

## SOCIOLOGY OF MIGRATION

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### **Noneconomic Dimensions of Migrants' Adaptation to the Labor Market: Migrant Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Cultures during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

*Abstract:* This article explores the interactions of migrant Polish business owners with the new entrepreneurial culture in their host country (the UK). The research question of the article concerns how migrant business owners experience the entrepreneurial culture of their host society and how this process reflects noneconomic aspects of labor market adaptation. In the theoretical dimension, the aim is to develop a perspective of examining the labor market adaptation of migrants as a cultural process which reflects certain values and internalized or institutionalized patterns of thinking and acting (Hofstede 2005). The study examines cross-cultural encounters in three interconnected areas: entrepreneurs' relations with the state, their interactions with other business people, and their interactions with their employees. International mobility provides individuals with the potential to modify their habits and beliefs in the new structural settings and socio-cultural environment of their activities. Socioeconomic crises are moments of trial for migrants, highlighting the challenges of adaptation but also clarifying differences in values and behaviors. The COVID-19 pandemic perpetuated the migrants' view of the host country as an entrepreneurship-friendly state and enhanced their vision of the host's entrepreneurial culture as one based on a high level of trust in regard to business owners. The analysis is based on the qualitative method (53 interviews with Polish migrant entrepreneurs).

*Keywords:* Polish migration, migrants in the UK, migrant entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial culture, post-socialism, COVID-19 pandemic

Migrant entrepreneurs have the opportunity to experience various cultural patterns of doing business. The aim of the article is to examine selected aspects of the entrepreneurial culture of Polish migrants in the UK. In broader terms, the analysis will be an exploration of noneconomic aspects of adaptation during labor market integration in the country of emigration. The focus is on migrant entrepreneurs and the cultural challenges they encounter in the new environment. As company owners, employees, and labor market participants in general, migrant business owners tend to have an in-depth understanding of the cultural dimensions of doing business, of employment, and of various forms of gig work. Migrants' activities on the labor market are typically seen as a key dimension of overall integration efforts in the host country (i.a., Kogan 2011; Cheung, Phillimore 2014; Auer 2018; Wimark, Haandrikman, Nielsen 2019). While this article also draws from some of the literature concerning migrant *integration*, it chooses to use the closely related term "adaptation" to describe how foreigners learn the norms and patterns of the

host society and contribute to the institutionalization of new norms and patterns. Integration is a highly politicized notion (Scholten, Verbeek 2015; Korteweg 2017), and a more neutral term gives the opportunity to shed light on less studied (especially noneconomic) aspects of the socialization of migrants on the host labor market. The existing literature already indicates some important noneconomic effects of migrants' work on their social lives: for example, even in low-paid jobs, migrants also improve and enrich personal skills, such as openness, flexibility, and problem-solving abilities (Grabowska 2019), during their stay abroad. From the perspective of research into entrepreneurship, the processes under study can be perceived as a dimension of "entrepreneurial learning," which happens through critical reflection on a person's own experience, gained in normal daily relations as well as in critical, challenging moments (Gudkova 2006). The experience of being abroad intensifies the necessity and indispensability of this kind of knowledge gain. Labor market activities allow migrants to learn about the economic as well as the socio-cultural aspects of the functioning of host communities. For migrant workers and entrepreneurs, work is a common, everyday experience, and thus it shapes the process of adaptation in the most fundamental and significant way.

