentally conscious thinking in gardening.

9 Conclusion

This family case-study shows how social and spatial mobility are intertwined, and how places are mutually linked by dispositions, everyday practices, and meanings. The focus on the homemaking process of a return migrant couple reveals how different place-related practices and dispositions can be reconciled, resulting in a harmonious 'sense of (social) place' (Hillier & Rocksby, 2002). Their feeling 'at home' is multi-layered; rooted in a specific rural place (Tanyavilág) that is embedded in family history, in the aesthetics of this farmhouse, and is constantly reaffirmed by everyday practices (formalities), which reaffirm the pleasure of a chosen lifestyle in a desired home. The pleasure of their chosen lifestyle is indeed the lived meaning of their social mobility trajectory, since 'freedom of choice' or the 'luxury of taste' – that is, an aesthetically conscious everyday life – are actually attributes of a bourgeois way of life (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 175–177).

The lived meaning of this mobility trajectory is also reflected in intergenerational dynamics: this couple gradually loosened their social constraints through migration. This chosen lifestyle related to their home creates a level of distance from the necessities that were limiting their opportunities for social mobility in this town and had made the previous generations' struggles, choices, and habitus 'a virtue of necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 175) amidst a framework of 'socialist modernisation'. However, there is also some continuity as this couple kept, but managed to re-frame the old meanings of family history.

This mobility trajectory fuelled by transnational migration highlights the importance of the spatial dimension in interpreting social mobility, especially in terms of dislocation and home-making. Despite dislocation (Parreñas, 2001), however, this family history has never entirely been disembedded from Tanyavilág, where the protagonist's ancestors lived. Place-related practices and family-inherited dispositions have shaped this intergenerational mobility trajectory, even if they are less apparent. Renovation of the old farmhouse was financed by international migration and work in London, while Tanyavilág, however, was

always linked by the old family ethos and hard work. Sarah and Robert's success working abroad was based on this family-inherited work ethic, which reframed dislocation by making it meaningful and also a terrain of self-development. Moreover, this renovated house is indeed the *materialised* object of hard work: it is financed by hard work done abroad, and it was built by hand, mobilising the embodied know-how in Sarah's family.

The materiality of this house and this homemaking-project provide an insight into the process of how family-inherited and newly developed dispositions can be harmonized; that is, how habitus can change within limits. The choice of home was narrated by Sarah as *amor fati,* indicating that 'homeness' is deeply related to the lived social and physical spaces inhabited by ancestors and its embodied traditions. In the case of this renovated farmhouse, amor fati does not just explain a seemingly inexplicable 'affinity' towards it, but through the homemaking process it means 'being content with what one is and has' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 574). What this couple has now, however, is more than their ancestors had: this home signifies their obtained social position and their chosen lifestyle, which dynamizes even the logic of *amor fati.* They have a much broader perspective than their ancestors: for those living in Tanyavilág, the 'horizon' of potential social mobility was 'peasant embourgeoisement', which did not exceed the 'town and its surroundings' either in spatial or social terms (Erdei, 1971; Juhász, 2006, p. 271). Sarah and Robert, however, experienced dislocation and became cosmopolitans by exploiting the ethos of hard work inherited from their families. Although they came back to Tanyavilág, their position changed within it, and even within the town: their occupational positions are of significant importance to the running of the town; Robert has a leadership position within the administration. They are developing an enterprise and feel responsibility towards their community and environment. These are also constitutive elements of the bourgeois lifestyle (Juhász, 2006). These changes in their objective (and also relational) social position define social mobility; more importantly, they illustrate that even if they are (re-)embedded in Tanyavilág, they brought with them new attitudes and dispositions as socially and spatially mobile cosmopolitans. As a consequence, their homemaking shows the fine interrelation among different place-related dispositions and the reconciliation of those ethoses that pre-determine them, and reveals how a 'reappropriation of self' (Bourdieu cited by Naudet, 2018, p. 20) takes place in the process of the adaptation of habitus.

Their harmonious 'sense of (social) place' and multiple embeddedness also points out the importance of attachment and feelings in social and spatial mobility. However, the 'emotional costs' of (social) mobility are less apparent in this story. One reason may be their narrative position: a successful couple is speaking about their return migration/mobility *retrospectively,* and showing their home as a symbol of their social position and lived harmonious 'sense of (social) place'. Their emotional safety, 'homeness' and social stability, as well as an increase in the level of self-reflection due to their being mobile (cf. Bourdieu, 2000; 2002; Ingram & Abrahams, 2016) might also mitigate the relevance of the emotional cost in their story by making it well-rounded. Furthermore, the story is about re-embedding in Tanyavilág; the protagonists do not struggle with the emotional pain of leaving behind one's social origin (cf. Naudet, 2018). Their story is more about how one can reconcile different dispositions and values, and create some continuity with family and life history despite migration, dislocation, and social advancement. This is why this story of intergenerational mobility with attention to the foreground of the homemaking process was interpreted 'rather in terms of equilibrium' (Naudet, 2018, p. 15), pointing out how habitus can change within limits (Bourdieu, 2000; 2002). This is the theoretical reason why this analysis has put emphasis on

the *process* of adaptation and the *dynamics* of habitus instead of attempting to grasp different states of habitus by describing them as 'reconciled', 'destabilised', 'cleft' (Bourdieu, 2000; Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Ingram & Abrahams, 2016), or 'split' (Naudet, 2018). Although these notions are relevant, since habitus is generally quite stable (Bourdieu, 2000; 2002), this intergenerational perspective permits scrutiny of how habitus can change within limits and how adaptation takes place in the long term.

Acknowledgements

Project no. [124455] 'Marginalisation and (im)mobility: the dynamic of habitus' as implemented with support provided from the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund of Hungary, financed under the PD_17 funding scheme. The postdoctoral research was implemented in cooperation with project no. [119465] 'Governing urban marginality in shrinking cities', financed by the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund of Hungary.

References

Abrahams, J. & Ingram, N. (2013). The chameleon habitus: Exploring local students' negotiations of multiple fields. *Sociological Research Online, 18(*4), 213–226. https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.3189

Andorka, R. (2006). *Bevezetés a szociológiába [Introduction to sociology].* Osiris.

Bereményi, B. Á. & Durst, J. (2021). Meaning making and resilience among academically high-achieving Roma women. *Review of Sociology of the Hungarian Sociological Association 31*(3), 103–132. https://doi.org/10.51624/szocszemle.2021.3.5

Berger, V. (2018). *Térré szőtt társadalmiság [Sociability woven in space].* L'Harmattan.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste.* Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2000). Bodily knowledge. In *Pascalian meditations* (pp. 128–164). Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2002). Habitus. In Hillier J. & Rooksby E. (Eds.), *Habitus: A sense of place* (pp. 17–37). Ashgate.

Bourdieu, P. (2009 [2000]). Struktúrák, habitusok és gyakorlatok [Structures, habituses and practices]. In *A gyakorlat elméletének vázlata. Három kabil etnológiai tanulmány* (pp. 208–236). Napvilág.

Creswell, T. (2009). Place. In N. Thrift & R. Kitchin (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, Vol. 8 (pp. 169–177). Elsevier.

de Haas, H. (2010). The internal dynamics of migration processes: A theoretical inquiry. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *36*(10), 1587–1617. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2010.489361

Dúll, A. (2015). Amikor messze van az „odakinn" az „idebenn"-től: a helyváltoztatás és az identitás összefüggései [When 'outside' is far from 'inside': The nexus between displacement and identity] In A. Keszei & Zs. Bögre (Eds.), *Hely, identitás, emlékezet* (pp. 19–33). L'Harmattan.

Durst, J. (2018). Out of the Frying Pan into the Fire? From Municipal Lords to the Global Assembly Lines – Roma Experiences of Social Im/Mobility Through Migration from North Hungary. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics, 4*(3), 4–28. https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v4i3.479

Durst, J. & Nyírő, Zs. (2018a). Constrained choices, enhanced aspirations: Transnational mobility, poverty and development. A case study from North Hungary. *Review of Sociology of the Hungarian Sociological Association, 28*(4), 4–36. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2018.4.1

Durst, J. & Nyírő, Zs. (2018b). Soul work and giving back. Ethnic support groups and the hidden costs of social mobility. *Intersections East European Journal of Society and Politics*, *4*(1), 88–108. doi: https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v4i1.406

Durst, J. & Nyírő, Zs. (2021). Introduction. Cultural Migrants? The consequences of educational mobility and changing social class among first-in-family graduates in Hungary. *Review of Sociology of the Hungarian Sociological Association, 31(*3): 4–21. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2021.3.1

Erdei, F. (1971). *Város* és *vidéke [The town and its surrounding area].* Szépirodalmi.

Fáber, Á. (2018). *Pierre Bourdieu: Elmélet* és *politika [Pierre Bourdieu: Theory and politics].* Napvilág.

Feischmidt, M. (2007). Az antropológiai terepmunka módszerei [Methods of anthropological fieldwork]. In M. Feischmidt & É. Kovács (Eds.), *Kvalitatív módszerek az empirikus társadalom-* és *kultúrakutatásban* https://mmi.elte.hu/szabadbolcseszet/mmi.elte.hu/szabadbolcseszet/indexa3ef

Fejős, A. (2019). 'There is an exemplar because I'm there': Professional roles and experiences of Roma teachers in rural Hungary. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics*, *5*(4), 18–40. https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v5i4.577

Hillier, J. & Rooksby E. (2002). Introduction. In J. Hillier & E. Rooksby (Eds.), *Habitus: A sense of place* (pp. 3–27). Ashgate.

Ingram, N. & Abrahams, J. (2016). Stepping outside of oneself: how a cleft-habitus can lead to greater reflexivity through occupying 'the third space'. In J. Thatcher, N. Ingram, C. Burke & J. Abrahams (Eds.), *Bourdieu: The Next Generation: The development of Bourdieu's intellectual heritage in contemporary UK sociology* (pp. 168–184). Routledge.

Jelinek, Cs. & Virág, T. (2020). Zsugorodó városok és társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek Magyarországon [Shrinking cities and social inequalities in Hungary]. *Szociológiai Szemle, 30*(2), 4–27. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2020.2.1

Juhász, P. (2006). Polgárosodás – A második gazdaság bázisán [Embourgeoisement – on the basis of the second economy]. In *Emberek* és *intézmények. Két zsákutca az agráriumban* (pp. 270–273). Új Mandátum & Jelenkor Alapítvány.

Kovács É. (2006). Mari és az ő „cigánysága" – avagy a narratíva helye és ereje az etnicitás kutatásában [Mari and her 'gypsiness': the place and the power of narratives in researching ethnicity]. *Tabula*, 9(1), 41–52.

Kovács, É. & Vajda, J. (2002). *Mutatkozás. Zsidó identitástörténetek [Self-presentations: Stories of Jewish Identities].* Múlt és Jövő.

Kovács, É. & Vidra, Zs. (2012). Kényszer vagy kivonulás – élet a peremeken [Voluntary or forced exit – life on the margins.] *Tér* és *Társadalom*, *26*(4), 73–92. https://doi.org/10.17649/TET.26.4.2443

Kovai, C. (2019). Permanent wage labour as a norm. Workfare policy and everyday experiences of precariousness in a small Hungarian former industrial town. *socio*.hu, *9*(7), 143–161. https://doi.org/10.18030/socio.hu.2019en.142

Kovai, C. & Vigvári, A. (2020). Befejezetlen proletarizáció? A vidéki munkaerő-tartaléksereg Magyarországon a 2008-as válságot követően [Incomplete proletarisation? Rural reserve army of wage labour in Hungary after the 2008 crises]. *Tér* és *Társadalom*, *34*(3), 68–89. https://doi.org/10.17649/TET.34.3.3284

Kvale, S. (1994). Ten Standard Objections to Qualitative Interviews. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, *25*(2), 147–173. https://doi.org/10.1163/156916294X00016

Melegh, A., Gábriel, D., Gresits, G. & Hámos, D. (2018). Abandoned Hungarian workers and the political economy of care work in Austria. *Review of Sociology of the Hungarian Sociological Association, 28*(4), 61–87. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2018.4.3

Németh K. & Váradi M. M. (2018). Development in the context of care migration from rural Hungary: An agency-based approach. *Review of Sociology of the Hungarian Sociological Association*, *28*(4), 88–110. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2018.4.4

Naudet, J. (2018). *Stepping into the Elite: Trajectories of Social Achievement in India, France, and United States.* Oxford University Press.

Parreňas, R. S. (2001). *Servants of Globalization. Women, Migration and Domestic Work*. Stanford University Press.

Rácz, J., Pintér, J. & Kassai, Sz. (2016). A*z interpretatív fenomenológiai analízis (IPA) elmélete, módszertana* és *alkalmazási területei [The theory, methods and applications of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA)]*. L'Harmattan.

Rosenthal, G. (1993). Reconstruction of life stories. In R. Josselson & A. Lieblich (Eds.), *The narrative study of lives,* vol. 1 (pp. 59–91). Sage.

Schütz, A. (1984a [1963]). A cselekvések köznapi és tudományos értelmezése [Common-Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action]. In M. Hernádi (Ed.), *Fenomenológia a társadalom-tudományokban* (pp. 178–229). Gondolat.

Standing, Guy (2011). *The precariat: The new dangerous class.* Bloomsbury.

Szombati, K. (2018). *Revolt of the provinces: Anti-Gypsyism and Right-Wing Politics in Hungary.* Berghahn.

Timár, J. (1990). Kérdőjelek és hiányjelek a magyar tanyakutatásban [Questions and gaps in Hungarian farmland research]. *Tér* és *Társadalom*, *4*(2), 49–62. https://doi.org/10.17649/TET.4.2.173

Toma, S. & Fosztó, L. (2018). Returnees and their neighbors: Migration of the Romanian Roma, networks, social distance, and local development. *Review of Sociology of the Hungarian Sociological Association, 28*(4), 37–60. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2018.4.2

Tompa, A. (2020). *Haza [Home].* Jelenkor.

Tuitjer, G. (2018). A house of one's own – The *Eigenheim* within rural women's biographies. *Journal of Rural Studies, 62,* 156–163. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.08.002

Vajda J. (2003). Az élettörténet szövegének szövete. *JEL-KÉP. Kommunikáció, közvélemény, média*, *22*(1), 89–96.

Vajda, J. (2007). Two survivor cases: Therapeutic effect as a side-product of the biographical narrative interview. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, *21*(1), 89–102. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650530601173664

Váradi, M. M. (2018). Elméleti kaleidoszkóp – a migrációs tapasztalatok értelmezési lehetőségei. [Theoretical caleidoscope – an interpretive framework of migration experiences]. In M. M. Váradi (Ed.), *Migráció alulnézetből* (pp. 13-42). MTA KRTK Regionális Kutatások Intézete & Argumentum.

Váradi, M. M., Durst, J., Fehér, K., Németh, K. & Virág, T. (2017). Kényszerű mobilitás: migrációs utak hátrányos helyzetű vidéki terekben [Forced mobility: migrant trajectories in peripheral rural areas]. *socio.hu*, *7*(3), 25–46. https://doi.org/10.18030/socio.hu.2017.3.25

Váradi, M. M. & Virág, T. (2015). A térbeli kirekesztés változó mintái vidéki terekben [Changing patterns of social exclusion in rural places]. *Szociológiai Szemle, 25*(1), 89–113.

Vasárus, G., Bajmócy, P. & Lennert, J. (2018). In the shadow of the city: demographic processes and emerging conflicts in the rural-urban fringe of the Hungarian agglomerations. *Geographica Pannonica, 22*(1), 14–29. https://doi.org/10.5937/22-16572

Vigvári, A. (2016). 'Rural poverty' in urban spaces of Budapest Research proposal for examining spatial inequality in contemporary Hungary. *socio.hu, 6*(4), 47–61. https://doi.org/10.18030/socio.hu.2016en.47

Vigvári, A. & Gerőcs, T. (2017). The Concept of 'Peasant Embourgeoisement' in the Perspective of Different Historical Conjunctures. *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai Sociologia*, *62(*1), 85–104. https://doi.org/10.1515/subbs-2017-0006

Wacquant, L. (2007). Territorial stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality. *Thesis Eleven*, *91*(1), 66–77. https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513607082003

Wacquant, L., Slater, T. & Pereira, V. B. (2014). Territorial stigmatization in action. *Environment and Planning*, *46*(6), 1270–1280. https://doi.org/10.1068/a4606ge

Oksana Žabko*

Giving (positive) meaning to downward and horizontal occupational mobility to maintain individual well-being

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 120–137.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.834
https://intersections.tk.hu

* [oksana.zabko@biss.soc.lv] (Baltic Institute of Social Sciences)

Abstract

This study addresses some limitations related to knowledge of the circumstances that contribute to perceptions of downward or horizontal occupational mobility as a positive experience, increasing work satisfaction, labour market security, and maintaining subjective well-being. In pursuing this objective, seven working-life biographies are examined that demonstrate causes of occupational mobility, the investment needed for transition and stabilisation, as well as attitudes towards the destination occupation. Although a sense of meaningful work helps individuals accept a reduced income, interviewees treat it as a transitional period, seeing a possibility for at least some increase in salary. Maintaining one's original social networks while accepting a less qualified occupation also contributes to preserving individual well-being. These aspects are more pronounced in women's life stories. A more ambiguous attitude can be seen in the experience of men who encountered occupational and financial decline. While decision-making awareness, confidence in one's choice, and control of the process helps to stabilize potential frustration caused by decline, some isolation from previous networks appears in the keeping of distance, reducing contact intensity, or staying abroad for longer periods. Perhaps to regain their subjective sense of well-being, the former implements the principle of 'discrete stages' in their social life, a notion that reflects the situation of their working life.

Keywords: occupational mobility; downward mobility; intragenerational mobility; meaningful work; subjective well-being; Latvia

1 Introduction

This article focuses on different sources of positive consequences based on seven examples purposively selected from a larger number of interviews conducted under the umbrella of research into contemporary occupational mobility trajectories in Latvia between November 2019 and 2020. They support the argument that downward mobility cannot be seen merely as a decline in the social status and subjective well-being of individuals, and horizontal mobility as the maintenance thereof. The narratives presented here were collected from individuals who have experienced occupational, thus intra-generational mobility within the Latvian

labour market since 2009, applying the working-life biographical interview method. Most cases demonstrate occupational transition as the result of the changing needs or interests of individuals more than external circumstances – that is, mobility was largely viewed as a deliberate decision.

The reasoning for this study is threefold. The first stems from current state-of-the-art mobility experience research across Europe. Academic literature has dedicated overwhelming attention to upward mobility (De Bellaigue et al., 2019), but recent mobility trends indicate the need to balance pre-existing knowledge with an investigation of the experience of mobility in the opposite direction. This is especially crucial for Central and East European countries, in particular Latvia, whose inhabitants are today experiencing downward mobility more than upward mobility (Bukodi & Róbert, 2007; Bukodi et al., 2020).

Second, the experience of crossing social class boundaries – upward and downward – is largely associated with detrimental social and psychological consequences (Daenekindt, 2017, see Houle, 2011 for a broader overview). In Eastern Europe, this presupposition was once true due to the clash of experience that resulted from the social and economic transformations of the 1990s (see, e.g., Aarelaid-Tart & Bennich-Björkman, 2011), but should be reviewed under the present conditions more than three decades later. More recently, Becker and Birkelbach (2018) argued that a feeling of internal control over the mobility process may reduce potentially harmful effects associated with transition, but found this assumption to be true only for upward mobility. Moreover, this demonstrates a failure of explanations for the absence of the same trend for the downwardly mobile in the respective sample. Indeed, the authors call for further research to explain the maintenance of a sense of well-being for this group. Substantially, a potential explanation of previous findings is the fact that most results about the negative effects of social mobility emerged from studies that applied a limited number of occupational distinctions (see e.g., Houle, 2011) which led to more or less significant changes in individuals' social environment (Friedman, 2014). However, contemporary social processes may lead to mobility that is measurable on a micro level (Weeden & Grusky, 2005) or involve some other more specific distinctions among transitional groups such as the field of education. Such mobility also brings a loss of human capital (Kambourov & Manovskii, 2009) and a need to fill occupation-specific knowledge gaps (Medici et al., 2020). However, what is missing is an examination of whether these conditions have the same effects on individuals' social ties and subjective well-being that are observed when applying highly aggregated occupational divisions.

Third, a leading role in research on the consequences of mobility is played by quantitative approaches (e.g., Becker & Birkelbach, 2018; Daenekindt, 2017; Houle, 2011), but the above-mentioned knowledge gaps call for the contribution of qualitative inquiry, as pursued by this study.

In tracking the working-life stories presented here, the article examines the following research question: which circumstances in individuals' lives lead to a positive perception of the downward or horizontal occupational mobility experience, and to maintaining individuals' subjective well-being? Moreover, the examination of occupational mobility in a contemporary East-European country, a category to which Latvia belongs, may bring a different perspective to the debate about the consequences of occupational mobility.

2 Literature review

Occupations are perceived as the deployment of a set of certain skills associated with similar wages (le Grand & Tåhlin, 2013; Weeden, 2002), that assign individuals prestige, social power, and status (Freeland & Hoey, 2018; le Grand & Tåhlin, 2013), thus have a broad influence on an individual's social life conditions and outcomes (Weeden & Grusky, 2005). Thus, vertical transition between occupations can be designated as upward or downward according to a mutual hierarchical relationship. In contrast, passing from one occupation to another at the same hierarchical level is perceived as horizontal mobility (Van Der Waal & De Koster, 2014). Quantitative measurement of the consequences of mobility has long been a subject of interest to social scientists, who tend to use aggregated scales with a limited number of occupational groups (e.g., Houle, 2011), or to investigate mobility among educational levels (e.g., Daenekindt, 2017). This infers long-distance mobility between a former and a current occupation (Jarvis & Song, 2017). This tradition might impact the results that are obtained in terms of the interpretation of the consequences of mobility – the greater the distance, the greater the changes the individual may have to cope with. Moreover, with the exception of some early studies, scholars tend to describe the detrimental implications of mobility on the social life and well-being of individuals largely based on working-class or minority groups' upward mobility experiences (see review in Friedman, 2014). As downward mobility is perceived as the loss of an individual's status, prestige, and income (Newman, 1999), the impact of these negative effects on an individual's social and psychological well-being are usually examined in the light of the 'dissociative' thesis (Sorokin, 1959; see a more recent contribution by Daenekindt, 2017) or the 'falling-from-grace' thesis (Newman, 1999). In general, both theses consider that changes in social affiliation require impossible-to-implement adaptation to the values, attitudes and lifestyle of the destination class that may harm pre-existing informal ties (Sorokin, 1959), unless other members of the original social network such as relatives, friends, and colleagues experience a similar status transition (Blau, 1956). Facing these challenges, harm occurs to the individual's subjective well-being – i.e., to the perception of satisfaction with various specific domains of their life and feelings of happiness (Becker & Birkelbach, 2018).

The more neutral 'acculturation theory' (Blau, 1956; Houle, 2011) considers an individual's adaptation to the values, attitudes, and behaviour of the destination class. Moreover, acculturation theory suggests that the negative effects captured by the dissociative and falling-from-grace theses describe the acculturation process *per se,* while the individual accommodates to the destination class position (Houle, 2011).

Examining these hypotheses over recent decades, scholars are inconclusive about the direction of mobility and its effect on an individual's social and psychological state (see reviews in Becker & Birkelbach, 2018; Houle, 2011), claiming the need to look for other explanatory variables (e.g., Becker & Birkelbach, 2018). The results mentioned above have been obtained on the basis of quantitative investigations, and new hypotheses continue to be sought. For example, Becker and Birkelbach (2018) test internal locus of control (decision-making and the management of life-events by individuals themselves) as a significant determinant of the psychological resilience of the upwardly mobile. However, a few studies have searched for new explanations through employing a qualitative approach. Among them, Friedman (2016) specifies that the lived experience of mobility varies according to transition trajectory and individual characteristics such as original class, gender, and ethnicity. Gradual mobility pro-

vides a smooth transition and incorporation of the original social and cultural background into the new experience (Friedman, 2016). However, these findings still do not close the knowledge gap about the lived experience of the *downwardly mobile*, leaving the *horizontally mobile* completely outside this discussion.

Focusing primarily on the consequences of occupational mobility, explanatory variables can be found in the individual and organizational settings of work in the destination occupation. Hence, the meaningful work construct emerges as positively loaded (Bailey et al., 2019), linking 'meaning in work' (Chalofsky, 2003) with individual-level outcomes such as life-satisfaction and well-being (e.g., Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010; Steger et al. 2012). Moreover, according to a comprehensive review presented by Bailey et al. (2019), 'meaning in work' can be examined both as largely depending on an individual's durable internal attitudes (Steger et al. 2012), or in relation to specific workplaces, suggesting that engagement with organizations may generate a sense of meaningfulness (Duchon & Ashmos Plowman, 2005). The meaning 'of work' and 'in work' may also change over time according to the importance of other roles which individuals play (see Bari & Róbert, 2016). Here, acceptance as a deliberate strategy, and strengthening due to support from family and important others (Bereményi & Durst, 2021) can be purposively adapted to reframe meaning and handle the disagreeable consequences of downward mobility (see Almevall et al., 2021; Bereményi & Durst, 2021). This position may be permanent or temporary as individuals apply various strategies to deal with their downgrading such as adopting 'getting by' (staying in a lower position), 'getting on' (advancing), or 'going nowhere' attitudes (Brown, 2016). Moreover, social classes may be heterogeneous, so despite diverse educational levels and occupations, individuals may have close interpersonal ties and be part of the same social networks (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2004). Thus, nowadays, the relationship between occupational mobility and the potential loss of an individual's original social networks may be considered more blurred (see e.g., Rözer et al., 2020). Considering these arguments, the author maintains that the concept of 'meaningful work' and accompanying adjustments of individual perceptions of positions could further explain the conferral of meaning to and maintenance of well-being in relation to the experience of downward or horizontal mobility, as long as the related dynamics are more precisely operationalized based on the results of qualitative research.

3 Research background: employment and occupational mobility trends in Latvia

Latvia, similarly to other Central and East European countries, is a potentially interesting space for research on occupational mobility experience caused by specific labour market features and mobility trends. Restructuring of the economy in the 1990s brought about several crucial systematic changes in work-related values, the demand for occupations, their prestige and remuneration (Koroļeva et al., 2014). At that time, occupational mobility was a means of maintaining previously guaranteed – but now increasingly uncertain – employment opportunities. A large share of the population felt this to be a stressful and difficult process, especially those in less well-educated and minority groups. Moreover, due to the changing socio-political conditions that Latvia experienced throughout the twentieth century, various generations were convinced of the unpredictability of life and the need to be ready for change (Aarelaid-Tart & Bennich-Björkman, 2011).

Inheriting the tradition of high female participation in the labour market established under the socialist system, Latvian women's participation in full-time employment throughout their lives remained high even after the economic restructuring of the 1990s. Thus, occupational mobility applied equally to men and women (Šumilo et al., 2007).

However, relatively little data is available to characterize the occupational mobility rate over time. Before the economic recession of 2009, Latvia was among those countries with the highest level of job mobility experience during work-life (~ 80 per cent), with around half of the workforce being downwardly mobile (Bukodi & Róbert, 2007). The economic turbulence of 2009 also brought more downward than upward occupational mobility to Latvia (Pohlig, 2020). However, the incidence of horizontal mobility may have increased over the last five years since specific recruitment and retraining programmes for other-sector professionals were introduced by industries dealing with their labour shortages.

A number of social processes explain these trends at present. Having a small economy, Latvia has been more likely to be open to external influences, resulting in continuously changing demand for occupations (Šumilo et al., 2007). This is also reflected in the flexibility of educational requirements. Since the training system is largely non-vocational-specific (Bukodi & Róbert, 2007), the assessment of candidates' suitability for jobs is left to employers, except in regulated professions such as medicine or architecture. This can lead to lower costs of occupational mobility than expected (see Kambourov & Manovskii, 2009).

Besides this, the economic changes of the 1990s and beyond allowed young people to experience rapid career growth (Aarelaid-Tart & Bennich-Björkman, 2011), which sometimes led to breaking points in the middle of the working life. Here, additional reasons for mobility have emerged, from dissatisfaction with work content, lack of opportunities for further growth (Šumilo et al., 2007), and burnout stemming from stringent job performance requirements and difficulties reconciling work and private life over a longer period of time (Žabko, 2021/2022).

4 Data and method

The article is based on empirical data collected through working-life biographical interviews for ongoing doctoral research on contemporary intragenerational occupational mobility patterns in the Latvian labour market. The aim of the original study was to identify coping strategies for dealing with the knowledge gap that emerges when moving from one occupation to another. Research participants were required to have changed their occupation since 2009, thus within the ten years since the last major economic turbulence in Latvia. The search for interviewees was based on the use of personal networks combined with the snowball method. Each participant read and signed an informed consent form; audio records of interviews were fully transcribed.

A crucial task of the study was defining the reference point for determining the fact of occupational mobility. Unlike most studies based on the hierarchy of occupations (e.g., Becker & Birkelbach, 2018; Houle, 2011), the aim of the study – to determine the persistence of the knowledge gap – demanded a different approach. The classification also had to be sufficiently sensitive, but not fragmented. This was achieved by applying the 'narrow field' level of ISCED classification (UNESCO, 2014), thereby allowing detection of the mobility of interviewees across 29 educational fields. The step could also be considered a novelty in relation to the current state-of-the-art.

After selecting participants according to the given criteria, 38 interviews were conducted between November 2019 and 2020. Most interviewees acknowledged that they had decided to move to another occupation due to their own needs, such as changing vocational interests, finding working conditions unacceptable, or facing health problems, thus claiming their decisions to be voluntary. This finding may be a limitation of the study as the given recruitment methods were not able to reach those who felt forced to change occupation due to the risk of unemployment or a decrease in the demand for their occupation.

Assessing the collected coping strategies also revealed the need to determine the direction of mobility when this was observed, whether vertical or horizontal. This demanded a return to existing classifications of occupations and the identification of a similar, sufficiently sensitive, scale of measurement. The widely referenced big-class schema developed by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992), in the eleven-point version, was selected for this purpose. The advantage of this scale is its most accurate consideration of the abstraction level of working tasks (see Chan & Goldthorpe, 2004) allowing for differentiation among higher and lower grades of professionals, technicians and routine non-manual employees, skilled and non-skilled manual workers (see Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992). As a result, the working-life stories that were collected could be classified as follows: 15 interviewees moved downward, 21 horizontally and two upward; this breakdown is an uncontrolled side effect of the interviewee recruitment process.

For the purpose of demonstrating the circumstances that allow for considering a downward (and horizontal) mobility experience as positive, valuable, or maintaining a sense of well-being, seven cases were purposively selected for more nuanced examination in this article. For the six downwardly mobile examples, variety was also ensured in the perception of the consequences and diversity of narrators in terms of their gender, age, educational, ethnic and language background. A single example of horizontal mobility was added, as an occupational change was implemented by a medium-skilled adult of mature age, more likely to be immobile.

The collection of working-life biographies presumed an exploration of narrators' education and work path since early adolescence, including the reasoning behind their choices, attitudes of their parents and peers in respect of these decisions, as well as a description of the working routine and relationships within organizations. To finalize, the narrators were asked to compare their former and current occupation in terms of prestige, financial viability, complexity of work, and knowledge required. Based on these comparisons, the feeling of interviewees about the direction of their transition was detected and, through the data analysis, contrasted with the mobility patterns as defined by the author. Narrative analysis, coherent with the interview method (Lieblich et al., 1998), was used for data exploration. In demonstrating mobility experience that emerged from collected working-life stories, selected cases were aggregated into three clusters of positive reasoning extracted from the interviews, aligned with the concepts examined in the literature review.

5 Results: clusters of positive reasoning in relation to downward and horizontal mobility

5.1 Meaningfulness of work

Emilia (female, 30 years, married with young children) came from a lower-middle class family, but since childhood had faced challenges caused by studying at a prestigious school in the

city centre. Although interested in medicine, due to the difficult financial circumstances of her parents Emilia started studying public relations, which allowed her time and space for work. Emilia worked in advertising for seven years, rising to be a key account director. Over the years, emotional tension and exhaustion accumulated as the specifics of her job contradicted her inner need to 'be excellent so that everyone is happy with my work'. In reality, this was not possible: 'Everyday life was very stressful, I was like a taskmaster all the time – you would never be good enough for anyone because you were an account manager, you stood in between the client and the executive, among these creative people, from whom you had to get a result'.

Following advice and significant support from her spouse, Emilia left her job and start studying rehabilitation medicine. She turned her studies to midwifery with the birth of her first child, following her new and intimate insights. Since then, Emilia had been studying and volunteering as a midwife for three years, seeing if the job was suitable for her. Volunteering gives her an opportunity to plan her shifts at work, thus allowing her to balance work and domestic responsibilities. Emilia is aware that her choices have downgraded her position, first and foremost, financially. 'Many midwives are puzzled, as I have left such a very lucrative job for one of the lowest paid [in Latvia]. [...] I know what it means to make big money, but you are in a very, very bad place emotionally. If I had to choose again now, I would choose this [midwifery] again, because it brings me energy and joy'.

Although Emilia acknowledges that the work of a midwife is less prestigious in society, she believes that this societal perception is undeserved in that it stems from a lack of public knowledge about the role and responsibilities of a midwife. Through her statements 'I want these beautiful moments with a normal labour' and 'my hands are the first to await this little baby', it is clear that Emilia assigns high value to her work, giving her a sense of meaningful work and contributing to the 'greater good' (Duchon & Ashmos Plowman, 2005; Steger et al., 2012), and increasing her well-being (Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010; Steger et al., 2012). These considerations strengthen her position when she is confronted within her wider social network about why she did not choose the hierarchically superior position of a doctor, which would better correspond to her previous professional level. However, she rejects the idea of becoming a doctor, believing that it is exactly the specifics of midwifery work that she is looking for and finds meaningful.

Emilia's closest social ties support her choice; however, maintenance of her former social status, income, and network is supported by her spouse, who has maintained his work in advertising, and her additional job as a marketing freelancer. However, within a wider informal network and among previous and current colleagues, Emilia encounters different attitudes towards her choice, which sometimes, especially in relation to the older generation of medical staff, involve distrust of her goals and some resistance in terms of her developing a new professional network. Despite this, she purposefully tries to overcome these obstacles, largely applying the soft skills she developed for work in advertising. 'I knew how to approach people; it [marketing] actually gave me a very good schooling, which is also useful for me in this [new] job – namely, how to communicate with people from a variety of classes and occupations. You just know how to adapt, because you have always had to adapt'.

Notably, some years after leaving the advertising profession, Emilia agreed to provide marketing services to a couple of individual clients as a freelancer in tandem with her work as a midwife. She justifies this decision with multiple arguments. Besides the financial gain, she acknowledges that this allows her to maintain a connection with the creative industry,

satisfies her longing for the uplifting feeling of completing a campaign, and allows her to maintain the advertising skills that would be needed in future to promote herself as a midwife. Her long-term goal is to provide private midwifery services, allowing her to earn more than in a public hospital, demonstrating her commitment to further development described by Brown (2016) as a strategy of 'getting on' in her occupational market.

Lisa (female, 43 years, married, with adolescent children) came from an educated middle-class family and knew from an early age that higher education was a must. After her studies, Lisa worked as an accountant for almost 20 years before deciding to change her profession to become a beautician. For this purpose, although possessing a master's degree in finance, she returned to education at a lower – secondary vocational – level. Before this decision, Lisa had reached the position of senior accountant. Lisa describes her work as responsible and exhausting, boosting her decision to make a change in her working-life trajectory, concluding 'I had served everyone so much, both businessmen and the State Revenue Service, and the State Treasury … I just wanted to be free of it'. However, Lisa's decision to change occupation was multifaceted. Her health problems, worsened by this exhausting work, were combined with the comprehension that 'you are [I am] almost 40 years old and you [I] have to work until 70 years old, do the same for another 30 years…' and the fact that 'I have mastered everything and the only thing that left for me [in this job] is changes in taxation.' These lessons demonstrate a loss of commitment to the accounting profession which Lisa faced before the decision to change.

Earlier, Lisa had revealed her interest in beauty care, attending informal training sessions for several years and gradually establishing relationships with some professionals within the industry. For entry to the occupation of beautician, Lisa completed vocational training relying on her spouse's support and savings, temporarily worsening the family's financial situation. At the time of interview, Lisa had been working as a beautician for more than two years. While initially an employee, unable to accept the organizational culture of her workplace a year later Lisa opened her own beauty care salon. Soon, she also received an invitation to work as a trainer in a vocational school, demonstrating rapid 'getting on' (Brown, 2016) in the new occupation.

Although her case is considered to be downward mobility in terms of education and the abstraction level of the occupation (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2004), Lisa relates incongruously to this statement. She considers that there are limitations to developing as a beauty care professional as Latvia does not provide tertiary education opportunities in this area. Also, in terms of employment, she feels that she is back in business. Lisa admits that her current occupation gives her freedom and the opportunity to do exactly what is meaningful in her work – 'I like beautiful things, a beautiful environment' (see Duchon & Ashmos Plowman, 2005). Although her financial situation has stabilized, Lisa does not compare the income of her present and former occupations, but she also does not reject the idea of returning to accounting if 'something new turns up', demonstrating stronger commitment to following her aspirations than before.

