

*Krystyna Szafraniec**

Spatial mobility as a carrier of cultural capital: an analysis based on a longitudinal study of generations*

Abstract

For many years international migrations have been the primary focus of spatial mobility research, whereas internal migrations – occurring within one state – have aroused significantly less interest. However, the latter are not only an important complement to the former, but they also seem to have a much greater impact on the domestic affairs of the state. For example, internal migrations engage the resources (intellectual, cultural, social) of much wider cohorts of people who therefore become, with varying degrees of significance, agents of social changes. This article presents an analysis of the spatial mobility of two generations monitored during a 45-year-long longitudinal research project. Its broad time perspective makes it possible to analyse not only the net changes with regard to the place of residence, a typical focus of migration studies, but also gross changes (migration flows). The aim of this article is to determine the scale and the social embeddedness of the migration flows in both generations.

* Institute of Sociology, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. ORCID: 0000-0002-5967-3109.

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It is assumed that, due to differences in generational biographies and resources, as well as changes in the quality of life in rural areas compared to urban areas, migrations in both generations, even though occurring at the same stages of life, are different. As a result, the resources contributed by migrants to their new places of residence also carry a different quality.

Keywords: spatial mobility, internal migrations, longitudinal studies, generations

Following Wilbur Zelinsky's hypothesis, spatial mobility is defined as a deliberate adaptation process whose aim is to off-set the demographic and labour resources, and the relationship between the population and the environment in situations of profound imbalance caused by modernisation. It is a process that continues to evolve along with the societal shift from the pre-modern to ultra-modern stages whereby mobility from the countryside to cities is replaced by migrations within or between cities, which in turn are superseded by international mobility (Zelinsky 1971). Although spatial mobility may be a relatively strong aspect of modern times, the vast majority of people lead a sedentary lifestyle with only temporary (though sometimes necessary, repeated, and relatively frequent) changes in their place of residence as a means to achieve their life goals (Okólski 1999, 2001). This mobility is particularly necessary in the modern labour market, while one's willingness to move from areas with a lower labour demand to those with a higher one is considered a modernist virtue.

In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – which have followed a slightly 'different' modernisation path – all types of mobility, including spatial/territorial, have been given a particular meaning, both by migrants and migration researchers. The eruption of mobility – in the face of labour market opportunities created by the European Union (EU) and the inability of local labour markets to accommodate the excess labour supply – has predominantly attracted the attention of researchers with regard to its international dimension, pushing the internal (domestic) migrations slightly to the margins¹ and 'offloading' this area of interest to demographers,

¹ This has been discussed at length by Polish demographers, economists, and sociologists, as shown, for example, by reports and monographs published by the most

geographers, and economists. However, occurring concurrently, internal migrations are not only an important complement to the international ones, but also seem to have a much greater impact on the state's domestic affairs. These migrations engage the lives and resources (intellectual, cultural, emotional, social, political) of a wider range of people who become, sometimes regardless of their will, more or less significant agents of social change.

Two approaches to migrations

Two trends seem to come to the fore in the discussion of spatial mobility (migrations): one where migrations are perceived as an element of life strategy or, more broadly, human fate, and another which explores the relationship between migrations and development processes. In the former, spatial mobility demonstrates the individual's readiness to make changes in life and face challenges related to moving to a different place while also highlighting problems and dilemmas experienced by migrants. The latter focuses on society, culture, economy, and social development as points of reference. On the one hand, it studies the processes of spatial mobility as indicators of the system's openness to solutions developed through individual decisions and choices, indicating its flexibility and institutional readiness to respond to individual projects involving where and how people want to live and work and which culture they prefer to identify with. On the other hand, migration is seen as an important factor/element of progress which has both a positive and negative impact on the flows of human resources, cultural capital, and finance (financial transfers).

Although international migrations are the central point of this discourse (along with the associated scientific theories and hypotheses), many of the ideas touched upon can be applied to internal migrations, allowing us to see them as a functionally crucial element of a larger whole. This is, for example, the case with rural development studies conducted by the Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development at the Polish Academy of Sciences (2014, 2016, 2018) to monitor the correlation between the socio-economic development of a gmina/powiat/region and spatial mobility. The classic dispute concerns

dynamic research centre in this area, i.e. the Centre of Migration Research at the University of Warsaw, or the Centre for Migration Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków.

the positive and negative effects of migration. For instance, while migrations contribute to reducing the population pressure and excess labour supply that cannot be effectively accommodated (which is an important mechanism towards achieving sustainable growth), they also come at a considerable cost (social, political) due to the outflow of active and well-educated people ('brain drain'). While migration is said to generally foster people's educational pursuits, which could point to its overall positive effects (Beine et al. 2001), researchers differ in their views depending on the adopted paradigm and often present ambivalent assessments of this phenomenon.