Self-employment and running one's own business are common in migrant communities. This phenomenon has led to extensive literature about forms of ethnic entrepreneurship, its role in migrants' upward mobility abroad, and their transnational practices (e.g., Portes, Haller, Guarnizo 2002; Zhou 2004; Ram, Jones 2008; Sinkovics, Reuber 2021). Migrants establishing their own business ventures in a receiving country experience not only a different legal framework but also cultural differences with regard to how business is conducted. The studies concerning the role of culture in migrant entrepreneurship are widespread, but they tend to focus on how business performance is influenced by the ethnic culture: its unique intra-group relations, ethnic networks, the role of the migrant family and gender norms, a minority language, or cultural patterns of risk-taking (Basu, Altinay 2002; Sahin, Nijkamp, Baycan-Levent 2007; Hu, Su, Zhang 2021; Vershinina et al. 2020). The research question of this article concerns an understudied topic, namely how migrant business owners experience the entrepreneurial culture of the host society and how this process reflects noneconomic aspects of labor market adaptation. The analysis will demonstrate how migrants adapt to this culture, comparing the experience of doing business in the new country with the culture of work to which they were socialized in their country of origin. Examining this phenomenon may give insights into the process of mutual infiltration and amalgamation of entrepreneurial cultures. It will show how labor market activities in the host country provide the potential for the emergence and consolidation of new values, attitudes, and practices among migrant entrepreneurs. To address the research question, the analysis focuses on how the adaptation of migrant entrepreneurs is reflected in the main types of encounters with the new entrepreneurial culture: namely the relations of migrants with the state, their interactions with other business people, and with their employees.

Research on how the economic performance of communities and individuals is embedded in cultural traditions and social structures has long standing (Weber 1930; Granovetter 1985). In the studies of organizational anthropology and international management, such analyses are supported by the concept of culture as "mental programming" (Hofstede 2005)

which affects social perceptions, and the affective and behavioral patterns of individuals. Culture as “mental programming” and “communication software” shapes ways of thinking, feeling, and potentially acting in organizations (Hofstede 2005: 4). In the case of entrepreneurship, the carriers of culture and its values are not only individuals but also institutions and communities. Encounters with other cultural patterns of entrepreneurship may be challenging. However, the cross-cultural differences, including those in business, may lead not to conflicts but to development through innovation and cross-fertilization (Hamden-Turner, Trompenaars 2000; Gesteland 2012). Discussions about the development of capitalism touch on how it is mediated, *inter alia*, by religion, social networks, and political institutions. Needless to say, entrepreneurship is very much interconnected and influenced by capitalist structures. But these structures are not homogeneous or static. In different parts of the world, free market structures and institutions take different forms depending on the local institutional settings. As varieties of capitalist theory have demonstrated, differences in the organization of national economies influence the overall economic performance of particular states (Soskice, Hall 2001; Hall, Gingerich 2009). The academic literature shows that the transformation from centrally planned economies to free market economies has shaped the unique character of capitalism in Central Europe (Federowicz 2004). The differences may concern elements such as the regulatory power of the state, decision-making styles, the roles of workforce representatives, and also patterns of doing business. The main assumption of this analysis is that national and regional socio-political circumstances have also shaped the specific character of entrepreneurial culture, which differs between Western Europe and Poland. The present article analyzes entrepreneurial culture, which is understood as the attitudes, values, and value-driven practices prevalent in a given social environment (Krueger, Liñán & Nabi 2013). These practices include organizational culture, which shapes the relations and hierarchies inside an enterprise, both horizontally (among workers) as well as vertically (between workers and employers).

The analysis takes into account the importance of post-socialism as a particular cultural setting. In the labor market context, it represents work culture, values and motivations, and ways of doing business, which are shaped by two phenomena: (1) the cultural legacy of the Polish People's Republic and (2) the “wild capitalism” of the 1990s in Poland. These two periods exerted a strong influence on the cultural patterns of doing business in Poland, but in different ways. The unique feature of the period between 1946 and 1989 was the dominant role of state property and the top-down organization of the economy. Working relations were characterized by a lack of competitiveness and the state's focus on full employment. The socio-cultural legacy of the communist period includes distrust of individual resourcefulness, entrepreneurial attitudes, and economic independence, but also a negligent attitude to legal norms. Some of these values and attitudes inevitably changed during Poland's transition to a market economy, but the fast pace of the transformation and the huge discrepancy between the socialist economy and the new liberal rules induced particular tensions. These were unique to the Central European region. Public opinion polls regarding entrepreneurship also demonstrated contradictory tendencies: support for strong competition on the labor market was almost as strong as support for various types of state intervention in the economy (Zagórski, Koźmiński 2011: 63). The values and attitudes that promote a focus on quick profit-making and short-term business relations are the