Prior to the economic recession in 2009, Steven (male, 44 years, married, with adolescent children) was a client manager in the area of the wholesale of construction goods. Formerly, he completed vocational training, but experienced occupational mobility in the late 1990s and early 2000s, moving from art to industrial metalwork and wholesales later on due to weak demand for his work. The year 2009 brought redundancy and unemployment, and Steven used this time to learn the trade of an electrician. Starting work in real-estate man-

agement, within ten years Steven was gradually promoted from a line electrician to a branch manager, replacing manual work with office work. However, these changes did not give Steven satisfaction; he lost motivation because office work was not interesting for him and he felt the need for more technical and manual tasks (see Nixon, 2006). It took Steven a long time until – becoming inspired by the thinking of younger colleagues that one should change workplace every few years – he applied for a vacancy which allowed him to return to the position of a line electrician with some office duties. In this, it was difficult to trace how conscious Steven's choice to change jobs was, but he had found meaning in this change, feeling satisfied with the result. According to Steven, the new job is much more interesting and technologically advanced – the new workplace has state-of-the-art electronics and energy-saving equipment, which requires him to learn how it is built and should be serviced.

Steven's employment experience can be considered as fluctuating within a range of several occupational categories. Although the recent transition from branch manager to line electrician should be considered a downgrade, Steven himself believes this to be growth, thus echoing the observation of Chan and Goldthorpe (2004, p. 389) about the occupational rank-ordering of individuals in society based on the presence of 'manuality' at work. According to this approach, occupations that include work involving abstraction are more highly valued. Here, Steven assigns a greater value to his occupation when it encompasses working with more the abstract advanced technologies. Although Steven strongly considers himself to be an electrician, upon retirement he would probably return to the art of metalwork, thus demonstrating a long-lasting commitment to his initial – unfortunately, in low demand – occupation.

The above cases, together with the fact that a sense of meaningful work can reduce feelings of occupational downgrading as evident from social scientists' occupation classifications (see e.g., Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992), show that individuals may be concerned to maintain their previous social status, such as their original social networks. Similarly, occupational decline, as established by the main occupation, may be conditional upon the individual retaining their previous occupation as a side job.

5.2 Increased labour market security

Jane (female, 60 years, divorced) grew up in the Soviet era in a rural area and, following the advice and example of her parents, completed vocational training as a salesperson. She had worked in sales for over 30 years when due to health problems she felt she could no longer spend long working hours standing up. Jane found a post as babysitter and worked at this for a year, maintaining her informal social network that had been developed earlier. This led to her receiving another job offer from a former colleague who had started developing a small business as a manicurist, and had received an unexpected level of customer interest by selling discount stock. Although she knew the main principles of offering manicures from her own experience, Jane doubted whether she could work as a professional in this area. However, following the insistence and emotional support of her former colleague, Jane passed the training hurdle and overcame initial difficulties starting work. At the time of interview, she had been working as a manicurist for eight years.

Although Jane's mobility can be considered rather horizontal, as a manicurist she feels much more in demand in her occupation than as a salesperson. Her situation has improved significantly in financial terms; thus, she has lived through the experience that the reward from similar occupations is 'not tightly linked to the complexity of [the] occupation's knowledge base' (Weeden, 2002, p. 55). Jane has also developed in social terms as her work has helped to expand and diversify her informal network: 'A manicurist is also a kind of salesperson, but it is completely different. For example, you spend three minutes with a person at the counter, but more than an hour here. So, I say, those girls are no longer clients, they are my friends'.

Among the circumstances that influenced Vanessa's (female, 33 years, married, with a young child, ethnic and language minority background) choice of physics were financial considerations such as the number of state-subsidized places because her family could not pay for her and sister's tertiary studies. Further, starting work at a scientific institute, as Vanessa explains, is natural for students of physics who are completing their baccalaureate, but this work 'dragged in' smoothly, pulling her towards master's and doctoral studies.

Vanessa worked in science for 10 years, evolving from a novice engineer to a researcher. For the last five years, Vanessa has been combining science with work in the IT industry. Vanessa admits that she enjoyed experimenting and participating in international conferences, but at the same time perceived a lack of mentoring from her supervisor, who worked abroad, while additionally she found that her older colleagues' resistance to new ideas was disappointing. Besides this, at a public scientific institute 'the question of money was acute', with wages largely depending on research grants. Faced with career uncertainty and instability like other young scientists around Europe (see, e.g., Ruiz Castro et al., 2020), Vanessa did not feel secure in academia and as she started her family life looked for a job with more stable earnings. With the recommendation of her sister to a potential employer, Vanessa found a job at an IT company as a test engineer and worked in this position for eight years. Her choice to change her occupation was unintentional; it was a circumstances-driven decision – the offer of a suitable job fit the need to change her occupation.

Although the transition from a physics researcher to a test engineer may be seen as downward mobility, both in terms of education and degree of work abstraction (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2004), Vanessa believes that the changes in her working life are not very significant. She is proud of her doctoral degree and admits that work in science could generally be considered more prestigious and intellectually demanding. Simultaneously, Vanessa emphasizes that in financial terms, the opportunities are inverted – income from work in IT is incomparably higher than from science. In Vanessa's view, the cognitive skills that are developed in physics make it easy to adapt to other technical industries, so a well-paid IT industry job is a natural choice for many physicists. Demonstrating her ability to adapt to the IT industry, Vanessa admits that 'My sister sent me a book, saying that I would have to take a test based on it. After physics, this book is very easy to read – like a fairy-tale at night'. While working in IT, she also met many of her former workmates, including former colleagues at the research institute, so her social network remained relatively unchanged.

In clarifying her decisions, Vanessa displayed two features. First, she is concerned with work security – a stable income, clear responsibilities, and teamwork with a mentor. Her sense of security in the IT industry is supported by the presence of her sister – both have studied together and also work in the same company. Second, from the beginning, Vanessa demonstrated a high level of commitment to learning, in contrast to the situation with

physics. Emphasizing the IT field's need for continuous professional development, she enjoys training and collecting various forms of certification. Although less important to Vanessa herself, she acknowledges that the IT industry is also characterized by a different organizational culture, where new ideas are encouraged and discussed. Since the birth of her child some years ago, she believes that her connection with science has been severed and she now belongs to the IT industry, where she plans to develop further.

5.3 Other layers of subjective well-being and the acceptance of downgrading

There is also a third group of reasons that alleviate the feeling of downward mobility or facilitate its acceptance that are not directly related to work content or security. This contribution is made by the internal locus of control (Becker & Birkelbach, 2018), which involves a deliberate decision to move to a lower-skilled job due to other overarching life goals or benefits and applying it as a survival strategy in times of particularly unfavourable conditions.

Since the late 1990s, Mischa (male, 58 years, second marriage, ethnic and language minority background), who completed vocational training irrelevant in a market economy, worked in broadcasting, evolving from being a journalist to holding a director's position. Through his working life he also had various side jobs, demonstrating a trend to having multiple jobs that is typical of inhabitants of East European societies (Bari & Róbert, 2016). After more than 20 years of service, due to his different vision of management to that of the company owners, Mischa felt forced to leave his job at the age of 55 years old, having no options for the future. Mischa believed that finding a job at his age could be more difficult due to his previously rich work experience and weak knowledge of the Latvian (national) and English language, so he looked at a variety of jobs, including one as a logistics specialist, identified through his social ties. Mischa felt familiar with the industry as he had worked in this area for a couple of years in the early 1990s (leaving this work due to a highly unpredictable business environment). Realizing that other potential jobs might be even lower-skilled, he says he is satisfied. Moreover, feeling successful in a new job, he explained: 'I am a universalist, I can succeed in any field of employment that is interesting to me. Although with age the ambitions become less. At the age of 58, I can no longer start from scratch'.

Through his story of seeking a new job and strengthening his position in logistics, Mischa demonstrates a variety of adaptation strategies for achieving his goals. First, he has a certain approach to dealing with his lack of English-language skills – he works with international partners such as those looking for a Russian-speaking people for companies or uses *Google translate* to manage conversations. Second, when seeking a job, Mischa prepared several versions of his CV tailored to each particular industry, and downplayed his experience, excluding information which might cause employers to reject him as over-qualified. Third, Mischa still examines various job offers and evaluates additional job opportunities, especially due to the decrease in demand for transportation due to COVID-19. He receives these job offers from his diverse social network, although, fourth, he appears to be avoiding some of his former colleagues, limiting the circle of persons who know of his current employment status and position.

Accepting his current position, Mischa believes that working life consists of several cycles that offer certain lessons. He admits that he lost his first family due to his high workload in the mid-2000s, so Mischa is satisfied that now he is able not to think of work all day

long. Having passed through an adaptation period in the field of logistics, he evaluates his income level as similar to when he worked in broadcasting, emphasizing that the period when he earned the most was in the 1990s. Summarizing Mischa's position, it corresponds to the 'getting by' strategy (Brown, 2016), as no intention to advance in the future was detected in his narration.

Although the last case is somewhat similar, Tony (male, 45 years, married) has chosen a different approach, finding himself stuck with the solution that was chosen. Before changes to the ownership structure of his employer, for more than ten years Tony served as a logistics manager at a large-sized enterprise. Due to his loyalty to the previous owners, Tony did not find it possible to cooperate with the new ones, but had no ideas about the future. He decided to become a truck driver, assigning to this work the need for a sense of business intelligence:

> Logistics in general was interesting, so I decided to stick to it as well. […] However, I did not start my own business, because I realized that I lack experience to some extent. So, I decided to look at how it was done elsewhere in the world. But the problem is that you can't get into any factories because people are protecting their production and warehousing. Then there was the idea of working a bit as a truck-driver across Europe. So, I got the driving licence quite quickly and got inside all the factories from the 'backyard'.

For the next seven years, Tony's working life was about transportation – he evolved rapidly from a regular driver to a driver instructor, and then a driver base manager with a large number of subordinates. While working, he spent most of his time abroad, then, under pressure from his family, tried to find a job in Latvia. Failing in this, Tony returned to regular truck-driving. Summarising, he refers to this period as 'temporary work'.

Although Tony admits that he has experienced some downturns, both in terms of qualifications and financially, he describes his emotional state the following way: 'I don't feel frustrated comparing myself to where I could be and what I could do', and 'I am not particularly oriented towards the past'. However, listening to Tony's story, some sense of 'falling-from-grace' (Newman, 1999) persisted in the emotional dynamics he imparted to each stage of his employment. Working as a logistics manager prior to driving he described as dynamic and interesting:

> It was such a cool adventure all those years. We worked at a pretty big avant-garde company because we could really make money. There was also an opportunity to get familiar with modern technologies and to explore everything. There was also a kind of development in corporate terms, we were bought and merged […], then we were bought again […] and merged with others.

Working as a logistics manager also coincides with Tony's achievements in other areas of life – he graduated from university, purchased a family house in a prestigious district, had savings, and said of himself that 'I was a satisfied tomcat who goes and takes what he needs'. The story about truck-driving had a different tone, involving the acceptance needed to maintain a sense of well-being (Almevall et al., 2021). In this respect, Tony tried to find self-motivating moments in his daily work routine, saying 'Scandinavia is interesting purely in terms of technical driving skills' and 'I have always been interested in socio-anthropological portraits a bit; I like to look at people using archetypes'. However, some alienation from the original social environment can be sensed in Tony's conclusion that he no longer finds it possible to return to work in the Latvian labour market:

> If we put together an offer from [a local employer] at 2000 EUR per month, where you really have to sit at the computer and swear at other men, or you can drive around beautiful France and enjoy a good time, good relationships, where you don't have anything to worry about, and you earn twice as much, then the choice is quite clear.

Tony is convinced that he will definitely change his occupation again. He has a dream of moving to live abroad, thus demonstrating a desire to move away from the Latvian environment and former social networks. However, implementing the idea is hindered by his spouse, who is not ready to move and lose some of the usual comforts of life and social ties:

> I am going to change now, but there is a question about the family, how to organize it properly. The wife, on the other hand, is not ready to start living elsewhere. She is very well settled down. She has both a house and a car, she has a garden and neighbours, everything is really cool. But in the middle of the city of Bordeaux there is a vineyard, everything smells there, in the morning croissants, in the evenings there are such eateries [...] There is a wonderful atmosphere. People speak an incomprehensible language, but you can learn it.

Tony demonstrates that he has thought about what to do next. He is aware that the 'entry level in any case does not allow him to seek a very high salary, but it allows access to local social networks'. Tony has been aware of the importance of social networking since adolescence, and he demonstrates the presence of communication and networking skills throughout his narration about his own working life. He is convinced that 'as long as you do not compete directly with them [natives] for pay, it is very easy to get into the social environment'. Although this last statement by Tony somehow conforms to the 'getting on' strategy observed by Brown (2016), Tony's case can more precisely be defined as a 'getting away' approach, presuming some horizontal and even spatial movement.

6 Discussion and conclusions

As the probability of downward mobility in Latvia is greater than for the upward type (Bukodi & Róbert, 2007; Pohlig, 2020), it is important to track the impact of these processes on individuals' social and psychological state. Since downward mobility is somehow neglected in academic debate (De Bellaigue et al., 2019), especially in terms of comprehension of what individual strategies promote the giving of positive meaning to lived experience, this study offers insights that expand this knowledge by examining both downward and horizontal mobility cases.

The novelty of the study stems from the investigation of both less examined – downward – mobility patterns and a society that has a certain pre-developed readiness for change (Aarelaid-Tart & Bennich-Björkman, 2011). The selected cases offer insight into the complexity of these experiences and perceptions of the consequences of mobility. The first lesson of this study is the relativity of downward mobility, which simultaneously involves both loss in one important area of an individual's life and gain in another, thus strongly demonstrating the multi-dimensionality of the consequences. The examples discussed here show that positive meaning is obtained through the meaningfulness of work, including contributing to the 'greater good' (Duchon & Ashmos Plowman, 2005; Steger et al., 2012) and the application of advanced technologies, stronger labour market protection, and an acceptance of moving

downward (Almevall et al., 2021) adhering to one's own values or goals. Importantly, a move between occupations of the same complexity can even be subjectively perceived as an upward move if any aspects of an individual's employment improve.

Although there are no quantitative data about gender as a determinant, in this study, downgrading for meaningful work was specific to women. However, the interviewees are applying a 'getting on' (Brown, 2016) strategy, seeking growth financially and at least partly professionally in the destination occupation. Although this involved a period of completely leaving the original occupation, taking up another, and growing in the new area, previous work can be maintained as a side job. In addition to financial benefits, this helps sustain, at least partly, the original social ties needed to ensure individual well-being. Interestingly, in certain occupational groups, the desire to take special care to maintain social ties appears differently – for example, downgrading from science to a more applied IT industry job did not involve significant change in this respect. However, horizontal mobility to an occupation that presumes the need for 'people processing' (see Chan & Goldthorpe, 2004) can expand the original network and make it more diverse.

Conversely, downgrading due to personal values or more ambitious goals, in this study, is largely common to men. In both cases disclosed in this article the interviewees had achieved high occupational status, so the reasoning for accepting their downgrading and maintaining their subjective well-being was particularly important. Here, the key point is sustaining an internal locus of control (Becker & Birkelbach, 2018) over the process and the choice, and awareness of greater goals and future perspectives. Part of this process involves making a clear distinction between the different stages of working life, assuming that they also bring certain lessons. As the original occupations of the interviewees could be considered meaningful, attitudes to the destination occupation regarding further perspectives may vary. Both the 'getting by' strategy described by Brown (2016) and the modified 'getting on' approach could be observed. As to the last of these, since a strong component appears to be further movement onward (horizontally and spatially) the movement could be classified as a 'getting away' approach. In the absence of belief in further advancement in the destination occupation, a desire to keep some distance from part of former social networks was observed (a similar pattern for the upwardly mobile was observed by Bereményi & Durst, 2021) that might possibly link individuals to a period of life that has already passed. Focusing on the current stage of life is essential for maintaining a sense of well-being in these narratives.

As quantitative research is at the forefront of social and occupational mobility studies, an important issue is further translating these qualitative findings into meaningful analytical categories. Some, such as technological advancement and people-processing at work, are easily identifiable. Others that cover types of losses and gains may be time-consuming in terms of developing and testing reliable measurement scales. Another issue that arises from the discussion and empirical data presented here is the nature of the approach that is applied to detect the fact of occupational mobility. A multidimensional approach which can be used to detect the directions of change involved in occupational mobility challenges the measurement scales used so far in social (quantitative) research. The final issue is hypothesizing the impact of common societal experiences such as socioeconomic transformations on the subjective perceptions of various processes at the individual level. It would be worth examining whether a working population that has experienced more downward mobility in their life course is also characterized by higher resilience and a more stable sense of subjective well-being.

The limitations of this study stem from the number of cases that are dealt with and the region covered. Cases selected for this article complement each other, gradually demonstrating various benefits of the mobility experience. Within the collection of narratives are relatively many examples of horizontal mobility that included a downturn in the early stages of transition due to loss of human capital (Kambourov & Manovskii, 2009). Together with cases of downward mobility, most of them were justified by the search for meaningful work. Less common were cases involving the search for more labour market security or other reasons. The composition of the study does not allow conclusions to be made about the prevalence of such reasons within the wider population. To date, no measurements have been implemented to determine to what extent such findings are specific only to the Central and Eastern Europe or Latvia as a country within the latter region. The properties of the Latvian labour market, such as the high likelihood of downward mobility (Bukodi & Róbert, 2007; Pohlig, 2020) and frequently changing demand for occupations (Šumilo et al., 2007), may make the results of this study strongly idiosyncratic.

Acknowledgements

Oksana Žabko's work was supported by the project 'Strengthening of the Capacity of Doctoral Studies at the University of Latvia within the Framework of the New Doctoral Model', identification No. 8.2.2.0/20/I/006.

References

Aarelaid-Tart, A. & Bennich-Björkman, L. (Eds.), (2011). *Baltic Biographies at Historical Crossroads.* Routledge.

Almevall, A. D., Zingmarka, K., Nordmark, S., Forslund, A. S. & Niklasson, J. (2021). Accepting the inevitable: A mixed method approach with assessment and perceptions of well-being in very old persons within the northern Sweden Silver-MONICA study. *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics, 92,* Article 104275. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.archger.2020.104275

Bailey, C., Yeoman, R., Madden, A., Thompson, M. & Kerridge, G. (2019). A Review of the Empirical Literature on Meaningful Work: Progress and Research Agenda. *Human Resource Development Review, 18*(1), 83–113. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484318804653

Bari, D. & Róbert, P. (2016). Who Benefits More from a Balanced life? Gender Differences in Work-life Balance and Satisfaction with Life in Eight Post-communist Countries. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics, 2*(3), 21–41. https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v2i3.195

Becker, D. & Birkelbach, K. (2018). Social mobility and subjective well-being revisited: The importance of individual locus of control. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility, 54,* 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2018.01.001

Bereményi, B. Á. & Durst, J. (2021). Meaning making and resilience among academically high-achieving Roma women. *Szociológiai Szemle, 31*(3), 103–131. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2021.3.5

Blau, P. M. (1956). Social Mobility and Interpersonal Relations. *American Sociological Review, 21*(3), 290–295. https://doi.org/10.2307/2089282

Brown, A. (2016) Career adaptability and attitudes to low-skilled work by individuals with few qualifications: 'getting by', 'getting on' or 'going nowhere'. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 44*(2), 221–232. https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2016.1145196

Bukodi, E. & Róbert, P. (2007). *Occupational Mobility in Europe.* Eurofound. https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef0711en.pdf

Bukodi, E., Paskov, M. & Nolan, B. (2020). Intergenerational Class Mobility in Europe: A New Account. *Social Forces*, *98*(3), 941–972. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soz026

Chalofsky, N. (2003). An emerging construct for meaningful work. *Human Resource Development International, 6*(1), 69–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/1367886022000016785

Chan, T. W. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (2004). Is There a Status Order in Contemporary British Society? Evidence from the Occupational Structure of Friendship. *European Sociological Review, 20*(5), 383-401. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jch033

Daenekindt, S. (2017). The Experience of Social Mobility: Social Isolation, Utilitarian Individualism, and Social Disorientation. *Social Indicators Research, 133*, 15–30. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-016-1369-3

De Bellaigue, C., Mills, H. & Worth, E. (2019). 'Rags to Riches?' New Histories of Social Mobility in Modern Britain – Introduction. *Cultural and Social History*, *16*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2019.1574053

Duchon, D. & Ashmos Plowman, D. (2005). Nurturing the spirit at work: Impact on work unit performance. *The Leadership Quarterly, 16*(5), 807–833. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.07.008

Erikson, R. & Goldthorpe, J. (1992). *The constant flux: A study of class mobility in industrial societies.* Oxford University Press.

Freeland, R. E. & Hoey, J. (2018). The Structure of Deference: Modeling Occupational Status Using Affect Control Theory. *American Sociological Review, 83*(2), 243–277. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418761857

Friedman, S. (2014). The price of the ticket: Rethinking the experience of social mobility. *Sociology, 48*(2), 352–368. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038513490355

Friedman, S. (2016). Habitus clivé and the emotional imprint of social mobility. *The Sociological Review, 64*(1), 129–147. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12280

Houle, J. N. (2011). The psychological impact of intragenerational social class mobility. *Social Science Research, 40*(3), 757–772. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2010.11.008

Jarvis, B. F. & Song, X. (2017). Rising Intragenerational Occupational Mobility in the United States, 1969 to 2011. *American Sociological Review, 82*(3), 568–599. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122417706391

Kambourov, G. & Manovskii, I. (2009). Occupational Mobility and Wage Inequality. *The Review of Economic Studies*, *76*(2), 731–759. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-937X.2009.00535.x

Koroļeva, I., Mieriņa, I. & Rungule, R. (2014). *Profesiju prestižs un izvēle jauniešu vidū: divu paaudžu salīdzinājums [Occupational prestige and choice among young people: A comparison between two generations].* LU Akadēmiskais apgāds.

le Grand, C. & Tåhlin, M. (2013). Class, Occupation, Wages, and Skills: The Iron Law of Labor Market Inequality. In E. G. Birkelund (Ed.), *Class and Stratification Analysis* (pp. 3–46). Emerald. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0195-6310(2013)0000030006

Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R. & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation*. Sage.

Littman-Ovadia, H. & Steger, M. (2010). Character strengths and well-being among volunteers and employees: Toward an integrative model. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 5*(6), 419–430. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2010.516765

Medici, G., Tschopp, C., Grote, G. & Hirsch, A. (2020). Grassroots of occupational change: Understanding mobility in vocational careers. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 122*, Article 10348. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103480

Newman, K. (1999). *Falling from Grace: Downward Mobility in the Age of Affluence*. University of California Press.

Nixon, D. (2006). 'I just like working with my hands': employment aspirations and the meaning of work for low-skilled unemployed men in Britain's service economy. *Journal of Education and Work, 19*(2), 201–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080600668051

Pohlig, M. (2020). Occupational mobility in Europe during the crisis: Did the social elevator break? *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, Article 100549. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2020.100549

Rözer, J. J., Hofstra, B., Brashears, M. E. & Volker, B. (2020). Does unemployment lead to isolation? The consequences of unemployment for social networks. *Social Networks, 63*, 100–111. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socnet.2020.06.002

Ruiz Castro, M., van der Heijden, B. & Henderson, E. L. (2020). Catalysts in career transitions: Academic researchers transitioning into sustainable careers in data science. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 122,* Article 103479. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103479

Sorokin, P. A. (1959). *Social and Cultural Mobility*. Free Press.

Steger, M. F., Dik, B. J. & Duffy, R. D. (2012). Measuring Meaningful Work: The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI). *Journal of Career Assessment, 20*(3), 322–337. https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072711436160

Šumilo, Ē., Sloka, I., Karnups, V. P., Šķiltere, D., Škapars, R., Ādamsons, V., Kavale, L., Dovladbekova, I., Oļevskis, G., Šavriņa, B., Vaskis, G., Danusēvičs, M., Brēķis, F., Baumane, I. & Lauze, A. (2007). *Darbaspēka profesionālā mobilitāte [Occupational mobility of the workforce].* Latvijas Universitāte.

UNESCO (2014). *ISCED Fields of Education and Training 2013 (ISCED-F 2013).* UNESCO Institute of Statistics. https://doi.org/10.15220/978-92-9189-150-4-en

Van Der Waal, J. & De Koster, W. (2014). Occupational mobility. In A. C. Michalos (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of quality of life and well-being research* (pp. 4451–4453). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5

Weeden, K. A. (2002). Why Do Some Occupations Pay More than Others? Social Closure and Earnings Inequality in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology, 108*(1), 55–101. https://doi.org/10.1086/344121

Weeden, K. A. & Grusky, D. B. (2005). The Case for a New Class Map. *American Journal of Sociology, 111*(1), 141–212. https://doi.org/10.1086/428815

Žabko, O. (2021/2022). Izdegšana un garīgās veselības problēmas kā profesijas maiņas iemesls: būtiskie apsvērumi jaunas profesijas izvēlē [Burnout and Mental Health Problems as a Reason for Occupational Change: Essential Considerations for Choosing a New Occupation]. *Akadēmiskā Dzīve, 57*, 97–104. https://doi.org/10.22364/adz.57.10

Ákos Huszár,* Karolina Balogh** & Ágnes Győri***

Educational mobility at the top and the bottom of the social structure in Hungary

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 138–155.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.858
https://intersections.tk.hu

* [huszar.akos@tk.hu] (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest)
** [balogh.karolina@tk.hu] (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest)
*** [gyori.agnes@tk.hu] (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest)

Abstract

According to recent studies, both absolute and relative mobility in Hungary have recently declined. In our paper, we seek to explain how these processes evolved in the lower and upper segments of the social structure. Is the decline in mobility more due to the fact that parents in a more favourable position manage to pass on their privileged social position successfully, or rather to the fact that those starting from below are less able to overcome their disadvantages? To what extent have these processes occurred simultaneously in the last almost twenty years, and to what extent have they taken place independently? According to our results, the decrease in social mobility can be detected in both the lower and upper segments of society. However, processes at the two poles have not involved the same dynamics over the past nearly two decades. In the 2000s, educational expansion fuelled immobility in the upper segment of society, but also created mobility channels for those with an unfavourable social background. In contrast, in the 2010s the proportion of the immobile increased among both the high and low educated. In terms of relative mobility, quite similar processes have taken place in the upper and lower segments of society: the already unequal relative mobility chances became even more unequal during the nearly twenty years under study.

Keywords: social mobility; social closure; sticky floor; sticky ceiling; Hungary

Our paper seeks to explain to what extent it depends on the family background of individuals whether someone is currently in a favourable or unfavourable social position; how strong this association is in Hungary; and whether any change can be observed in this respect in the last two decades. This form of questioning is embedded in the tradition of social mobility research, but now we focus on two of the possible mobility routes: mobility paths leading to the upper and lower groups of society. These mobility routes require special attention, as their study can shed light on two phenomena that are of decisive importance in terms of the openness and closedness of a society. On the one hand, by examining the mobility pathways leading to the upper segment of society we can obtain information about the extent to which privileged social groups inherit their social position. On the other hand, by focusing on the mobility paths to the lower segment of society we can estimate how much disadvantaged positions reproduce themselves. These two phenomena are aptly illustrated by the metaphors

of the 'sticky floor' and the 'sticky ceiling' (OECD, 2018). In the following, we first clarify our research questions by introducing the theoretical and methodological grounds of our research, and then present our results.

1 Mobility and social closure

Social mobility research has traditionally distinguished between absolute and relative mobility. The absolute mobility rate, from an intergenerational perspective, refers to those whose social position has changed compared to that of their parents. Absolute mobility depends mostly on how much the structure of society itself changes. If the proportions of different social groups change from one generation to the next, this increases the degree of mobility in itself: structural changes force individuals to leave their parents' social group and move to another one. Relative mobility measures, on the other hand, try to provide information about mobility processes while filtering out the effects of structural changes. In this respect, relative measures of mobility are much more suitable for shedding light on how and to what extent the equality of opportunity has changed in a society, i.e., how far the latter can be considered open or closed (Andorka, 1982; Breen, 2010; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2019; Marshall, Swift & Roberts, 1997).

Both absolute and relative mobility have been declining in Hungary since the 1970s (Andorka, 1982; Harcsa & Kulcsár, 1986; Andorka, Bukodi & Harcsa, 1994; Luijkx et al., 2002; Bukodi, 2002; Róbert & Bukodi, 2004; Németh, 2006; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2010; 2021; Róbert, 2018; Jackson & Evans, 2017; Balogh et al, 2019; Huszár et al., 2020; 2022); moreover, according to the latest studies, Hungary (in European comparison) belongs to the group of countries considered most disadvantaged in terms of social mobility (Bukodi, Paskov & Nolan, 2017; 2019; Bukodi & Paskov, 2020; Eurofound, 2017; OECD, 2018). The simultaneous unfavourable change in absolute and relative mobility means that on the one hand Hungarian society is becoming more and more rigid – i.e. the class structure is changing to a lesser extent than before –, and on the other hand that it is becoming more and more closed, which means that the chances of changing one's social position relative to that of one's parents is smaller and smaller.

However, from the point of view of assessing how rigid or open a society is, it is not irrelevant to consider what mobility paths total mobility consists of. Relative proportions of horizontal and vertical mobility do make a difference, for example, as well as what social distances vertical mobility can bridge, i.e., what proportion of society can change their social situation significantly. The issue of how much mobility affects the lower and upper segments of society (i.e., the extent to which mobility channels are available to the most disadvantaged and the extent to which mobility paths are open to those in higher positions in society) is just as important.

In the present paper, we focus on these two mobility pathways. We seek to investigate to what extent the closure of Hungarian society after the regime change stemmed from processes taking place in the upper or lower part of society. Did these trends occur in parallel at the two poles of society, or as a result of periodically changing, or perhaps opposite, trends? The latter may easily have occurred, and is even very likely, as mobility and immobility mean completely different thing in the lower and upper segments of society; accordingly, different factors determine whether someone's social position changes or remains unchanged.

Those in the most disadvantaged situation due to their origin start from a position that is not a destination for other social groups. Thus, for those starting from the bottom, mobility means moving upwards compared to their parents, and improving their social situation. Mobility here therefore holds the promise of progress, thus in this case it is a goal to be mobile. Whether this goal is actually achieved depends on a number of factors. Above all, it depends on structural factors, which primarily involve changes in the education system and the occupational structure. If more and more people have the opportunity to complete higher levels of education, or if the proportion of jobs associated with higher prestige and more favourable income and working conditions increases compared to that of unskilled jobs, it will open up mobility channels for those starting from below. However, in addition to structural factors, mobility also depends on the various characteristics of the people involved – what economic, cultural, and social resources they have; whether their family relationships are peaceful and secure; the extent to which their homes provide a supportive environment for children; and may also depend on other hidden factors.[1] Moreover, mobility may depend on the willingness and ability of potentially mobile people to pay the potential costs of mobility (Chan, 2018; Hajdu, Huszár & Kristóf, 2019; Durst & Nyírő, 2021; Dés, 2021). Therefore, in the lower part of society, closure always means failed or derailed mobility. This occurs when, for various reasons, individuals are unable or to a lesser and lesser extent able to realize their mobility aspirations. Expanding the metaphor of the sticky floor (OECD, 2018), this phenomenon means that the way that society operates 'sticks' those at the lower end to their position of origin, despite their (potential) ambitions, effort, and talent, depriving them of the opportunity to move upward.

Closure in the upper part of society means something completely different. Positions here are considered the most desirable destinations in term of social mobility. However, for those in the best positions due to their origin, intergenerational change would mean that their situation worsens compared to that of their parents. In this case, therefore, it is not mobility but immobility that is the main goal. The extent to which this is accomplished may also depend on various factors. Increasing access to higher education and an increase in the proportion of higher-prestige occupations will facilitate the transmission of a favourable social situation between generations, but will also allow new groups to enter these positions. However, other factors may specifically facilitate closure, such as the concentration or direct inheritance of wealth; degrees obtained in elite schools and the social networks established therein; and, as in the case of the bottom, homogamous marriage (Tóth & Szelényi, 2019) can facilitate closure at the top as well. 'Stickiness' thus has a different meaning in relation to the ceiling. This phenomenon is not rooted in the lack of realization of mobility aspirations, but in the successful transmission of the position of origin. In addition, in contrast to the sticky floor phenomenon, the successful blocking of mobility occurs in terms of positions that are considered to be desirable destinations for other social groups as well, thus preserving a privileged social position is potentially achieved by excluding those who start from a disadvantaged position.

---

[1] Regarding the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage and poverty, see above all the work of Gábor Kertesi and Gábor Kézdi (2005), which systematically takes into account the factors determining this. See also the comprehensive work by János Ladányi and Iván Szelényi (2004), as well as András Gábos and Péter Szívós (2008), and Balázs Kapitány (2012).

In our paper we seek to identify to what extent the recent decline in absolute and relative forms of social mobility is due to processes materializing in the upper and lower segments of society. Have they evolved simultaneously, or can some periods be distinguished when sticky floor or sticky ceiling effects prevailed? In the absence of comprehensive stratification and mobility studies, little is known about this, and only rough hypotheses can be formulated in this regard. The deep occupational crisis of the early 1990s probably contributed most strongly to the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage and poverty (Kertesi & Kézdi, 2005), while the political and economic changes that followed the regime change may have generated greater movement in the upper segments of society. György István Tóth and Iván Szelényi (2019) take a much firmer view about the current processes. According to them, factors contributing to the closure of the upper middle class dominate today; however, they consider this assumption to be a research hypothesis that may be confirmed by targeted empirical studies. In this study, our goal is to generate empirical evidence that may help evaluate such hypotheses, even if we cannot fully test them.

2 Data and methods

In our work, we aim to review the mobility processes of Hungary over a relatively long period of almost 20 years. For this purpose, we relied on data from the *European Social Survey* (*ESS*). The ESS is a longitudinal survey that uses the same methodology and questionnaire and is conducted every two years in many European countries, including Hungary. The ESS was initiated by the European Science Foundation back in 2001 with the aim of obtaining internationally comparable data about the demographic and social situation of European societies, the evolution of the political and public preferences of the population, and changes in the values that influence social attitudes and activities. ESS data are valuable not only for academic purposes but also for European and national governments and public policies and make a significant contribution to understanding the social processes currently taking place in Europe. Surveys are conducted in each country based on a multi-stage probabilistic sample design using nationally representative samples. The first phase of data collection took place in 2002, and nine ESS waves have been recorded, the last one in 2018.[2]

Reviewing the factors through which individuals can enter the upper and lower groups of society during different periods, as well as how the size of these groups has changed over time, could be the subject of independent research. Such preliminary research might make it possible to grasp our subject more accurately, However, instead of this complex approach, we sought to make several, simple, reliable measurements that allow for temporal and international comparison. Each of these measurements is less comprehensive in itself, but we believe that together they are more suitable for drawing conclusions about the processes that have taken place in different segments of society.

In the field of social mobility research, capture of the origin and current positions of individuals is most typically attempted in three ways: based on occupational class, education, and income status.[3] The ESS contains information on all of them.

[2] More detailed information on the survey is available at https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/

[3] The vast majority of sociological studies apply the occupational-based approach, while there is lively debate about the different approaches. A study by John Goldthorpe (2013) provides good insight into these debates.

The most difficult task in mobility research is assessing *the position of origin* of individuals, as this information can be collected only retrospectively, apart from in specific cohort surveys and potential administrative data sources. In most cases, including the ESS, this prevents researchers from obtaining reliable data on the income status of respondents. However, although not in a uniform way, information is available about the educational level and occupational group of the respondent's father and mother. Information on parents' educational attainment is available for the whole period under review on the basis of ISCED classification, which was included in our analysis in four categories (Primary education: ISCED 0 and 1; Lower secondary education: ISCED 2; Upper and post-secondary education: ISCED 3 and 4; Tertiary education: ISCED 5-).[4] However, comparable data for the father's and mother's occupations are available only for the period after 2008, and not as detailed occupational codes, but as pre-defined occupational categories. Information on parents' occupation is therefore not the most appropriate, so we omitted the use of this in this study. Thus, the position of origin of the respondents was determined by education using the dominance approach – i.e., the data of the parent with the higher educational level was taken into account.

Much more information is available to capture the social position of respondents; however, the situation is not ideal in this case either. Above all, the variable of educational attainment is available, the assessment of which is exactly the same as that for parents. Occupation is also available in the form of four-digit ISCO codes, which we aggregated in line with the five-category version of the *European Socio-economic Classification* (ESeC) scheme.[5] However, after examining the change in the distribution of class categories, we decided not to use this information in this work either. Unfortunately – primarily due to the change in the ISCO nomenclature – the proportion of lower- and upper-class categories has fluctuated to an extent that makes the data unreliable. In the case of respondents, the ESS also includes an income decile variable that would have been especially useful for the purpose of our study. However, unfortunately, we also had to give up the idea of using it due to the quality of the data.[6]

Thus, in our study the position of origin and the current social position of respondents is measured by educational attainment. Our preliminary plan was to capture the top and bottom social positions by using multiple indicators, but unfortunately, we had to give up on this idea.

Due to the sample size, the results are not presented according to each wave of the data collection, but separated into four periods. The first period includes the first three waves of the ESS, which covers 2002–2006, and the subsequent waves were combined in units of two. To avoid our results being distorted by respondents who had not or had just entered the labour market, as well as those who had already left, we included in the analysis only those individuals between the ages of 25 and 64.

---

[4] Unfortunately, due to the fieldwork in Hungary, Hungarian data on parents' education level are missing from the sixth wave of the ESS (for 2012).