According to de Haas (2010), the discussion on migration and social development can be reduced to a dispute between two extreme paradigms referred to as 'migration optimism' and 'migration pessimism'. Researchers representing the former option present migration as a source of significant growth potential, where migrants are actually the 'heroes' of the economic growth and agents of change. The theory was initially put forward by Stephen Castles, who states that mobility is not only an element of the transformation process as such, but that migrating in search of better living conditions or safety is an important dimension of human agency (Castles 2009). Highlighting the importance of such an approach to migration, Paweł Kaczmarczyk refers to Amartya Sen's concept of development (1999) and applies some of its ideas to the migration discourse (Kaczmarczyk and Nestorowicz 2017). Sen defines development as the expansion of the freedoms that people can enjoy in life. His concept has been operationalised as the capability approach, which describes people's ability to implement their desired life choices. Indeed, for Sen 'development' is not defined by economic parameters, but by people's ability (or lack of it) to control their own lives. Kaczmarczyk argues that migration can therefore be perceived as an inherent component of the development process if it leads to an extension of the freedoms (opportunities), allowing the individual to achieve his/her life goals.

Proponents of the dependency theory, along with Wallerstein himself (1974), present a different point of view. In their opinion, not only does migration not produce development, but it can even block positive effects with the potential to support development in other areas. One of the reasons for this is the selective nature of migrations: among migrants one finds mainly active and well-educated people who could potentially become agents of social change. These arguments can be applied to both international

and internal (local) migrations, as documented by researchers in various countries, including Poland.

This dispute is, in all likelihood, irresolvable – migrations tend to reduce some problems in one place while triggering others somewhere else. The situation looks the same from the point of view of migrants who, by changing their place of residence, have something in common with Simmel's 'Alien' (1975) and generate similar problems; by being different migrants are a natural medium of change, but for the same reason they can also expose both themselves and the new community to culture clash and its consequences. Such situations and problems have become the subject of multiple studies and sociological theories, from the classics of the Chicago school, in particular the representatives of the marginal man theory by Robert E. Park (1928) and Everett V. Stonequist (1935), to postmodernist concepts of the axiologically attractive 'between borders' approach, i.e. functioning 'between' the ambivalent contents of culture (Giroux 1993).² Living between borders and being aware of the post-border character of the surrounding world is not only about being open and in contact with diverse cultural spaces; it also prompts reflection on the variability and multidimensionality of the individual and community self. By crossing borders, we intertwine our own experiences with those of others, sometimes transgressing beyond the narratives of the dominant culture. Such spaces should be seen as potential sources of experimentation, creativity, and stimulation of human abilities, leading to solutions that would not otherwise be possible.³

In this sense, both internal and external migrations function as carriers of cultural capital from one place (cultural space) to another, changing not only the life opportunities of the migrants, but also the internal resources of the sending and host communities. While frequently adopted in transnational migration research, this perspective is much less present in internal migration

² Their perspective allows us to clearly see the adaptation processes of international migrants in whose case living 'between borders' puts them, on the one hand, at risk of being marginalised and, on the other hand, invites experimentation, creativity and the use of their capabilities, allowing them to find solutions to problems that could not be resolved in the world they left – see K. Szafraniec, *Młode pokolenie a nowy ustrój* [The young generation and the new system], Warsaw 2010, pp. 155–225.