legacy of the “wild capitalism” of the 1990s. Polish entrepreneurs are often critical of state control and they want the labor market to be “flexible” (Męcina 2013), by which they mean that employees have reduced protection. In the last decade of the twentieth century, the levels of unemployment in Poland dramatically increased, employees’ legal protection was significantly weakened, and as a result work relations became more hostile and based on constant competition. Significantly relaxed rules of doing business (in comparison to the socialist period) coincided with individuals’ careless approach to state norms, disrespect for rapidly changing laws, and a traditionally strong “gray zone.” This period enhanced the already existing suspiciousness of the state toward entrepreneurs. However, the cultural context of doing business in Poland has improved in the last decade, especially due to Poland’s accession to the EU and to generational change (Glinka 2020). Contemporary Polish beliefs and perceptions concerning entrepreneurship are more European-oriented, indicating that using opportunities provided by non-state institutions (especially the EU) may support significant business growth (Glinka 2020: 102). The pandemic also demonstrated Polish employers’ perception of workers as being one of the crucial and most valuable assets in business (Pyrkosz-Pacyna et al. 2021). The question of how these views about entrepreneurial development are intertwined with post-accession migration will be elaborated on later in the article.

Poles are one of the largest migrant groups in the UK, mainly thanks to an unprecedented wave of post-accession migration which started in 2004, when Poland joined the European Union. The Polish community is diversified with regard to primary motives of migration: it encompasses labor migrants, but also students—educational migrants, and migrants who come for family reasons (Grabowska, Okólski 2009; White 2011; Drinkwater, Garapich 2015). They are also a heterogeneous group with regard to their education level: the Polish community encompasses low-skilled migrants as well as highly skilled individuals (ibidem). The Polish community, just like other EU citizens residing in the UK, is also experiencing new challenges due to Brexit. The resulting legal and political transformations affect EU migrants’ work and entrepreneurial activities, the way they interact with the host communities, and the legal-institutional problems they face (Rzepnikowska 2019; Trąbka, Pustułka 2020). These contexts make Polish migrant entrepreneurs a particularly interesting case for studying noneconomic dimensions of labor market adaptation. The changing circumstances of their stay abroad affect how they experience, interpret, and process the entrepreneurial culture in the new country.

### Research Method

The analysis relies on a qualitative study of Polish migrant entrepreneurs in the UK: 53 in-depth interviews with 25 women and 28 men. The qualitative approach is the optimal method for examining the individual creative process and understanding the personal interpretations of social interactions which determine entrepreneurs’ learning (Glinka, Gudkova 2006: 50; Andrejuk 2022). The research took place during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and due to this fact, the interviews were conducted offline and online through Zoom. The sample of Polish entrepreneurs consisted of migrants possessing

various education levels, but most were highly skilled (42 had a university education, 9 had a secondary school education, and 2 had vocational education). They represented various sectors: gastronomy, accountancy, law, art, translations, education, computer services, retail and wholesale trade, marketing, construction, and design. The respondents were between 25 and 63 years old, with the majority being between 30 and 50, and five being 50 or older. While only a few of the respondents had experienced the labor market of communist Poland (pre-1990), many of them had been active professionally in Poland in the 1990s, when post-socialist structures determined organization and the relations between entrepreneurs, workers, and other actors of the labor market. Therefore, their perceptions and observations reflect cross-cultural interactions between individuals at least partly embedded in "post-socialist" markets on the one hand, and those socialized into the "Western" labor market on the other. An important part of the research also involved participant observation in London, with ad hoc conversations in Polish shops and other business ventures. Participation in online meetings of migrant entrepreneurs organized by a migrant business association in the UK allowed further ethnographic observation for the study.

The interview scenario consisted of open-ended questions, the majority of which examined migration history and labor market experiences. The analysis below focuses on questions about differences between work and doing business in the country of origin and host country. The respondents were asked about cultural differences between Poland and the UK in the sphere of work. Those individuals who had engaged in business activities in Poland were asked about cultural differences with regard to entrepreneurial activities and doing business in the two countries.