[5] Regarding ESeC, see above all the work by David Rose and Eric Harrison (2010).

[6] In the ESS questionnaires, respondents are asked to classify their income into one of multiple income categories that have been defined in advance based on external data sources so that they correspond to each income decile. In the case of Hungary, this was not really successful: e.g., in 2008, 4 per cent of respondents were included in the bottom income tenth, compared to 18 per cent in 2014. For more details on ESS income data, see https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round8/survey/ESS8_appendix_a2_e02_1.pdf

In the following, we first examine to what extent children inherited the favourable or unfavourable social position of their parents by relying on absolute indicators of mobility. We then shift the focus to see how the relative chances of mobility at the top and at the bottom changed during the period under review.

3 Absolute mobility

When we focus on the lower and upper parts of society, we are in fact dividing society into three distinct parts. It is important, however, to interpret in the light of the specific measurement which social groups the borderlines we draw are separating, and which are treated together (i.e., what is included in each category). It is important to note that in this triple division the middle cannot be identified with the middle class, nor can the upper category be associated with the elite, nor the lower with those living in deep poverty.

In our study, those with a university or college degree are included in the upper group. This is a broad and very heterogeneous group that may include owners and managers of large corporations, lawyers, engineers, teachers, and other professionals working as employees. Thus, when referring to the upper part of society, we do not intend to refer to the super-rich or the elite, or even the upper middle class (Tóth & Szelényi, 2019). In terms of its sociological content, this category can best be characterized as grouping those with at least a rather stable middle-class status (cf. Tóth, 2016a; 2016b; Éber, 2020, pp. 191–212; Huszár & Berger, 2020; Szalai, 2020). Thus, when examining the change in the mobility characteristics of this group, our question can be refined to the following: to what extent have those with a middle-class position managed to pass on their social position to the next generation?

The lower group, on the other hand, includes those who, based on their qualifications, have at most a primary or lower secondary education (they do not have a high-school diploma). This lower category is thus much more homogeneous than the upper one, as it includes those who, based on their qualifications, are clearly disadvantaged in the labour market and at the greatest risk of unemployment. This precarious group can be considered deprived in many respects, but it is far from identifiable with those in a multiply disadvantaged situation and living in deep poverty (cf. Spéder, 2002; Havasi, 2002; Kapitány & Spéder, 2004; Kertesi & Kézdi, 2005; Ladányi & Szelényi, 2004). Therefore, based on the mobility characteristics of this group, it is possible to examine to what extent precarious social situations are reproduced.

Taking a closer look at the change in the size of the groups in the periods concerned, the direction of the change is basically favourable, and this trend can be observed for both respondents and their parents (see Tables 1–3 in the Appendix). The proportion of the tertiary educated increased in each period in the case of both parents and respondents, and at the same time the proportion of those with low level of education clearly decreased.[7] Over-

[7] These tendencies are fully in line with the results identified by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office based on censuses and microcensuses (KSH, 2017).

all, these structural changes help the children of parents with a low level of education to improve their social position, while they also make it easier for those from tertiary-educated families to retain their position of origin.[8]

After this brief overview of the structural changes in educational attainment, we review how far parents with low and high educational attainment transferred their own social position (see Figure 1). Figure 1 shows the immobility rate of the high and low educated groups; i.e., the proportion of children of tertiary-educated parents who themselves have a university degree as well, and the proportion of children of parents with up to primary education who have a primary or secondary education without a high-school diploma. According to our results, the extent of immobility in the case of higher education shows a clear trend to increasing: while in the first half of the 2000s about half of the children of highly educated parents obtained a high educational level themselves, at the end of the 2010s two-thirds did. Overall, therefore, children of parents with a high educational level are increasingly likely to attain the educational level of their parents. It is important, however, that as a result of the educational expansion, the group of the tertiary educated has expanded, which has opened up mobility paths primarily for the children of parents with a high-school diploma.[9]

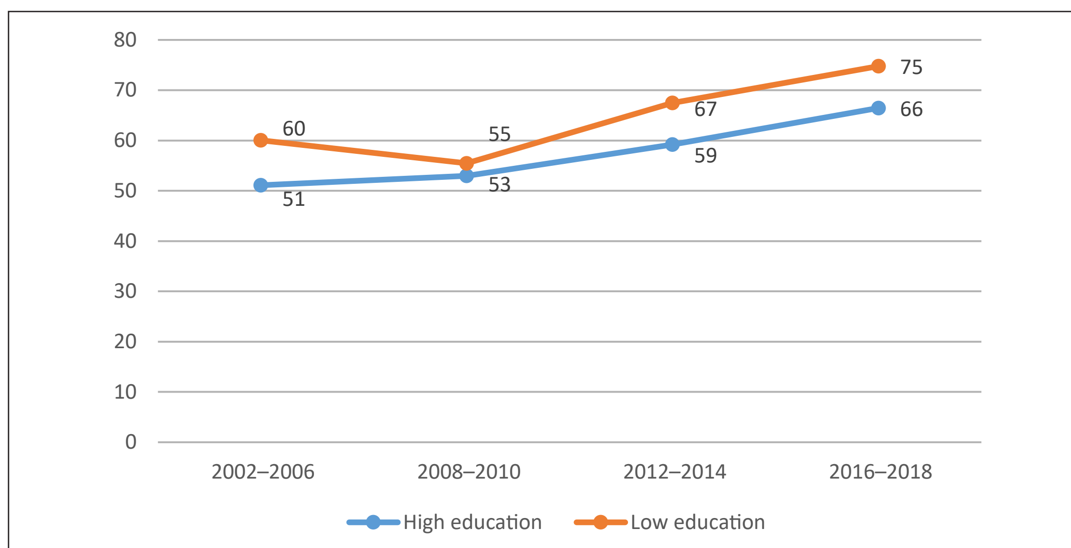

Figure 1 Immobility rates among the low and high educated in Hungary, %

Source: Authors' calculation based on ESS

Note: High education: the proportion of children of tertiary-educated parents who also have a university degree; low education: proportion of children of parents with up to primary education who completed primary or secondary education without obtaining a high-school diploma.

[8] It must be added in explanation of these changes that just as the structure of qualifications changes, so does the relative value of each level of education. The value of a university degree is higher if there are fewer tertiary educated in a society, and as their proportion increases the relative value of higher education will decrease. Of course, this is also true for the other side of the qualification structure.

[9] Regarding this issue, see Table A3 in the appendix.

The other line in the figure provides information on the proportion of children of parents with up to primary education who have a primary or secondary education without a high-school diploma. In this case, the trends are less straightforward than in the case of the inheritance of higher positions. In the second period, the proportion of those with a low-level education like their parents decreased compared to the first period, but it has been rising continuously since the beginning of the 2010s.[10] While in the beginning of the 2000s 40 per cent of the children of parents who had no more than a primary education were able to obtain a high-school diploma, and in the second half of the 2000s approx. 45 per cent of them could achieve the same, this figure had fallen to below 25 per cent by the end of the decade. These results suggest that while the mobility chances of those who started at the bottom somewhat improved in the 2000s, they steadily deteriorated in the 2010s.

Overall, therefore, compared to the 2000s, by the end of the 2010s the proportion of those with a similar social position to that of their parents increased remarkably. In the case of tertiary education, the trend is clear and unbroken: an increasing proportion of children with tertiary-educated parents obtained a higher education degree themselves. In the case of lower education levels, the data show the trend reversal in the early 2010s: while by the end of the 2000s the proportion of those with a low level of education like their parents decreased compared to the previous period, this started to increase after 2010. The increase in immobility among the highly educated is not surprising at all in the light of the structural changes. The increase in the proportion of the tertiary educated in society indicates that an increasing share of children of highly educated parents will themselves reach the educational level of their parents. What is more surprising, however, is what we see in the case of the low educated. As a result of structural changes – that is, the expansion of education – we might have expected a reduction in the share of the low-educated immobile. However, this expectation is only met in the case of the 2000s, while after 2010 the share of the low-educated immobile increased despite the favourable structural changes.

4 Relative mobility chances

So far, we have examined how far parents passed on their more favourable and less favourable social position based on absolute indicators. In the following, we seek to explore, regardless of structural changes, how strong the association is between the social position of parents and their children in the lower and upper parts of society, and how it has changed over the past twenty years. We therefore examine the relative chances of a disadvantaged as well as a privileged social situation being passed on from one generation to the next, and whether this chance has changed over time.

The effect of origin was examined using hierarchical logistic regression models for each of the key mobility destinations on the complete database. Thus, we examined independently how the social position of parents explains whether someone receives a higher

[10] The same trend emerges even if only primary education is taken into account in the case of respondents. See Table A3 in the Appendix in this regard.

education degree, or reaches a level of education lower than a high school diploma. In order to find out how the effect of origin changed in the lower and upper segments of society in Hungary, we also included the interaction of time (i.e., period and origin) into our models. The regression models were constructed in two steps in each case. In the first step, the variables of origin – i.e., parents' educational attainment, period variables, and the main socio-demographic background variables (the respondents' gender, age, household size and type of place of residence) – were included in the analysis. In the second step, our models were extended with the interaction of the origin and period. The interaction of the origin categories and the periods is relevant to our study because they can provide insight into how the relative mobility chances of the children of parents with different qualifications evolved from one period to another. The results of the models constructed in relation to completing higher education are summarized in Table 1, and the results of the models constructed for primary or lower secondary education are summarized in Table 2.

Based on the results of the models for obtaining tertiary education, we can first conclude that both the variables of origin and period have a significant independent effect on the respondents' educational attainment (and this does not change when the interactions are included in the model either). In the case of the educational level of parents, understandably, the coefficients are negative, which indicates that children of parents with a lower-level education have less chance of getting a diploma. In the case of the period, however, the direction of the relationship is positive, which means that in general the chance of completing tertiary education increased in later periods compared to the first one.

In the following, we examine how the chances of children of parents with different qualifications indicating high educational attainment have changed over time based on the interaction terms. In the case of upper-secondary education background, none of the interactions were significant – in this case, therefore, no substantive change can be observed. There are, however, significant changes in the case of children of parents with lower secondary and primary education. In both cases, the coefficients are negative, indicating that their relative chance of obtaining a university diploma deteriorated compared to the descendants of tertiary-educated parents. In the case of children with a lower secondary education background, compared to the early 2000s it was more difficult to obtain a degree in each of the following periods. In the case of descendants of primary education parents, however, in the second half of the 2010s their relative chances narrowed greatly.

Mobility processes that took place in the lower segment of society followed similar dynamics. According to the regression models for low educational attainment, the independent effect of family background and period variables is significant, as in the previous case. On the one hand, this means that the higher the educational level of the parents, the smaller the chance that their children will have a low level of education. Thus, the relative mobility chances of individuals from different social backgrounds are unequal and the degree of inequality is even higher in the case of low educational attainment than in the case of obtaining a degree. On the other hand, these results again indicate that as a result of educational expansion the chances of someone obtaining a low level of education decreased by the end of the 2010s compared to the beginning of the 2000s.

Table 1 Hierarchical logistic regression models of tertiary education attainment

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Coef.	**S.E.**	**z**	**Coef.**	**S.E.**	**z**
Education level of parents (Ref: Tertiary education)						
Upper and post-secondary education	−1.85***	0.08	−21.75	−1.87***	0.15	−12.21
Lower secondary education	−2.89***	0.12	−23.38	−2.31***	0.19	−12.13
Primary education	−3.46***	0.17	−19.64	−3.11***	0.25	−12.38
Period (ref: 2002–2006)						
2008–2010	0.36***	0.09	3.89	0.46***	0.19	2.31
2012–2014	0.40***	0.09	4.45	0.55***	0.21	2.58
2016–2018	0.53***	0.09	5.45	0.68***	0.18	3.74
Control variables	Yes	Yes				
Interactions						
2008–2010 x Upper and post-secondary education				0.07	0.23	0.31
2012–2014 x Upper and post-secondary education				0.16	0.25	0.65
2016–2018 x Upper and post-secondary education				−0.17	0.21	−0.78
2008–2010 x Lower secondary education				−0.90**	0.32	−2.77
2012–2014 x Lower secondary education				−0.74**	0.33	−2.23
2014–2018 x Lower secondary education				−1.07***	0.33	−3.18
2008–2010 x Primary education				−0.31	0.40	−0.79
2012–2014 x Primary education				−0.61	0.54	−1.14
2016–2018 x Primary education				−1.64**	0.77	−2.14
Constant	0.27	0.19	1.42	0.16	0.19	19.77
Number of obs.	8,349	8,349				
Log pseudolikelihood	−3491.11	−3475.65				
Wald chi^2	941.12	1001.24				
Pseudo R^2	0.170	0.174				

Source: Authors' calculation based on ESS

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2 Hierarchical logistic regression models of primary or lower secondary education

	Model 3			Model 4		
	Coef.	**S.E.**	**z**	**Coef.**	**S.E.**	**z**
Education level of parents (Ref: Primary education)						
Tertiary education	−4.16***	0.28	−14.60	−3.72***	0.40	−9.30
Upper and post-secondary education	−2.76***	0.11	−24.52	−2.25***	0.15	−14.51
Lower secondary education	−1.10***	0.09	−11.77	−1.20***	0.12	−8.21
Period (ref: 2002–2006)						
2008–2010	0.09	0.09	−0.26	0.22	0.16	1.31
2012–2014	−0.31*	0.10	−1.70	−0.47*	0.21	−1.58
2016–2018	−0.45**	0.10	−2.26	−0.97***	0.23	−3.09
Control variables	Yes	Yes				
Interactions (Education level of parents x Period)						
Tertiary education x 2008–2010				−0.28	0.65	−0.43
Tertiary education x 2012–2014				−1.88**	1.09	−1.72
Tertiary education x 2016–2018				−1.35**	0.73	−1.84
Upper and post-secondary education x 2008–2010				−0.30	0.23	−1.30
Upper and post-secondary education x 2012–2014				−1.21***	0.30	−4.03
Upper and post-secondary education x 2016–2018				−1.71***	0.31	−5.51
Lower secondary education x 2008–2010				−0.38*	0.22	−1.18
Lower secondary education x 2012–2014				−0.20	0.26	−0.78
Lower secondary education x 2016–2018				−0.17	0.28	−0.60
Constant	0.29	0.26	1.12	0.15	0.27	0.58
Number of obs.	8,349	8,349				
Log pseudolikelihood	−3298.25	−3254.16				
Wald chi^2	1004.5	1024.36				
Pseudo R^2	0.227	0.237				

Source: Authors' calculation based on ESS
Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Turning to the analysis of the interaction terms, however, we again see that against the background of the general trends the relative chances of those with different family backgrounds developed differently. For children whose parents have a lower secondary education, almost none of the interaction terms are significant. Thus, the relative chances of these children obtaining a low level of education did not change between the early 2000s and the second half of the 2000s. However, the situation is different for those of more favourable origin. The already small chance of the children of parents with a degree or a secondary-school diploma not receiving at least a secondary-school diploma decreased significantly in the 2010s compared to the previous decade.

Two main conclusions can be drawn from the examination of the relative mobility chances of achieving high or low educational levels. On the one hand, the structural changes that took place in the period that are reflected in an upward shift in the distribution of educational categories have had an overall positive effect on the relative mobility chances of individuals. Compared to the early 2000s, the overall chance of individuals obtaining a tertiary education increased by the second half of the 2010s. Additionally, the chance of someone getting at most a low level of education decreased during the period under review. On the other hand, however, this overall increase in probability was not accompanied by a reduction in the inequality of opportunities of those with different social backgrounds. Actually, the opposite is the case for both high and low educational levels. By the second half of the 2010s, inequality of the relative mobility chances of children with a more favourable and less favourable family background increased compared to the early 2000s.

5 Conclusions

According to the latest studies of social mobility in Hungary, both absolute and relative mobility have decreased, and in our paper we sought to explain how these processes manifested at different levels of social structure. Is the decrease in mobility typically due to the fact that parents in a more favourable position can pass on their privileged social position successfully, or rather to the fact that those starting from the bottom are less and less able to overcome their disadvantages? To what extent have these processes occurred simultaneously in the last almost twenty years, and to what extent have they taken place independently? In our study we try to answer these questions by examining the mobility paths leading to higher and lower education attainment. Of course, these examinations cannot provide an exhaustive account of the factors that promote or hinder social mobility, nor of the specific strategies pursued by individuals with more or less favourable family backgrounds. More detailed quantitative and qualitative studies may answer these questions. Our study aims to provide a rough picture of the main structural processes that are taking place in the lower and upper parts of society.

According to our results, in the almost twenty-year period under review, tertiary-educated parents have managed to pass on their more favourable social position with increasing success – i.e., an increasing proportion of their children have also obtained university degrees. However, it is important to point out that the proportion of tertiary educated themselves has increased during this period, which has allowed those from disadvantaged backgrounds to join these groups in increasing numbers. Accordingly, the relative chance of obtaining a tertiary education increased overall during the period under review. However,

the overall increase in the chance of reaching a high educational level was not accompanied by a reduction in the inequality of opportunity. On the contrary, the already unequal opportunities of children with different social background became even more unequal during the period under review. As a result, by the second half of the 2010s the relative chances of children of parents with a lower-level education had deteriorated compared to the chances of children with a tertiary-education family background.

A slightly different picture emerges in terms of the changes taking place in the lower part of society. By the end of the 2000s, the proportion of those from low-educated families with low levels of education themselves had fallen, but after 2010 began to rise again in the following periods. Thus, while the proportion of low-educated immobile decreased in the 2000s, it started to increase in the 2010s despite the favourable structural changes. In terms of the relative chances of obtaining a low level of education, the processes are very similar to those we saw in the case of high educational attainment. The relative chances of individuals with a different social background obtaining a low level of education are very unequal. They are more unequal than in the case of those with a high educational attainment. However, compared to the beginning of the 2000s, these otherwise sharp inequalities had become even greater by the second half of the 2010s.

Overall, therefore, the decline in absolute and relative mobility in Hungary that has been indicated by comprehensive mobility surveys can be detected in both the lower and upper segments of society. However, the processes taking place at the two poles have not followed the same dynamics over the past nearly two decades. In the 2000s, educational expansion fuelled immobility in the upper segment of society, but also created mobility channels for those with an unfavourable social background. In contrast, in the 2010s the proportion of the immobile increased among both the high and low educated. In terms of relative mobility, quite similar processes have taken place in the upper and lower segments of society: the already unequal relative mobility chances of those with a different family background became even more unequal during the nearly twenty years under study.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by the National Research Development and Innovation Office (Grant No. FK131997) and the MTA Cooperation of Excellences Mobility Research Centre project.

References

Andorka, R. (1982). A *társadalmi mobilitás változásai Magyarországon [Changes in social mobility in Hungary]*. Gondolat.

Andorka, R., Bukodi, E. & Harcsa, I. (1994). Társadalmi mobilitás, 1992 [Social mobility, 1992]. In R. Andorka, T. Kolosi & Gy. Vukovich (Eds.), *Társadalmi Riport 1994 [Social Report 1994]* (pp. 293–310). Tárki.

Balogh, K., Hajdu, G., Huszár, Á., Kristóf, L. & Megyesi, G. B. (2019). *Származás és integráció a mai magyar társadalomban [Origin and integration in Hungarian society today]*. MTA TK.

Breen, R. (2010). Social Mobility and Equality of Opportunity. *The Economic and Social Review, 41*(4), 413–428.

Bukodi, E. (2002). Társadalmi mobilitás Magyarországon, 1983–2000 [Social mobility in Hungary, 1983–2000]. In T. Kolosi, I. Gy. Tóth & Gy. Vukovich (Eds.), *Társadalmi Riport 2002 [Social Report 2002]* (pp. 193–206). Tárki.

Bukodi, E. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (2010). Market versus Meritocracy: Hungary as a Critical Case. *European Sociological Review, 26*(6), 655–674. http://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcp043

Bukodi, E. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (2019). *Social mobility and education in Britain: Research, Politics and Policy.* Cambridge University Press.

Bukodi, E. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (2021). 'Primary' Factors in Intergenerational Class Mobility in Europe: Results from the Application of a Topological Model. *European Sociological Review, 37*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcaa028

Bukodi, E. & Paskov, M. (2020). Intergenerational Class Mobility among Men and Women in Europe. Gender differences or Gender Similarities? *European Sociological Review, 36*(4), 495–512. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcaa001

Bukodi, E., Paskov, M. & Nolan, B. (2017). *Intergenerational Class Mobility in Europe: A New Account and an Old Story.* INET Oxford Working Papers 2017-03.

Bukodi, E., Paskov, M. & Nolan, B. (2019). Intergenerational Class Mobility in Europe: A new account. *Social Forces, 98*(3), 941–972, https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soz026

Chan, T. W. (2018). Social mobility and the well-being of individuals. *The British Journal of Sociology, 69*(1), 183–206. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12285

Dés, F. (2022). Costs of social mobility in the context of intimate partner relationships. "It is really easy to be angry at someone who is in front of me and not at the system, which produces the inequalities between us". *Szociológiai Szemle, 31*(3), 51–73. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2021.3.3

Durst, J. & Nyírő, Zs. (2022). Introduction. Cultural migrants? The consequences of educational mobility and changing social class among first-in-family graduates in Hungary. *Szociológiai Szemle, 31*(3), 4–20. https://doi.org/10.51624/SzocSzemle.2021.3.1

Éber, M. Á. (2020). *A csepp. A félperifériás magyar társadalom osztályszerkezete [The drop: Class structure of semi-peripheric society in Hungary].* Napvilág.

Eurofound (2017). *Social mobility in the EU.* European Union.

Gábos, A. & Szívós, P. (2008). A gyermekkori háttér és az iskolázottság [Childhood background and education]. In T. Kolosi & I. Gy. Tóth (Eds.), *Újratervezés. Életutak és alkalmazkodás a rendszerváltás évtizedeiben: Kutatási jelentés a „Háztartások Életút Vizsgálata" (HÉV) alapján [Replanning. Ways of life and accommodation during the regime change: Research report of the Households Life Course Survey]* (pp. 121–134). Tárki.

Goldthorpe, J. H. (2013). Understanding – and Misunderstanding – Social Mobility in Britain: The Entry of the Economists, the Confusion of Politicians and the Limits of Educational Policy. *Journal of Social Policy, 42*(3), 431–450. https://doi.org/10.1017/S004727941300024X

Hajdu, G., Huszár, Á. & Kristóf, L. (2019). Mobilitás és társadalmi integráció [Mobility and social integration]. *socio.hu, 9*(4), 42–61. https://doi.org/10.18030/socio.hu.2019.4.42

Harcsa, I. & Kulcsár, R. (1986). *Társadalmi mobilitás és presztízs. Társadalomstatisztikai Közlemények [Social mobility and prestige: Papers on social statistics].* Központi Statisztikai Hivatal.

Havasi, É. (2002). Szegénység és társadalmi kirekesztettség a mai Magyarországon [Poverty and social exclusion in Hungary today]. *Szociológiai Szemle, 12*(4), 51–71.

Huszár, Á., Balogh, K. & Győri, Á. (2020). A társadalmi mobilitás egyenlőtlensége a nők és a férfiak között: Közeledés vagy támogatás? [Inequality of social mobility among women and men: Approximation or support?] In I. Kovách (Ed.), *Mobilitás* és *integráció a magyar társadalomban [Mobility and integration in Hungarian society]* (pp. 35–57). Argumentum.

Huszár, Á., Balogh K. & Győri, Á. (2022). Resistance to Change. Intergenerational Class Mobility in Hungary, 1973–2018. *Sociological Research Online,* online first, https://doi.org/10.1177/13607804221084727

Huszár, Á. & Berger, V. (2020). Az új középosztály [The new middle class]. *Politikatudományi Szemle, 29*(2), 71–99. https://doi.org/10.30718/POLTUD.HU.2020.2.71

Huszár, Á. & Záhonyi, M. (2018). *A foglalkozási szerkezet változása* és *jellemzői Magyarországon [Changes and characteristics of professional structure in Hungary].* Budapest: KSH. https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/mikrocenzus2016/mikrocenzus_2016_9.pdf

Jackson, M. & Evans, G. (2017). Rebuilding Walls: Market Transition and Social Mobility in the Post-Socialist Societies of Europe. *Sociological Science, 4,* 54–79. https://doi.org/10.15195/v4.a3

Kapitány, B. & Spéder, Zs. (2004). *Szegénység* és *depriváció. Társadalomszerkezeti* összefüggések *nyomában [Poverty and deprivation: In search of structural connections].* Központi Statisztikai Hivatal & Népességtudományi Kutatóintézet.

Kertesi, G. & Kézdi, G. (2005). Foglalkoztatási válság gyermekei [Children of the employment crisis]. In G. Kertesi (Ed.) *A társadalom peremén. Romák a munkaerőpiacon* és *az iskolában [On the fringe of society: The Roma on the labour market and in school]* (pp. 247–312). Osiris.

KSH (2017). *Iskolázottsági adatok [Education data].* Budapest: KSH. https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/mikrocenzus2016/mikrocenzus_2016_4.pdf

Ladányi, J. & Szelényi, I. (2004). *A kirekesztettség változó formái. Közép-* és *délkelet-európai romák történeti* és összehasonlító *szociológiai vizsgálata [Changing forms of exclusion: A historical and comparative sociological survey of Roma in Central and South-Eastern Europe].* Napvilág.

Luijkx, R., Róbert, P., Graaf, P. M. & Ganzeboom, H. B. G. (2002). Changes in status attainment in Hungary between 1910 and 1989. *European Societies, 4*(1), 107–140. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616690220131017

Marshall, G., Swift, A. & Roberts, S. (1997). *Against the Odds? Social Class and Social Justice in Industrial Societies.* Clarendon Press.

Németh, R. (2006). A társadalmi mobilitás változásai Magyarországon a rendszerváltás folyamán [Changes in social mobility in Hungary during the regime change]. *Szociológiai Szemle, 16*(4), 19–35.

OECD (2018). *A Broken Social Elevator? How to Promote Social Mobility.* OECD.

Róbert, P. (2018). Intergenerációs iskolai mobilitás az európai országokban a válság előtt és után [Intergenerational school mobility in European countries before and during the crisis]. In T. Kolosi & I. Gy. Tóth (Eds.), *Társadalmi Riport 2018 [Social Report 2018]* (pp. 64–80). Tárki.

Róbert, P. & Bukodi, E. (2004). Changes in intergenerational class mobility in Hungary, 1973–2000. In R. Breen (Ed.), *Social Mobility in Europe* (pp. 287–315). Oxford University Press.

Rose, D. & Harrison, E. (2010). *Social Class in Europe*: *An introduction to the European Socio-economic Classification.* Routledge.

Spéder, Zs. (2002). *A szegénység változó arcai. Tények* és értelmezések *[The changing faces of poverty: Facts and interpretations].* Andorka Rudolf Társadalomtudományi Társaság & Századvég.

Szalai, J. (2020). *A nem polgárosuló középosztály. Az* "államfüggőség" *társadalmi konfliktusai a jelenkori Magyarországon [The non-embourgeoised middle class: Social conflicts of 'state dependence' in Hungary today].* Balassi.

Tóth, I. Gy. (2016a). Is Hungary still in search of its middle class? In D. Vaughan-Whitehead (Ed.), *Europe's Disappearing Middle Class? Evidence from the World of Work* (pp. 279–322). Edward Elgar & ILO.

Tóth I. Gy. (2016b). Középosztály(ok) Magyarországon és Európában [Middle class(es) in Hungary and Europe]. In T. Kolosi & I. Gy. Tóth (Eds.), *Társadalmi Riport [Social Report]* (pp. 75–97). Tárki.

Tóth I. Gy. & Szelényi I. (2019). The upper middle class: a new aristocracy? In I. Gy. Tóth (Ed.), *Hungarian Social Report 2019* (pp. 101–119). Tárki.

Appendix

Table A1 Distribution of parents by educational attainment (%)

	2002–2006	2008–2010	2012–2014	2016–2018
Primary education	18	13	10	6
Lower secondary education	24	24	25	18
Upper and post-secondary education	45	47	51	60
Tertiary education	14	15	14	16
Total	100	100	100	100
N	3169	2018	1287	1998

Source: Authors' calculation based on ESS

Table A2 Distribution of respondents by educational attainment (%)

	2002–2006	2008–2010	2012–2014	2016–2018
Primary education	3	2	2	1
Lower secondary education	23	18	16	14
Upper and post-secondary education	59	61	59	60
Tertiary education	16	19	24	25
Total	100	100	100	100
N	3206	2036	2388	2080

Source: Authors' calculation based on ESS

Table A3 Educational level of respondents by educational level of parents (%)

	Primary education	Lower secondary education	Upper and post-secondary education	Tertiary education	Total	N
2002–2006						
Primary education	9	51	36	4	100	553
Lower secondary education	2	30	59	9	100	739
Upper and post-secondary education	0	13	73	14	100	1399

Table A3 (Continued)

	Primary education	**Lower secondary education**	**Upper and post-secondary education**	**Tertiary education**	**Total**	**N**
Tertiary education	0	3	46	51	100	454
Total	2	22	59	16	100	3145
2008–2010						
Primary education	9	46	40	5	100	265
Lower secondary education	2	31	62	6	100	494
Upper and post-secondary education	1	8	72	19	100	955
Tertiary education	0	4	43	53	100	304
Total	2	18	61	19	100	2018
2012–2014						
Primary education	12	55	29	4	100	129
Lower secondary education	1	33	59	7	100	317
Upper and post-secondary education	0	6	70	23	100	659
Tertiary education	0	1	40	59	100	179
Total	1	17	59	22	100	1284
2016–2018						
Primary education	15	59	23	2	100	111
Lower secondary education	2	40	51	6	100	367
Upper and post-secondary education	0	5	74	21	100	1197
Tertiary education	0	2	32	66	100	322
Total	1	14	60	24	100	1997

Source: Authors' calculation based on ESS

Péter Róbert,* Nikolett Geszler** & Beáta Nagy***

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 156–174.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.837
https://intersections.tk.hu

Parental influence on subjective child well-being in Hungary

* [Robert.Peter@tk.hu] (Centre for Social Sciences & TÁRKI Social Research Institute)
** [nikolettgeszler@gmail.com] (Corvinus University of Budapest)
*** [beata.nagy@uni-corvinus.hu] (Corvinus University of Budapest)

Abstract

The paper extends the scope of social mobility research to family processes and family cohesion. The analysis aims to detect how various objective and subjective parental features influence subjective well-being (SWB) of adolescents in a dataset of 852 Hungarian families with 12–16-year-old children. SWB was operationalized by 14 comparable items on satisfaction with different domains of life, for both generations. The dependent variable is an aggregate SWB index, based on adolescents' evaluations and OLS regression method is applied to uncover the association between parental well-being and children's satisfaction. For a better understanding of this intergenerational process, we also control for parental education and material situation. The statistical model reflects gender, age and regional variation, as well.

Results reveal a strong relationship between children's and parents' subjective well-being. Parental satisfaction with life and family- and work relations particularly affect offspring's aggregate well-being. Material situation in the family matters more than parental education in the whole process. There is more variation in the results by the age of the adolescents than by gender. Findings reflect the importance of familial aspects and call attention to the relevance of soft, less intentional forms of status transmission.

Keywords: social mobility; subjective well-being; satisfaction; intergenerational inheritance; family relations

1 Introduction

Research on intergenerational mobility has conceptual and empirical traditions that have lasted for a long time. The classic approach of mobility studies focuses on the comparison of parental occupation and offspring's occupation and define immobility vs. mobility on the grounds of whether occupation in the two generations is the same or differs (Sorokin, 1927). However, the topic of occupational mobility has extended rapidly, taking various components of offspring's social status into account and investigating the influence of parental background on further status attributes. Two aspects of inequalities are particularly relevant for intergenerational mobility research: education and income.

Education is a major driving force of social (im)mobility in terms of both human capital investment (Becker, 1964) and the reproduction of inequalities (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Growing up in a family with higher educated parents is an advantage; higher level of parental schooling improves parental care of children in terms of quantity (time, money) and quality (efficiency, effectiveness). Studies on income mobility (Corak, 2004; Bowles et al., 2005) or on transmission of wealth (Charles & Hurst, 2003; Pfeffer & Killewald, 2015) made a major step towards softer components of intergenerational transmission of inequalities, when taking into account cognitive and non-cognitive abilities, personal traits like aspiration or motivation, habits, norms or values (Sewell & Shah, 1967; Bowles et al., 2001; Heckman & Vytlacil, 2001).

Robert Mare (2011) makes a proposal that multidimensionality of inequalities should be more strongly emphasised, also in a multigenerational sense, otherwise the degree of social mobility will be overestimated in the society. While multigenerational analysis of inheritance is not easy, among others from the perspective of data collection, going beyond the traditional (occupational and educational) dimensions of intergenerational mobility seems to be crucial. Children frequently have higher levels of schooling and work in higher occupational positions compared to their parents. This is due to structural developments that generate social mobility in the society. At the same time, children walk in the footsteps of their ancestors in several respects like habitus, tastes, attitudes, temperament, handling of problems, and intergenerational continuity becomes more visible if a larger variety of status attributes and behavioural features is investigated.

Consequently, research on intergenerational transmission of (dis)advantages tends to be a broader topic in social sciences than ever before and covers an increasingly large variety of domains (D'Addio, 2007). Our paper intends to contribute to this literature by analysing the intergenerational association for satisfaction with various aspects of life in Hungary. More precisely, current knowledge on adolescents' well-being in Hungary lacks the intergenerational perspective; the association between parents' and their children's satisfaction has hardly been investigated using Hungarian data. A particular added value of our paper is that we can use comparable satisfaction questions directly from children and their parents, whereas the data on parents is regularly retrospective, coming from the (then grown-up) child, in most cases of traditional mobility analysis. This rich set of comparable satisfaction items will allow us to examine how various domains of parental subjective well-being are associated with adolescents' well-being. The originality of our approach lies in the comparison how relational and material aspects contribute to the intergenerational correlation of subjective well-being. In addition to parental subjective well-being, all other information, such as educational attainment and financial situation, comes directly from parents, too. We also intend to investigate the role of educational and material background in the intergenerational association of subjective well-being.

The next section of the paper reviews previous studies on the topic, internationally and in Hungary. Then we introduce our data and the methods applied. Findings include how parental aggregate well-being as well as different domains of parental well-being influence adolescents' aggregate well-being. The paper ends with the discussion of the results in policy context and further research directions are also recommended.

2 Overview of previous research

The aim of this section is twofold. On the one hand, we put the topic of the analysis into a broader perspective regarding both conceptual framework and previous empirical studies. On the other hand, we place the analysis into context for the Hungarian mobility studies.

2.1 Intergenerational transmission of well-being

Pfeffer and Schoeni (2014) make an explicit suggestion to investigate the intergenerational correlations of well-being. They distinguish the economic and non-economic dimensions of well-being and the latter one is relevant for our study, namely transmission of personality traits, values, norms, attitudes, subjective evaluations and satisfaction from the parents to the offspring. These – partly psychological – structures and processes seem to be relevant issues in the literature on intergenerational inheritance of (dis)advantages (Loehlin, 2005; Lucas, 2008). Along these lines, Headey et al. (2012) develop a conceptual model on intergenerational transmission of subjective well-being. The model assumes a causal link from transmission of personality traits to that of values, to behavioural choices and, finally, to satisfaction with life. This model is tested on German socio-economic panel data (SOEP) and the paper finds a convincing correlation between parents' and offspring's life satisfaction.

2.2 Child well-being and parental well-being

In principle, it is worth distinguishing two forms of intergenerational transmission: the intended and the unintended. The intended parental effect on children, can be described by the well-known phrase 'investment into children' (Haveman & Wolfe, 1994). The notion involves various forms of resources (time, money, culture, social contacts) parents use to ensure either the inheritance of their advantage to their offspring or to foster (further) upward mobility for them. Parents are aware of applying these means and children are mostly aware of the advantages they enjoy, as well. At the same time, childhood investment is a much broader phenomenon as it contains a large variety of parental activities, behaviour and practices of non-material, non-cognitive but psychological kind. These procedures are frequently unintended and unnoticed though they have a long-lasting effect on children's future behaviour, customs, norms and practices in their everyday – working and social – life and contribute to the intergenerational transmission of advantages or to upward mobility in the society. Exploring cross-cultural specificities in addition to the mere fact of value transmission is also crucial. Results by Albert et al. (2009) showed that the cultural context does not facilitate or hinder the transmission of values, but rather influences the content.

There are various examinations targeting school-aged children and adolescents and investigating their well-being from different perspectives, in line with the literature on the multidimensional character of child well-being with mental, psychological, physical and social dimensions (Pollard & Lee, 2003; Amerijckx & Humblet, 2014). Questions on subjective well-being, happiness or life satisfaction are part of the Health Behaviour in School-aged

Children (HBSC) or Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) surveys (OECD, 2019; Inchley et al., 2020). There is even a particular project, the Children's Worlds, focusing on 8-, 10- and 12-year-old children's subjective well-being on various fields like satisfaction with family relations, home environment, school, teachers, schoolmates, friendship connections, material conditions, local environment and neighbourhood (Rees et al., 2020).