³ This perspective was adopted in our study of the post-2004 international migrations of Polish youth – see K. Szafraniec, *Młode pokolenie a nowy ustrój* [The young generation and the new system], Warsaw 2010.

studies (Szafranec 2006a, 2006b). In the latter area, studies on the value added by migration (cultural capital, lifestyle changes, mentality), the core of sociologists' interests in the past, have mostly been replaced by scientific pursuits of a demographic and economic nature. Furthermore, Polish researchers predominantly study internal migrations in order to obtain an insight into Poland's labour and educational market and the country's spatial diversity in relation to socio-economic development. Such studies are mostly based on the official data collected by Statistics Poland and Local Data Bank, which automatically influences the research options and types of questions that can be asked (Stanny and Wyduba 2020); these studies mainly concern migration directions, intensity, geographic diversification, and differentiating factors such as age or gender. However, researchers emphasise that it is difficult to say to what extent the available data reflects the actual scale of internal migrations given that such information is based solely on people's willingness to register in a new place of residence, which clearly decreased in post-1989 Poland (Frenkel et al. 2019: 81). In contrast, collecting data through direct contact with respondents by means of field studies offers greater opportunities to ask questions which typically pertain to individual educational or career choices. Nevertheless, such studies do not give us the overall picture of the scale and spatial differentiation of migrations.

Migrations from rural to urban areas in Poland

Seeking to define the specificity and primary trends of internal migrations in Poland, in the first place one must highlight the historical context of these migrations, which was different in the times of the People's Republic of Poland (Communist Poland) compared to nowadays. In Communist Poland, focused on the pursuit of the ambitious plan for the country's socialist modernisation, internal migrations mainly involved the movement of poor rural people to intensely industrialised urban areas. Landless and young people, unable to find work on farms, migrated to cities where stable jobs, income, and housing awaited. From the perspective of a migrating individual, migration to the city was a matter of social and civilisational advancement, and from the macrosocial point of view it was a guarantee of social development which, at that time, was driven by industrialisation and urbanisation. These aspects were extensively studied by Polish sociology scholars in the 1960s

and 1970s, which revealed not only the multi-vector character and regional differentiation of internal migrations, but also their social background and consequences visible in the changing social structure, lifestyles, and life opportunities (Gałaj 1970; Kozakiewicz 1973; Kwieciński 1972, 1980; Winclawski 1973, 1976; Kaleta and Winclawski 1988; Frenkel 1973; Rosner 1991). The rural-urban dichotomy and migrations from the countryside to the city were effectively reinforced by the then communist state's policy of restrictive tolerance towards rural areas and agriculture (Gorlach 2004). The 1970s and 1980s were marked by internal migrations of the highest intensity, with the migration balance for rural areas reaching approximately -2,005,400 in the former and -1,344,000 in the latter decade (Frenkel et al. 2019: 100).

Another example to illustrate the intensity of the studied phenomenon at that time is the 'advancing' cities (in Polish: *miasta awansujące*) – cities subjected to intensive industrialisation. In one of them, within a period shorter than ten years from the commencement of state investments, every third inhabitant was a newcomer (Nowakowa 1973). The migration plans of the then youth seem even more pungent. When asked about their plans for a future place of residence in a survey in the early 1970s, 76% of respondents (who were 15 years old at the time) indicated the city, despite the fact that less than half of them lived in urban areas. In contrast, only 1% of urban youth considered the possibility of living in the countryside (Kwieciński 1980: 84). Repeated in 1997 in a similar study of 15-year-olds, the same question revealed that 51% wanted to live in the city (with a further 11% planning to live abroad). Less than 6% of urban, mainly well-off, youth declared their willingness to live in rural areas. Overall, the difference was minor; despite the passage of time, in the opinion of the vast majority of respondents (N = 4,650), the countryside was still perceived as underprivileged (Szafraniec 1999).

After 2000, rurality associated with agriculture and peasantry became a thing of the past. This transformation was evoked not only by economic factors, which in the case of Poland and Polish agriculture improved significantly after joining the EU (Wilkin 2004; *Raport o stanie wsi* [Report on the state of rural areas] 2012, 2014; Kniec 2012), but also ideological and cultural factors. In the postmodern society, and amidst the progressing globalisation, rural areas and rurality are becoming increasingly more valued, if not overvalued, for the natural environment, landscapes, and lower costs of living (including the purchasing of land and the building of a house).

They are turning into a new place and subject of consumption (Chavalier 2009; Halamska 2011). While the countryside continues to be perceived in opposition to the city, the differences between them tend to be more ambiguous depending on the context. New ideologies of villages and rural areas are emerging which are naturally connected to ecological movements. With better conditions of living and new ways of thinking, the countryside is no longer a place that one has to 'run away' from. Nevertheless, given the poorer prospects in the local labour market and the critical role of work in achieving both independence and a lifestyle recommended by modern culture, migrations to the city are still a popular plan among many young people. Before moving on to the discussion of our data, let us present a few trends in contemporary internal migrations highlighted in other studies.