### **Research Results**

The experience of doing business abroad leads to growing awareness of the diversity of entrepreneurial cultures. Migrants obtain the opportunity to contrast their habits, values, and cultural patterns with the modes of interpretation and behavior that are widespread in a different, foreign social space. This confrontation happens on a daily basis in many types of interactions. Such activities and acts of communication typically give rise to greater criticism of the Polish business environment and of the cultural patterns of entrepreneurship in Poland. It is important to emphasize that cultural differences and possible clashes of entrepreneurial cultures are experienced differently by migrants of various ages, generations, social classes, or genders (Hofstede 2005: 10). But for all of them, differences at the level of the sending and receiving countries and their approaches to business are seen to be significant. The common point is the perception of the sending state as less trustworthy and of that quality also infiltrating the relations of entrepreneurs with workers and with other business owners. As a rule, the Polish cultural and legal framework for entrepreneurial activity is considered to be detrimental to entrepreneurial success. It is regarded as being less transparent and less safe than the UK context. Three kinds of relations seem to be particularly important in the context of entrepreneurial culture: interactions with the state, with other businesspeople, and with employees. Among these three aspects, relations with the state appear in the narratives as the most important factor, with a crucial

role in shaping entrepreneurial culture. Therefore, these relations will be given particular attention.

### *Relations with the State*

State institutions have a vital influence on entrepreneurship, *inter alia* through normative patterns of control and supervision over business entities, and through the rules of public intervention. Entrepreneurial cultures emerge and transform in interaction with the state. Exploring the relations between business owners and the state is therefore essential in the analysis of these cultures. The narratives indicate that, in the UK, entrepreneurs are more trusted by the state and its institutions. In particular, this involves a more tolerant approach by various officials dealing with entrepreneurs' problems, and their (often unintentional) mistakes and failures to observe bureaucratic procedures. This picture was opposed to the omnipotence of state officials in Poland, with the prevalence of fining and punishing entrepreneurs for various misinterpretations of the law. The pattern of relations between the Polish state and businesses that emerges from the narratives can be summarized as a penalization culture, which often disadvantages entrepreneurs for minor errors. The roots of these behaviors date back to the Polish People's Republic, its hegemony in shaping economic activities, and traditional suspiciousness in regard to "private initiative." On the other hand, this lack of trust from public institutions influenced the over-regulation of certain areas of entrepreneurial activities and the establishment of excessively detailed provisions and laws. These findings are in line with existing analyses of the Polish context, which indicate the systemic weakness in the position of entrepreneurs in Central and Eastern European countries and associate this phenomenon with contemporary neo-statist and authoritarian tendencies (Jasiecki 2017). Those migrant entrepreneurs who had experience running their own businesses in both countries (the sending and the receiving one) emphasize the complicated nature of Polish ZUS and tax regulations.

*I have run huge businesses here, I have run huge businesses in Poland, and the attitude towards business is completely different. I'll tell you the two most important differences. First, the attitudes of public institutions here and in Poland, their free interpretations, are totally different. In Poland, you are suspected of being dishonest in your business and they treat you like this—you have to prove that you are honest. Here it is the opposite, they treat you like a normal businessman who wants to earn their living legally. And if you do something that is wrong, then they prove that you should not do it. While the attitude of Polish public institutions, tax or business registration—I could not get used to it. I started doing business here, then I returned to Poland for a while and I came back here, because I just couldn't stand all that [male, incomplete university education, 59 years old, off and on in the UK since 1981]*

*Employees in Poland—and more generally, businesspeople in Poland—experience more difficulties, yes. It's connected with the taxation system, regulations, etc. And this influences employees as well. It has such an influence that everything is done just to survive, really. Of course, what I'm saying is about the situation many years ago. Now it is definitely different. I can see—I follow my friends in Poland—the times have changed [male, high school education, 42 years old, in the UK since 2004]*

In exploring the relations between the state, the local communities, and migrants, researchers often focus on individuals' migrant status, but such status is not always the main context structuring these interactions and relationships. As this case study demonstrates, migrant entrepreneurs' sense of safety and their feeling of being at home

is not only dependent on the attitudes toward foreigners and migrants in the host country. Other significant factors include relations with the state, business owners, employers, and employees, as well as other actors of the labor market. Entrepreneurial activities in the UK had made the respondents familiar with less stressful ways of doing business and a more customer-friendly approach on the part of state institutions. Individuals have diversified social roles, and the visibility of migrant status seems to be relatively less significant in the multicultural UK environment. In the respondents' relations with official institutions, their migrant status did not seem to be a relevant point of reference; on the other hand, the social role of an entrepreneur is perceived very positively. The interviewees emphasized that business owners were treated in helpful and cooperative ways:

[Thirty years ago] *in order to survive in Poland, one had to pay at the post office to establish a telephone line, pay a bribe at the tax office to get something, pay a bribe to a lady in the bank to get something done. At that time, it worked like that—everyone was taking bribes and everyone knew it. And generally, that was the biggest problem in Poland—with whom to talk in order to survive, administration-wise. (...) After coming to England—the tax office helps, one doesn't have to be afraid of them, any matter can be dealt with over the phone, the banks are helpful, if I want ten telephone lines, I can have them the next day. Everything that constituted a problem in Poland, never constitutes a problem here. Establishing a company—five minutes and it is done; bank account—you go to the bank and it is done. Everyone gives you a bunch of documents just to help you. In Poland, that was the most difficult thing—administrative stuff, offices, denunciations, everything doesn't happen here.* [male, university education, 63 years old, in the UK since 1992]

The experience of doing business in various countries makes migrants more attentive to the variability of entrepreneurial cultures, but the above quotes encompass more than cross-country variability. They also demonstrate the significance of the temporal dimension. The society of origin was subject to quick social change in the area of norms and habits connected with professional activity. The entrepreneurs are also more aware of the temporal variabilities within a single social space; they emphasize in particular the fast pace of economic and cultural transformations in Poland. In describing their own stories of running a business in the UK, they contrast it with their experience of professional activities in Poland in the past years or even decades. Due to the fast pace of socio-economic changes, that experience differed from the contemporary Polish context. The respondents recognize the complicated character of comparisons between Poland before their migration abroad, and Poland's present economy and society, which influence present-day entrepreneurial culture. Poland's accession to the European Union (2004) was a breakthrough moment which started the period of profound transformations also in the labor market (Kaczmarczyk, Okólski 2008). These changes led to modifications in the work culture and entrepreneurial culture. After two decades of EU membership, Poland has created a different environment for work and entrepreneurial development. The influx of EU funds, financial remittances from migrants, and investments in Poland initiated changes on the labor market and the improvement of the situation of workers due to decreasing unemployment. The linkages between Poles travelling to Western Europe for work and the improvement of labor market conditions in Poland demonstrate the paradoxical nature of the country's development. The current condition of the Polish economy enables problematic elements of entrepreneurial culture resulting from the high level of distrust among labor market actors to be mitigated. However, this improvement is the effect of the emigration from Poland of the most entrepreneurial migrants, who fled from

disadvantageous conditions of professional development and the hampering of business activities.

The adaptation of migrants is a two-way process which encompasses both the foreigners and the receiving societies (Ager, Strang 2008). The changes which take place are not always positive. The interviewees were very critical of Central Eastern Europeans' low respect for the law and the frequency of its abuse, which they interpreted as a negative "contribution" of Central Eastern Europeans to UK social life. Even though the anti-immigrant narrative is traditionally linked with nationalist and radical right-wing movements, the elements of such a discourse also appear in the accounts of migrants speaking about their own ethnic community. In particular, long-term migrants who have been settled in the host country for many years tend to be critical in this regard. The respondents emphasize the growing distrust of the host state toward individuals, including labor market participants. Others indicate that the current approach of the state institutions is too lenient and the policies should be tightened:

*When I talk to my friends in Poland about the government assistance which we get here, they cannot believe that the government can help its citizens to this extent. Of course, it is not a perfect country, and historically, it has changed dramatically in the last 30 years because every system defends itself from the frauds who came. (...) Once everyone could enter the underground; nobody checked their tickets. Sometimes someone showed that they had [the ticket], entered and went on. But people started to abuse the system and the restrictions appeared. People began to behave dishonestly in banks, tax offices, and people with all this Eastern European experience started to abuse the system. The system started to defend itself, so now it is much worse, but these people did it. [male, university education, 63 years old, in the UK since 1992]*