Previous research on intergenerational inheritance of subjective well-being reveals higher levels for children than for parents but still a high degree of correlation between parents' and children's feelings in the same family (Winkelmann, 2005). It makes a difference whether subjective well-being is approached as an aggregate measure, or the various concrete components of well-being are studied. In an analysis on Spanish families by Casas et al. (2012), adolescents reported higher levels of well-being for most of the life domains compared to their parents and inheritance was the strongest for the summated index of subjective well-being. Clair (2012) found a persistent influence of parental life satisfaction on children's life satisfaction but one particular domain, relationship quality played a crucial role in explaining children's well-being. In another study, satisfaction with financial situation turned out to interrelate strongly for adolescents aged 16+ and their parents in the same household (Molina et al., 2011). On the Children's Worlds survey data, Rees (2017) investigated how family structure and family types affect children's subjective well-being. Results showed that not family type, rather family deprivation and family time explained children's subjective well-being, i.e. the quality of family relationships is more important than family structure.

2.3 The Hungarian context

Analysis of intergenerational mobility has long traditions in Hungary, in particular for occupational and educational mobility (Simkus & Andorka, 1982; Andorka, 1990). These studies described Hungary as a relatively 'open' society in the socialist era. According to more recent comparative analyses, however, social fluidity seems to be low in European comparison (Bukodi et al., 2019; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2021). The same holds for Hungary in terms of educational mobility (Róbert, 2019). High level of intergenerational immobility regarding 'hard' social status markers makes the analysis of association for softer social attributes between parents and children an even more relevant research issue as intergenerational persistence of attitudes, values may be even stronger within the family.

Information on child well-being in Hungary is available from international comparative studies, mentioned above. For example, satisfaction with life measured on a 0–10 point scale scores 7.6 for boys and 7.3 for girls and older pupils are less satisfied than younger ones, according to the HBSC survey data from 2018 (Németh & Várnai, 2019, p. 179). The Hungarian country report of the 3rd wave of the Children's World project (Róbert & Szabó, 2020) provides more details about child well-being in Hungary in several domains, like family life, school environment, home environment and neighbourhood, friendship relations, material circumstances. The two extremes of satisfaction are family relations (the most positive opinions) and the school environment (the most negative opinions). High satisfaction with family situation is reflected in issues such as safety at home or feeling cared about. Dissatisfaction with school and learning is an interesting result given that the data collection occurs in

schools for the Children's World project. Hungarian pupils seemed to be honest when they expressed criticism and dissatisfaction with their life as a student or with things they learn at school. At the same time, pupils were satisfied with their schoolmates and friends.

In a broader perspective on the Hungarian situation, the subjective well-being of the society is very low by international standards (Helliwell et al., 2020). Various international data sources (Eurobarometer, European Social Survey) also display the same difference. Local studies like Ivony (2017) find that old age, low levels of schooling, unemployment and bad health reduce subjective well-being the most. The significant role of bad health status is also confirmed by Molnár and Kapitány (2014).

In the context of and based on the literature review, the research questions of this paper are focusing on (1) the main features of how subjective well-being is transmitted from parents to their children in Hungary and (2) which components (cultural, relational, material) of subjective well-being are the most influential in this process. We assume, that intergenerational inheritance of subjective well-being is consistent with the general observations derived from the previous studies in three main aspects (hypothesis 1): (1a) adolescents' well-being is higher compared to their parents; (1b) boys are more satisfied than girls; (1c) older children are less satisfied than their younger counterparts. Furthermore, we are interested in the role of cultural vs. material aspects of parental background as well as in the role of those domains of parental well-being, which reflect to personal relations and to the material situation, in affecting adolescents' well-being. Along these lines, hypothesis 2 refers to an important role of satisfaction with relationships as a mechanism determining offspring's subjective well-being. Finally, hypothesis 3, on the other hand, says that the financial situation of parents as well as parental satisfaction with material conditions also contribute to establishing higher levels of subjective well-being for children in Hungary, where financial circumstances usually matter a lot. Thus, hypotheses 2 and 3 represent basically two distinct competing mechanisms for parental determinants of child well-being.

3 Data and measures

We employ data from a nationwide survey, applying F2F CAPI method in Hungary in 2017. The survey targeted families with 12-16-year-old adolescents and their parents, aiming to collect data about their experiences and perceptions of the time they spent together. The total sample consists of 1000 families with a combined database that includes responses from both adolescents and their parents. In families where more than one child belonged to the required age group, the interviewee was randomly selected according to the first letter of his/her name. During the data collection in the respondents' own home the interviewer addressed first the parent then the parental interview was followed by the interview with the child without the parent being present in the same room. Quota method was applied for sampling: at the household level the sample represents families with 12–16-year-old children by the seven main regions of Hungary and by type of settlement (Budapest, county centres, towns, villages). At the individual level the sample represents the target group by the age and gender of the child. A parental quota was also settled for interviewing at least 40 per cent of fathers. The current analysis contains only families with two parents (N=852). The reason for excluding single parent households, multigenerational households and families

where children were raised by their grandparents was primarily due to their low presence in the sample that does not represent the real frequency of these households within the target group. In order to avoid reaching biased conclusions in relation to the effect of family type, we decided to choose a more accurate sampling and limit our analysis on two-parent households. Biological parents and stepparents are not distinguished.

There are somewhat more girls (59 per cent) than boys (41 per cent) in the sample. More than one third (37 per cent) of the adolescents belong to the 12–13 age group, while 63 per cent of them are 14–16 years old. There is only one child in half of the families (50 per cent), there is a second child in about one-third of the families (37 per cent) and more siblings live with the parents in the rest of the families (13 per cent). About 16–17 per cent of mothers and fathers have a tertiary degree; the relative majority of the mothers have secondary level of schooling (42 per cent), while the relative majority of the fathers have vocational education (43 per cent). The families are typically dual-earner ones, both fathers and the majority of mothers are in the labour force.

The dependent variable and the main explanatory variables are based on 14 comparable items on satisfaction with different aspects of life, for adolescents and their parents; the battery has been developed by the research group. Respondents were asked to express their satisfaction on a 0-to-10-point rating scale (0 = fully unsatisfied, 10 = fully satisfied). Exactly similar wording was used for the items related to satisfaction with home, friends, family relations, neighbourhood, health conditions, amount of leisure time, life in general, future prospects; functionally equivalent wording was used for questions on relations with colleagues / classmates, relations with bosses / teachers, satisfaction with work / school stuff, satisfaction with income / pocket money, with material situation / things owned by the child.

In the light of the literature of similar studies cited above (Molina et al., 2011; Casas et al., 2012; Clair, 2012), we examine how an aggregate well-being index and the various domains of satisfaction interrelate for the two generations. Therefore, we constructed a total SWB index both for the parents and the adolescents, applying principal component analysis. These aggregate measures explain 56 per cent of the variation of the 14 items for the parents and 49 per cent for the children. The reliability tests resulted in Cronbach's alpha values of 0.939 and 0.918. We are aware that the elements of this aggregate index vary, some being more specific (home, family, friends, health, neighbourhood, leisure time), others more general (life in general, life so far, future prospects). Still, we believe that the aggregate index as dependent variable reflects the complex and multidimensional nature of adolescents' subjective well-being better than any possible more general item. Basically, we follow the approach that if we want to measure a quasi-latent phenomenon (subjective well-being), using multiple indicators reduces the measurement error that may be more likely to exist for a single item. This holds for the parental generation as well, but then the analysis goes beyond the aggregate index and examines the role of the various items in the intergenerational association of subjective well-being.

Regarding the control variables, gender is coded as 0 for girls and 1 for boys; age runs from 12 to 16; number of siblings is measured by dummies: lone child, one sibling, more siblings; parental education is also measured by dummies: primary level of schooling, low secondary (vocational training), high secondary level and tertiary level; material circumstances in the family reflect the opinion of the parent on the subject and the scale is transformed

into dummies: poor, medium or good subjective material circumstances; and place of residence describes type of settlement as well as the main regional units in Hungary. In order to avoid high multicollinearity with parental education, parental labour force status is omitted. We do not control for gender at the parental level as gender differences for parents are reflected in the data at the measurement level, when parental quota have been applied in the data collection.

4 Results

4.1 Bivariate intergenerational associations at the level of the various domains of subjective well-being

In this section, we reflect to two previous research findings from the literature. Figure 1 demonstrates that children report higher level of well-being than their parents in Hungary, as well. Satisfaction with the various domains was recorded on a 0-to-10-point scale and the difference of the means were calculated (mean score for child – mean score for parent) and displayed on Figure 1. Variation is substantial and seems to be – at least to some extent – reasonable but interesting results are also obtained in terms of the attitudes towards material vs. personal relations.

The highest absolute difference (above two points) appears for material situation / possessions, i.e. children tend to be satisfied with the things they possess even in those families where parents are less satisfied with their own material conditions. There is a difference about one and half points for the amount of leisure time, health conditions and future prospects. This outcome may reflect to the reality, namely that parents have more duties and – due to their age – a worse health situation or a worse outlook for the future. It is also important that satisfaction with some items is more similar, and these items relate to relations with other people. Parents are likewise as satisfied with colleagues, bosses and also with work as their children are satisfied with schoolmates, teachers and with school. Parental satisfaction scores only a bit lower than that of the offspring and this holds for the evaluation of family relations, too. It looks as if respondents in both generations have similar attitudes towards their personal connections.

Figure 2 displays the bivariate association between the dependent variable of the analysis, adolescents' SWB index and the main predictor variables, namely parental SWB index as well as the parental satisfaction for the 14 domains of subjective well-being. The two aggregate measures of subjective well-being show the strongest correlation: this is 0.48 in Hungary. The separate satisfaction domains correlate lower with adolescents' well-being but coefficients are close to .40 for many of them like neighbourhood, life in general, family relations, life so far, future prospects and home. Lower levels of correlation with child well-being, around 0.30, appear for satisfaction with work, health conditions, bosses, and leisure time. This picture is more mixed: some satisfaction items on relations (e.g. with family) correlate higher, while other satisfaction items on relations (with work or bosses) correlate lower with offspring's aggregate SWB index.

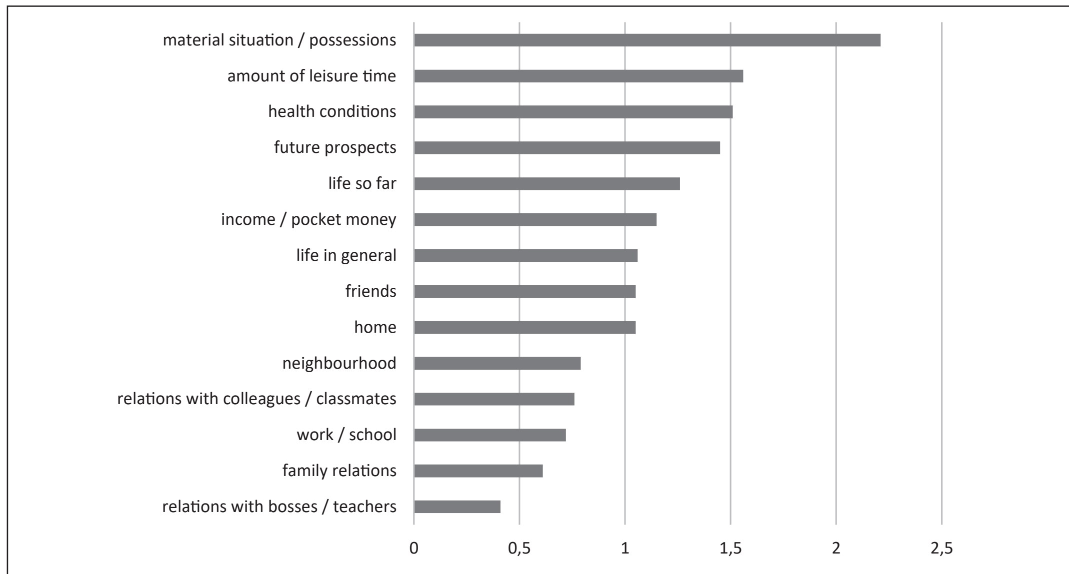

Figure 1 Absolute difference between adolescents' and their parents' well-being

Source: own calculations

Note: Satisfaction items for the various domains are measured on a 0-to-10 point scale; absolute difference is calculated as mean score for adolescent - mean score for parent.

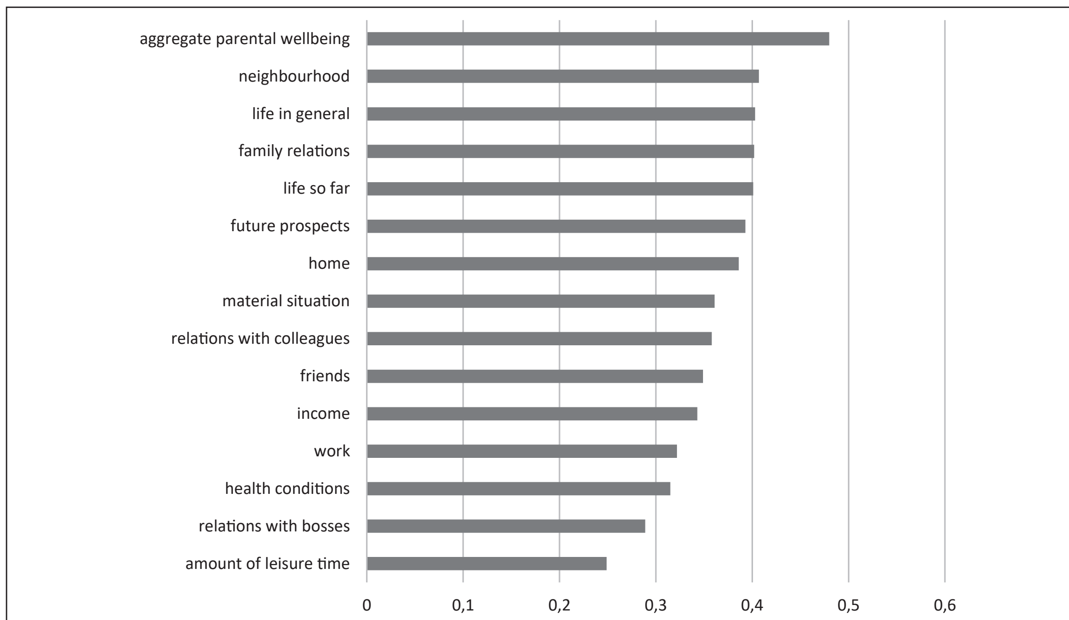

Figure 2 Pearson correlations between adolescents' aggregate well-being and parental well-being indicators

Source: own calculations

Note: Aggregate SWB indices for adolescents and their parents are derived from PCA (see text for details). Parental satisfaction items for the various domains are measured on a 0-to-10 scale.

4.2 Multivariate analysis of intergenerational transmission of subjective well-being

We separate two kinds of the process in generating higher aggregate SWB for children when analysing how adolescents' subjective well-being is associated with parental characteristics. First, we focus on the influence of the aggregate parental SWB index; second, we examine the role of the various domains of parental satisfaction. Since the aggregate SWB index for the offspring is a factor score, an interval measure, OLS regression technique is applied. In the statistical model, we control for the impact of some socio-demographic characteristics, in the way described above.

4.2.1 The effect of parental aggregate SWB index

In this model, the primary explanatory variable is the aggregate SWB index for parents. Although the OLS regression model detects linear effect of parental subjective well-being on children's subjective well-being, we also intend to test whether this effect is, indeed, linear or not. For this purpose, the quadratic term of the aggregate parental well-being measure is also included in the model.

We apply a reverse model building strategy for this analysis, namely Model 1 contains the demographic features of the offspring; Model 2 adds parental level of education, Model 3 adds parental evaluation of the financial situation of the family, and finally the inheritance of subjective well-being, the aggregate parental SWB index and its quadratic term are added to the equation. All four regression models are estimated by the enter method. The results are displayed in Table 1.

Model 1 reveals no significant gender differences; thus boys' higher subjective well-being is not confirmed by these data. The negative estimates for age, however, confirm that older adolescents are more critical with their subjective well-being than younger ones, in line with the literature. This result persists in the subsequent models, as well. Having a sibling improves subjective well-being in contrast to being a lone child. In a subsequent step, when material conditions are also included, having more siblings seems to be even slightly better but number of siblings does not matter anymore in the final model. Model 2 displays a significant difference for parental education: children's subjective well-being is higher if they live in families where the parent has tertiary level of schooling. Although, when the model takes into account the influence of the subjective material situation, the impact of parental tertiary education is eliminated and finally disappears in the last model. In fact, correlation between parental education and perceived material conditions is 0.427. In Model 3, the financial circumstances seem to take a lead and adolescents' well-being is markedly connected with the material conditions in the family: it has a strong negative influence if the circumstances are perceived bad and a strong positive influence if the situation is considered good by the parents. Finally, Model 4 introduces parental well-being and the transmission seems to be marked in Hungary: the explained variance increases from 15 to nearly 30 per cent. Moreover, the impact of the aggregate parental SWB index is not linear as the quadratic measure is also significant and the positive estimate suggests that a higher level of parental satisfaction contributes even further to adolescents' subjective well-being. Given the fact that parental education and perceived material situation correlate with the aggregate parental SWB index, (correlation is 0.224 and 0.369, respectively), it is not surprising that none of

these parental background indicators play a substantial role in Model 4. All of the estimates from models 1-4 are controlled for regional variation as displayed in the bottom lines of Table 1.

Table 1 Predicting adolescents' subjective well-being (unstandardised OLS regression estimates)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	1.789***	1.812***	1.520***	1.217***
Gender of the child (Boy=1)	−0.095	−0.079	−0.091	−0.068
Age of the child (12-16)	−0.132***	−0.132***	−0.124***	−0.102***
Has one sibling	0.168*	0.167*	0.118	0.087
Has more siblings	0.167	0.192	0.227+	0.133
Parental education: primary level		−0.230	−0.033	0.032
Parental education: low secondary level		−0.105	−0.019	0.027
Parental education: tertiary level		0.238*	0.190+	0.077
Good subjective material circumstances			0.287***	0.036
Poor subjective material circumstances			−0.412***	−0.128+
Parental SWB index				0.463***
Parental SWB index – quadratic				0.064**
Lives in Budapest	0.130	0.041	0.030	0.238+
Lives in big city	0.036	−0.045	−0.127	0.020
Lives in village	−0.036	−0.065	−0.119	−0.025
Region: Northern Hungary	0.137	0.167	0.197	0.265*
Region: Northern Great Plain	0.173	0.180	0.295*	0.132
Region: Southern Great Plain	−0.498***	−0.448***	−0.357*	−0.286*
Region: Central Transdanubia	0.215	0.235+	0.245+	0.276*
Region: Western Transdanubia	−0.089	−0.120	0.018	0.007
Region: Southern Transdanubia	0.211	0.234	0.292+	0.170
Explained variance (adj. R^2)	0.088	0.100	0.148	0.295

Significance: ***p<.0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05, +p<0.1.

Source: own calculations

Note: Dependent variable: Adolescents' aggregate SWB index. Regression estimates in Model 1–4 are based on the enter method. Reference categories for the predictor variables: Gender: girl; Siblings: lone child; Parental education: high secondary level; Subjective material situation: average subjective material circumstances; Region: family lives in small town and in Central Hungary.

4.2.2 The role of the satisfaction domains in the intergenerational transmission of subjective well-being

The aim of this part of the analysis is to provide a deeper insight into the process of intergenerational transmission of subjective well-being. Therefore, we re-estimated the statistical model predicting adolescents' aggregate SWB and replaced the aggregate parental SWB index by the 14 satisfaction items. The model building strategy is also modified; first the different satisfaction measures are included in the model by applying the stepwise method in order to handle the multicollinearity between the predictor variables. Parental satisfaction items related to the different domains of life correlate with each other, on the one hand and parental satisfaction also correlates with their demographic characteristics, on the other hand. The stepwise method aims to detect those parental satisfaction domains with the strongest significant impact on children's aggregate SWB. This model building design brings in the demographic variables in the last but one step by using the enter method. The results appear in Table 2.

Table 2 The role of the satisfaction domains in the intergeneration transmission of subjective well-being (unstandardised OLS regression estimates)

	Model 1a	**Model 1b**	**Model 1c**	**Model 1d**	**Model 1e**	**Model 2**
Intercept	−1.600***	−2.139***	−2.508***	−2.556***	−2.541***	−0.999**
Life in general	0.213***	0.165***	0.120***	0.091***	0.067**	0.060*
Relations with colleagues		0.115***	0.101***	0.082***	0.073***	0.067**
Family relations			0.099***	0.083***	0.079**	0.073**
Neighbourhood				0.072**	0.062**	0.055**
Future prospects					0.049*	0.036+
Gender of the child (Boy=1)						−0.080
Age of the child (12-16)						−0.100***
Has one sibling						0.104
Has more siblings						0.137
Parental education: primary level						−0.029
Parental education: low secondary level						0.020
Parental education: tertiary level						0.083
Good subjective material circumstances						0.065
Poor subjective material circumstances						−0.144*

Table 2 (Continued)

	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 1e	Model 2
Lives in Budapest						0.209+
Lives in big city						0.015
Lives in village						−0.019
Region: Northern Hungary						0.241+
Region: Northern Great Plain						0.091
Region: Southern Great Plain						−0.297*
Region: Central Transdanubia						0.272*
Region: Western Transdanubia						0.001
Region: Southern Transdanubia						0.106
Explained variance (adj. R^2)	0.177	0.212	0.230	0.241	0.246	0.304

Significance: ***p<.0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05, +p<0.1.

Source: own calculations

Note: Dependent variable: Adolescents' aggregate SWB index. Estimates in Model 1a – 1e come from stepwise regression procedure where all 14 satisfaction items were included. The procedure selects the variables one by one based on their level of significance. In this case 5 domains were selected, while the other 10 domains do not have a significant effect on the dependent variable. Model 2 adds all of the demographic variables in one step with the enter method. Reference categories for the predictor variables: Gender: girl; Siblings: lone child; Parental education: high secondary level; Subjective material situation: average subjective material circumstances; Region: family lives in small town and in Central Hungary.

The analysis reveals that five domains play particularly important roles in intergenerational inheritance of subjective well-being, namely life in general, future prospects, family relations, relations with colleagues and neighbourhood. Given that these domains interrelate, the effect sizes are getting weaker in Models 1a–1e as the next predictor is included in the equation, but the coefficients remain statistically significant. This result persists in Model 2 as well, when the estimation procedure is completed by all of the demographic variables. The analysis shows that none of the other satisfaction items plays an important role in influencing adolescents' subjective well-being – when their effects are controlled by the five more important satisfaction questions and the demographic variables. There is no new information to add to the demographic characteristics, apart from those outlined in the section above.

Based on the five satisfaction domains, adolescents' subjective well-being is explained by 24 per cent (Model 1e). Both analytical approaches to intergenerational transmission of well-being have yielded similar results: the explained variance is roughly 30 per cent in both models. Still, the second approach offers some additional details on the process of inheritance, with respect to the role of personal vs. material aspects. In order to shed more light on transmission of well-being, we investigated the correlations between those parental satisfaction items which seem to play key role in the process. These correlations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Correlation between selected parental satisfaction items (Pearson's correlation coefficients)

	Future prospects	Life in general	Material situation	Income	Home	Neigh-bourhood	Family relations	Relation with boss	Relation with colleagues
Life so far	0.678	0.767	0.680	0.615	0.631	0.572	0.540	0.433	0.450
Future prospects		0.653	0.699	0.683	0,588	0.546	0.474	0.487	0.482
Life in general			0.635	0.605	0.606	0.564	0.569	0.446	0.457
Material situation				0.827	0.619	0.550	0.398	0.432	0.429
Income					0.580	0.533	0.353	0.428	0.447
Home						0.623	0.513	0.439	0.478
Neighbourhood							0.473	0.428	0.468
Family relations								0.358	0.400
Relations with bosses									0.588

Source: own calculations

Note: Parental satisfaction items for the various domains are measured on a 0-to-10 scale. The full correlation matrix including all 14 satisfaction items is available from the authors upon request. All correlations are significant at p<.0.001.

Correlation coefficients range widely, the extremes are 0.827 and 0.767, on the one hand and 0.398 and 0.353, on the other hand. It is perhaps not a surprise that the correlation between satisfaction with 'income' and 'material situation' is 0.827, while the correlation between satisfaction with 'life in general' and 'life so far' is 0.767. It is more surprising that the lowest correlations appear between family relations and material situation and income (coefficients are 0.398 and 0.353, respectively). Parents in Hungary seem to be satisfied with their family relations, even if they are less satisfied with their material circumstances.

Correlations in Table 3, however, display an interesting cleavage for satisfaction with the material vs. personal relational aspects of life from another viewpoint, too. The satisfaction battery included three items at more general level (life in general, life so far, future prospects) and the domains related to material circumstances (material situation, income, home) have stronger correlations with these generalised items as compared to domains related to personal connections (family relations, relations with colleagues, relations with bosses). As highlighted in grey in Table 3, correlations between satisfaction items, related material issues and generalised items are mostly above 0.6. The closest values for personal relations show lower correlations: 0.569 (life in general and family relations) and 0.540 (life so far and family relations). This structure of parental well-being may have an impact on intergenerational transmission of subjective well-being.

5 Discussion and conclusion

The sociological approach of intergenerational inheritance focuses on occupational mobility, while economists examine transmission of material inequalities between generations. Another distinction in analysing intergenerational mobility lies between the focus on 'hard' fields like schooling, job, earnings and the study of 'soft' individual features like personal and behavioural characteristics. In contrast with earlier approaches, research on subjective or soft factors has gained ground over the last decades (D'Addio, 2007). Thus, this paper intended to contribute to the growing international literature of intergenerational transmission of subjective well-being.

Previous research revealed that young people's subjective well-being was in line with the international patterns for differences regarding gender and age (Németh & Várnai, 2019), while Hungarian adults are less satisfied with their lives in international comparison (Ivony, 2017; Helliwell et al., 2020). These results underline the importance of analysing intergenerational inheritance for subjective well-being in Hungary.

Based on the representative investigation carried out with parents and their teenage children in 2017, our results largely confirm the comprehensive hypothesis 1 that intergenerational transmission of subjective well-being takes place in Hungary in a similar way as earlier international research explored (Casas et al., 2012; Winkelmann, 2005). We found that satisfaction scored higher among Hungarian adolescents compared to their parents; subjective well-being drops as children get older; adolescents' overall well-being is more strongly related to the overall well-being of their parents than to any specific domain of parental satisfaction. The only exception is that the significant gender difference, i.e. higher subjective well-being for boys, was not confirmed by our multivariate model. In general, the results prove that intergenerational transmission of subjective well-being is an existing and highly relevant phenomenon in Hungary, too, mainly in line with the previous international literature on the topic.

A further research question referred to the influence of parental background in terms of its cultural versus material aspects. We found that tertiary level of parental education improves adolescents' subjective well-being. This is likely to occur due to a more attentive and a more efficiently caring home environment in these families. The importance of good family relationships was also underlined by earlier research scrutinizing the role of family structure in child well-being (Rees, 2017). Looking at the other component of the research issue, i.e. the financial aspects, the perceived parental material situation proved to influence child well-being more strongly than parental education. This finding is worth underlining, even if only a small negative effect of living under poor material circumstances persists in our final models (Table 1, Model 4 or Table 2, Model 2). In fact, Molina et al. (2011) also found that satisfaction with the financial situation contributes to the transmission of subjective well-being between parents and their children.

More details on the transmission of child well-being were uncovered by the analysis separating the domains of parental well-being, in line with hypotheses 2 and 3, which addressed the two mechanisms of how relational and material aspects could influence offspring's subjective well-being. The multivariate analysis in Table 2 reveals that parents' satisfaction with their personal relations (particularly with the family and their colleagues) plays an important role in influencing children's subjective well-being. Furthermore, the descriptive results also show that adolescents' and their parents' satisfaction with personal relations are closer to each other. We consider these results as a confirmation of hypothesis 2, derived from the previous work by Clair (2012), namely that personal relations represent a particular mechanism in the process of intergenerational transmission of subjective well-being.

We found no similar direct confirmation of hypothesis 3 on the importance of satisfaction with material situation, based partly on the work by Molina et al. (2011), partly on the fact that material conditions generally play an important role in Hungary. None of the parental satisfaction items related to material circumstances (income, material situation, home) turned out to improve adolescents' aggregate subjective well-being significantly. Instead, two out of the three generalised satisfaction items play an important role in affecting child well-being in Hungary. However, as the correlations between the parental satisfaction items in our last table reveal, generalised satisfaction and material aspects of satisfaction are closely related, which can be interpreted as an indirect influence of the material satisfaction on adolescents' subjective well-being. At first sight satisfaction with neighbourhood is more difficult to interpret. This satisfaction item, however, is strongly linked to satisfaction with home, and the latter domain can be regarded a material indicator in Hungary.

The relatively strong relationship between material and satisfaction with life and with future is probably not surprising in Hungary, where dissatisfaction with the material situation is strong. We consider it more important that the analysis explored a separate channel of social relationships (family relations, work relations) with a fairly remarkable influence on adolescents' subjective well-being. These personal relations typically belong to those 'soft' characteristics, we are looking for, and represent some unintended and unconscious forms of generating higher levels of subjective well-being for children. This result highlights the importance of investigating 'soft' factors and mechanisms in the process of intergenerational transmission of (dis)advantages.

We are aware that our article suffers from a number of shortcomings. For example, we assume that inheritance of personal traits from parent to child, like transmission of values,

norms, behavioural patterns, emotional reactions, contribute to the success of inheritance of other kind of advantages in more traditional mobility fields, like school choice, occupational decisions, or transmission of wealth. Another assumption is that the degree of intergenerational openness and mobility may be higher in the case of educational, occupational or financial inequalities, while inheritance from parent to child is stronger for 'soft' features, i.e. in terms of personal characteristics, decision making, problem solving, value choices or following various norms. None of these issues has been investigated in the current paper in a direct manner. Nevertheless, Hungary as a country case can be particularly interesting from the viewpoint of these assumptions outlined above because the low level of educational and class mobility may be related to deeper family rooted aspects, like those we tried to uncover in our analysis.

Traditional intergenerational mobility research on education and occupation is more straightforward in terms of causality and direction of the effect: parental education and occupation influence the schooling and the job of the offspring. When examining the intergenerational link between soft behavioural characteristics, the offspring's decisions and opinions may also reflect those of the parent. Therefore, causality is an issue that needs to be treated with caution.

Another undeniable limitation of the analysis lies in the data. Our results stem from cross-sectional data, while the international literature is mostly based on panel data, where parental information is collected at an earlier step, children are measured at a later step. In addition, our data did not allow us to take the variation in family composition into account. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy between the theoretical background and the empirical information we could employ. The conceptual scope of personality traits, values, norms and attitudes is much broader than the battery of 14 satisfaction items asked in the present survey. This empirical information is just a subset of the whole conceptual mechanism of 'soft' characteristics, being an effect of intergenerational mobility. Nevertheless, based on the data, we uncovered an important part of this mechanism, and this is a solid first step of research on Hungary.

We think that adolescents' well-being cannot be merely simplified to attaining a better social position in terms of occupation, class or income, but it also refers to the importance of achieving better psychological and emotional personal conditions. The success of this intention, i.e. the identification of factors that mediate a higher level of subjective well-being for the next generation, has important policy implications, too. For example, our findings might be relevant for policy decisions on family support, which is a distinguished topic on the policy agenda in Hungary, in terms of family cohesion, stability and other components of well-being.

We are aware that a large amount of empirical work is still required to understand the process in detail, how parental objective and subjective, intentional and unintended characteristics influence the outcomes of the offspring generation. Both qualitative and quantitative fieldwork could contribute to a better description of the course of investment into children with its diversified elements. Moreover, the ideal unit of further studies could be not selected persons but complete families with members representing both generations as data providers, potentially available for longitudinal research.

Acknowledgements

Péter Róbert was a Senior Core Fellow of Institute for Advanced Studies, Central European University, between October 2019 and June 2020 in the period when the first draft of this paper was prepared. The authors would also like to thank the Hungarian National Research Development and Innovation Office for funding of two related projects: 'Race against time', principal investigator: Beáta Nagy, Grant number: K120086; and 'Children in school: well-being and beyond', principal investigator: Péter Róbert, Grant number: NN125715

References

Albert, I., Trommsdorff, G. & Wisnubrata, L. (2009). Intergenerational transmission of values in different cultural contexts: A study in Germany and Indonesia. In G. Aikaterini & K. Mylonas (Eds.), *Quod Erat Demonstrandum: From Herodotus' ethnographic journeys to cross-cultural research* (pp. 221–230). Proceedings from the 18th International Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology. https://www.iaccp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/24_Albert.pdf

Amerijckx, G. & Humblet, P. (2014). Child Well-Being: What Does It Mean? *Children & Society, 28*(5), 404–415. https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12003

Andorka, R. (1990). Changes in Social Mobility in Hungary, 1930–1983. In M. Haller (Ed.), *Class Structure in Europe. New Findings from East–West Comparisons of Social Structure and Mobility* (pp. 198–232). M. E. Sharpe.

Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human Capital.* Columbia University Press.

Blau, P. M. & Duncan, O. D. (1967). *The American Occupational Structure.* John Wiley and Sons.

Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In R. Brown (Ed.), *Knowledge. Education and Social Change* (pp. 71–112). Tavistock.

Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J-C. (1977). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture.* Sage.

Bowles, S., Gintis, H. & Osborne Groves, M. (2001). The Determinants of Earnings: A Behavioural Approach. *Journal of Economic Literature, 39*(4), 1137–1176. https://doi.org/10.1257/jel.39.4.1137

Bowles, S., Gintis, H. & Osborne Groves, M. (Eds.) (2005). *Unequal Chances: Family Background and Economic Success.* Princeton University Press.

Bukodi, E., Paskov, N. & Nolan, B. (2019). Intergenerational Class Mobility in Europe: A New Account. *Social Forces, 98*(3), 941–972. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soz026

Bukodi, E. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (2021). 'Primary' Factors in Intergenerational Class Mobility in Europe: Results from the Application of a Topological Model, *European Sociological Review 37*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcaa028

Casas, F., Coenders, G., González, M., Malo, S., Bertran, I. & Figuer C. (2012). Testing the Relationship Between Parents' and Their Children's Subjective Well-Being. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 13*(6), 1031–1051. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-011-9305-3

Charles, K. K. & Hurst, E. (2003). The Correlation of Wealth Across Generations. *Journal of Political Economy, 111*(6), 1155–1182. https://doi.org/10.1086/378526

Clair, A. (2012). The Relationship Between Parent's Subjective Well-Being and the Life Satisfaction of Their Children in Britain. *Child Indicators Research*, *5*(4), 631–650. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-012-9139-5

Corak, M. (Ed.). (2004). *Generational Income Mobility in North America and Europe.* Cambridge University Press.

D'Addio, A. Ch. (2007). Intergenerational Transmission of Disadvantage: Mobility or Immobility across Generations? A Review of the Evidence for OCED Countries. *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 52.* https://doi.org/10.1787/217730505550

Erikson, R. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (1992). *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies.* Clarendon Press.

Ganzeboom, H. B. G., De Graaf, P. M. & Treiman, D. J. (1992). A standard international socio-economic index of occupational status, *Social Science Research, 21*(1), 1–56. https://doi.org/10.1016/0049-089X(92)90017-B

Haveman, R. H. & Wolfe, B. (1994). *Succeeding Generations: On the Effects of Investments in Children.* Russell Sage Foundation.

Headey, B., Muffels, R. & Wagner, G. G. (2014). Parents Transmit Happiness Along with Associated Values and Behaviors to Their Children: A Lifelong *Happiness Dividend? Social Indicators Research, 116*(3), 909–933. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-013-0326-7

Heckman, J. J. & Vytlacil, E. (2001). Identifying the role of cognitive ability in explaining the level of and change in the return to schooling. *Review of Economics and Statistics, 83*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1162/003465301750159993

Helliwell, J. F., Layard, R., Sachs,J. & De Neve, J-E. (Eds.) (2020). *World Happiness Report 2020.* Sustainable Development Solutions Network. https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2020/

Inchley, J., Currie, D., Budisavljevic, S., Torsheim, T., Jåstad, A., Cosma A. et al. (Eds.). (2020). *Spotlight on adolescent health and well-being. Findings from the 2017/2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey in Europe and Canada.* International report. Volume 1. Key findings. WHO Regional Office for Europe. https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332104

Ivony, É. (2017). Szubjektív életminőség és érzelmi jóllét Magyarországon a gazdasági válság előtt és azt követően, európai kitekintéssel [Subjective quality of life and emotional well-being in Hungary before and after the economic crisis, with a European outlook]. *Statisztikai Szemle, 95*(10), 997–1022. https://doi.org/10.20311/stat2017.10.hu0997

Loehlin, J. C. (2005). Resemblance in Personality and Attitudes between Parents and Their Children: Genetic and Environmental Contributions. In S. Bowles, H. Gintis & M. Osborne Groves (Eds.), *Unequal Chances: Family Background and Economic Success* (pp. 192–206). Princeton University Press.

Lucas, R. E. (2008). Personality and Subjective Well-Being. In M. Eid & R. J. Larsen (Eds.), *The Science of Subjective Well-Being* (pp. 171–194). Guilford Press.

Mare, R. M. (2011). A Multigenerational View of Inequality. *Demography, 48*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-011-0014-7

Molina, J. A., Navarro, M. & Walker, I. (2011). Intergenerational Well-Being Mobility in Europe. *Kyklos. 64*(2), 253–270. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6435.2011.00505.x

Molnár, G., & Kapitány, Zs. (2014). Miért elégedetlenek annyira a magyarok az életükkel? [Why are Hungarians so dissatisfied with life?] *Közgazdasági Szemle, 61*(6), 637–671.