According to demographic findings, migrations in Poland are, next to natural movements, the second biggest cause of significant changes in the level and spatial distribution of the population, with internal migrations playing an increasingly important role since the 1990s (Okólski 2007). The changes have been so profound that urban areas, unlike rural, have begun to lose their population due to internal migrations (Statistics Poland 2014; Wrzochalska et al. 2012; Frenkel et al. 2019). According to researchers from the Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development at the Polish Academy of Sciences, while the migration balance from rural to urban areas was negative for the former until the beginning of the 21st century, since 2001 it has been slightly positive, reaching the levels of approximately 337,600 (Frenkel et al. 2019: 100). The current process of increasing the share of the rural population is occurring in specific conditions; on the one hand, there is a rise in migrations from cities to suburban areas (suburbanisation), but, on the other hand, the character of these areas is changing from rural to urban, as many suburban localities are transformed into housing estates for those moving out of city centres (gentrification) (Czarnecki 2019; Stanny and Wyduba 2020; Frenkel et al. 2019: 97).

The well-known thesis regarding the selective nature of migration (Ravenstain 1885), according to which migrants are young, better educated and enterprising people, finds confirmation also in Polish research – in studies of migration trends in Communist Poland (Rosner 1991), during the transformation period (Zdrojewski 2000), and currently, with respect to migrations to rural areas. As highlighted by Rosner (2016: 247), the countryside primarily attracts inhabitants of larger agglomerations who

seek better environmental conditions, landscapes, and prestige. The rural population outflows are primarily a result of young people moving to cities for education and work. Consequently, the population of rural areas distant from cities is in decline, while that of the rural suburbs is on the rise.

The majority of Polish internal migrations involve moving from one district (*gmina*) to another within the same province (*voivodeship*) (Statistics Poland 2014; Kiniorska 2017). Feminisation is another distinctive feature, with females of working age accounting for over half of all internal migrants in Poland (62.4%, including 15.5% of the 18–24 age group) (Wrzochalska et al. 2012: 80). Relatively, the highest migration activity is observed among young people aged 25–29 and 30–34 (Statistics Poland, 2014), although these levels are generally not assessed as high. Indeed, Mikołaj Herbst and Aneta Sobotka even mention low migration levels in their analysis of the spatial mobility of young people (under 30 years of age) with regard to educational choices. A staggering 75% of respondents had never changed their place of residence (Herbst and Sobotka 2014: 7), most of them being young people from cities (of whom only 17% had moved) or from poorer families who could not afford to support a child studying in a different town or city.

Although the presented trends paint an important picture of spatial migrations in Poland, they do not provide data on their additional functions as carriers of cultural capital, i.e. social and mental resources that are transferred to the new environment. Such studies, conducted in rural and urban communities in the golden age of empirical sociology (Winclawski 1976) and in later periods (see Szafraniec 2006a, 2006b), show a significant diversification of social resources depending on their location towards the centre and their migratory attractiveness. The perspective adopted in our study is different. Although the analysis of spatial mobility coupled with the type of ‘transferred’ human resources and cultural capital serves as the starting point, our approach is largely determined by the methodology of longitudinal research covering a few generations. On the one hand, this allows us to ask questions otherwise impossible in most migration studies – about the gross changes (flows). On the other hand, given that our surveys cover generations whose life activity coincided with two different historical epochs, it is necessary to consider the circumstances shaping the respondents’ generational socialisation and the overall social context in the interpretation of the results. The aim of this article is therefore to determine the scale and the social and cultural embeddedness of the migration flows in both

generations. It is assumed that, due to differences in generational biographies and resources, as well as changes in the quality of life in rural areas compared to urban areas, migrations in both generations, even though occurring at the same stages of life, are different. As a result, the resources contributed by migrants to their new places of residence also carry a different quality.

Discursiveness of human capital and its categories

The concept of human capital first emerged in economics where it was defined in relatively simple and unambiguous terms. Human capital was primarily perceived as the amount of people's knowledge and skills measured by the level and quality of their education (training) – the key factors of economic prosperity in the 1960s (Wilkin 2006). In modern times, the term has been burdened with multiple definitions and interpretations. With the growing interest in the concept, first, from sociologists and, second, from psychologists, economists have broadened their approach to include psychosocial aspects, while psychologists and sociologists – highlighting the ever broader and more complex nature of all phenomena that build human capital – do not ignore the economic perspective. Nowadays, human capital is understood as an element of a much broader set of resources that define the ability of an individual or a group to change, innovate, manage the emerging growth opportunities, and take joint actions.