*To be honest, the offices here are too forgiving; they are very trusting, friendly, which is good, but sometimes they are too flexible. (...) When it comes to the Covid-induced state aid, the UK has simply the best rescue package in the world. They give us a lot of money all the time, because they do not take an interest in [how people use it]; huge loans with delayed payment; this country really helps. But let's be honest, objectively, the UK is a wealthy country, they can afford it. [male, university education, 41 years old, in the UK since 2000]*

A common image of Polish entrepreneurship presents Polish entrepreneurs as individuals taking advantage of loopholes; the implication is that they have tolerance for "kombi-nowanie" (contriving, coping, either legally or illegally). This image is represented in both the media discourse as well as in public opinion polls (Wnorowski 2015). However, the narratives in this study indicate that such practices are also present in the entrepreneurial environment of the native British people, as well as among other migrants. The pandemic elicited differences which can be associated with the approach to the authorities and the perception of an entrepreneur as an equal/unequal partner in the dialogue with the state (see Hofstede 2011: 10). The differences between the countries lie rather in the expectation of a state penalty when a transgression of the law is detected (which is evident in Poland, but not so obvious in the UK). The UK state is generally perceived as much more generous, which induces more "carefree" public spending.

*Poles—and not only Poles—show that they can. I have a client—he's not Polish—who applied for grants even though he had closed his business. At the beginning [of the Covid-19 pandemic], when the state was giving away the grants, they did not ask any questions. When someone applied for financial help, they declared that they earned a given amount, [and] the state just sent [them] the money. No questions asked. At the beginning this system did not have any control measures, because it was established overnight. They announced it on March 20th and implemented it on April 20th. There was no time to prepare the computer system for controls. At the*



*beginning, everyone who applied for a grant, obtained it. And this client, he applied for a grant and got it. He applied for another one and he got it, too. They rejected him when he applied the third time. [male, university education, 40 years old, on and off in the UK from 2001 to 2004, permanently since 2004]*

The narrative above demonstrates that Polish migrant entrepreneurs had learned about relations with the British state not only through direct interactions but also by observing the behaviors and activities of their (non-Polish) customers and contractors. The host state's more lenient approach to legal issues may encourage some business owners to engage in dishonest behavior, but on the other hand it also has a significant positive effect. British entrepreneurial culture provides a sense of safety and support in critical times. This motivates migrants to further economic activity without fear of penalty.

### ***Business Relations***

The entrepreneurial cultures of various states require diversified behavior in regard to contractors. Migrant entrepreneurs in the UK tend to adopt a different approach toward their business partners, whom they regard as more trustworthy. Socialization to the new entrepreneurial culture begins on the level of business relations, which are less burdened with suspicion and the risk of unexpected difficulties. The respondents declared differences in their level of trust of business partners, the partners' perceived reliability, and the safety of business transactions.

*I think that in the UK there is more trust among businesses—among business owners—they trust each other more. Here, I think generally if a person approaches another [businessman] with a deal—there isn't this attitude of "just don't cheat me." Here generally people do not worry in advance. I can sum it up in a sentence—because there is more trust among businesses. As in "I am coming to you, I know that you will do this work well, you know that I have money to pay you," and so on. While in Poland I think this issue of trust is...it is very much a result of the system as such, after all. [male, high school education, 42 years old, in the UK since 2004]*

There are analyses which demonstrate that the level of generalized trust in Central European countries (including Poland) is relatively low in comparison to Western Europe (Sztompka 1996; Hooghe et al. 2009). Lower levels of trust among entrepreneurs in Poland, and social norms legitimizing dishonest conduct, decrease the credibility of professional relations and hinder business development and innovation (Młokosiewicz, Misiak-Kwit 2017). This research confirms that the distrust also resonates among entrepreneurs and shapes their professional expectations and actions. Post-socialist entrepreneurial cultures are associated with a lower level of trust among contractors. The respondents who had the experience of doing business in Poland complained about the non-payment of invoices or delays in other financial transfers. On the other hand, this study shows that migrants who engaged in entrepreneurial activities abroad are open to learning new business practices and values:

*There are many things that we as Poles should learn: diplomacy, a calm attitude to things. The English are a bit like Poles in the sense that they like things to be written down. The Scots are more about a handshake. We have learned a whole lot about how to run this business. We are learning all the time; we continue developing all the time. [female, university education, 44 years old, in the UK since 2000]*