Németh, Á. & Várnai, D. (Eds.) (2019). *Kamaszéletmód Magyarországon [Lifestyle of adolescents in Hungary].* L'Harmattan.

OECD (2019). *PISA 2018 Assessment and Analytical Framework.* OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/19963777

Pfeffer, F. T. & Schoeni, R. F. (2014). Intergenerational transmission of well-being. *Focus 31*(1), 39–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X21995868

Pfeffer, F. T. & Killewald, A. A. (2015). How Rigid Is the Wealth Structure and Why? Inter- and Multigenerational Associations in Family Wealth. *PSC Research Report No. 15–845.* https://www.psc.isr.umich.edu/pubs/pdf/rr15-845.pdf

Pollard, E. L. & Lee, P. D. (2003). Child Well-being: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Social Indicators Research, 61*(1), 59–78. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021284215801

Rees, G. (2017). Family structure and children's subjective well-being: A comparative analysis in eight European countries. *Enfance*, *1*(1), 13–35. https://doi.org/10.4074/S0013754517001033

Rees, G., Savahl, S., Lee, B. J. & Casas, F. (Eds.) (2020). *Children's views on their lives and well-being in 35 countries: A report on the Children's Worlds project, 2016–19.* Children's Worlds Project (ISCWeB). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65196-5

Róbert P. (2019). Intergenerational educational mobility in European societies before and after the crisis. In I. Gy. Tóth (Ed.), *Hungarian Social Report 2019.* (pp. 120–136). TÁRKI. https://tarki.hu/sites/default/files/2019-02/120_136_Robert.pdf

Róbert, P. & Szabó, L. (2020). *Children's World national report. Hungary.* Manuscript. https://isciweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Hungary-National-Report-Wave-3.pdf

Simkus, A. & Andorka, R. (1982). Inequalities in educational attainment in Hungary, 1923–1973. *American Sociological Review, 47*(6), 740–751. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095210

Sewell, W. H. & Shah, V. P. (1967). Socioeconomic Status, Intelligence, and the Attainment of Higher Education. *Sociology of Education, 40*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.2307/2112184

Sorokin, P. A. (1927). *Social Mobility.* The Free Press.

Winkelmann, R. (2005). Subjective well-being and the family: Results from an ordered probit model with multiple random effects. *Empirical Economics, 30*(3), 749–761. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00181-005-0255-7

Svetlana Mareeva,* Ekaterina Slobodenyuk** & Vasiliy Anikin***

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 175–196.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.782
https://intersections.tk.hu

Support for reducing inequality in the new Russia: Does social mobility matter?

* [smareeva@hse.ru] (HSE University, Moscow)
** [eslobodenyuk@hse.ru] (HSE University, Moscow)
*** [vanikin@hse.ru] (HSE University, Moscow)

Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of the interrelation between different types of social mobility and support for reducing income inequality in contemporary Russia. Drawing from the Russian subsets of the International Social Survey Programme's (ISSP) surveys, we estimate how this support is differentiated across experienced and expected subjective mobility. Official statistics and empirical survey data widely confirm that the large-scale socioeconomic changes that took place in Russia during the 2000s brought an increase in living standards for most population groups and a more-than-twofold reduction in poverty. However, according to the ISSP data, demand for the government to reduce income differences is at its highest level since 1992. More than 90 per cent of Russians unequivocally perceive income gaps in the country as too high (the same as in the late 1990s) and unfair. We test the effects of actual and expected mobility, showing that, in contrast to the literature, including earlier studies on Russia, past mobility and expected medium-term mobility do not have any significant effect on levels of support for reducing income differences, and only the effect of short-term expectations can be seen. We argue that the effect of social mobility in Russia is limited by a widespread consensus across the population that preexisting inequalities in Russia are too high and unfair – a viewpoint based mostly not on the specifics of individual situations, including experienced or expected mobility, but on shared subjective norms and beliefs about inequality and their contrast with existing reality.

Keywords: social mobility; income inequality; inequality perceptions; POUM hypothesis; Russia

1 Introduction

This paper discusses the impact of different types of social mobility on the population's support for reducing income inequality in modern Russian society.

Inequality remains a key challenge in socioeconomic development, both globally and in certain countries. Monetary aspects of inequality have been under the spotlight in recent years (Atkinson, 2015; Milanovic, 2016; Piketty, 2013; Stiglitz, 2012). However, it is increasingly

pointed out that inequality cannot be reduced to only income levels, as income gaps and wealth inequalities (Chauvel et al., 2021; Shin, 2020), non-monetary aspects of inequality (Grusky, 2011), and the population's subjective perceptions (Kuhn, 2011) are gaining more significance.

The topic of social mobility enriches the analysis of the inequality issue, since moving between social positions can mitigate or reinforce inequalities as well as affect the population's attitude towards them (Shorrocks, 1978; OECD, 2018). The relationship between social mobility on the one hand, and society's tolerance for inequalities and the demand for reducing them on the other, is conceptualized in the academic literature through the tunnel effect and the prospect of upward mobility (POUM) hypotheses.

These hypotheses have been tested repeatedly in the literature. Their relevance for Russia has also been partially examined (Ravallion & Lokshin, 2000). In the 1990s, Russia underwent a dramatic socioeconomic transformation that led to a sharp increase in inequality and mobility among the majority of the population. Empirical studies have verified that there was a correlation between social mobility and support for restricting the income of the rich at that time. This correlation was particularly noticeable among the most well-off individuals. Among them, support varied depending on their expected mobility, and, statistically, it proved to be considerably higher in the case of pessimistic expectations about their own position.

Subsequently, however, socioeconomic circumstances in Russia changed significantly. Although the scale of income inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient remained the same, the scale of poverty and the size of the middle class, as well as the standard and quality of living, underwent major transformation. Perceptions of inequality of the population and their underlying factors might have been transformed as well. Our research questions are the following: 'How pronounced is the relation between social mobility and support for reducing income inequalities amid the current socioeconomic reality in Russia?' and 'What effects do different types of mobility (experienced in the past and expected in the short- and medium-term future) have on shaping this support?'

Russia is an interesting case for such a study, since, as we shall demonstrate below, inequality and the conflict between the poor and the rich are still perceived by the country's population as crucial issues, despite income growth and a noticeable reduction in poverty. The demand for reducing income differences remains consistently high as well and is aimed primarily at the state. Analysis of different types of mobility as factors behind this demand will allow us to shed light on the nature of this situation and highlight the specifics of the income inequality challenge for the state, as well as the possibilities of its mitigation through the promotion of social mobility.

As for the structure of the paper, the first section focuses on the theoretical and methodological foundations of research. We describe basic theoretical concepts behind the relationship between social mobility and perceptions of inequality and the results of empirical testing obtained in previous studies. Next, we characterize the socioeconomic context of modern Russia and describe the empirical basis. In the second section, using descriptive statistics, we demonstrate the scale of different types of mobility in Russia, the general perception of inequality by the population and demands for reducing it, and also show the degree of their differentiation across various social groups. In the third section, we apply regression analysis to assess the role of different types of intragenerational social mobility as factors shaping the demand for reducing income differences aimed at the government. The discussion section contains the main conclusions of the study and their interpretation.

2 Theoretical and methodological framework of the study

Our research focuses on the relationship between subjective assessments of one's own individual mobility, both experienced in the past and expected in the future, and support for reducing income inequality aimed at the state.

In our analysis, we draw upon preexisting approaches to the assessment of the correlation between mobility and inequality. Researchers working in this broad area initially focused on objective indicators – that is, the impact of the actual inequality level on the degree of redistribution in various countries. According to the median voter hypothesis, an increase in inequality means a widening gap between the median and average income. In this case, the median (typical) voter will have a below-average income and will vote for redistribution. This means that in countries with a democratic system and a high level of income inequality, the demand for redistribution and its actual level should be higher (Meltzer & Richard, 1981). However, this hypothesis was not fully supported by empirical data. For instance, Larsen (2016, pp. 94–95), using the example of a number of countries, shows that there is no direct correlation between inequalities and attitudes towards them. Other studies have indicated that the demand for redistribution has to do with the perceived level of inequality rather than its actual depth (Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018). Clearly, there are other factors that influence attitudes towards inequality and support for reducing it, including social mobility.

One of the key hypotheses about the impact of social mobility on attitudes towards inequality was put forward by A. Hirschman. According to him, tolerance for inequalities will be higher if the population observes upward social mobility in society, even if it does not yet affect them personally (Hirschman & Rothschild, 1973). When talking about tolerance for inequalities in rapidly developing countries, Hirschman used the analogy of cars stuck in a traffic jam in a tunnel. If cars in the second lane begin to move, then drivers in the first lane perceive this as an encouraging signal meaning that they too will soon be able to move. However, if this does not happen, the movement in the adjacent lane will be perceived as rule violation and cheating, which will lead to discontent. This hypothesis was named 'the tunnel effect.'

The tunnel effect hypothesis was tested using both empirical data and economic modeling. A prominent example of the second approach is the work of T. Piketty (1995). His theoretical model included the factors of the objective experience of mobility, the ability to learn from one's own and other people's experiences of mobility, and the population's subjective ideas about mobility. Further studies (Kuhn, 2011; Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018) confirmed that the analysis of the correlation in question is indeed enriched by the use of subjective indicators for both mobility and inequality.

Economic modeling was also used to test and partially confirm another related hypothesis concerning perspectives of upward mobility (POUM). It assumed a lower demand for redistribution among low-income citizens who expect that their children will have a higher-than-average income in the future (Benabou & Ok, 2001). Later, the POUM hypothesis was expanded to include one's own social mobility as well. In general terms, it implies that an expected rise in one's social position (upward mobility) increases the tolerance for existing inequality.

This concept can be applied to past mobility as well – if an individual has already experienced upward mobility, this might give him hope for the further improvement of his

social position in the future as well, therefore lessening his concern about inequality in society and any corresponding demands towards the government. This theoretical framework is the one we imply in our study.

Empirical studies that test the correlation between attitudes towards inequality and social mobility are much more common than those that use economic modeling. In these studies, various types of social mobility identified within the broad concept are verified, including inter- and intragenerational mobility, actual and expected mobility, and the general ideas of the population about mobility in society (its scale and specific characteristics, as well as its scale relative to society overall). Attitudes to and concerns about inequalities are also measured in a variety of ways – in terms of their perceived depth, acceptability, assessment of their foundations, the level of demand for redistribution (also measured differently, from a direct assessment of the need for redistribution based on one question or a composite indicator, to voting for certain parties), etc. So, while the basic assumption remains the same (social mobility has an effect on perceptions of inequality), the spectrum of measures used both for social mobility and perceptions of inequality is very broad, depending on the chosen focus of the study. Below, we describe several interesting examples of approaches to measuring the different aspects of the connection between social mobility and perceptions of inequality, based on empirical data.

An empirical study by Graham and Pettinato (1999) based on data from Latin American countries complements the idea of Hirschman, who suggested that the 'tunnel effect' does not work if the factors of other people's mobility are seen as illegitimate. Graham and Pettinato postulate that if social mobility, as perceived by citizens, does not lead to a decrease in inequalities in a country (and does not reduce the gap between the 'top' and the rest of the population), then the demand for redistribution does not decline. They also support Hirschman's reasoning about the importance of the historical and economic context. It is demonstrated that in countries that have recently undergone socioeconomic transformation (for example, a revolution), residents do not show an overwhelming demand for redistribution, expecting it from market mechanisms.

Hungarian data were used to illustrate that the experience and expectations of mobility contributed to notable differentiation in the population's demands of the government (Tóth, 2008). As expected, the intensity of the demand for redistribution (measured by a composite indicator) varied in different income groups. However, even within homogenous income groups, it was more often presented by those who experienced downward mobility, as well as those who did not expect any improvements in the future. Interestingly, the social mobility experience had different effects depending on the direction: an increase in the demand for redistribution was caused by just a slight deterioration in one's position, while a similar decrease in the demand occurred only amid significant improvement of the experience.

Another example of a cross-country empirical analysis can be found in the work of Gimpelson and Monosova (2014). Measuring mobility from an intergenerational perspective, Russian researchers showed that intergenerational mobility is a predictor of tolerance for inequalities. Similar to Graham and Pettinato, they highlighted the importance of the subjective dimension of mobility – namely, the population's ideas about its legitimacy. However, the authors did not put emphasis on the Russian situation, as they were working in a comparative international context.

Combining different subjective dimensions of mobility, Larsen tested the effect of three value mechanisms on the tolerance for inequalities: the prevalence of upward mobility over

downward mobility, the belief in the equality of opportunities for social status attainment, and the belief that society is a middle-class society (Larsen, 2016). Working on data from cross-country studies, Larsen showed that consideration of all three mechanisms enriches the model and significantly increases its explanatory power, once again confirming the importance of subjective indicators in explaining subjective ideas about inequality.

We have already mentioned above that Russia was also examined for the connection between expected social mobility and support for redistribution, in that particular case measured as demand for restricting the income of the rich (Ravallion & Lokshin, 2000). Ravallion and Lokshin worked during the last decade of the twentieth century – a difficult period in the country's history due to the economic and political upheaval that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. Using data from 1996, they showed that the disadvantaged population at that time was homogeneous in its demand for restricting the income of the rich. Among the well-off population, the situation was mixed, depending on the expected changes in their own status. In the analysis, the researchers considered other factors as well – the level of consumption, the subjective evaluation of one's own social position, changes in real consumption, expected developments in one's position in the coming year (short-term social mobility), perceived exclusion risks, anxiety about the likelihood of losing a job, political preferences, and sociodemographic characteristics. The influence of all these factors was in one way or another associated with individuals' expectations of improvement or deterioration in their situation. Stronger support for the 'restrict-the-rich' idea was shown by vulnerable groups who feared downward mobility due to the objective characteristics of their position. Thus, a strong demand for redistribution from the rich[1] in terms of the situation in Russia in the mid-1990s was linked not only to the disadvantageous situation of a significant part of the population, but also to the fact that only a minority had experienced improvement in their lives or expected it in the future, while the bulk of the population feared the situation would worsen, or the latter had already taken place.

We aim to test the effects of different types of mobility (not only expected mobility, but also that experienced in the past) on support for reducing income inequalities in the new socioeconomic reality of Russia. Since the study by Ravallion and Lokshin, Russia has experienced major socioeconomic development in terms of the population's income. What objective changes have occurred during this period? First of all, there has been a noticeable increase in the income and living standards of the population. Income-level trends allowed the national economy to move from the lower-income category to the upper-middle one, according to the World Bank classification (and even to the high-income group in certain years of the past decade).[2] The majority of the population in the country benefited from these developments, particularly the middle strata (Tikhonova, 2018). The standard of living among the mass population rose much above the physical survival level, which reduced the incidence of poverty several times (Ovcharova & Popova, 2013; Ovcharova & Biryukova, 2018). According to the international poverty thresholds used by the World Bank, poverty associated with the problem of physical survival has already been eradicated in Russia (World Bank,

[1] The authors emphasize that the question they use does not explicitly describe the full redistribution scheme, but it implies that the rich are the donors.

[2] https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519.

2020); this is also confirmed by the drop in the official poverty rate[3] from 33.5 per cent in 1992 to 12.3 per cent in 2019.[4] Furthermore, faster income growth (and a slower pace of income decline in recent years) among the bottom 40 per cent of the population suggest a reduction in inequality in the lower part of the income distribution (World Bank, 2016; World Bank, 2020).

As for the mass population in general, the distribution of income among them is currently characterized by high, although not extreme, inequality. According to the World Bank, the Gini coefficient for Russia was 37.5 in 2018, and the shares of income of the lower and upper deciles were 2.9 per cent and 29.9 per cent, respectively.[5] These figures show noticeably higher income inequality in Russia than in Western Europe. However, among BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) Russia is not the leader in terms of inequality – it places comparatively close to China, while inequality in Brazil and South Africa is greater.

This situation of relatively high inequality among the mass population has been common in Russia throughout the entire post-reform period. The Gini coefficient has been around 40 all this time, without showing any significant decline. The distribution of total monetary income indicated a decrease in the share of income attributable to the bottom two quintiles from the 1990s to the mid-2000s. Afterwards, the situation stabilized. The share of the fifth quintile rose sharply in the early 1990s and remains at a high level today – its representatives account for more than 45 per cent of the total monetary income of the population (Appendix, Table A).

When assessing inequality in terms of income concentration and, even more so, wealth, Russia is among the world leaders. The top one percent earn 20–22 per cent of all income and own 43–56 per cent of all wealth (Novokmet et al., 2018; Credit Suisse, 2019), and the trend is not showing any signs of improvement. On the contrary, the gap between 'the top' and the mass population keeps growing.

At the same time, the objective income mobility of the mass population remains quite high, as in earlier periods of the country's post-reform development (Bogomolova & Tapilina, 1999; Mareeva & Slobodenyuk, 2020). The current incomes of the population show high volatility in comparison with European countries, and a relatively small zone of persistently high incomes ('sticky ceiling') suggests that even moderate mass prosperity is unstable.

Going back to our research question, given the background of objective income inequality and its dynamics in Russia, our basic assumption is the absence of any strong effect of mobility on support for reducing income inequity in the new socioeconomic context in the country. We hypothesize that persistently high inequality (by European standards), especially coupled with an extreme concentration of income and wealth in the hands of a very small elite group, leads to disappointment and a stabilizing of the demand for reducing income inequalities at a high level even among those who already have experienced upward mobility in the past or expect it in the future.

---

[3] With income lower than the minimum subsistence level

[4] https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/13723?print=1, https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/13723?print=1

[5] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/.

Drawing upon previous studies that have demonstrated the importance of subjective parameters, we work with subjective indicators of mobility. We test the effects of different types of intragenerational social mobility, such as mobility that has already happened, and mobility expected in the medium- and short-term future. We believe that only the latter indicator (which actually shows the volatility of one's own position rather than social mobility) might have a significant effect on the population's support for state-led reductions in income inequality.

The empirical basis of our research is data from the Russian subset of the ISSP,[6] including four waves that took place in 1992 (1,944 respondents), 1999 (1,705 respondents), 2009 (1,603 respondents) and 2019 (1,626 respondents). In those years, the problem of perceived inequality was the theme of the study. In 2019, for the Russian survey only, an additional set of questions was added to the standard international questionnaire, and we utilize some of them in the analysis. This allows us to factor in and demonstrate more clearly country-specific characteristics of the situation which could be overlooked in a standard cross-country analysis.

In the next section, we shall provide a general description of the situation in Russia with regard to mobility and perceptions of inequality, based on these data.

3 Perceptions of inequality and social mobility in the socioeconomic context in modern Russia

Our assessment of mobility is based on the question about Russians' self-evaluation of their social position at the time of the survey, five years before that, and the expected position in ten years. We apply broad estimates on a scale of 1 to 10 (scores 1 through 3 refer to a low social status, 4–6 refer to a medium social status, and 7–10 to a high one). Such aggregation of the self-evaluation scale values is in line with current practices adopted in the relevant literature (Lei & Tam, 2012). By mobility, we mean transitioning from one state to another. The distribution of respondents according to this indicator and the sizes of aggregated groups are shown in the appendix (Table B).

We also use a proxy for assessing short-term expected mobility, referring to the question what financial situation is expected by an individual in the next twelve months, in accordance with the approach used by Ravallion and Lokshin. Directions of various mobility types are given in Table 1.[7]

[6] ISSP is a cross-national collaborative program that involves conducting annual surveys on diverse topics relevant to the social sciences. The waves of 1992, 1999, 2009 and 2019 were devoted to social inequality. http://issp.org

[7] In our further analysis, we chose to focus on different types of intragenerational mobility to compare their effects; we deliberately did not use intergenerational mobility, since this implies a longer period of comparison; its effect might also differ for different generations. The effect of intergenerational mobility should be seen in the focus of the analysis of specialized research. However, showing its scale is important for understanding the general context of social mobility in Russia.

Table 1 Prevalence of various mobility directions in Russia, 2019, ISSP, %

Types of mobility	Mobility Direction		
	Downward mobility	**Immobility**	**Upward mobility**
Intergenerational in 2019 (vs 2009)	24.8 (vs 25.0)	64,6 (vs 62,2)	10.0 (vs 12.3)
Experienced (in the last five years)	21.8	69.6	7.9
Expected in the short term (next twelve months)	51.6	36.1	7.7
Expected in the medium term (next ten years)	9.9	64.3	23.0

As seen in Table 1, immobility is prevalent both intra- and intergenerationally. About two-thirds of Russians do not see any noticeable changes in their situation compared to that of their parents' family and their own situation five years ago. As for the socially mobile population, downward mobility is more prevalent in comparison to the upward type. Importantly, the scale of intergenerational mobility has not changed since 2009. Russians do not see more opportunities for markedly improving their situation compared to the previous generation. Even more so, they witness a prevalence of downward life trajectories around them.

As for expected mobility, the situation at first glance seems paradoxical. On the one hand, people mostly expect their situation to worsen in the next twelve months (more than half of Russians assume this). On the other hand, expectations of changes in the medium term are rather positive. Nearly two-thirds of Russians believe that in ten years their position will not be lower than today, and every fourth Russian thinks that his or her social position will actually improve.

Thus, despite past experiences and a pessimistic outlook regarding their near-term prospects, Russians tend to believe in a better, albeit distant, future. We consider the subjective assessment of the short-term expected mobility to be more realistic, as the majority of Russians do not plan their lives even in the medium term. The ISSP dataset shows that only 5 per cent of the population have at least some kind of plan for the next five to ten years, not to mention any longer period of time; half of the population believe that it is simply impossible to plan even for one or two years. Therefore, such views about prospects for mobility could be explained by the overall optimism and a belief in a bright future, rather than by realistic expectations about future trajectories.

Furthermore, let us consider the public's perception of inequalities. According to the data, the perception of inequalities and the demand for redistribution in Russia remain similar to the situation twenty years ago (Figure 1). Socioeconomic developments have not led to any massive changes in this regard.

Attitudes towards the conflict between the poor and the rich have changed slightly – compared with the 1990s, it is perceived as less acute now. However, it is still the most prominent conflict in the public eye and is considered to be stronger than traditional class con-

flicts between workers and employers or between the working and middle classes (according to ISSP data, these conflicts were specified as 'very strong' or 'strong' by 46.1 per cent and 23.7 per cent of the population correspondingly).

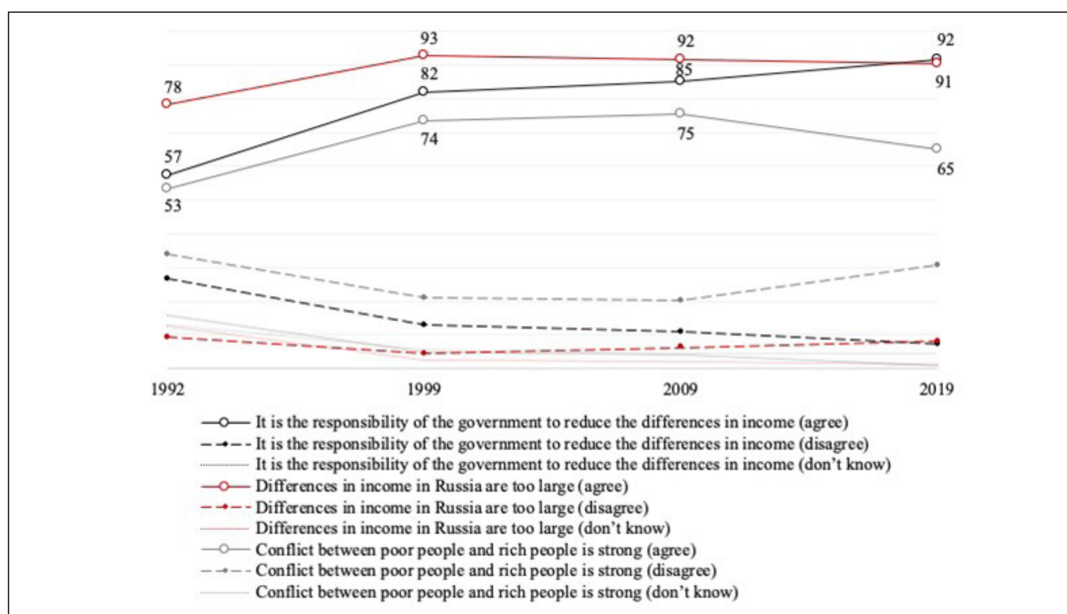

Figure 1 Trends in the Russian population's perception of income inequality and support for reducing it, 1992–2019, ISSP, %

Along with the country's post-reform development, Russians' beliefs regarding inequalities are being reinforced. The number of Russians who did not have a clear-cut opinion on the degree of social inequality, the severity of the conflict between the poor and the rich, and the role of the state in the solution of these problems decreased significantly in the 1990s. In the new, turbulent times of the early 1990s, the population could not yet make sense of 'the rules of the game' regarding inequalities and thus form an opinion about them. However, as the new institutional circumstances stabilized, the public developed a clearer understanding of inequality, which was reflected in the more pronounced polarization of opinions due to the smaller number of those who did not respond (Figure 1).

Existing inequality is deemed to be not only particularly high but also unfair. This is the characteristic indicated by more than 90 per cent of Russians in 2019. It should be noted that such a perception of inequality in Russian society is common across the entire population and hardly ever varies by individual income level or human capital (Table 2).

Even the most well-to-do – highly educated and high-income – Russians largely perceive income inequality as excessively high and unfair and consider the conflict between the poor and the rich to be particularly potent. Just like their less prosperous fellow citizens, they believe that it is the government's responsibility to solve this problem, and that currently it is failing at this task (Appendix, Table C). Interestingly, a higher level of education is associated with even greater awareness of the conflict between the poor and the rich, which highlights the issue of the legitimacy of inequality in the public consciousness.

Table 2 Perception of inequality in groups with different human capital and income levels, 2019, ISSP, %[8]

Agreement with the statements	Education level			
	Secondary and lower	Technical college, vocational school, unfinished high	High	Academic degree, MBA, etc
Differences in income in Russia are too large	88.1	90.0	94.7	89.4
Income distribution in Russia is unfair	88.8	92.0	93.6	89.4
Conflict between poor people and rich people is strong	62.0	68.3	72.3	73.8
It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high and low incomes	93.1	91.2	91.3	87.2
Government in Russia is not successful at reducing the differences in income between people with high and low incomes	77.3	80.3	81.6	76.6
	Income strata*			
	< 0.75 Me	0.75-1.25 Me	1.25-2.00 Me	>2.00 Me
Differences in income in Russia are too large	87.5	93.5	92.7	88.3
Income distribution in Russia is unfair	92.2	92.9	93.4	90.4
Conflict between poor people and rich people is strong	62.8	69.6	71.7	69.9
It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high and low incomes	91.2	94.3	92.7	85.1
Government in Russia is not successful in reducing the differences in income between people with high and low incomes	78.0	82.6	81.1	77.1

* Income groups are identified based on the ratio of monthly per capita household income to a median value (Me) for a given type of settlement (large city / small town / rural area)

[8] The table does not include those who did not provide a response.

To test and compare the effects of different types of social mobility on support for reducing inequality, we chose to focus on the population's agreement with the statement 'It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the difference in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes.' As seen in the relevant literature, this indicator might be considered both as a proxy for general perceptions of inequality and as support for redistribution. We refer to it as a form of support for reducing income inequality; in our opinion, it is important that it indicates not just Russians' basic understanding of inequality as being high / low or fair / unfair, but also the demand for action from the government to manage it, and as such, it is connected with the issue of redistribution. However, we understand that the concept of redistribution is much broader than the demand to reduce income inequality, so we stress that we focused only on this particular aspect of it.

To determine whether mobility has an effect on Russians' support for reducing income inequality, aimed at the state, we turn to data indicating how this support is differentiated among the population according to actual and expected social mobility (Figure 2). To identify the mobility effect, we examine it separately in different income groups (following the above-mentioned approach by Tóth [2008]).

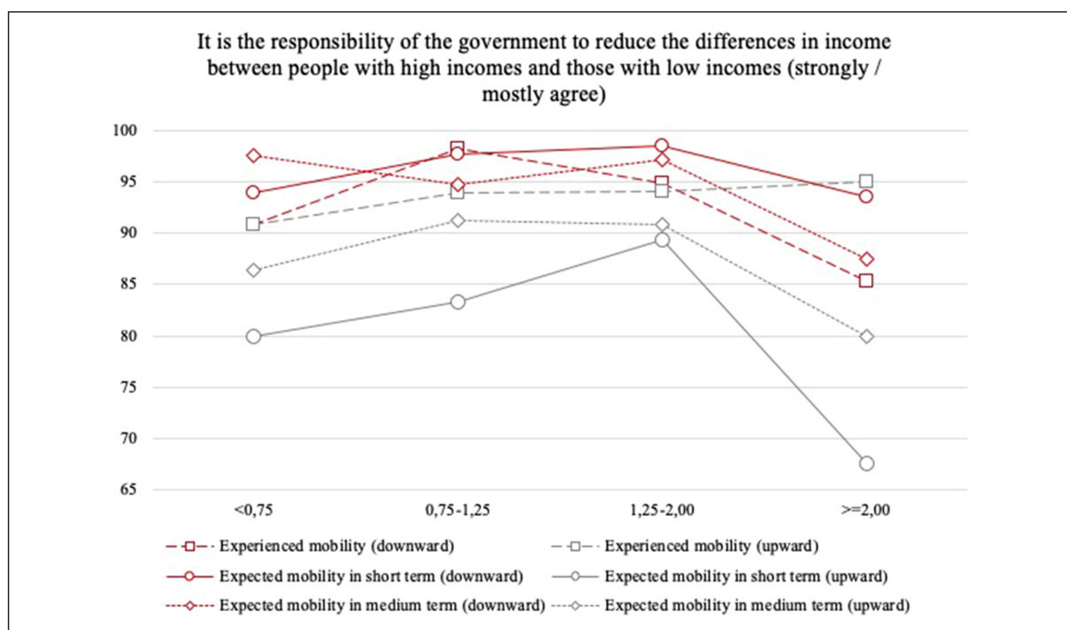

Figure 2 Support for reducing income inequality in different income groups depending on subjective mobility, 2019, ISSP, %

Figure 2 shows that the biggest effect in terms of the differentiation of the support for reducing income inequality is produced by expected short-term mobility, while the effect of experienced mobility proves to be ambiguous. To provide a more accurate analysis of the effects of actual and expected mobility on this support in modern Russia, we further apply regression analysis.

4 Regression analysis: the effect of mobility on support for reducing income differences

If the effect of any type of mobility is present, we should observe a statistically significant correlation between that type of mobility and the agreement that government should reduce the difference in incomes in society. Downward mobility would increase the likelihood of support for narrowing the income gap, while upward mobility would reduce it. A lack of the mobility effect will be manifested in either very slim evidence of such correlation or no evidence at all.

We examined the presence of the effect of social mobility by means of multivariate econometric models. The attitude to the statement that the government must reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes served as a dependent variable. Responses to this question, initially measured with a Likert scale, were aggregated into a binary choice where '1' = agreement (including strong agreement) with the statement and '0' = all other options. Based on this, logit models of binary choice were evaluated. Key variables in the analysis are represented by the variables of subjective experienced mobility, expected mobility in the medium term, and the proxy for short-term mobility, the distribution of which is described above (Table 1). Control variables included individuals' sociodemographic characteristics and subjective perceptions of inequality in general, which are described below.

Modeling the effect of mobility on support for reducing income inequality, we drew upon earlier analysis (Tóth, 2008), according to which modeling should be started by including a set of individuals' sociodemographic and income characteristics into the regression equations. This is the so-called basic model with key control variables that is used for the further evaluation of models with mobility variables. Basic model values are given in the first column of Table 3 (Model 1).

We see either very weak evidence of the significance ($p<0.1$) of the effects of demographic characteristics (gender, age, education, type of settlement) or its entire absence. This indicates that support for reducing income inequality addressed to the government is mostly even across all demographics. The effects of income groups turn out to be statistically significant (although the impact of income is non-linear), and the evidence of significance, although weak, is seen in all models. However, the effect of income groups is not robust.[9]

Next, key mobility indicators are included in the analysis. Models 2.1 and 2.2 compare the effects of various subjective mobility measurements (experienced and expected in the medium term and the proxy for expected mobility in the short term) on support for reducing income differences in society. A crucial criterion for comparing the quality of models is the BIC proposed by Long and Freese (2001, p. 83) for use in pairwise comparisons of nested models to establish 'whether a model is explaining enough of the variation in the data to justify the number of parameters it uses' (Raftery, 1995, p. 35). All other factors being equal, it is recommended to choose a simpler model with the lowest BIC (the difference in absolute values must be at least two).

[9] This disappears once we correct the standard errors for sample weights.

Table 3 Logit models of the demand for redistribution among Russians, odds ratio, and standard errors

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Model 1	**Model 2.1**	**Model 2.2**	**Model 3**
Demographics				
Males	0.723*	0.721*	0.736	0.755
	(0.140)	(0.140)	(0.145)	(0.157)
Age	1.012*	1.006	1.007	1.003
	(0.00682)	(0.00731)	(0.00675)	(0.00710)
Higher education	1.049	1.043	1.151	0.962
	(0.234)	(0.235)	(0.260)	(0.240)
Residency (rural – ref.)				
Small towns	0.735	0.704	0.684	0.684
	(0.215)	(0.207)	(0.204)	(0.225)
Medium and large cities	0.633*	0.626*	0.689	0.691
	(0.166)	(0.166)	(0.184)	(0.202)
Employment	1.290	1.314	1.254	1.241
	(0.292)	(0.301)	(0.284)	(0.312)
Income strata				
<0.75 Me	0.637*	0.614*	0.557**	0.590*
	(0.165)	(0.160)	(0.145)	(0.170)
1.25 – 2 Me	0.785	0.772	0.914	0.837
	(0.231)	(0.229)	(0.275)	(0.258)
> 2 Me	0.388***	0.387***	0.558*	0.540*
	(0.114)	(0.114)	(0.166)	(0.177)
Subjective mobility				
Experienced (in the last five years) (immobility – ref.)				
Upward		1.378		
		(0.558)		
Downward		1.568*		
		(0.405)		

Table 3 (Continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Model 1	**Model 2.1**	**Model 2.2**	**Model 3**
Expected in the medium term (immobility – ref.)				
Upward		0.628**		
		(0.140)		
Downward		1.459		
		(0.608)		
Expected in the short-term (immobility – ref.)				
Upward			0.548**	0.809
			(0.152)	(0.256)
Downward			3.407***	2.590***
			(0.777)	(0.624)
Settings and perceptions				
Equality of opportunity over equality of incomes				0.482*** (0.105)
Differences in income in Russia are too large				0.151*** (0.0374)
Income distribution in Russia is fair				3.181***
				(0.984)
Constant	12.88***	16.54***	9.996***	20.83***
	(6.505)	(8.837)	(5.134)	(18.02)
Observations	1,489	1,489	1,489	1,489
BIC	893.484	914.063	865.886	799.609
Hosmer-Lemeshow ($\chi^2(8)$)	9.53	11.04	7.68	11.70
Prob > χ^2	0.2993	0.1994	0.4649	0.1649

NOTE: Ref. = reference category, df = degrees of freedom. Higher education = university degree and above (contrasted with lower education). BIC stands for modified Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), widely used to compare nested models (see (Long, 1997); *ceteris paribus* one should choose the model with the smallest BIC. Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit statistics (χ^2) were calculated for ten groups for all models so that degrees of freedom were the same in all the models (=$\chi^2(8)$). Robust standard errors of odds ratios are in parentheses. The estimates with the strongest evidence of significance are flagged with three asterisks: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. While correcting the standard errors for the sampling weights, the effects of income groups became insignificant, whereas estimates of the other effects appeared robust in all the models. We also checked the efficiency of different measures of long-run subjective mobility. The most efficient measure of subjective mobility is a term of three categories – immobility, downward mobility, and upward mobility.

It is evident that Model 2.2, which employs short-term mobility, is the preferable one from this pair. Although in Model 2.1 the effects of downward experienced mobility and upward expected mobility in the next ten years proved to be significant, adding these effects would considerably worsen Model 2.1, as compared to both basic Model 1 (where the BIC value spiked from 893.484 to 914.063) and Model 2.2. In further modeling, the significance of these effects disappears completely.

Model 2.2, with the proxy for expected short-term mobility, proves to be more efficient than the basic model with sociodemographic variables (BIC values dropped from 893.484 to 865.886; this is also confirmed by the results of the Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test). From a methodological point of view, it means that the final model should be based on expected short-term mobility rather than its measures in the medium term. The model demonstrates that expectations about one's position in the near future indeed contribute to the differentiation of support for reducing income inequality. Negative expectations increase that support, while positive ones reduce it.

This effect, however, might be offset by the influence of individuals' subjective perceptions of inequality, which has been widely confirmed in the literature. These include preferences for the equality of opportunities or the equality of outcomes, and assessments of the depth and fairness of the inequality existing in the country.[10] All these subjective determinants show various aspects of the population's ideas about inequality and its characteristics specific to Russia (but not the demand towards the government in this respect, which, according to our framework, is measured by the dependent variable).[11] We included these subjective terms in Model 3, as an extension of Model 2.2. The statistical quality of Model 3 turned out to be higher than that of Model 2.2. That means that the population's general attitudes toward inequality significantly explain the variation in support for reducing it. The preference for equality of outcomes rather than equality of opportunities raises the demand for reducing income differences, as does the perception that income inequality in modern Russia is high and unfair.