Among all the sociological concepts of human capital, that by Pierre Bourdieu (2006) seems to be the most well-known and most frequently referred to. Bourdieu defines human capital as an individual's resources necessary to either improve or maintain one's social position and prestige, and function more effectively in everyday reality. As a result, human capital is perceived as a means in the pursuit of specific interests and values that constitute the objective of individual and/or group activities. Bourdieu identifies different types of capital, among which the following three are fundamental: material, social, and cultural. While all three are the subject of our interest in analyses extending beyond the purview of this article, our intention in this paper is to highlight only one of them – cultural capital, defined by Bourdieu as knowledge, competencies, and professional qualifications, as well as a specific type and level of cultural competence. Given the limited space and the general complexity of the presented issues,

the concept of cultural capital is here narrowed down to its institutionalised aspect, i.e. the length and formal status of education. This approach was dictated by the high status of education as a variable that significantly differentiates other aspects of cultural capital – attitudes, behaviour, life orientations, and mental characteristics.

Empirical foundations of the analyses

Spatial mobility, like social mobility, is effectively an ‘indicator’ of society’s openness, development dynamics, and people’s readiness to introduce changes in their lives, while the ‘circulation of social objects and values’ that comes with it, as observed by Pitirim Sorokin (1927/2009: 372 ff.), changes the social face and life opportunities of many groups and communities. The combination of both perspectives, the spatial mobility of people and the related ‘mobility of ideas and values’, can be described as the main reason behind this article. The unfolding analysis focuses on two generations as two subsequent links in a genealogical sequence. The first (‘Parents’) is the generation born in 1957, euphemistically referred to as ‘children of Communist Poland’, whose members are currently aged just over 60, while the second generation (‘Children’) comprises their children (currently aged 36–38) who grew up and entered adulthood in post-communist Poland. Alongside the longitudinal nature of the research, the fact that they form two genealogically adjacent groups makes it possible to describe spatial mobility in the same, continually observed subjects, while the wide time spectrum covered by the study allows us to propose conclusions about spatial mobility as a result of fundamental migration decisions made at the same stages of life by two different generations. The nature of our study offers, on the one hand, a unique opportunity to estimate the generation effect of migration through time-sequential analyses, but, on the other hand, given the lack of similar research, it makes it difficult to formulate a specific hypothesis.

We had reasons to assume that the spatial mobility observed in the generations whose biographies coincided with the socially and historically different times in Poland would be different in terms of its scale, intensity, directions of migration, and resources. The older generation was born and brought up in a pre-modern, largely rural, and agricultural nation; moreover, its representatives entered independent adult life during the economic and

political collapse of the system in the 1980s. The post-1989 period of systemic transformation created opportunities for the realisation of aspirations, and also with regard to the place of residence, which had largely remained frozen throughout the period of Communist Poland. The Children, effectively socialised to the values of success, colourful life and prosperity, invested in education and were highly determined to live in places where their aspirations could be met to the highest degree. As a result, they tended to migrate abroad and to large cities. The attractive power of rural areas and provinces, despite favourable changes in their perception, remained small. While these arguments may suggest only a slight change in the vectors of internal migrations, their social significance – related to the transfer of human capital – evolved largely due to differences observed in the contemporary young generation. Success-orientated and well-educated, members of this young generation brought to new communities the capital that helped them multiply their development resources, which, in our opinion, did not reduce but further deepened the already existing differences. This finding is verified in the unfolding empirical analysis.

Our analysis is based on a longitudinal study that was launched in the early 1970s. The Toruń region was selected for the research as it represents the average level of socio-economic development in Poland. Entire cohorts of 15-year-olds, primary school final graders, were included in the first study (in 1972);⁴ data was then collected regarding their school careers and further educational paths over the next five years, taking into account diverse social and environmental conditions. The primary focus of the surveys conducted during the school period, and subsequently during adult life, was to ensure the respondents' traceability.⁵

The first post-school (and the sixth overall) wave of the study took place in 1987–1988, when the studied population turned 30 and entered the phase of complete stabilisation in life. A total of 4,831 respondents were effectively reached, with whom an extensive biographical interview was conducted. In 1997–1998, the subsequent (seventh) survey was carried with the population

⁴ Prof. Zbigniew Kwiecieński was the author and the head of the first five editions of the research. In 1988, this role was taken over by Prof. Ryszard Borowicz. The last two waves of the research were supervised by Prof. Krystyna Szafranec.