International mobility provides individuals with the potential to modify their habits and beliefs thanks to new structural settings for their activities. These findings are in line with

the analyses of highly skilled return migrants as “knowledge brokers” and “institutional innovators,” who foster the internationalization of national economies, bring technical and organizational knowledge, and support knowledge transfers between actors from various environments (Klein-Hitpaß 2016). This case study shows that knowledge acquisition is important not only for the sending societies. Migrants’ entrepreneurial cultures transcend nation states. These changes are not limited to highly skilled individuals. Migrants who engage in entrepreneurial activities on the UK labor market are confronted with new values and standards in the sphere of business relations and integrate these new attitudes into their own professional identity.

### *Relations between Employers and Employees*

Migrants pay particular attention to the organizational culture that defines relations between employers and employees. Patterns of interaction within a business venture and the management of workflows affects overall performance and the attractiveness of the employment for potential workers. This is especially important given the high demand for workers in the Brexit and post-Brexit era. The respondents recognize these challenges but also emphasize that the level of trust between employers and employees differs in both entrepreneurial cultures. A helpful explanation is provided by Hofstede, who stated that in cultures with a huge power distance, subordinates (such as employees) expect to be told how to act, while in cultures with a small power distance, subordinates expect to be consulted (Hofstede 2011: 9). In Poland the vertical relations within a business venture are perceived as more formal, and as following stricter rules. These differences concerning the power distance originate from the geopolitical and temporal context. The notion of post-socialism seems to be important, because it describes the phase of aligning with the economies of Western Europe. This is associated with Poland’s emphasis on improving economic results and more disregard of employees’ well-being. These differences have translated into different practices of work organization within companies and treatment of workers. An emphasis on results in the post-socialist culture of Poland is opposed to the emphasis on quality of life and sense of safety in the UK entrepreneurial culture. The social costs of the capitalist transformation in Poland, such as unemployment, have had a long-term influence on the culture of work, approach to workers, and relations between employees and employer.

The interactions between employers and employees also have consequences in regard to openness toward other entrepreneurial cultures. Migrants become more open toward non-Polish groups and communities (both those originating from the native country as well as other migrant groups). Leaving an ethnic niche while remaining on the UK labor market is the effect of reluctance to work with Polish employees. In the migrants’ subjective hierarchies of entrepreneurial cultures, the work organization within Polish business ventures is evaluated as more challenging and as creating additional obstacles. Hence the processes of recognizing the difference between entrepreneurial cultures results in a—somewhat forced—openness to other cultures. Some respondents perceive Polish working culture (especially relations with employees) as rooted in historical processes much older than the Polish People’s Republic. In particular, they associate the problem

with the legacy of Polish feudalism and the tradition of strict subordination in economic relations.

*The attitude to an employee is definitely [different], in my opinion, in Poland; it is changing due to the economy and not due to social processes, unfortunately. As to relations between employees and employer, the 'farmhand'/'manor' mentality [Polish: mentalność folwarczna] does not appear [in the UK], while it does appear in Poland; there has to be a powerful master to whip the poor farmhand. [male, university education, 40 years old, in the UK since 2004, returned to Poland]*

The narratives about relations between employees and employers indicate the non-financial, non-monetary profit of working abroad: the immigrants appreciate the better atmosphere of work, the sense of safety, and professional satisfaction, which is easier to achieve in the host country's entrepreneurial culture. During the Covid-19 pandemic and increasing popularity of remote work, working cultures are all the more important as they are the glue that binds people engaged in a business venture. The economic component is only one of many aspects of labor market adaptation and it does not exhaust the multiplicity of meanings of professional activity for a migrating individual. Limiting the analysis of entrepreneurial activities to this component might result in superficiality and fragmentary research results. In the cultural dimension, activation on the labor market is associated with adaptation to a new culture, including such elements as work-life balance, patterns of interaction between employers and employees, and the internalization of values common in a given work environment.

Crises and critical situations have an impact on migrant entrepreneurs, who have to face new problems and challenges. They have a lot of discretion in interpreting the new anti-Covid legislation, including in relation to financial aid for entrepreneurs, since the regulations were drafted hastily and the authorities have provided few guidelines for their interpretation. The application of the new laws are embedded in existing values and practices, but the state of emergency means that interpretations are likely to align with individual strategies of maximizing profits. New patterns of business interactions emerge from a labor market situation in which various actors are less equal and more susceptible to abuse.