The impact of the proxy for short-term subjective mobility on the probability of demands for the government to reduce income inequalities is demonstrated in Figure 3. The figure represents marginal probabilities of those demands both independently and in combination with a number of subjective variables (the assessment of income distribution in Russia as fair, and the assessment of income gaps as too high). It is clearly seen from Figure 3 that short-term expectations tend to increase the probability of demands on the government to deal with income inequality (in the case of pessimistic expectations) more than reduce it (in the case of optimistic expectations).

[10] The responses to statements/questions from which they are derived are the following: 'Differences in income in Russia are too large' (strongly agree, agree), 'How fair or unfair do you think income distribution is in Russia?' (very fair, fair), and the choice between two alternative statements: 'equality of opportunity is more important than equality of income and living conditions' or 'equality of income and living conditions is more important than equality of opportunity.' These subjective notions show general perceptions of inequality among the population that can also act as factors in the demand on the state to reduce it.

[11] This list of settings is not exhaustive. For example, research (Gimpelson & Monusova, 2014) highlights the importance of how the current and ideal models of social stratification are perceived by the population and the differences between them. We checked this in our regression models; however, the effects proved to be insignificant.

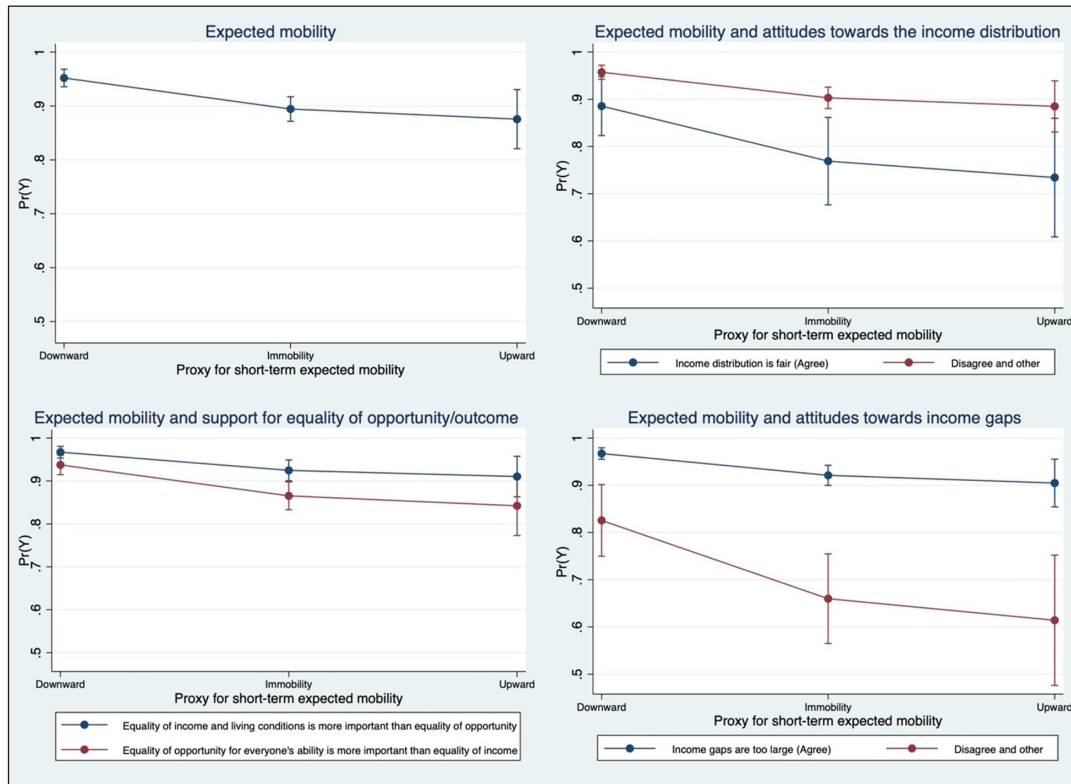

Figure 3 Predictive margins of the effect of short-term expected mobility, given other subjective variables with 95% confidence intervals, from Model 3

NOTE: Proxy for short-term expected mobility is based on people's expectations about their situation over the next twelve months. Pr(Y) = probability of agreeing with the statement that it is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income. Attitudes towards income gaps are based on the agreement / disagreement with the statement that differences in income in Russia are too large. Estimates are retrieved from Model 3.

In general, the results of Model 3 confirm the assumption that support for reducing inequality, being a subjective category, is best explained by other subjective categories – primarily, normative ideas about a fair social order and how far the observed reality is from it in terms of inequality. The demand for reducing income inequality that is addressed to the government in modern Russian society is connected mostly with such notions[12] and is not based on individual characteristics and specific situations, including actual or expected mobility in the medium term. Only short-term expectations about one's unstable situation (describing, in fact, volatility rather than mobility) remain important, regardless of 'the starting point' of the individual.

[12] We do not aim to prove the direction of causation here – our interpretation of the results is that all these subjective notions show different dimensions of the complex and multidimensional models of the 'ideal' and 'real' society in terms of inequality and the gap between them in the perceptions of the population.

5 Discussion

Despite dramatic socioeconomic changes in Russia over the past few decades, the population's perception of inequality has not undergone any major transformation. Today, most Russians still think that inequalities are excessively high and unfair, and the conflict between the rich and the poor is considered to be the strongest of all social conflicts. Support for reducing income differences is also shared by the majority of representatives across all social groups. It is seen as the responsibility of the state, which, Russians believe, is failing to respond to the challenge of income inequality. Overall, surprisingly, the situation resembles that seen in the 1990s when the country was going through a different development stage.

Such perceptions about income inequality and the demand for reducing it prove to be universal among the entire population – they are differentiated neither by basic sociodemographic characteristics, nor by human capital and income levels. Empirical analysis demonstrates that the impact of mobility is also very limited – neither the experience of mobility in the past, nor expectations of changes in the medium term significantly affect the demand for reducing the difference in income between people with high and low incomes. The only aspect of mobility (or even volatility) that 'works' in this regard is people's expectations of a worse financial situation in the near future, which only increases support for reducing income inequality in Russian society.

What may be the reasons for Russians universally sharing these ideas about inequality that are little influenced by experience and expectations of mobility, and which to a certain degree run counter to the results of previous studies and the POUM hypothesis in general?

As noted in the literature, a high tolerance for inequalities can be observed at the first stages of fundamental change, when a population is ready to put up with growing inequalities but expects the situation to be different in the future (Hirschman & Rothschild, 1973; Graham & Pettinato, 1999). For Russia, however, the period of reforms ended a long time ago, and the configuration of inequality, as we mentioned above, changed only in the lower part of the income distribution. As for the top part, there remains a big gap between the wealthy few and the rest of the population whose prosperity can be characterized as very moderate and unstable. In these conditions, even one's personal experience or expectations of mobility do not change general ideas about the unacceptability of such a situation (Meltzer & Richard, 1981). Previous Russian studies have demonstrated that, when talking about reducing income inequality and the conflict between the rich and the poor, even the part of the population that is considered to be relatively prosperous by general standards does not refer to itself and its own separation from the masses, but to the elite who have left the rest of the population (both disadvantaged and well-off, according to general standards) far behind and keep increasing the distance (Mareeva, 2020). This may also contribute to the general consensus among the mass population. In this case, the direction in which an individual has been moving or expects to move in the future is no longer important – their mobility will not change the general configuration of inequality and the great divide between the elite and the rest of the population.

In a broader sense, our results demonstrate one of the outcomes of the rent-seeking behavior regime in Russia – one of the post-communist countries that has chosen the path of building capitalism from above, so-called 'political capitalism' (Mihályi & Szelényi, 2019). This has resulted in a regime of inequality that is not legitimate in the perceptions of the mass population. However, the crucial divide for Russia seems to be located higher up than

between the top 20 per cent, or even the top 10 per cent, and the rest. This is due to the very high degree of differentiation of the top quintile, and even the decile that unites both the very top and the zone of mass prosperity, which is quite modest.

In addition, the instability of mass prosperity, which is characteristic of Russia today (Mareeva & Slobodenyuk, 2020), may also be reducing the effect of mobility – if movement up or down the social ladder is perceived not as mobility but as instability, and if there is a general predominance of downward life trajectories and this situation does not change over time, then the universal demand for reducing the income differences between rich and poor is quite understandable. The lack of opportunities or capability to plan for the future leads to a greater emphasis on the next expected change, regardless of the initial social position and the experience of mobility. Since short-term mobility assessments are generally pessimistic, they only reinforce the strong demand for dealing with the challenge of income inequality among the population.

One positive indicator in this situation is the relatively more optimistic expectations of mobility in the next ten years among Russians. But, as our analysis has shown, they do not have a lasting impact on the perception of inequality. Perhaps this is due to the fact that they reflect a belief in a bright future and are not real assessments of individuals' own prospects. However, this is clearly not enough to tackle the serious challenge of inequality – a challenge that the Russian government fails to respond to, according to the population. Unfortunately, the current situation may negatively affect the overall prospects of social mobility in Russia, suppressing the willingness of a part of the population to be active and improve their situation on their own by investing in human capital and achieving upward mobility.

Acknowledgement

The article was prepared within the framework of a research grant funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation (grant ID: 075-15-2022-325).

References

Atkinson, A. (2015). *Inequality: What can be done?* Harvard University Press.

Bogomolova, T. & Tapilina, V. (1999). Income mobility in Russia in the mid-1990s. *EERC Working Paper 99/11.* http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00002049/01/wp_99-11E.pdf

Benabou, R. & Ok, E. (2001). Social mobility and the demand for redistribution: The POUM hypothesis. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *116*(2), 447–487. https://doi.org/10.1162/00335530151144078

Chauvel, L., Haim, E. B., Hartung, A. & Murphy, E. (2021). Rewealthization in twenty-first century Western countries: the defining trend of the socioeconomic squeeze of the middle class. *The Journal of Chinese Sociology, 8*(4). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40711-020-00135-6

Credit Suisse (2019). *Global wealth report.* Credit Suisse group AG. Switzerland. https://www.credit-suisse.com/about-us/en/reports-research/global-wealth-report.html Accessed: 20-12-2020.

Gimpelson, V. & Monusova, G. (2014). Perception of inequality and social mobility. *HSE Economic Journal*, *18*(2), 216–248. https://wp.hse.ru/data/2014/12/15/1103562366/84EC2014.pdf

Gimpelson, V. & Treisman, D. (2018). Misperceiving inequality. *Economics & Politics*, *30*(1), 27–54. https://doi.org/10.1111/ecpo.12103

Graham, C. & Pettinato, S. (1999). Assessing hardship and happiness: Trends in mobility and expectations in the new market economies *Center on Social and Economic Dynamics. Working Paper No. 7.* https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/happiness.pdf

Grusky D. (2011). The stories about inequality that we love to tell. In D. Grusky & S. Szelényi (Eds.), *The inequality reader. Contemporary and foundational readings in race, class, and gender* (pp. 1–13). Westview Press.

Hirschman, A. & Rothschild, M. (1973). The changing tolerance for income inequality in the course of economic development. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 87*(4), 544–566. https://doi.org/10.2307/1882024

Kuhn, A. (2011). In the eye of the beholder: Subjective inequality measures and individuals' assessment of market justice. *European Journal of Political Economy*, *27*(4), 625–641. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2011.06.002

Larsen, C. (2016). How three narratives of modernity justify economic inequality. *Acta Sociologica*, *59*(2), 93–111. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699315622801

Lei, J. & Tam, T. (2012). Subjective social status, perceived social mobility and health in China https://paa2012.princeton.edu/papers/122792 Accessed: 20-11-2020.

Long, S. (1997). *Regression models for categorical and limited dependent variables.* Sage.

Long, S. & Freese, J. (2001). *Regression models for categorical and limited dependent variables.* Stata Press.

Mareeva, S. (2020). Socio-economic inequalities in modern Russia and their perception by the population. *The Journal of Chinese Sociology*, *7*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40711-020-00124-9

Mareeva, S. & Slobodenyuk, E. (2020). A Society of unstable well-being: Income mobility and immobility in Russia. *Higher School of Economics Research Paper* No. WP BRP, 94. https://publications.hse.ru/mirror/pubs/share/direct/403091085.pdf

Meltzer, A. & Richard, S. (1981). A rational theory of the size of government. *Journal of Political Economy, 89*(5), 914–927. https://doi.org/10.1086/261013

Mihályi, P. & Szelényi, I. (2019). *Rent-seekers, profits, wages and inequality. The Top 20%.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Milanovic, B. (2016). *Global inequality: A new approach for the age of globalization.* Harvard University Press.

Novokmet, F., Piketty, T. & Zucman, G. (2018). From Soviets to oligarchs: inequality and property in Russia 1905–2016. *The Journal of Economic Inequality, 16*(2), 189–223. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10888-018-9383-0

OECD (2018). *A Broken social elevator? How to promote social mobility.* https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264301085-en

Ovcharova, L. & Popova, D. (2013). Доходы и расходы российских домашних хозяйств: что изменилось в массовом стандарте потребления (Cash income and expenditure of the Russian population: What are the changes in consumer standards?) *Universe of Russia, 22*(3), 3–34.

Ovcharova L. & Biryukova, S. (2018). Poverty and the poor in post-soviet Russia. In N. Hatti & D. Rauhut (Eds.), *Poverty, Politics and the Poverty of Politics* (pp. 151–175). BR Publishing.

Piketty, T. (2013). *Capital in the 21st Century.* Harvard College.

Piketty, T. (1995). Social mobility and redistributive politics. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 110*(3), 551–584. https://doi.org/10.2307/2946692

Raftery, A. (1995). Bayesian model selection in social research. *Sociological Methodology, 25,* 111–163. https://doi.org/10.2307/271063

Ravallion, M. & Lokshin, M. (2000). Who wants to redistribute? The tunnel effect in 1990s Russia. *Journal of Public Economics, 76*(1), 87–104. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0047-2727(99)00064-X

Shin, K. (2020) A new approach to social inequality: Inequality of income and wealth in South Korea. *Journal of Chinese Sociology, 7*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40711-020-00126-7

Shorrocks, A. (1978). Income inequality and income mobility. *Journal of Economic Theory, 19*(2), 376–393. https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-0531(78)90101-1

Stiglitz, J. (2012). *The price of inequality: How today's divided society endangers our future.* WW Norton.

Tikhonova, N. (Ed.) (2018). Модель доходной стратификации российского общества: динамика, факторы, межстрановые сравнения (*Model of income stratification of Russian society: Dynamics, factors, cross-country comparisons.*) Nestor Istoriya.

Tóth, I. (2008). The demand for redistribution: A test on Hungarian data. *Sociologický časopis, 44*(6), 1063–1087. https://doi.org/10.13060/00380288.2008.44.6.01

World Bank (2020). *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversals of Fortune.* Washington, DC: World Bank. https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/poverty-and-shared-prosperity Accessed: 20-12-2020.

World Bank (2016). *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality.* Washington, DC: World Bank. https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/poverty-and-shared-prosperity-2016 Accessed: 20-12-2020.

Appendix

Table A Distribution of total cash income and differentiation of cash income across the population, 1970–2019.

Year	Cash income – total	across 20-percent groups, %:					R/P 10% ratio, times	Gini coeffi-cient
		first group (lowest income)	second group	third group	fourth group	fifth group (highest income)		
1970	100	7.8	14.8	18.0	22.6	36.8	…	…
1980	100	10.1	14.8	18.6	23.1	33.4	…	…
1990	100	9.8	14.9	18.8	23.8	32.7	…	…
1995	100	6.1	10.8	15.2	21.6	46.3	13.5	38.7
2000	100	5.9	10.4	15.1	21.9	46.7	13.9	39.5
2005	100	5.4	10.1	15.1	22.7	46.7	15.2	40.9
2010	100	5.2	9.8	14.8	22.5	47.7	16.6	42.1
2015	100	5.4	10.1	15.0	22.6	46.9	14.8	41.0
2016	100	5.4	10.1	15.0	22.6	46.9	14.8	41.0
2017	100	5.5	10.1	15.1	22.6	46.7	14.6	40.8
2018	100	5.3	10.0	15.0	22.6	47.1	15.6	41.3
2019	100	5.3	10.1	15.1	22.6	46.9	15.4	41.1

Source: data provided by the Federal State Statistic Service // URL: https://www.gks.ru/storage/mediabank/urov_32g.doc, updated on 29.04.2020; 2019 – preliminary data (Assessed 18-06-2020).

Table B Social status self-assessment by Russians using the 10-point social structure scale, %

Position in the social structure	Individual's position		
	Five years ago (2014, before the crisis)	At the time of the survey (2019)	Expected in 10 years (2029)
10 – highest	2.0	1.1	6.5
9	1.0	0.5	2.7
8	3.9	2.2	6.6
7	8.8	4.7	8.7
6	13.7	10.2	10.1

5	33.0	32.8	22.2
4	14.7	17.0	10.8
3	12.4	15.2	12.1
2	4.8	7.1	7.7
1 – lowest	5.6	9.2	12.6
For reference: social positions (cluster sizes)			
High (positions 7–10)	15.7	8.5	24.5
Medium (positions 4–6)	61.4	60.0	43.1
Low (positions 1–3)	22.8	31.5	32.4

Table C Subjective assessment of the role of the state and its efficiency in tackling the inequality challenge, %

Agreement with the statements	**Education level**			
	Secondary and lower	**Technical college, vocational school, unfinished high**	**High**	**Academic degree, MBA, etc**
The greatest responsibility for reducing differences in income between people with high and low incomes lies with the government	80.1	83.7	84.5	87.2
Most politicians in Russia do not care about reducing the differences in income	80.2	83.5	86.3	91.4
Government is not successful at reducing the differences in income	77.3	80.3	81.6	76.6
	Income strata			
	< 0.75 Me	**0.75-1.25 Me**	**1.25-2.00 Me**	**>2.00 Me**
The greatest responsibility for reducing differences in income between people with high and low incomes lies with the government	85.3	83.1	85.5	80.9
Most politicians in Russia do not care about reducing the differences in income	81.4	85.4	86.4	83.0
Government is not successful at reducing the differences in income	78.0	82.6	81.1	77.1

BOOK REVIEW

Under the long shadow of working-class origins

Friedman, S. & Laurison, D. (2020). The Class Ceiling: Why it Pays to be Privileged. Policy Press & Bristol University Press

https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.1024

In an era when merit seems to be the mantra of accessing high quality post-compulsory education followed by prestigious jobs, which also means fat pay checks and social recognition, it is of utmost importance to critically re-examine this social ethos, and to look behind it in terms of the social mechanisms active in the backdrop, and perhaps to ask what kind of society it produces. We often (and perhaps proudly) believe that will be a more egalitarian society. Or will it?

Friedman and Laurison present a fascinating, thought-provoking ethnography set in three elite corporate firms in London, UK, based on interviews with individuals of working-class background who 'made it' (at least that is what it looks like at the first glimpse). The book is based on elaborate individual insights in the form of personal narratives about corporate careers, education and job-related choices, failures and barriers when searching for suitable employment and assignments, individual success stories with helpers and movers in the backdrop. Their case studies come from three very different sectors in terms of the type of 'merit' they require or recognize, from a *fashionable national television broadcaster, a successful architecture firm, and a large multinational accounting company*. Despite the different profiles and sectors, what connects these corporate entities as ethnographic sites is that they represent elite professions, where many young professionals from the UK and abroad aspire to reach and plan to make their fortunes. These are firms where those from privileged backgrounds enter at disproportionately higher rates, and in addition they tend to earn much more once 'in' than their less fortunate (and privileged) colleagues coming from a working-class family background. Analysis of the respective sectors in the UK (based on Britain's largest employment survey, the Labour Force Survey (LFS)) by the authors reveals that a significant pay gap exists between those from a privileged backgrounds and those coming from the working class. And this means not only that the former reach higher positions and in shorter time, but also that the latter get paid less for the same work.

The case studies present insights from both the employer and employee perspective, examining both the 'demand' and 'supply' side contributing to mechanisms of professional inclusion and exclusion, obstacles in career advancement, feelings of inadequacy, lost opportunities in parallel to multiple instances of arrogance or ignorance of those in lead positions.

The book manages to capture narratives of employers on choosing those considered 'fit' or 'matching' concrete positions and tasks (leading to employment, tasks assigned, promotion, or accepting among the firm's Partners) due to certain behaviours, accent and language use, manners, ways of self-presenting instead of others considered 'less fit' or 'matching'. Intriguingly, those belonging to the 'fitting' category are typically coming from the elite, privileged backgrounds, while the rejected ones are first-generation diploma holders with working-class origins. Hence, Friedman and Laurison argue that *class origin*, in contrast to meritocratic ideas that emphasize the central role of merit in career achievements (see corporate ethos), *casts a long shadow on people's lives.*

The authors' book captures the complex socio-cultural mechanisms through which class origins operate in individual careers with exemplary ethnographic precision: their answer focuses on elite occupations and career advancements. They draw on various and rich research traditions, providing important clues for their analysis. The first such tradition comes from studies on ethnic minorities and white women in the job market, introducing the concept of 'glass ceiling'. Here the ceiling is used to suggest the invisible yet firm barriers which individuals belonging to these groups have to negotiate. These barriers include mechanisms linked to indirect as well as more direct forms of discrimination. This line of research has firmly proved that minority people and women tend to get systematically shut out of career opportunities and promotions. 'Merit' is a key point in these studies, underlining an important fact: *merit is not or not the lead factor in accessing elite jobs and progressing in one's career.* When feminist academics spoke about 'a glass ceiling' in the careers of many women previously, they also noted a sense of *dislocation* experienced during their journeys, both in the past and in future places. Friedman and Laurison note similar dilemmas among their working-class origin interviewees, feelings of exclusion and limited access, hesitation as well as questions of self-worth when it comes to stepping into high prestige jobs in elite sectors. The authors' intention is not to simply draw parallels with cases of inequality concerning ethnic minorities or women, instead, their work is inspired by the concept of *intersectionality*, emphasizing that these categories and axes of analysis (ethnicity, gender, race and class) build on and reinforce each other.

Previous research related to class and mobility often halted at the point of getting access to quality education, assuming that public education systems in the democratic world have an equalising effect regarding its capacity to directing individuals to channels of social mobility by bestowing them with (technical, meaning professional) knowledge required by their future employers. Friedman and Laurison however point to a serious inadequacy and pretention of the 'meritocratic model'. Their results unquestionably suggest that technical knowledge is insufficient for getting hired or gaining promotion. The most exciting part of the book, covering an uncharted territory in terms of previous research of qualitative and ethnographic nature, sheds light on mechanisms of and challenges encountered while getting 'on' within the firm, moving in their careers, climbing firm hierarchies. It comes across as a striking, yet very powerful finding that working-class background is a key explanatory factor in difficulties related to promotion, career advancement, in getting on with external partners of the firm, in becoming part of the upper management, laced with identity crises, emotional struggles, reoccurring sense of inadequacy and feeling of 'out of place'.

The analysis of Friedman and Laurison in the book, as a continuation of their earlier work, adapts the Bourdieusian lens which insists that class background is defined by one's parents' stock of three primary forms of capital (economic, cultural, and social). These not only structure one's childhood, but we tend to inherit them. While the passing on of eco-

nomic (monetary assets) and social capital (networks) seems to be more straightforward, the inheritance of cultural capital is a bit more complex, as the authors argue. Bourdieu introduces the concept of *habitus* for this end, describing a set of *dispositions* which organize and define how we relate to and understand the world around us. Some of these dispositions are embodied, manifest themselves through bodily *comportment* such as accent, affections, posture, gestures, but also it includes a broader set of body-related behaviours such as etiquette, manners or dressing style. The most striking examples of these bodily manifestations emerge through practices through which privileged families imprint (teach) their children for 'symbolic mastery', as Bourdieu calls it, of those codes and behaviours related to correct language use, grammar, vocabulary, tone of speech etc. (for a quick comparison, Brecht's Pygmalion poignantly captures such comportments and the problems around their 'symbolic mastery').

The real significance of such aesthetic dispositions and various aspects of symbolic mastery associated to the privileged classes is their direct relevance to social mobility. Such dispositions tend to be (mis)recognized, especially in highly elit(ist) environments such as leading corporate firms, they are assigned with high value, and are read as signs of cultural competence and distinctions. This is in short how class privilege gets reproduced. What is especially problematic about this practice from the point of social justice and equality of chances is that while the passing on of economic assets and social contacts is (relatively) easy to spot, cultural capital is transferred in less obvious ways, and such capacities tend to be (mis)red as signs of talent, 'natural sophistication', innate intelligence, as Friedman and Laurison so compellingly point out. While these are strong theoretical statements, the book manages to convey this message through a uniquely rich ethnography. A short quote from the book:

> … it is really important to be able to chat and yes, have a bit of humour and for it to be jolly. There's a certain lightness of touch and it's really tiring because you are performing. You are on. It sort of looks open but it's actually quite careful and not like… it's actually a skill. (p. 135)

A major strength of this book is not simply its insights into certain elite occupations, as there have been studies about specific professional fields, but these were always isolated studies, without establishing any links with the complex mobility structures of the entire society, and typically focused on the single issue of making it 'into' those professions (from lower strata of society), whereas the next steps remained unexplored until now. In my understanding, this is the major strength and novelty of the book, since Friedman and Laurison discuss individual mobilities (from the working class to the upper-middle class and the elite) not only by following and explaining how people 'get into' elite occupations, but most importantly, by meticulously exploring and via individual narratives reconstructing individual career trajectories laced into life-histories.

The second major strength of the book is the way the authors synthetize a standard approach of class mobility, which looks at occupational class as the single most important indicator of social mobility, with two further research traditions which conventionally do not fall under the scope of classic mobility studies. One of these traditions is the sociology of the elite recruitment tradition, a tradition which gained special popularity in the last century, especially in the 1950s and 1960s Anglo-Saxon sociological tradition (around the concept of social closure). Bringing back the class- structure approach, the analysis draws on a current mobility analysis utilizing LFS data on class origin. The second tradition is that of feminist critics introducing the 'glass ceiling' concept into the general scholarship, standing for a broad circle of mechanisms identified as characteristics of the class ceiling such as homo-

phily, sponsorship, micro-aggression, which have been identified in studies about racial ethnic groups and in studies about white women too. Friedman and Laurison promptly explore these features and mechanisms among their corporate protagonists too. Since many of their interviewees also belong to racialized minorities while being of working-class background, their 'double or multiple disadvantage' is without a question, intersectionality is at play without any doubt.

The book's major innovative aspect lies in its ability to capture the conceptual depths of social mobility. As the authors note, income and occupation still stand in most studies to analyse social mobility (a two-point approach: departure and arrival), which means that even recent innovations fail to dislodge this theoretical consensus on social mobility. This means that class is still approached through a single variable (income or occupation) and mobility destination is captured through a one-time single snapshot (they call it single time-point). What is missing from this approach is the trajectory aspect, leaving bumps and turns of the journey unexplored, and the entire time aspect unnoticed – whereas in a professional career, it is quite important both in terms of prestige as well as financially, whether one reaches the (potential) 'peak' of one's career two years after entry into a firm, or after twenty years, or if it never takes place at all.

This is where the Bourdieusian approach turns out to be extremely fruitful as it captures exactly these two aspects: time and trajectory. Friedman and Laurison are deeply interested in exploring intra-generational mobility that is mobility within one's own career, its intricacies and nuances, its main influencing factors, hindering and supporting circumstances. For the latter they bring examples from interviews about the role of 'the Bank of Mum and Dad' (parental financial support), housing arrangement typical of privileged background (rent paid by the parents at the beginning of one's career, access to housing in an affordable way via social contacts). Other than its immediate consequences on one's financial situation, such support coming from one's (privileged) family background has far-reaching career related consequences: those without such privileges are to make undesirable career choices, becoming forced to detour from their intended trajectory (e.g. an actor aspiring for a TV channel gets stuck in unimportant C category ads, accepts casts in clichéd roles instead of making his/her break of his/her life, while a colleague of similar artistic talent with a significant family support can make more informed and planned choices quickly advancing his/her career).

Friedman's and Laurison's book is brilliant for multiple reasons: it advances an important line of research to better grasp the complexities of social mobility via the Bourdieusian lens in a theoretical sense. It also adds significantly to better understand the mobilities to and within certain elite professions (with direct relevance to the entire structure of social mobility), while it most importantly informs social science thinking about the role of class in social mobilities, its role not restricted to only studying access to certain occupational categories but also regarding individual movements within these categories. The book's real highlights are the chapters unpacking the 'trickiness of merit', individual perceptions of situations characterized by 'studied informality', or the one on selection and promotion mechanisms applying 'glass slippers', that is; the (mis)recognition of 'symbolic masteries' of candidates on the road of the reproduction of the elite.

Zsuzsanna Árendás
[arendas.zsuzsanna@tk.hu]
(Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest)

CONFERENCE PAPERS

The re-enchantment of culture and flexible citizenship in a hardening world

Ideology and life strategies in middle-class migration to Europe and beyond

The Research Centre for Social Sciences (Centre for Excellence, Hungarian Academy of Sciences) and the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (Halle, Germany) co-organised the workshop 'The Re-enchantment of Culture and Flexible Citizenship in a Hardening World: Ideology and Life strategies in Middle-Class Migration to Europe and Beyond'. The workshop took place on 26 November 2021, when global migration seemed to be gradually emerging from a lockdown. The initiators, Pál Nyíri and Biao Xiang, invited scholars whose work sheds light on the various forms and interpretations of middle-class migration. By the time we are finishing the editing of the workshop's materials, we are in the middle of a major war in Europe and escalation of military tensions in the Asia Pacific. The questions that the workshop aimed to tackle have only become more urgent.

Migration and values

Biao Xiang* & Pál Nyíri**

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 201–206.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.1059
https://intersections.tk.hu

* [xiang@eth.mpg.de] (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology)
** [p.d.nyiri@vu.nl] (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

People migrate not only to make money, but also to seek freedom, happiness and new meanings of life. Migration is inseparable from values – migrants' perceptions of what is good, important, and worthy (for a succinct review of anthropological discussions on values, see Robbins and Sommerschuh, 2016). Following Graeber (2013, pp. 219–243), we distinguish *values* (in the plural), i.e. norms to be striven for or moral principles according to which one wishes to live, from economic *value* (in the singular). Specific values that drive migration include fairness, freedom, tolerance, authenticity, autonomy, among many others. For instance, middle class Chinese have been moving to Hungary since the 2010s to enjoy a slower pace of

life and a stronger sense of autonomy, while sacrificing their financial incomes (Nyíri & Beck, 2020). Chinese parents send children, including pre-school children, overseas for education that is hoped to offer happy, free, and well-round development, which suits 'human nature' as the parents put it (Xiang, 2022; Kardaszewicz, 2019). There have been reports that Western Europeans committed to a right-leaning political ideology have moved to rural Hungary in order to lead a more authentic 'European' life in an environment perceived as white and Christian (e.g. *Le Figaro,* 2016).

These emerging flows are compelled by ideologies, desires, and lifestyle choices. But none of them alone is sufficient to account for the migrants' motivations. Values encompass these elements. Deeply internalised, values also have more direct effects on actions than ideologies. According Kluckhohn's classical definition, values are about 'conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action' (1951, p. 395). People are much more likely to relocate in pursuit of gender equality (a value) than following the faith in socialism or liberalism (ideology). Values shape lifestyle choice but are much more than lifestyle strategies. There is no such thing as desire or as lifestyle choice without people's value judgement. When we examine how people migrate for a desirable lifestyle, we have to ask *why* they regard that lifestyle desirable in the first place. People may opt for lifestyles that appear less enjoyable because they see them as less materialistic or corrupt or as environmentally more sustainable.

It has been long recognised that values are an integral part of migration. Albert Hirschman, James Scott and David Graeber have made the case that the search for political freedom and autonomy has been a central driving force for long-distance migration throughout human history. Immigration as a quest for freedom is central to the mainstream narrative in the U.S. about its national history. During the Cold War, communist states prohibited outmigration based on the perception that it reflected a choice of political values, and thus emigration, or even the intention to do so, constituted an act of disloyalty.

However, in the social science literature on migration, values are curiously absent. Despite significant differences in their approaches, migration scholars, political commentators and advocates share a focus on economic motives. They tend to dismiss earlier views of migration as an act expressing value preferences as naive at best, and self-serving at worst. The push-pull model and neoclassical theories reduce migrants to value-maximising but values-free *homo economicus*. The structural-historical school, as represented by the dependency and world systems theories, call attention to inequality and exploitation, but they nevertheless perceive migrants as economic actors following economic laws. Frameworks based on migrant networks go beyond economic transactions, and call attention to social norms such as reciprocity, ethnic solidarity, and familism. But norms as identified in migration network theories are different from values held by individuals. These norms are given and assumed to be followed; values as we understand them require reflexivity, judgement, and active endorsement. People are obliged to conform to norms, but actively seek values that are what they want or believe that should have (Venkatesan, 2015, pp. 442–443, cited in Robbins & Sommerschuh, 2016, p. 2). Norms facilitate existing migration; values initiate new flows. Social networks literature describes how migration became normalised and therefore self-perpetuating but fails to explain why people sometimes migrate against norms, even without networks.

A major exception to this utilitarian approach is the literature on migration and gender. This body of work clearly shows that people, especially those at marginalised positions, migrate for the sake of dignity, respect, individual autonomy and sexual freedom. They do so often at the cost of economic security. Values motivate them to break with norms, and migration enables them to achieve so because it is hard to rebel against norms in the home society. This literature further demonstrates that migration is not a straightforward journey led by a signal value. Migrants negotiate multiple, often conflicting, values. For instance, female migrants constantly struggle to balance their desire for being a good mother, an independent woman, and a happy self. Migration is a process in which migrants reflect on and remake values (for latest examples along this line of study, see Fengjiang, 2021; Yang, 2021).

The literature on migration and gender provides us with important inspirations in tackling the relation between migration and values. This is the time to broaden the notion of values and develop a larger framework. As the world is going through major shifts after the 2008 financial crisis, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it is becoming increasingly apparent that values are shaping migrations more directly than before, and conversely migration is more closely tied to global shifts as a contestation over values. Take China as an example. On WeChat, the social network used by virtually everyone in mainland China (Sun & Yu, 2022), searches for the term 'emigration' (*yimin*) jumped by 440 per cent nationwide on April 3 when the central government announced to adhere to its zero-COVID policy (WeChat Index, 2022). For many middle-class Chinese, insistence on this policy is not only misguided but a reflection of how the government's increasing authoritarianism makes life increasingly difficult even for those who stay out of politics. It is unclear, however, whether this desire would translate into actual outflows as the Chinese government has drastically reduced the number of passports issued. According to data from the State Migration Bureau, 335,000 passports were issued in the first half of 2021, which accounted for only 2 per cent of the number issued in the same period in 2019. Regulations for 'non-essential' travel abroad were further tightened in 2022. The trend of decoupling of outmigration control from ideology, unbroken through all political upheavals since 1986 (Cheng, 2002; Zweig et al., 2004) seems reversed. This reversal of a long-held policy of free movement is likely to be caused by the state's fear that Chinese who have studied or lived abroad may be a source of subversive values.

In Russia, where travel abroad has been impeded by cancelled flights, official harassment, and payment difficulties due to sanctions, an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 IT specialists left the country by the end of March, a number that is forecast to reach 100,000 in April (Volpicelli, 2022; Metz & Satariano, 2022). While tech workers have been overrepresented in this migration as their international firms enabled them to relocate, it extends to other segments of the urban middle class. An economist at the University of Chicago calculated an outflow of 200,000 by the second week of the war and predicted 0.5 million to 1 million outmigration in 2022.) As in China, it is driven by an intersection of values – a liberally minded urban middle class not wanting to live in Putin's Russia – and the apparent end to their ability to carve out a lifestyle bubble within which life appeared tolerable and even pleasant (Gessen, 2022). Are they leaving Russia as the evil side, the losing side, or simply the inconvenient side? Different people would have different answers, but all of them have to face the values question.

Unpacking migration as a value-action and value-aspiration

Migration as an action is by definition a multifaceted and practical process. The process is never a direct reflection of migrants' wishes. In many cases what appear to be ideological causes of migration may be post hoc rationalisation. This may explain, in part, why existing literature has been reluctant in factoring in values as an explanatory variable. It is therefore important to investigate empirically how abstract ideas interact with specific material conditions that eventually shape the migration journey. To this end, we will need to do the following.

First, we need to pay much closer attention to the migrant-sending context. In contrast to the limited attention to values in the study of migratory processes, values-related questions do figure, if disproportionately focused on the 'integration'-transnationalism binary, in studies on *post*-migration experiences in the destination country. Just to name a few examples of such values-related concerns: identity, citizenship, rights, access, diversity, long-distance nationalism, and transnational householding. Other vectors of values are, however, rarely considered. More strikingly, it is as if that only after a migrant settles down at the destination does she become a full person with concerns about values. In this sense, the negligence about values in migration is a function of the negligence of the sending context. If we take the sending context as seriously as the receiving context, and examine how the desire for migration emerges through complex social relations in the sending context, values may naturally emerge as an important dimension. As Inglehart has pointed out, as societies get richer, they often undergo an accompanying shift in values (Welzel & Inglehart, 2005), a shift that has recently become increasingly obvious in newly affluent societies outside the West (e.g. Hansen & Svarverud, 2010). However, such value shifts are uneven and often generate tensions with and backlashes by holders of traditional norms – defined by class, generation, gender and other factors – which can contribute to decisions to migrate among both groups.