⁵ The results of these surveys (regarding social inequalities in education and selectivity at schools) are discussed in numerous works (books and articles) by Zbigniew Kwiecieński and Ryszard Borowicz.

that was now 40 years old and had functioned for nearly a decade in Poland's new political reality. For pragmatic reasons, in order to avoid the dropout effect (Tuijnman 1989: 103–120), and also due to financial constraints, the study sample was reduced from 4,831 to 1,025 respondents to ensure greater control over the parameters. The navigating and selecting variable was the respondent's socio-economic status. Quota sampling was applied to ensure appropriate proportions. The adolescent (17–19 years old) children of our respondents were also included in the study, and the interviews conducted with them contained questions allowing us to describe the processes of adaptation to the new social reality in both generations.

The last (eighth) wave took place in 2016–2017. There was the need for a closure in studying the fate of these two sociologically interesting generations in this historical period of at first delayed, and now eroding, political transformation in Poland. As usual, the critical task was to update the contact data. In addition, the panel fatigue effect was observed. A total of 360 questionnaire interviews were completed for the 60-year-old respondents alongside 240 interviews with their children; more than half were reconstructed by assigning the same baseline parameters to people recruited from outside the original sample.⁶

The validity of our comparisons seems to be a fundamental issue. Considering the progressive reduction in the number of respondents in the subsequent waves of the research, a question arises as to whether the last survey's group (today's 60-year-olds) actually constituted a specific population in terms of basic socio-demographic parameters compared to those studied in the 1998 and 1988 surveys.

To resolve this problem, two comparisons were made: the group of 60-year-olds (surveyed in 2017) with the two groups of 30- and 40-year-olds which did not participate in the subsequent waves of the research. As the basic socio-demographic characteristics of the population from the last survey did not differ from those of the populations that did not participate in the respective previous waves of the research, dynamic analysis was assumed to be methodologically justified.⁷

⁶ In the unfolding analysis this group is referred to as a quasi-panel sample.

⁷ One of the challenges was a limited selection of variables that would provide the basis for comparative analyses (because of the research methodology). Comparative analysis options become limited with time. Eventually, our comparative analyses referred

The analysis reveals that the group within the most recent survey was more rural and agricultural compared to the 1988 and 1998 groups which did not participate in the subsequent surveys. However, no statistically significant differences were identified in the education levels achieved at the age of 40. Considering the greater explanatory power of the education variable – as confirmed by many previous studies – this is a positive conclusion, enabling further dynamic analyses that appeared to be methodologically justified as long as the sample's more rural nature was taken into account.

Spatial allocation and changes in the place of residence

Spatial mobility of the studied generations

In our analyses we adopted the definition proposed by Everett S. Lee, who defines spatial mobility as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence whereby people leave one territorial unit of a specific administrative status in order to move to another. The adoption of such a definition excludes cases in which individuals move within the city/town/village of the same administrative status (Lee 1966: 49).

The first group of questions concerned the similarities and differences between generations in their mobility patterns. The second group of questions, meanwhile, had a greater focus on the social background and social consequences of spatial mobility. We will start the analysis with a description of the current allocation of the respondents (at the time of the last survey). The vast majority (92%) of them lived in the area originally covered by the study (Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship). This is a region with average population sizes, i.e. neither exceptionally active nor depopulated⁸ (Miszczyk et al. 2010: 97); its migration balances from urban to rural areas and rural to urban areas are not high, while its slightly positive balance for the former remains within Poland's average parameters (Wrzochalska et al. 2012: 78–80). Most respondents lived in urban areas – cities/larger towns (41.5% of the Parents

mostly to the characteristics describing social origin, educational achievements, changes in the level of education, and place of residence (taking into account the dynamics of the latter two).

⁸ In general, depopulation is observed in areas that are peripheral, both spatially and socio-economically, which includes the microregion of Eastern Poland.

and 57.3% of the Children) and towns (25.1% and 14.7%, respectively). In simple terms, one out of three parents and one out of five children lived in the countryside. In terms of place of residence, the studied population did not differ from the average parameters observed across Poland.