The pandemic was generally a period of reorientation in the sphere of professional activities and organizational cultures. New rules and cultural practices were set up, for example, in association with online work. The UK government recommended online work for people who were not on leave and who continued their professional activities. This requirement was contested by employees from ethnic communities as well as by non-minority business people. As the narratives show, British business owners in the UK took advantage of nontransparent rules of state aid during lockdowns. They expected their employees to continue performing their regular duties even though the financial aid was meant to support workers on leave. The entrepreneurial culture legitimizes the search for profit even if it means benefitting from loopholes, imprecise regulations, legislative ambiguities, or limited possibilities of state control. The Covid-19 crisis proved that employers in the UK took a rather relaxed approach to the state aid provided during the pandemic. This attitude resulted from their lack of fear of the state and lack of vision of the state as a penalizing institution. As the interviewees declared, British employers can also take advantage of their workers if the structural circumstances provide such opportunities:

*During this period of leave we were de facto encouraged to work normally and there was a moment when I realized that the whole situation was...I mean, I worked for a large, very prestigious organization and people whom I really liked and respected would start conversations with us—the bosses, they'd say 'yes, you are on leave, the government pays you the minimum wage, but we have to continue our business here.' From the legal point of view, we should not have been working, but the company actually treated us like people who work nine to five, and this was a source of internal conflict for me. Because either we have rules, or we don't. [male, 50 years old, university education, in the UK since 2012]*

The author of the above statement decided to leave the dishonest employer and start his own business in the host country during the pandemic. This also indicates how entrepreneurial culture shapes the rules of expected interpersonal relations and the sense of belonging in the occupational environment. Even though the respondent's account concerned a possible case of abuse of employees, it nevertheless shows the agency of migrant individuals. In the psychological dimension, adaptation on the labor market influences the individual sense of identity, enhances autonomy, and provides empowerment. Work is increasingly interpreted in the context of potential self-realization. The changes connected with the growing flexibility of work and the uncertainty of employment relations—especially during various crises—lead to a quest for economic and professional independence.

### Conclusion

The study demonstrated the cultural (noneconomic) aspects of migrants' embeddedness in the labor market. Analysis of migrants' entrepreneurial cultures requires a more nuanced approach to the concepts and notions used in labor market studies. The focus on entrepreneurial culture allows us to discuss other possible meanings of migrants' labor market activities—in regard to themselves as well as the host society. The process of labor market adaptation cannot be understood solely in economic terms. It is connected with the reinterpretation of existing habits, and socialization to new patterns of work organization. It is a diffusion of various influences: it also occurs in the cultural dimension, which may deeply affect migrants' social relations and identity as entrepreneurs. These transformations are not necessarily one-track changes and they do not always go in one direction, as the narratives about dealing with the Covid-19 crisis show. Distinguishing these aspects allows labor market adaptation to be studied in a more in-depth and comprehensive way, and leads to the exploration of lesser known mechanisms, practices, and adaptation patterns. The case study concerned Polish migrant entrepreneurs, but the theme of noneconomic aspects of labor market adaptation has universal validity. Occupational activities encompass all (or almost all) groups and categories of migrants: not only labor migrants but also those who have political or educational motivations, and those migrating with the aim of family reunification. This study may serve as an introduction to researching migrants' labor market socialization as a process of multidimensional metamorphoses and reorientations, caused by international mobility and cross-cultural encounters.

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted differences in entrepreneurial cultures, opportunities of state assistance, and the availability of resilience strategies in various countries. Migrants' perception of differences in entrepreneurial cultures is increasingly significant

for how they develop individually as entrepreneurs, and for their skills and professional values. But the presence and activities of migrants also have broader consequences for the sending country. When Polish migrants evaluate the host society's culture as being more advantageous and welcoming, it discourages them from looking for work in Poland. On the other hand, those migrants who decide to return, with new skills and competences, may contribute to the consolidation of new cultural patterns on the Polish labor market.

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