Second, we need to delineate the two-way relationship between values and experiences. Values are always a particular person's values. A person's socioeconomic status and lived experiences shape values. Middle-class migrants have different values, including the ways that they assert such values and means to pursue such values, than other groups. It is thus important to locate the migrants in their home society according to their relations to other groups. At the same time, we need to listen carefully to how migrants envision living according to values they subscribe to. Migrants' complaint about the lack of freedom, for instance, may refer to the rote learning model in the education system, or an excessively competitive work environment, or patriarchal family relations, but also to surveillance, political freedoms, and ideological conformity. Freedom can be enjoyed by privileged groups in an authoritarian state more so than by ordinary people in a democratic country. Migrants sometimes may choose to move to a country that is not at all friendly to foreigners because, despite the general hostile environment, the middle class could recreate bubbles of perceived freedom. It is not values in general, but always values in particular – values of particular group in particular context, that shape migration.

Third, we need to examine how migration as a plan and inspiration expresses values. Many more people think and talk about migration than those who actually migrate at the end. These 'would-be migrants' (Xiang, 2014) may fail in their migration plans but reinforce their values by thinking and talking about their desire for outmigration. 'Runology' – discussions about how one can 'run away' from China quickly – was a major topic in the

Chinese social media in early 2022 (Zhang, 2022). The question 'what does the internet term "run" mean?' posted by a netizen on the website *Zhihu* attracted 612 responses, including lengthy and sophisticated argumentations, and nearly 8 million views by the end of May 2022. Many posts under 'runology' on *Zhihu* expressed dissatisfaction with the economic development model and especially top-down control, and the desire for happiness, responsibility, fairness, individual freedom, democratic participation, limiting public power, and the rule of law. The topic was regarded so sensitive that a WeChat group *Huarun Wanjia* (which is the name of a chain department store; the term can be interpreted to mean 'ten thousand families run away from China') was banned in May 2022. Communication is important because values must be expressed in order to be maintained. Migration is a special means to articulate values. Talking about migration is making an international comparison, and this links personal life to global geopolitics. In the era of instant global communication and rapid world reordering, international relations is an important dimension of value articulation.

Fourth and finally, in addition to being more attentive to the sending context, we need to develop more nuanced understandings about the meaning of the destination. Desirable destinations are not necessarily places where offer the best economic opportunities, and vice versa. This partly explains why southern and eastern European countries have become a popular destination for many middle-class migrants, especially from China, in recent years. Some of these migrants move as investors, others as students. They see southern and eastern Europe as the location that offers an authentic 'European lifestyle' associated with desirable values at lower costs. This does not mean that the values desirable for the migrants match the dominant ideologies in these countries. In many cases they contradict each other. But particular cities may identify themselves as locations of exception to national regimes of value. The migrants may also cultivate particular social niches to satisfy their desirable values. As such, the destination should be understood as particular place and social milieu, which is nested in multi-scalar relations to other places, rather than a monolithic nation.

References

Anonymous (n. d). 网络用语「润」是什么意思，有哪些引申用法 [What is the meaning of the internet term 'Run' and what are its derivative uses] https://www.zhihu.com/question/487540745

Cheng Xi (2002). Non-remaining and non-returning: The mainland Chinese students in Japan and Europe since the 1970s. In P. Nyíri & I. Saveliev (Eds.), *Globalizing Chinese Migration* (pp. 158–172). Routledge.

Graeber, D. (2013). It is value that brings universes into being. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory, 3*(2), 219–243. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau3.2.012

Hansen, M. H. & Svarverud, R. (Eds.) (2010). *iChina: The Rise of the Individual in Modern Chinese Society.* NIAS Press.

Jiazhi Fengjiang (2021). 'To be a little more realistic': Ethical labour of suspension among nightclub hostesses in southeast China. *Pacific Affairs, 94*(2). 307–328. https://doi.org/10.5509/2021942307

Kardaszewicz, K. (2019). New rules of the game? Education and governmentality in Chinese migration to Poland. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 28*(3), 353–376. https://doi.org/10.1177/0117196819877004

Kovacs, S. (2016). Ces Allemands qui fuient leur pays pour s'installer en Hongrie. *Le Figaro*, 23 October. https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2016/10/23/01003-20161023ARTFIG00110-ces-allemands-qui-fuient-leur-pays-pour-s-installer-en-hongrie.php

Nyíri, P. & Beck, F. (2020). Europe's New Bildungsbürger? Chinese Migrants in Search of a Pure Land. *Diaspora, 20*(3), 305–326. https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.20.3.003

Robbins, J. & Sommerschuh, J. (2016). Values. In F. Stein, S. Lazar, M. Candea, H. Diemberger, J. Robbins, A. Sanchez & R. Stasch (Eds.), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. https://doi.org/10.29164/16values

Sun, W. & Yu, H. (Eds.) (2022). *WeChat and the Chinese Diaspora: Digital Transnationalism in the Era of China's Rise.* Routledge.

Venkatesan, S. et al. (2015). There is no such thing as the good: The 2013 meeting of the group for debates in anthropological theory. *Critique of Anthropology, 35*(4), 430–480. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X15598384

WeChat Index. Cited in Shanghai people's immigration fever soared, Canada 'immigration conditions' search even surged 2846%, 2022-04-13.

Wei Yang (2021). 'Temporary Couples' among Chinese Migrant Workers in Singapore. *Pacific Affairs, 94*(2). 285–305. https://doi.org/10.5509/2021942285

Welzel, C. & Inglehart, R. (2005) Liberalism, postmaterialism, and the growth of freedom. *International Review of Sociology, 15*(1), 81–108. https://doi.org/10.1080/03906700500038579

Xiang, Biao (2003). Emigration from China: A Sending Country Perspective. *International Migration, 41*(3), 21–48. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2435.00240

Xiang, Biao (2014). The would-be migrant: Post-socialist primitive accumulation, potential transnational mobility, and the displacement of the present in northeast China. *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, *2*(2), 183–199. https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2014.3

Xiang, Biao (2022). *Educational mobility and 'human nature': Changes in student migration from China since 2000.* Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. https://www.eth.mpg.de/6026449/educational_mobility_and_human_nature

Zhang, Juan (2022). *'Rùn!' – Why are China's Urban Youths Searching for a Way Out?* Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. (forthcoming)

Zweig, D., Chen, C. & Rosen, S. (2004). Globalization and transnational human capital: Overseas and returnee scholars to China. *The China Quarterly, 179*, 735–757. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741004000566

国家移民管理局：从严限制中国公民非必要出境活动 [National Immigration Administration: Strictly limit Chinese citizens' non-essential border crossing activities]. *Chinanews.com.cn,* 12 May 2022. https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/2022/05-12/9752959.shtml

国家移民管理局发布2021年1-6月份移民管理工作主要数据 [National Immigration Administration releases main immigration administration work data for January-June 2021]. https://www.nia.gov.cn/n897453/c1431039/content.html

The enchantment of national culture in East Central Europe

Balázs Trencsényi*

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 207–210.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.1060
https://intersections.tk.hu

* [trencsenyib@ceu.edu] (Central European University)

This introduction helped situate contemporary migrations in the historical context of how cultural authenticity was projected onto different parts of Europe, especially Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

In this introduction, I have two aims. One is to give a historical overview of why a nativist mode of thinking or speaking is so well-entrenched in East Central European cultural traditions. This can also be an explanation of why it was relatively easy to mobilise people against migration in the 2010s. The other is why this region can operate as a kind of 'Disneyland of authenticity' not only for Chinese but also for Russian, American, British, Dutch and other migrants.

Usually, the local nobility is competing with the imperial bureaucracies and their clients, who try to take away their privileges. For instance, Hungarian nobility realised *en masse* that they were actually culturally and linguistically Hungarian only in the late 18th century under the pressure of Viennese Enlightened Absolutism. Before that, they did not really seem to care too much. Same with the Polish gentry after the partition of Poland. In the mid-18th century they still believed that they could adjust to any sovereign provided that their noble privileges were respected. But when they became part of the partitioning empires, they realised that empires are all (de)nationalising to a certain extent, and they started to protect and cherish their national tradition. They started to dress in 'national' garb.

In the 19th century, this discursive framework shifts once again. There is a general obsession with the death of the nation, which is a Herderian term but is picked up by Romantic intellectuals and 'awakeners' everywhere. This also contributes to the legitimisation of the national liberal reform discourses, which are ultimately about catching up to the West but combined with some sort of local tradition. So, the Eastern European national liberal modernisation projects – and these were the projects that would create the modern nation in this part of the world - are about how local traditions can be made somehow compatible with Western modernity. This is the period when they were trying to revalorise local premodern forms of self-government as precursors of Western parliamentarianism. The idea is not simply to adopt the institutions of British parliamentarianism, but to prove that Hungarian noblemen in the 12th century already had analogous traditions. These nativist discursive structures legitimise the import of Western political modernity. At the same time, the national romantic frame goes together with the expectation that the national spirit can assimilate everybody. So, this is not an ethnoculturalist discourse in this respect.

There is yet another change in the second half of the 19th century. With the modernisation of the epistemic framework of politics and the coming of positivism, comparative dimensions are opened up for thinking about the nation. But ironically, this framework is

also much warier about assimilation. So, on the one hand, the nation becomes structurally more open, on the other hand, much more closed; it is less allowing for swift assimilation of non-co-ethnic groups.

It is in this context that he first debates about immigration emerge and become connected to the question of naturalisation. For example, in Romania the debates about Jewish citizenship erupt when the Western powers set it as a condition for accepting the newly emerging Romanian state as a 'civilised' partner. What to do with Jews who are emigrating from the Russian Empire? The second half of the 19th century saw a moral panic in most of the Eastern European countries with regard to the 'influx of aliens,' in some ways prefiguring the early 21st century moral panic about Muslim immigration. There are close parallels.

Lastly, in this period, the ideological nativisation of religious cult and institutions gets reinforced. Religious denominations up to the late 19th century are usually universalistic and the church leadership still condemned the national 'deviation' of some of the local clergy (this was called 'philetism' in the Orthodox context), but in the late 19th century there is a nationalisation or nativisation of religious tradition ('national Catholicism,' 'national Orthodoxy,' and even more emphatic versions of 'national Protestantism'). It is a crucial phenomenon because it creates a situation where spiritual, biological, and social-cultural factors could be pushed together into a homogenised binary opposition of insiders and outsiders, those who are part of the ethnocultural community and those who are not.

After the First World War, the naturalisation of the ethnic 'others' is completed in the whole region, being stipulated by the post-war peace framework and the problematic but still existing post-war directives of minority protection. In those countries where this is actually the most neuralgic question (such as Romania and Poland), it is perceived to be a Western meddling with the internal affairs and in some ways it reinforced the discourse about the clash of allogenous and indigenous groups. Even within these legally unified post-WWI societies, there remained a very strong consciousness of insiders and outsiders. The stake was not so much legal rights, but competition for resources: educational resources, access to jobs, social mobility, and so on. Of course, this was even more pressing in countries where there was a radical scarcity after the First World War: but it is telling that ideas of 'numerus clausus' popped up not only in the defeated countries like Hungary, but also in its seemingly more successful neighbours.

The interwar period witnessed the emergence of new ideological constructs: national or ethnic ontologies, which are complex intellectual projects of constructing nativism as the ultimate matrix of the legitimisation - connecting space, culture, and time (history) into one metaphysical entity of national authenticity. Insiders and outsiders are also constructed metaphysically; the true natives have an ontological status of being the carriers of the true national tradition, while everybody else is an outsider, even if they had lived on the territory for a thousand years. So, certain insiders can be redefined as outsiders. They can be religious minorities, ethnic minorities, social cultural groups, and so on. Even without decipherable external features of alterity, spiritually, they could be the constructed as 'others,' and all the more dangerous as it was not that easy to unveil them as 'others.' During World War II, all these ideological constructs will feed into extremely bloody national homogenisation projects in this zone, not only the Holocaust but also the massacres and forced repatriation of minority groups (Poles, Ukrainians, Bosnians, Serbs, Albanians, etc).

These homogenisation processes did not stop with World War II. The state-building of the postwar period, irrespective of the relationship of democratic and communist compon-

ents in the respective political culture, often continued the wartime logic of ethnic cleansing. So, radical democratic and communist political elites often realised what the Fascists or extreme right movements started.

The postwar dynamic of getting rid of the ethnic others within the regime was very successful and emotionally loaded. It often created the ideological underpinning for national communism, which focused both on the integration of the pre-communist national romantic canon as the master-narrative of identity, and was often entangled with the clash of indigenous and allogenous groups within the leadership of the Communist Party (which was also due to the fact that in most cases the interwar communist movement was indeed very successful in mobilising the ethnic minorities) as it was offering an internationalist framework of identification, transcending the ethno-national cleavages permeating these societies. Similarly, rooted in the ideas of population management in a period of forced industrialisation, socialist projects of pronatalism proliferated in most of these countries, focusing on raising birth-rates, and in some cases this was also increasingly ethnicised (like in Bulgaria where the state was increasingly worried about the demographic fall of the overall population and the presence of a sizeable Turkish minority).

Meanwhile, following the cataclysms of the immediate postwar period, with the solidification of the Iron Curtain and the autarchic economic policies of local Stalinist elites, there was relatively little population movement in these countries. Once the immediate postwar population movements – mostly forced – were over, borders became more or less closed (obvious exceptions are the pre-Berlin Wall emigration to the West and the temporary collapse of border control in Hungary during the 1956 Revolution). Still, there is some migration, for example outbound from Yugoslavia in the 1960s or inbound from socialist countries in the 1970s and 1980s, like Cuban, Vietnamese, and even a small number of Chinese guest workers. Even smaller groups of leftist exiles were also accommodated in some of these societies (from the Greek communists, who managed to escape after the lost Civil War, to some South American intellectuals and activists). This is a microphenomenon compared to the macrophenomena I described above, but it generates quite interesting ethno-culturalist reactions such as Czech and East German anti-Vietnamese mobilisation in the early 1990s, which were connected to the challenge posed to the local working class by a very cheap work force in the moment of heightened anxiety. It is also important to mention that the pronatalist and nativist discourses - which are romantic and organicist, positivist – appeared also in the discourse of the anti-communist opposition in terms of a ‘demographic panic.’ So, while communist parties produced national communist narratives (in some cases, such as Romania after 1968, dominating the public sphere, in others, like Hungary, being marginalised), in some case there was also a local competition between ethnically diverse workers and an intellectually refined discussion about the ‘death of the nation’ in the ‘grey zone’ as well as in the opposition circles.

In sum, I would like to recall that, when various ‘migrant crises’ broke out in post-Cold War Europe, Western analysts often saw Eastern Europe as intrinsically intolerant due to its national homogeneity. It was said that Eastern Europeans were prejudiced because in comparison to Western Europe their societies were utterly homogeneous. Hungary’s prime minister Viktor Orbán also plays to this view: we are luckily still homogeneous, he has said, and we don’t want to be heterogeneous like you. I attempted to show that this is a very gross falsification of historical trajectories in Eastern Europe, because these countries where historically much more heterogeneous than Western European societies, where homogenisation

took place much earlier. Exactly because of this heterogeneity, there was a persistent ideological frame that divided people into insiders and outsiders. As many theoreticians, starting with the Hungarian István Bibó, pointed out, East Central European national projects were heavily influenced by ethno-culturalist discourses. So, even if the real plurality was there, there was also a very strong project of national homogenisation. Up to World War II it was ideological rather than real, because Eastern European societies were extremely heterogeneous. During and after World War II, however, most of them became much more homogeneous, and by the 1980s, the memory of heterogeneity completely faded away. The fiction of ethnic purity derives from the projects of ethnic competition aimed at making these societies homogeneous, rather than their historical homogeneity.

During the discussion, differences were raised between migration history and nativism in Eastern versus Western Europe. Local elites in the region, fearful of forceful assimilation into the empires, became hostile to immigrants as competitors. The romanticist origin of nativism was also emphasised: the symbolic language of national authenticity that was later recast in biological terms still shapes the discourse about immigration, emigration, and ethnic homogenisation up to now.

Shift in drivers of migration: From economic accumulation to social reproduction and lifestyle consumption

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 211–216.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.1061
https://intersections.tk.hu

Biao Xiang,* Susana Narotzky** & Pei-Chia Lan***

* [xiang@eth.mpg.de] (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology)
** [narotzky@ub.edu] (University of Barcelona)
*** [pclan@ntu.edu.tw] (National Taiwan University)

The first panel of the workshop aimed at conceptualising the shift in the drivers of migration. One way to understand the shift from economic accumulation to lifestyle consumption is, in Weberian terms, as a shift from *Zweckrationalität* (instrumental rationality) to *Wertrationalität* (value rationality). Alternatively, one can conceptualise it as a shift from production to reproduction migration (Xiang, 2021). How useful are these distinctions? Can they help in reformulating gravity-based push-pull models in migration theory? Should the role of social reproduction, understood as everything that sustains the generational reproduction of life (including education, environmental quality, healthcare, and care for the elderly) be acknowledged in shaping migration decision-making more generally in shaping both the symbolic *(Wert)* and economic *(Zweck)* landscape of mobilities? Or should values (such as nostalgia for a simpler life and more meaningful human relations) and ideologies (such as freedom or tradition) be acknowledged as determinants of migration in their own right?

Biao Xiang

My idea is to propose a framework to study reproduction migration. Reproduction migration refers to cases where people migrate for the purpose of maintaining, producing and enhancing life. This includes better education, better air quality, safer food having more social security, safety, and better care, or to give birth. I propose that this is very different from earlier migration where people went abroad to earn money or remit money back. These people – especially from China, South Korea, Singapore, and Russia – earn money at home and they spend money overseas for the purpose of life itself.

Why call it social reproduction rather than lifestyle migration or consumption migration? This concept is analytical rather than descriptive. Calling cleaning, washing up, childrearing and so on social reproduction reconnects women's invisible labour to the entire capitalist system. By calling these mobilities reproduction migration, it is my purpose to expose the links between these types of individual mobility and changes in the global political economy.

Asia and specifically China have become the centre of the global economy, but the West, including the peripheral West such as Hungary, have become the main sites of social reproduction. Production of, for example, clothes and shoes does not earn so much money. Education, entertainment, technology, fashion, overall lifestyle things are more important: that is where money is. And there is a spatial distribution of these types of activities.

I propose that there are two underlying processes behind reproduction migration. There is dis-embedding, meaning that social reproduction like care and education used to be embedded in family relations and then national welfare systems, and these relations are weakening. Because they are becoming dis-embedded, they become a commodity that can be exchanged in the market. Therefore, you can migrate for the purpose of social reproduction. If education and care were deeply embedded in localised or nationalised institutions, then it would be harder to migrate for this purpose.

The second process going hand in hand with dis-embedding is articulation. This concept refers to bringing different things together and creating something else. It is informed by a French anthropology school called the Articulation School in the 1960s. Its members suggest that migration should not be understood as merely the movement of people. Rather, it is the process that articulates the capitalist mode of the production of people. Migration became the critical link through which value is being transferred from tribal precapitalist mode of people production, or social reproduction to the capitalist core in Western Europe.

The reverse is occurring now: you have material production in the home country and social reproduction in the destination country. People are moving away from East China because social reproduction is very commodified and ironically it is in the West, where the commodification is less ingrained.

Articulation can further be divided into three aspects: structural, ideational and institutional. Structural is very difficult in terms of data because it is hard to decipher what the origin of the money is in the global economy. In China, this money comes from surplus generated from export-led economy. And then you have to figure out what the source of this value is. In relation to ideational articulation or culture: here, culture is not a matter of identity. Rather, it is presented as universal, related to human nature and authenticity. *It is very ideational, it is a process on how to think about the world.* I call this process ideational articulation. How migrants themselves make sense of these activities and choices.

If you look at the history of Chinese student migration, stage one is going abroad to learn technology to bring it back to serve the motherland. Stage two is to go overseas for your own benefit and to settle down. Now it is about neither of them, it is to save human nature. It is because China is too competitive. The education system is very well developed but it is not good for human nature, so you have to go overseas to save human well-being. There is no instrumental concern, but the political economy factor must come in as a part of ideations or articulation.

Susana Narotzky

I think I am here to talk about reproduction in some way, to respond to this very interesting idea that lifestyle migration is reproduction migration. I really like that you articulated these intimate decisions and decision-making processes with larger structural and institutional processes. I think it is very useful, and it relates to what social reproduction means.

However, when I read your paper – and the papers by Fanni [Beck], Krzysztof [Kardaszewicz] (2021), and Pál [Nyíri] (2022) – I get the impression that precisely these structural or institutional aspects get lost, and the individual aspects of decision-making get

highlighted. This is a bit problematical, because I get the feeling that in that view there remains a dichotomy between production and reproduction, between moving to get a better income and moving to get a better or healthier life. In fact, labour migrants are also moving to enhance life, maybe not so much their own lives but the lives of the people to whom they send remittances. The difference between materialistic migration and ideational migration for a better life is not so easily articulated.

I talked to a lot of labour migrants during my fieldwork in Spain. They all systematically talk about a 'better life' and 'making a life'. They say, 'I don't have a life and I want a life, so I have to go abroad.' And 'having a life' means, when you ask them, having children, being able to raise a family, all these things.

You say that, traditionally, the transfer of value between periphery and centre countries was through labour. We can speak about the Articulation School, but Michael Burawoy (in his 1976 article 'The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor') reaches the same conclusion. He says that the transfer of value occurs because reproduction is placed outside of the capitalist system as an unaccounted transfer of value. This is what Marxist feminism also said in the 1970s.

The change now is not so much about reproduction or lifestyle migration, but that the transfer of value is happening through capital. China is at the centre of the world economy; it is not on the periphery. So, what is happening is that capital is being transferred from the new centre to these Western countries. That is why the timing of these lifestyle migrations is very interesting – from China to Europe. On the one hand we have had the 2008 economic crisis in Europe, very strongly affecting Southern Europe; there are austerity measures, and there is a problem attracting capital and investment to these countries. So they introduced 'golden visas', residency-for-investment schemes, and other legislation benefiting FDI with tax breaks. At the same time, there is almost the opposite movement in China: there is excess capital that has to find places to invest. There is the Belt and Road Initiative and many similar ones. We cannot understand the individual decisions if we do not connect them to these wider structures.

Krzysztof's paper mentions that the Chinese government facilitates certain kinds of migration, for example education migration (cf. Kardaszewicz, 2021). This makes sense in an expansionary movement of foreign investment because you need people who are trained in these countries' cultural practices and education.

The other thing is that we cannot disconnect lifestyle or reproduction migration from the other kinds of migration of Chinese people. If you look at Chinese population movements in Spain, there is very strong immigration in the 2000s to the 2010s, then there is an out-migration, which is stronger than immigration, until 2015. And then again there is a strong influx of the population which is connected to 'golden visas' and capital movement. But it is also linked to other types of migration like labour migration, reunification of families, i.e. the first wave of migration in the 21st century. These people were usually connected to selling imported goods from Chinese manufacturers or to local restaurant businesses. My question is how do these Chinese migrants, who are very unequal and differentiated, themselves understand these different types of migration? How are these lifestyle migrants re-embedded into the local community or into the national community, in which there is some resistance to them as austerity for citizens is contrasted to 'golden visas' for foreigners?

Pei-Chia Lan

I want to start with some comments and then share some of my own research, mostly based on the book I published in 2018, *Raising Global Families* (Lan, 2018). I want to elaborate on the features and significance of reproduction migration, especially to reveal the importance of culture and social aspects in it, and the goal of maintaining life.

I echo Susana in my critique of dichotomising the economic versus the social-cultural and production versus reproduction aspects. I agree that labour migrants also want to enhance their lives when they are making money overseas. I also wonder if this concept is too encompassing empirically. In Biao [Xiang]'s paper it refers to many things: lifestyle migration, retirement, marriage, medical tourism, birth tourism. The category also overlaps with other types of migration: lifestyle migration, educational migration. We need to have a better distinction between these concepts.

It would be helpful to think about the definition of reproduction. Biao identifies two different meanings. One is really general, and the second is a bit more specific, the reproduction of the next generation. As we said earlier, the first definition is more challenging, because all labour migration engages with the everyday maintenance of the household and individual well-being. I do not see this as a unique type even if – as you mentioned in another paper (Xiang, 2021) – Chinese migrants are driven by reproduction as a temporal pressure: the need to get married, the need to buy a house by a certain age. I see this more like a speeding up process for the reproduction aspirations of migrant workers.

I think it is more useful to focus on the second definition of reproduction. But again, I wonder how this is different from earlier empirical phenomena, specifically when we talk about birth tourism and educational migration. As early as the 1980s there were people from South Korea and Taiwan who were sending 'parachute children' to the US. Recently people began to use the term 'global householding' to describe the situation when fathers continue to work at home, while studying mothers bring their children to Singapore, Canada, or Australia. I think we need to be more conscious about the specifics of the current wave of Chinese migration to Eastern Europe. I see some differences in that the logic of migration is different to start with. In this case, migrants are talking about a 'good enough life' in a 'good enough place'. The destination is different: they are moving to the semi-periphery rather than core countries. It is also not just the elite families who are moving but the middle class. They are pursuing reproduction migration for their children.

Lifestyle migration is very much present-oriented: it is about enjoying life *now*, not making money to have a better future. But I am not sure if reproduction migration is like this. The parents are future-oriented: they want their children to have a better future no matter how you define it.

To introduce some examples from my book: I talk about childrearing as a global security strategy. By using this concept, I want to move away from seeing parents as interest maximisers who use childrearing as a calculative action of class reproduction. Instead, I see childrearing as a coping strategy to deal with uncertainty and insecurity in family lives. Parents are doing economic and emotional work to mitigate insecurity for their children. But parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds define security in different ways and therefore come up with different strategies. It is important to situate parents' decisions in the global context, especially for parents in Asia. They enact various types of transnational mobility – short-term, long-term, virtual or physical migration – to mobilise resources and enhance children's lives.

The migratory behaviour of Chinese families reflects a broader pattern of the upwardly mobile middle class in Asia. Similar to the middle-class families I studied in Taiwan, they are mostly first-generation college graduates. They want to give their children a different kind of childhood and also a more globalised future. They also want to break the tradition of authoritarian parenting. At the same time, they are also attracted to a romanticised version of western education and a 'happy childhood'.

I use the term 'orchestrating natural growth' in my book, which can be useful to describe the cases mentioned here. It is used to describe the increasingly popular ideology of middle-class parenting. Some of you cited Annette Lareau's work (2003), which describes working-class parenting as 'the accomplishment of natural growth' because of the lack of money and time. But, in my case, middle-class parents value children's natural growth as a desired goal of childrearing. Unlike working class parents, these middle-class parents are doing a lot of background work to orchestrate children's natural growth. For example, they refrain from imposing too much pressure on children's education or they want to maintain a natural life by consuming organic food.

Some of these Taiwanese parents also engage in internal migration for the purpose of reproduction: they move away from the city to the countryside so that children can attend alternative schools like Waldorf schools. A similar thing is happening in China, where parents are moving for the same reason. There are no examinations or textbooks in Waldorf schools, and teachers incorporate arts and dance, and nature-oriented activities.

Who are these parents who engage in these types of reproduction migration? There is a lot of complexity in their motivations. The earlier generation of Waldorf parents are better described as lifestyle migrants. They gave up urban life, retired from their middle-class careers, and moved to the countryside to do organic farming. The recent cohort of parents in Taiwan migrate mainly for children's education. Some parents are actually prepared to accept their children's downward mobility, because these children might not be able to get into universities after attending an alternative school. And the parents can accept the possibility of their children becoming farmers or carpenters as long as they live a happy life and maintain a holistic personality. However, more parents send their children to alternative schools because they believe that these can cultivate soft skills (such as creativity, imagination, or critical thinking). They think that this can help their children thrive and be more successful in the future.

I talk about internal migration in my book, but these people make a lot of global connections through the Waldorf community. They invite teachers from Europe to visit Taiwan or visit the Waldorf headquarters in Switzerland during the summer.

In conclusion, I think we need to have a better focus on reproduction migration, and we need to see how people's decision to migrate intersects with economic and social cultural aspect. It is not only present-oriented, it has a lot of references to the future. In reaction to Biao [Xiang], especially in Chinese migrating to Eastern Europe, I am not sure if these parents only have their children's happy childhood in mind. It could be that they believe a happy childhood can turn into soft skills, and that Eastern Europe is a gateway to Western Europe.

Lastly, even though we believe that parents are pursuing security by doing emotional work to enhance children's emotional security, I want to emphasise that they have achieved relative class privilege. That is why they can afford the possibility that their children are not super successful, but it is still necessary to maintain their children's relative class privilege and middle-class comfort.

During the discussion, participants questioned whether the phenomenon of reproduction migration constituted a break from previous forms of migration. Speakers emphasised that the middle-class subjects studied were not displaced economically and their livelihood was secure; the driving force of their migration was the internationalisation of reproduction; spending – mostly on services and education – was their primary connection to the destination country; and the language in which they spoke about migration was distinct. However, it remained an open question whether economic security was necessary to allow for this type of migration, or if it should be analysed on a separate dimension.

References

Beck, F. & Nyíri, P. (2022). 'It's All for the Child': The Discontents of Middle-class Chinese Parenting and Migration to Europe. *The China Quarterly,* online first. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741022000169

Burawoy, M. (1976). The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States. *American Journal of Sociology, 81*(5), 1050–1087. https://doi.org/10.1086/226185

Kardaszewicz, K. (2021). *Educational aspirations in the diaspora: The case of the Chinese in Poland.* PhD thesis, University of Warsaw. https://depotuw.ceon.pl/handle/item/3995

Lan, P-C. (2018). *Raising Global Families: Parenting, Immigration, and Class in Taiwan and the US.* Stanford University Press.

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life.* University of California Press.

Xiang, B. (2021). Reproduction-Driven Labor Migration from China. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352488279_Reproduction-Driven_Labor_Migration_from_China/citation/download

The role of children and parenting in migration

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 217–221.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.1062
https://intersections.tk.hu

Krzysztof Kardaszewicz,* Fanni Beck,**
Anders Sybrandt Hansen*** & Andrew Kipnis****

* [k.kardaszewicz@uw.edu.pl] (University of Warsaw)
** [beck_fanni@phd.ceu.edu] (Central European University)
*** [etnoash@cas.au.dk] (Aarhus University)
**** [abkipnis@cuhk.edu.hk] (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Participants in the second panel discussed the role of children and parenting in middle-class migration. When Nyíri (1999) did research among an earlier wave of Chinese migrants in Hungary, concern for the present welfare of the child was absent, although it was encompassed in migrant narratives that presented the future material welfare of the family, understood as more or less extended kin, as the purpose of migration. Today's middle-class migrants explain migration as serving the emotional and mental health of the child, in many cases attended to by both parents living in a state of semi-retirement and leaving their own parents and other kin behind (Beck & Nyíri, 2022). These migrants appear to practice an extreme form of 'intensive parenting', which Yan Yunxiang (2021) sees as contributing to the state-led ideology of 'neofamilism', but many are far from following the filial piety it prescribes. How generalisable is this centrality of children? Is it sufficient to subsume children in the framework of reproduction or is it important to regard them as agents shaping migration? How is middle-class migration shaped by shifting family ideologies, and how does it shape or challenge them?

Krzysztof Kardaszewicz

My paper discusses the growing Chinese educational migration to Poland. I argue that it is driven by the pursuit of a good life due partly to a growing emphasis on happiness and personal fulfilment. I believe these ideas are the outcomes of state efforts and commercial intermediaries ultimately leading to an educational fetish: seeing overseas learning as a life-changing experience in what are largely imagined destinations.

First, we have changing families: the family ideology, structure and authority patterns are all becoming more flexible. Children and their formative experience are increasingly becoming the centre of family life. However, the shift in ideas about learning and childhood (that learning should be child-centred and childhood should be happy) do not go together with a relaxed attitude toward success and achievements. It should not be misread as a sign that parents are less ambitious.

Second, even though the rejection of the educational system in China is very real, it happens in the context of larger governance reforms. We have increasingly convergent policy trends, for example, the UNESCO project on 'happy schools' or the national 'happiness education' framework in South Korea. Happiness is now an official development indicator and so learning is becoming increasingly standardised as something that is supposed to be happy, creative, open, natural. All of this is done in the name of making students more efficient and productive.

This feels similar to efforts in policymaking on diaspora management – where 'best practices' are circulated and adopted to establish an efficient model of engaging diaspora and tapping into its resources. Alan Gamlen has a book out called *Human Geopolitics* (2019) which details the process behind such converging practices, and I think this has relevance to what we see in migrant focus on 'happy education,' and to the way such pursuit is designed and standardised to match official development goals. So because of this, the focus on achievement is still very important. As seen in my interviews, parents want their children to be both very happy and very competitive at the same time.

We talked about the idea of security, and that economic security is the basis of what is now pursued as emotional security. The concept of security can be as tricky and vague as the idea of the middle class. While people are materially better off they can be hugely insecure. So, we could ask what is really changing and why are these changes happening? How much of the above is a generational change to parenting? How much of the migration to Europe is about cultural citizenship versus gaining access to an exclusive club? Is flexible citizenship going out of fashion because it is too common?

Fanni Beck

I would like to bring in a distinction between what enables migration in the present political economy, and what drives it. By this, I mean a closer focus on values that animate the choices of these people, thereby bringing in Weber's work on the distinction between *Zweck*- and *Wertrationalität*, instrumental versus value-oriented rationality. It is tricky because probably both kinds of rationality feature in decision-making, but I would like to focus on the latter. Economic considerations *(Zweckrationalität)* do provide an explanation for how these migration trajectories emerge, but they have little analytical value in explaining why they emerge in the first place. In order to answer that question, we need to take migration narratives more seriously, and understand that the perceived emergency that triggered this mobility was caused by values *(Wertrationalität)* rather than economic necessity.

We have already talked about how the idea of a happy childhood has been taking a strikingly uniform shape around the globe – with significant variations regarding what happiness means in particular contexts. I think the concept of the middle class is crucial to understanding this phenomenon. Middle class cannot be reproduced merely through inheritance: it has to be secured by parenting. This is a universal phenomenon that takes specific forms based on what the political-economic context allows.

For instance, China is probably producing middle-class outmigration because of the specific Chinese middle-class dilemma of class reproduction. On the one hand, extremely harsh and ever-increasing educational competition has clear economic exigencies due to the processes that turn education into an investment for securing one's children's place in society. On the other hand, there are two competing ideals of childhood being promoted by the authoritarian capitalist state. One encourages children to be submissive, filial, obedient, while the other promotes a child who is competitive, creative, and innovative. This makes middle-class parenting inherently ambiguous and confuses parents about how to raise happy and successful children.

I want to bring in the question about the geography of migration and the unlikely destinations for the pursuit of happiness such as Hungary and Poland. Unlike Krzysztof

[Kardaszewicz], I see these parents as pursuing something different than competition. They seek a space outside competition and prescribed trajectories for success and thereby endow 'happiness' with their own signification. They want to reorganise their priorities and thus allow their children to live in the present. The emergence of the ideal of fulfilling your personality, finding your human nature and developing it is largely oriented at the present. Simultaneously, however, the fear of losing out in the competition does not disappear. My interviewees are deeply ambiguous about this dilemma. These decisions are negotiated over and over again.

Lastly, this parenting experience is fundamentally different from what these parents experienced as children in the 1970s and 1980s. So there is intergenerational conflict driving this ambiguity as well. Barbara Ehrenreich argues that American middle-class parents seek to reproduce their own childhood experiences in their child-rearing practices. In contrast, Chinese middle-class parents experiment with radically new ways of shaping childhood, and migration makes this possible.

Anders Sybrandt Hansen

I would like to react to the previous speakers and introduce some provisos. In Krzysztof [Kardaszewicz]'s work, there is a reluctance to take what people say at face value: you end up with the concept of education fetish, which you describe as deception. But I wonder, since people make all sorts of discursive constructs, how do you ascertain that exactly this is a trick or deception? What criteria do you use? In reaction to Fanni [Beck]'s paper, I liked the idea of escape. Perhaps taking it seriously means that unhappiness drives people out.

For quite a while now, educational migration was not necessarily a financially sound decision. It doesn't always translate into a pecuniary benefit. As you have pointed out, Fanni, there must be other reasons as well.

If there is a particular kind of unhappiness driving migration, can we say anything useful about it? I think we can. If we were to take seriously the theme of unhappiness, I think the idea of acceleration could be useful, which is something Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Hartmut Rosa both talk about. And some of these processes are felt particularly strongly in China compared, for example, to Denmark. These processes are unevenly distributed. In my work with Stig Thøgersen on education migration (Hansen & Thøgersen, 2015), I interviewed Chinese students who would talk about involution – at the time, the favourite word for this feeling was *fuzao* 浮躁. They described life as a student in China as too busy and shallow. They felt that they were not reaching any goals, but constantly grasping for a receding horizon.

I did phenomenological interviews with the students, and during this process, I was alerted to particular themes I could not predict. Temporality was the main theme I caught up with. In some cases, they told me that their life as a student in Denmark gave them more free time. Free of peer pressure and parental pressure. And for the first time in their lives, the luxury of being alone for extended periods of time. They would speak of differences in terms of the environment. There was empty space around them, there was no crowding, resulting in a different feel of life. If we are being generous, these experiences hold the promise of existential reflexivity. Some of my interlocutors who went back to China said that they would not continue to pursue the stressful life in the big cities, but rather move to the countryside.

To theoretically conceptualise these findings, I turn to the concept of temporality as used by Pierre Bourdieu and Edmund Husserl. Bourdieu makes the argument that we normally live in the mode of protention, meaning we know relatively well the social games that we engage in, and we can predict more or less what will happen. This happens in relatively stable environments with familiar social and cultural customs. But this can break down, and people's lives can become unpredictable in disruptive events (for instance, when people are fired), or when you are stuck in an involution game, where continuous efforts do not result in predictable results. This makes sense in connection with Guy Standing's concept of precarity. We are seeing precarity and the casualisation of work on the rise in China.

I argue that protention can also be broken down in a more productive way. For example, if you go abroad and you are outside of your normal concerns and you are existentially provoked into a reflexive situation. As long as you are financially and physically secure, as these middle-class students were, you have time for reflection, with potentially far-reaching existential implications. So I think, yes, education is a commodity, but it is also a life-changing event.

Andrew Kipnis

First, there are happy people in the Chinese education system. I knew a couple who would say 'my happiest time was in high school because we had a really clear goal that we were studying for the university entrance exam.' When I was teaching in Hong Kong about how competitive the Chinese education system was there was a student who would say: 'Oh, I never found it very hard… I work a lot harder at the university than I ever did in high school.'

There is this famous 1983 book by Thomas Rohlen, *Japan's High Schools*. At the time, they divided high schools into five levels: the brilliant, level two, level three… Rohlen spent a few months in each type of school, and he found that everybody knew that they were going to a good university at the top level. Thus, they had really good discussions on history, the students were engaged but not uptight. At the bottom level, kids knew that they were not going to university, so they were not uptight in a different way. But those in the middle three levels were absolutely uptight. So, there are different types of schools and different children.

My second point is that being a parent is contradictory. You cannot choose what you get. Sometimes, the child is unpredictable, and parents have to react, resulting in the contradictoriness of what parents articulate.

The third point, in reaction to Fanni's paper, is the question of reproduction. What are you reproducing? Is it the class status? Maybe you were trying to move up your class status. Are you trying to reproduce a certain value structure? I want my kid to be creative, or kind? Maybe it may even be called reproduction but an unconscious drive to have better material success. In a certain national context, this may lead to reproduction, but in an economically thriving country, it leads to upward mobility. If you bring in traditional anthropology, then the question is: are you trying to reproduce patrilines? For example, these people who are moving to Hungary for their children, would they be happy if their children do not have offspring? Is it enough to create happiness for them?

Discussants elaborated on the frequency of education migration among middle-class families who strive for their children's success. It also became clear that this is not the only or even the major motivation in many cases. In a case mentioned, the child's feelings became more important: parents chose the destination based on them.

Participants discussed how the importance of intermediaries had grown due to the increasing volume of education migration. Such businesses could count on the popularity of the 'happy childhood' ideology and use it as a sales strategy. They emphasised the 'feeling' or 'culture' of a destination country to parents. But especially for less well-off Chinese parents, there was also an economic motivation to choose more affordable elite education in Eastern Europe that is out of reach in both their home countries and Western countries.

It was also emphasised that many Chinese parents reject their home countries' approach to childrearing in a broad sense. Beyond the economic reasons, cultural, political and personal motivations were seen among parents. They did not want their children to get the same upbringing they had had, and so many young parents severed family ties with their own parents via migration.

References

Beck, F. & Nyíri, P. (2022). 'It's All for the Child': The Discontents of Middle-class Chinese Parenting and Migration to Europe. *The China Quarterly,* online first. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741022000169

Gamlen, A. (2019). *Human Geopolitics States, Emigrants, and the Rise of Diaspora Institutions.* Oxford University Press.

Hansen, A. S. & Thøgersen, S. (2015). The Anthropology of Chinese Transnational Educational Migration. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs, 44* (3), 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261504400301

Nyíri, P. (1999). *New Chinese Migrants in Europe: The Case of the Chinese Community in Hungary.* Ashgate.

Rohlen, T. (1983). *Japan's High Schools.* University of California Press.

Yan, Y. (2021). The Inverted Family, Post-Patriarchal Intergenerationality and Neo-Familism. In Y. Yan (Ed.), *Chinese Families Upside Down: Intergenerational Dynamics and Neo-Familism in the Early 21st Century* (pp. 1–30). Brill.

The intersection of lifestyle and ideology in migration

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 222–228.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.1064
https://intersections.tk.hu

Stephen Davies,* Matthew Hayes**
& Margit Feischmidt***

* [s.davies@uw.edu.pl] (Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw)
** [mhayes@stu.ca] (St. Thomas University)
*** [feischmidt.margit@tk.hu] (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest)

The pursuit of cultural authenticity, environmental purity, and meaningful social relations has become the global hallmark of the 'postmaterialist' middle class (Inglehart, 2018). Beck and Nyíri's (2022) Chinese interlocutors were attracted specifically to a European rather than an Anglo-American version of modernity, which they perceive as more capitalistic and therefore more similar to China's ('pastoral Occidentalism' in Fran Martin's term). It stands for a wholesomeness they see as gone from Chinese society. Since the 2010s, the pursuit of authenticity has become increasingly intertwined with the nativist backlash against liberal democracy. But while the authenticity nativists wish to reclaim usually lies in one's own imagined past, in this case, the nostalgia is projected onto someone else's imagined past. In this optic, lifestyle migrations may intersect in unexpected ways with currents of ideologies of environmental, cultural, and racial purity. How does a destination country's symbolic meaning for immigrants relate to ideology? What do we know about the scale of this phenomenon? Is the quest for authenticity/purity (both in physical and spiritual terms) an important driver of migration? How should we understand the interplay between economy and ideology, particularly when destination countries are on lower rungs of the global development hierarchy? Should we reinterpret/revise the notion of flexible citizenship as a tool for maximising economic accumulation (Ong, 1999) in order to accommodate these developments?

Stephen Davies

After the democratic transition of 1989–1990, Western businesses entered Poland, accompanied by managers and technicians. Demand for business and language knowledge attracted many American and British people, but also others from Western European nations. These people had business acumen, briefcases, and professional qualifications. For some, migration was seen as a stepping stone on a career ladder to another destination. British migrants who came to Poland in the 1990s could be seen as traditional middle class: they had inherited middle-class values, capital and so on. Their children went on to universities like Oxford and Cambridge, and even in Warsaw, we have an Oxbridge alumni club.

There were also a lot of students, a lot of young people who were looking for a new life, who arrived with just a rucksack on their back, looking for a life they did not have in the UK, people who felt that they were either rejected by the system or could not find a place to fit in. This was an individual leap in the dark for many people who did not know what to expect.

After the Polish accession to the European Union in 2004 and the 2008 recession, researchers started to wake up to other kinds of migration apart from the outmigration of Poles. They began to see return migration of Poles as well as new Western migrants who were coming to Poland. I found some interesting media representations of different groups of Western migrants. One was Italians, described as either under 30 and looking for work because of unemployment in Italy, or over 60 and looking for retirement. And there is a narrative of 'love migration', which used to be that Polish women were going to Italy for love, but now this has reversed and it is coming back in the direction of Poland. There are also a lot of Germans in Poland, often in formerly German-held or -occupied lands, such as Silesia and western border regions. Here, the narrative is around care; they can use their capital and income to get cheaper care in Poland. The advertising of some companies in Poland accentuates that it is just the same care as in Germany: same language, same meals, but a lot cheaper. But the leading source country of permanent immigration is the UK.

Immigrants from Spain, the USA, or France are generally based in cities, whereas among those from the UK, Germany, and the Netherlands, there is a more even split between the rural and the urban, particularly after accession, and particularly in the last decade. I have access to several closed Facebook groups, which British people are involved in. The most frequently shared images are of gardens, nature, animals, weather, fresh food, and freshness in general.

People who have come over the last 10 or 15 years very often have intercultural marriages. Usually a Polish woman and a British man with a young child. I think they are voting with their feet: looking at the situation in the UK, looking at chances of social mobility, at education systems, and safety. Additionally, the Polish government provides something called the 500+ allowance, which is a family supplement for each child. So, I think there is an important economic element to it, but there is also an element of biological reproduction.

Let us take 'flexible citizenship' or 'strategic citizenship' as a starting point. I found that taking Polish citizenship is not a very popular option for British long-term migrants, or indeed, for anybody from Western European countries. People often do not value Polish citizenship, they consider either, if they are from the EU, that one EU citizenship is enough for them – it is flexible citizenship in itself or, for British people, there are other options. One option has been to obtain an Irish passport, another to adopt a wait-and-see strategy.

The agency that many of the migrants have has been eroded by Brexit. The option of moving back to the UK is very difficult to foresee now for people who have Polish partners and probably would not qualify for the Points Based System, which requires EU migrants to be in skilled employment at a minimum salary of around £25,000. Many people who have been here for longer than 15 years were not eligible to even vote in the Brexit referendum. Children who might have gone on to higher education in the UK are no longer able to do that because the British government reneged on a promise of a seven-year moratorium on fees. British migrants in Poland who have children would have to pay the European fees.

I know of at least one or two people in my study whose children have turned their backs on the UK. They have been rejected, but they also have chosen to reject it. For people who have young children, it is not an option to move anywhere else. But once those children have grown, even long-term migrants do not necessarily tie their future to Poland.

The papers by Beck and Nyíri mention that there is a possible attraction to the homogenous, pure, nativist approach to culture in Hungary. A similar approach by the Polish government and part of Polish society is actually very negatively viewed by British people who

tend to be more liberal, more anti-Brexit and more pro-European. Because they see that illiberalism and xenophobia is present in Poland, but also in the UK, neither of these countries is an attractive location for retirement or living the rest of their life. And many of them are already thinking about where to go next.

Matthew Hayes

I am interested in thinking through the relationship between ideology and migration through the concept of 'imaginary,' which has been taken up in other studies by scholars like Karen O'Reilly and Michaela Benson. The case study of North American lifestyle migration to Cuenca might provide some interesting comparative stepping stones for thinking about Chinese migration to Eastern Europe.

The imaginaries of the lifestyle migrants from Canada and the United States going to Cuenca, Ecuador, Cuenca focus on how it is a 'colonial-style city'. From a sociological perspective, it is interesting how the colonial style of the city gets produced. It references Ecuador's colonial past, but currently, it is produced through an elite-led discourse of positioning the city in an archipelago of other colonial-style cities in Latin America, which have been marketed towards North Americans as retirement destinations or as lifestyle migration destinations.

A big part of elite-driven narratives about urban heritage and 'colonial style' is a product of the debt crisis of the 1980s when the World Bank began emphasising tourism as a way of earning foreign exchange. In the early 1990s, Ecuador (particularly Quito) was trying to copy the success of Costa Rica and Panama in attracting that type of real estate investment as a way of diversifying the economy. Cuenca's urban landowners began thinking about situating their own city within global heritage networks in the late 1990s, gaining UNESCO recognition in 1999, which referenced it as an 'outstanding example' of a planned colonial inland town.[1] The colonial-style town is an Ecuadorian discourse, in part presenting Spanish colonial heritage as world heritage. The presentation of the city in this way is internally created, but it also connects to American visions of a certain type of urbanism.

There are a few key parts of drawing people to this urban space. One is the European feel, referring to the architecture in particular, which feels old to North Americans and is in dialogue with cultural notions of authenticity. Another is its walkability, which is frequently commented on by North American migrants. It is an urban fabric that is no longer easily available in North America, where cities have undergone processes of disinvestment in the urban core in favour of automobile-centric suburbs. Cuenca's urban fabric is often described as being like America in the 1950s. The trope of the 1950s is culturally very important, it is a watershed trope: as I point out in my book *Gringolandia* (Hayes, 2018), it papers over deeply divisive social transformations that began in the 1960s. It harks back to an apparently simpler past of close families and straightforward life trajectories that are a source of nostalgia for some North Americans.

Drawing on Durkheimian cultural sociology, an imaginary refers to collective representations, which affect material forces and help to structure social life. North Americans'

---

[1] https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/863/

imaginaries of Ecuadorian families index the transformation of the family in Canada and the US. Similar to Biao [Xiang]'s discussion of social reproduction migration, lifestyle migration in this instance can be understood in terms of moving away from social formations that have increasingly commodified relations of care and reproduction, and moving instead towards places that are supposedly defined by something that is missing in North America: intimate families whose relations of care are unpolluted by the market mechanism, by the advances of the women's liberation movement, or by the painful struggles of the 1980s and 1990s over changing gender patterns of paid vs. household labour. The shift from Fordist capitalism to neoliberalism is understood by most people through changes in the family – from a system based on gendered care work in the household to one that was more time-crunched in the dual-income family. My North American participants spoke of the apparently closer Ecuadorian families they observed, but these imaginaries speak more to how North American families had changed than they do to the reality of Ecuadorian families, which have also changed. Ironically, these imaginaries of a more caring society also commingle with practices of purchasing lower-cost care labour, which would have been unaffordable for most in their home countries.

Lifestyle migrants to Ecuador also spoke a lot about Ecuador belonging to the past of North America's present. This is also what the 1950s trope signals: a denial of coevalness that references a specific, cultural notion of time as evolving through various stages from lowest to highest. In an evolutionary notion of time, Ecuador is seen as a developing space. It is developing towards North American modernity, which my interviewees identified as more progressive but having lost cultural authenticity and proximity to a purer, more natural human condition. This sense of loss reproduces North American settler ideology, which represents indigenous people as being more proximate to nature and therefore more authentic. I think some of the discussion about authenticity in our field is worth looking at through the prism of decolonial scholarship that highlights the concept of a Eurocentric notion of time.

These imaginaries are important cultural codes, deployed to make sense of certain forms of migration, and indeed, as others above point out, an imaginary of 'building a better life' is present in many different forms of migration. But these imaginaries amongst migrants who move from high-income to lower-income global regions must also be understood in relation to the political economy of a shifting and unequal global division of labour. In this respect, part of the imaginary of Ecuador for North Americans related to its low cost of living, highlighting utilitarian cultural codes of thriftiness, and utilitarian self-interest. They speak of their relocations as a kind of geographic arbitrage, but one that should be understood as a cultural discourse, rather than an economic one. It is not merely about choosing spaces where savings go further, but also of selecting places that facilitate the pursuit of meaningful projects, including perhaps family projects, or as I point out in some of my work, cultural strategies of aging. It is as much about the transfer of cultural and social capital to spaces where they hold more symbolic power as it is about economic processes of arbitrage.

For retirees in Ecuador, geoarbitrage was very much about being able to live a more active retirement that met the cultural goals of successful ageing in North America. Material conditions, of a changing North American economy, underpin some of those cultural ideals amongst the baby boomers who are retiring right now. There are locations in global social space where it is still possible to live out this imaginary of the good life for middle- and working-class Canadians and Americans who may have lost resources for attaining it in their home countries.

Margit Feischmidt

I would like to show certain ethnographic examples that we can interpret together and complicate the picture a bit because I focus on a migrant wave from East to West. Specifically, Hungarians who went to Germany and have lived there for years or decades.

In the first step, we started collecting data on Facebook and identifying those groups that organised the Hungarian diaspora, and we did a small survey among their members and networks. Then we conducted 42 interviews. In the end it turned out that most of the interviews were focused on four localities, where I also did some ethnographic research.

The most general outcome of the qualitative part of the research was that participants reported they were happy with migration, and they thought of themselves as successful. Overall, happier and more successful than they were previously. One particular group, however, composed of wives of leading managers and professionals, reported that they are unhappy, lonely and they have nostalgia. This is the most unhappy subgroup within this sample, but they are also the ones who talked the most about the education of their children. For example, Helga, who was in a leading position back in Hungary, is now a housewife in Germany, and she reports that the only reason for not returning to Hungary is the quality of school for her children.

I have four cases. Anna is a child of well-educated parents who themselves once tried to move to Germany. Curiosity and desire to travel was an important stimulus for her. The international trajectory that was mentally present to her suddenly became a reality offered as an option of a student exchange. Her image of Germany is strongly connected to Berlin and Potsdam, to cities and the professional institutions to which she is attached. She reports that arriving in Germany had a liberating effect on her life. There is money, structure, and more equal working conditions.

There is Emese, whose story is much more determined by her origins than by her current residence: the Transylvanian ancestors, a Hungarian village, a grandmother who was considered a witch. There is also a Catholic attachment, which is mostly institutionalised in the children's participation in the Boy Scouts. She says about her husband that scouting had made him Hungarian. The integration of nation and religion in the understanding of Hungarianness is the opposite of individualism and consumerism identified with Germany. Her nationalism carries not only the concept of authenticity but also mystical and oriental cultural connections, in contrast to the West she experienced in Germany. 'Hungary is the place I always wanted to go back to' – this is what she repeatedly says. She is happy that one of her four children has moved back to Hungary. Her disdain for German culture and society is really represented in the term *korcs* (mongrel), used also by others in the same diaspora community in opposition to the supposed 'purity' of Hungarian culture.

My next example is Dóri, who says 'I love the order in Germany, I love discipline.' Dóri's biographical narrative begins with her early enthusiasm for the German language and culture. She studied German philology in Romania where she was born. She arrived in Germany in the early 2000s. Currently, she has a permanent position as a school psychologist, working primarily with immigrant children having difficulties in learning and integration. In her narrative, there is simultaneous identification and criticism. The former is directed at values of capitalism and modernity, which appear here in the national framework of Germany. Criticism is directed at current migration policies, which lead to an unlimited number of undisciplined immigrants. Dóri presented the narrative of a 'new German' with an Eastern European minority background who supports the German Far Right.

I have one final example, Judit. Concerning relationships with German society, successful integration trajectories and social mobility were apparent in the narratives of the older generation. Our interviewees in their fifties and sixties are now well-connected to German society, through professional or personal ties. Some of them live with a German spouse and have ethnically mixed families. Judit is a successful businesswoman who moved from Budapest to West Berlin in the 1970s. With her university degree in economics and good language skills, she ascended to a leading position in international trade and currently leads her own small company. She speaks about hard work, and the long time it took for her to get along as an immigrant in Germany, which nevertheless involved a much easier experience than for new arrivals from war, or conflict zones.

What do these examples show in relation to the papers at this workshop? They support the idea of *Wertrationalität* in migration. Which were the most striking values? Solidarity, freedom, and I think nostalgia. Solidarity and freedom are somehow connected to each other, and nostalgia and conservative values are also linked. We can see solidarity and freedom, not only at the level of personal narratives but also in the activities of these people.

We found a subcategory of Hungarians with other Eastern European migrants living in Germany. They became active in the support of the refugees immediately after the so-called refugee crisis of 2015. It was only partially true that these people were the well-established middle class. Some of them were in very unstable (precarious) positions at that time in Germany, just in the first year after their arrival. Some of them became employees of the state maintained supportive systems for the refugees in a couple of years. So while they were supporting others, their social position rose.

How do they report about such solidarity? The discourses of commonality became very important. They often talk about how 'hard-working' and 'well-performing' migrants are. They illustrate with their own experience that if one works hard as a migrant in Germany, good things will follow. So, I think this is a new discourse of 'deservingness'. At the same time, we also see cosmopolitan identities are very much connected to or become part of the discourses of solidarity. I was wondering how far these cosmopolitan identities can be identified among the Chinese immigrants and new immigrants who came to Hungary because they are attracted by certain lifestyles.

The other set of values can be identified around historical nostalgia and concerted conservative values. The notion of re-enchantment of culture and nation offered by Pál [Nyíri] is very important and comes up very often. Nevertheless, I think this is not only a cultural issue and not only a historical issue. I would say that that the concept of long-distance nationalism with the old meaning, offered by Benedict Anderson, is crucial. There is a political radicalism that relates to the unaccountability of diaspora organizations and members of the diaspora and the support which comes from an authoritarian nationalist state. So most of these diaspora organizations, which are behind the nostalgia, and the Hungarian state are crucial factors if we want to identify not only the individual but the institutional background as well.

In conclusion, I want to propose an inquiry about differentiating the role of consumption and ideologies in migration. How far can you connect the two? How different would the outcome be if ideology were the central frame of analysing migration? What about the cultural commonality of the Chinese and the Europeans? I think that the perception of authentic otherness was rather emphasised, so Europe is an authentic other in many of your papers. What about the commonalities between the Chinese self-representation and self-perception and the perception of Europe? What is the perception of white Europe? Lastly, the disappointment. What would the disappointed migrants emphasise?

The discussion started with the complexity of the destination countries' imaginaries and their relationship to migration and settlement. Some Western Europeans move to Eastern European countries because they reject multiculturalism and liberal values in their home countries, but there is no evidence to suggest this is a major motivation. Ideas of authenticity and purity are frequently connected to the destination countries' cultural and natural features. Many foreigners buy real estate in the countryside of these countries and not in big cities. However, many expat subjects were less engaged with the culture of the destination country: this resulted in 'failed migrations'. Other migration narratives relativised the differences between the home and destination country, allowing them to skirt the sometimes racist or illiberal practices of the latter.

Powerful imaginaries of care were also added as a discourse that contributes to migration, for instance, in the case of Cuenca. North American elderly people connected their impression of Latin American care workers to the destination country of Ecuador, which made it a likely place for settling down.

A debate unfolded on how much intermediaries or even states' own self-promotion overtakes the spontaneity of migration. Subjects were mentioned who were rather clueless before moving to a new country. At the same time, the promotion of 'golden visas' and 'global/digital nomad visas' or real estate abroad are huge businesses relying on monetising cultural brokerage between destination countries and prospective migrants. Their relevance is further increased by more and more people 'aging into poverty' in high-income countries.

References

Beck, F. & Nyíri, P. (2022). 'It's All for the Child': The Discontents of Middle-class Chinese Parenting and Migration to Europe. *The China Quarterly,* online first. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741022000169

Hayes, M. (2018). *Gringolandia: Lifestyle Migration under Late Capitalism.* University of Minnesota Press.

Inglehart, R. F. (2018). *Cultural Evolution: People's Motivations Are Changing, and Reshaping the World.* Cambridge University Press.

Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality.* Duke University Press.

Migration and the global middle class

Intersections. EEJSP
8(2): 229–234.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v8i2.1065
https://intersections.tk.hu

Theodoros Rakopoulos,* Sarah Kunz**
& John Osburg***

* [theodoros.rakopoulos@sai.uio.no] (University of Oslo)
** [sarah.kunz@bristol.ac.uk] (University of Bristol)
*** [john.osburg@rochester.edu] (University of Rochester)

The final panel considered whether it was productive to approach migration from the perspective of a global middle class, a concept first advanced by economists in the early 2000s (Milanovic & Yitzhaki, 2002). While they defined it in quantitative terms, does such a class carry distinctive qualitative traits or a shared identity or set of values that apply across borders? Do we see evidence for the theory that 'postmaterial' values are becoming global as middle-class lifestyle spread (Inglehart, 2018), and how does this relate to migration? Can it be linked to particular temporal (present-oriented) and spatial (downscaling) aspirations? How does migration both reflect and constitute social stratification? Does the migrant middle class develop new class sensitivities that could be critical of sending-country class structures or are class identities transplanted seamlessly? If there is a global middle class, does it reconfigure global racial hierarchies?

Theodoros Rakopoulos

My paper loosely correlates with the conceptual context of social reproduction, but it is not particularly focusing on it. I am inspired instead by the idea of offshoring. I am studying citizenships solutions, 'golden passports' that are part of a broader framework of offshoring services.

I am presenting two of the many people that I have been working with in Cyprus: brokers who call themselves facilitators, providers, or being involved 'in the passport business'. One of them is a real estate agent, the other is an accountant for one of the Big Four companies. A citizenship-for-investment program in Cyprus was terminated after a huge backlash that touched several people in the higher echelons of the establishment. Cyprus is not unique in providing this framework of 'exceptional naturalization'. Targeted foreigners are high-income people, 'elite migrants'. What I am trying to unearth is whether these people are migrants in the traditional sense.

What was offered to international investors, entrepreneurs buying 'real estate solutions' from places like Cyprus or Malta, or Montenegro, or Moldova, is a service that leads to naturalisation for them and their families, hence the connection with social reproduction. The programme ran for 13 years. But especially after the banking crisis in 2013, it ran amok. Within the years 2013–2020, an estimated 6500 investors were naturalised (Al-Jazeera, 2020). They came with extended families, not only children but in some cases parents and siblings. So, we might be talking about 50,000 people, interlocutors in the golden passport industry roughly estimate. There are no official data from the government, which cites personal privacy

regulations for avoiding the publication of names and numbers of 'golden citizens'. Those naturalised coming mainly from Russophone areas: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and also from China. The Chinese were going to a specific small city in South Cyprus, the Russians to the place where I did my work, Limassol, the offshore financial hub of Cyprus. These people were buying Cypriot passports, meaning they became European Union citizens. How many actually moved to Cyprus is unknown.

There is an area on the eastern side of Limassol, where the 'new Russians', a term used by other Russophones for people who enriched themselves in the post-Soviet period and have taken their money to foreign banks, bought 'passport villas', as informants in the passport business call them. If you spend more than €2 million on real estate, you are rewarded with a passport. These villas are empty, some of them are inhabited by the housewife – hence real estate brokers call the area Widows' Villas. In some cases, the investor was assassinated. In other cases, the husband lives and occasionally flies in from faraway places like Tokyo and Frankfurt.

Only a small minority of the Russophone community of Limassol, which amounts to about 45,000 people in a city of 200,000, has a golden passport. The rest of the community, working-class migrants from Ukraine or Russophone Estonians, is providing services for these elite migrants. There is a bundle of financial and banking solutions connected to Golden Visas, a whole iceberg of offshoring practices lies beneath naturalization.

What drives my research question is an understanding that golden passports (commodified citizenship) are offshoring within the political domain. So, there needs to be an analysis of what offshoring has meant (and still means) in tax havens like Cyprus, Malta, the Caribbean.

What connects my research to the topic discussed today is that classic offshoring solutions allow for new type of mobilities, that of capitalists, the subjects behind big bank accounts.

The Republic of Cyprus has a high population of immigrants, but it is also a society with traditional or orthodox family values, and there is a lot of open racism *vis-à-vis* refugees. With the intermediaries, a new class emerged, saying 'we don't care if they are black, red or yellow, they are bringing in investment, they are good.' This kind of colour blindness is apparent.

I purposely used a phrase from my interlocutor saying, 'you have to please them within their culture'. Cyprus is the 10th most visited country per capita in the world, it is never short of tourists. But ironically, these brokers do not sell the Cypriot culture or Hellenic culture, but an accommodating framework for the foreigner's culture. So, the phrase implies that you must understand Mandarin for example, but you also have to enjoy Chinese tea or cuisine during their visits. That deviates from the examples of Chinese migrants in Europe who may be enchanted by Baroque galleries and come to enjoy and immerse themselves in that culture. This is also a context within the Mediterranean where 60,000 people have drowned going towards northern shores. These people were exploited by brokers to pay half their fortunes to cross.

Brokers have international connections. One of the people I quote works in a Big Four auditing company in a midsize city in Indonesia, where an investor might knock on the door of KPMG (they might have never heard of Malta or Cyprus), and the local branch would seek out their Cypriot branch and ask them to help them imagine their future elsewhere. It is usually not for him, but his family, which brings me to the concept of offshoring as a holistic solution.

Risk is being offshored for sure. As a doctor said, Limassol is the place where Russian oligarchs 'park their women', referring to dangers in Moscow and the safe hub of Mediterranean islands for the spouses and children. The risk for safe social reproduction is being offshored. Elsewhere, the family is being offshored at least seasonally. Within this context of offshoring is the idea of passport insurance. As seen by the experiences of Andrew Henderson, who is one of the most celebrated brokers of offshoring solutions and who wrote *Nomad Capitalist* (2018), we can reconsider the idea of golden visa attainment as a stratified social space. There is huge variation, and whether 100,000 or 2 million euros is middle class, and in what context it is, is a fascinating sociological question.

The changes in this new context of proliferating citizenship offshoring are showing that David Harvey might not have been right about the logic of capitalism. There is no inner logic to capitalism, there are capitalists behind it. Here, we have people who are willing to follow capital around the world and offshore themselves or at least their family somewhere else in a safe hub. An interlocutor who had an MA from a good UK university in shipping law said: 'You know what is similar between shipping and golden passports? That people are like ships, they need a flag of convenience,' and Cyprus offers the possibility of that.

Sarah Kunz

I had a couple of thoughts and comments while reading the paper, which I really enjoyed. First is the central role of intermediaries, you call them brokers, fixers, whatever they call themselves, I have even seen the term 'enabler'. This sort of industry has sprung up and mushroomed in the last 10 years around citizenship but also residence-by-investment schemes. So – as Xiang Biao and Johand Lindquist (2014) have of course pointed out before – we cannot think of migration as an unmediated phenomenon anymore. Intermediaries play an important role in determining where people move, how people move, why they move, whether they move at all, or whether they just buy citizenship and stay where they are. I am aware that big corporations did not really get their foot into the Cypriot industry as much as they probably would have liked. I would be interested to know more about the relationships between the different actors: the locally based agents and the multinational corporations.

Secondly, you write that brokers' approach to foreign capital and its owners who consider becoming Cypriots is colour-blind. I would be interested in who is treated in this 'colour-blind' way and who is really not. To understand how the social construct 'race' operates differently for different groups in this space, it might be helpful putting the developments you study in the context of the 'refugee crisis'. In my work on the UK investor visa, I situate it in the context of the hostile immigration environment, and I think it would be really fruitful here to think about the growth of the Cypriot investment immigration industry in the context of broader developments of forced migration.

Thirdly, I liked the concept of offshoring as a holistic perspective, because for some it's not about migration at all, it's just about a passport. It is connected to a broader system, which is offshore capitalism. The title of Oliver Bullough's *Moneyland* (2018) refers to this new geography that the super-rich can inhabit, where they can pick and choose a libel law here, passport there, an offshore tax haven, and so on. But I think it would be helpful and interesting to expand further on what you exactly mean by offshoring. Who's being offshored? What is being offshored? Is it the citizenship or the risk? I've been looking at the discourses in the industry, and it has moved away from selling a white prep school, British upper-class

lifestyle to a very financialised language. They talk about risk portfolios when they speak about passports, or about diversifying your risk, diversifying your passport portfolio. So, I think about what terms like this do in this particular context.

Lastly, about whether the middle class is a useful term to think about these phenomena that we're seeing. I'm hesitant because the investment migration context shows a usually diversified and stratified space. So you can move from spending as little as a couple hundred thousand U.S. dollars for a passport for a family of four on some Caribbean islands to spending two million pounds to acquire a residence in the UK. The market and the migrations that have been facilitated are incredibly varied. There is also an empirical question: is someone who has €100,000 to apply to these programs really middle class in any context? On what grounds are they middle class? In a global context, the national context? Also, as mentioned, there is a phenomenon where some people move abroad but continue to live off their assets. So maybe we should locate these developments in debates around rentier capitalism as well.

John Osburg

My previous work was with wealthy entrepreneurs in China, conducted in the early 2000s. Before the reproduction migration that is the subject of this workshop, 'lifestyle' migration from the PRC was an elite phenomenon. It had a specific political and class element to it. Many people that I conducted my research with were afraid of a political or economic crisis in China, resulting in their assets being seized either in an anti-corruption investigation or through a political shift. I would not say this was true of all business elites in China, but informants were largely concentrated in industries like real estate and mining that tend to rely more on ties to the government. There were also government officials who had accumulated illicit wealth, sending their families overseas. The term 'naked official' emerged to refer to a government official who was alone in China while his family was residing overseas.

Most of the entrepreneurs with whom I conducted research during this period had either made plans to emigrate or expressed their desire to do so. They frequently cited fears of a potential political-economic crisis in China but, among this cohort (born between the 1950s and the early 1970s) there was also a strong idealisation of the West. They would often say that things in the West were simpler, as opposed to the 'complex' nature of Chinese society. They believed that the West was more purely meritocratic, that personal connections (*guanxi*) were less important, and this idealisation informed their desire for their children to be educated or reside outside China. They believed that the morally purer, simpler environment of the West would ultimately make their children happier and healthier.

Generational differences are very important in China. While this idealisation of the West was largely present among those born before the 1980s, I wonder about generations born after the 1990s who came of age in a wealthier and more confident China and tend to be more nationalistic. I have seen a shift from the conception of the West as something to be emulated among older generations to something to be selectively consumed among younger cohorts. I see parallels with Matthew [Hayes]'s work on lifestyle migration in the attitudes of younger people in China, who view other cultures as objects to be selectively consumed for their own benefit. As a consequence, I wonder if there is a generational conflict between middle-class parents and children, who harbour contrasting visions of life outside China. To a degree, I see this manifested in Chinese international students at my university, who refer

to the city of Rochester (which is the third-largest city in New York State) as a 'village' and view it as a quaint and backward place, not a place that really is particularly interesting to them or in which they'd want to settle.

Secondly, the idea of 'opting out' (of which 'lying flat', *tangping*, is one manifestation) seemed to be present in several of the papers. I think it emerges from a position of political hopelessness. Opting out stems from the notion that one's home society cannot be reformed or transformed according to one's wishes and that the only way to achieve an aspired-for lifestyle, values or community is by moving elsewhere. So, if we see opting out as coming from a certain political position, we should also ask who is opting out and why. I mentioned a generational element, there are class elements, but also there is a gender element. Women are now the majority of educational migrants from China and studying abroad (and migrating) offers an escape, if only a temporary one, from the contradictory expectations placed on young women in China (Martin, 2022). However, we should keep in mind that there is also a tension between opting out as a critique of one's society versus opting out as a covert form of class reproduction. We see from the previous discussion that opting out can also enable middle-class Chinese to circumvent the competitive educational system and to maintain their class advantage. The entrepreneurs I interviewed often had an idealized notion of Western education: they believed that it produced students who were more daring, creative, and prone to take risks, thus yielding a subjectivity that would make them more successful in the future, especially in business.

Thirdly, I wonder about disillusionment and disenchantment among middle-class Chinese migrants. As middle-class/affluent Chinese migrant communities grow in many countries, many of the norms and values of the middle-class society that they were fleeing are now being reproduced overseas. One sees this, for example, on college campuses in the U.S. with large Chinese student populations, where Chinese student communities feature many of the same status hierarchies and modes of conspicuous consumption found at home. This is a common complaint articulated by my Chinese students, whose fantasies of self-transformation and cultural encounter are thwarted by their inability to escape scrutiny by their compatriots. Thus, I think the theme of disappointment or disenchantment would be interesting to trace in future research. You might be familiar with a slogan among wealthy Chinese who migrated to Canada in the early 2000s. A lot of the early Chinese migrants to Canada complained that it had 'beautiful mountains, beautiful water, but was basically boring as hell.' Although they were motivated by a fantasy of a healthy lifestyle in Canada, they initially found themselves quite socially isolated and bored. (I doubt this is the case now, as it is quite possible to approximate a 'Chinese' lifestyle in many Canadian cities, at least in culinary terms.) To add one final caveat to this point: despite the risk of disappointment, I think it is important to keep in mind the role of social media in enabling the curated presentation of one's life in another country for a Chinese audience. Even if they are disillusioned by their experience, it can be packaged through social media as a realisation of all their ideals and fantasies for people back home in China.

Finally, for the past several years I have been doing research on middle-class Han Chinese who have become practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism, and I see a lot of parallels between the critiques of Chinese society articulated by Chinese immigrants to Europe and these Buddhist converts. There is a notion that Han Chinese society is corrupted, and that the cure for this corruption can only be found outside mainstream Chinese society. Thus, they look to Tibet, which is viewed as this pre-modern, spiritual, and anti-materialistic place.

I use the term 'ethno-mimesis' to capture this dynamic: they possess a desire to internalize and absorb the qualities of this cultural and ethnic other. Thus, I wonder if a similar logic is at work in reproduction migration: there is a hope that one's children will internalise a 'simpler' worldview, embodied by cultural others, that is more likely to make them happy.

The discussion reflected on the often unreflected aspects of racialisation and deracialisation in migration research on the middle class. A common view is that racialisation happens to people who are from an undesired class. Conversely, the migrants in Cyprus are de-racialised because they are desirable. On the other hand, researchers usually assume that middle-class migrants are white, although the empirical reality is that middle-class migration is very diverse.

Participants agreed that there were shared characteristics in all middle-class migrants, such as post-materialist values of environmental protection and the aspiration to provide for the psychological well-being of their children. The curious cultural position of many Chinese migrants who pursue 'true European culture' as a discursive 'other' to China's modernisation, a morally more noble and authentic place, appears more distinctive.

References

Al-Jazeera (2020). The Cyprus Papers. *Aljazeera.com,* https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2020/cyprus-papers/index.html

Bullough, O. (2018). *Moneyland: Why Thieves And Crooks Now Rule The World And How To Take It Back.* Profile Books.

Henderson, A. (2018). *Nomad capitalist: How to reclaim your freedom with offshore bank accounts, dual citizenship, foreign companies, and overseas investments.* Nomad Books.

Inglehart, R. F. (2018). *Cultural Evolution: People's Motivations Are Changing, and Reshaping the World.* Cambridge University Press.

Martin, F. (2022). *Dreams of Flight: The Lives of Chinese Women Students in the West.* Duke University Press.

Milanovic, B. & Yitzhaki, S. (2002). Decomposing World Income Distribution: Does the World Have A Middle Class? *The Review of Income and Wealth, 48*(2), 155–178. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-4991.00046

Xiang, B. & Lindquist, J. (2014). Migration infrastructure. *International Migration Review, 48*(1), 122–148. https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12141