Nonetheless, even a simple overview – such as that presented in Table 1 – demonstrates that both generations⁹ underwent significant changes during the analysed period. When the Parents were 15 and still at school, most were from rural areas (45.5%), followed by cities/larger towns (41.3%) and towns (13%). Upon reaching life independence (at the age of 30), this population was much more urban and significantly less interested in staying in the countryside. At the next stage of life (between 30 and 40 years of age), the Parents left the countryside in favour of the city even more frequently. However, this trend was reversed after 2000; as the respondents came nearer to the end of their lives, their interest in living in the countryside increased (32.3%), whereas their affinity with the city decreased (to 41.6%), which resembles the initial trend. In the most recent surveys, towns were moderately attractive to representatives of the older generation (although clearly more respondents lived there than before).

Table 1. Changes in the place of residence in the studied generations¹⁰

Generation	Parents				Children
	15	30	40	60	
Age (in years)	15	30	40	60	37–38
Time of the survey	1973	1988	1998	2017	2017
Place of residence ↓					
City	41.4	44.4	46.4	41.6	57.3
Town	13.1	14.8	24.0	25.1	14.7
Rural areas	45.5	39.9	29.6	32.3	18.6
Abroad		2.3		1.1	9.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

⁹ The descriptions of the place of residence of the 40-year-old Parents also provide information about the place of residence of the Children aged 18–19 at that time (now 35+).

¹⁰ The phrase ‘change of (the place of) residence’ refers to changes of the living environment.

This situation was quite different in the generation of the Children, as the vast majority lived in cities/larger towns and significantly fewer lived in provinces (towns and villages). Neither towns nor villages were so willingly chosen by young people as places to live, with cities proving to have an increasing power of attraction over time. This can be seen in the comparisons of the Parents' previous places of residence (when they were 30 or 40) with those of their adult Children.

Nearly every tenth young respondent lived abroad, which means a tenfold increase compared to the generation of the Parents. However, the relevant data – like all statistics on population movements – is highly imprecise. The indicators for the 30-year-olds cannot be compared to the other two in the table due to differences in the methodology. The indicator specified for the 60-year-olds refers to the panel sample that was studied. It does not include the people who emigrated from Poland earlier, i.e. before the survey of the adult respondents began, whose sample functioned as the framework for the subsequent waves of the research. However, the number of people who emigrated in that period was established via data from the Central Address Office on the whereabouts of the former students enrolled in the study. Based on our calculations, people who had stayed abroad for a longer time accounted for 2.3% of the studied school year (Borowicz 1991). Cases of international migrants recruited from the older generation (1.1%), recorded in the later studies, referred to those respondents who left Poland at a later stage but whom we still managed to interview.

Mobility patterns within the studied generations

The analysis presented above highlights changes in the respondents' spatial allocation but says nothing about its dynamics. Where did people migrate from? Where to? Who was mobile and in what sense? Who did not change their place of residence? What mobility patterns can be identified? What do they show? Table 2 summarises the mobility rates for both the Parents and the Children. Analogous periods of life were selected for comparison purposes: between early youth and reaching total life independence. In the Parents group, the period was defined as the time between 15 and 40 years of age (15 years of which covered Communist Poland and 10 years of which covered the political transformation). In the case of the Children, the corresponding period fell between the ages of 18–19 (late 1990s) and 37–38

(the last survey), i.e. entirely during the period of advanced systemic transformation.

Table 2. Mobility patterns in the generations of the Parents and the Children

Generation	Parents	Children
Period in life/age (years)	15–40	18–37
Time span	1972–1998	1998–2017
Migration patterns ↓		
Immobile	69.6	61.0
Migrations to provinces	7.8	6.1
Migrations to cities/larger towns	21.5	23.4
International migrations	1.1	9.5

Immobility was found to be the dominant pattern in both generations, with the Parents proving to be more immobile. Nearly 70% of them had not changed their living environment until they were 40. A similar situation concerned 61% of the respondents in the generation of the Children, whereby permanent residents of cities/larger towns accounted for 36% and 38% of the immobile respondents, respectively, whereas permanent residents of rural areas accounted for 24% and 15%. The mobility proportions were reversed: being in motion (spatial mobility) was an attribute of 39% of the Children and 30.4% of the Parents. The most typical pattern of mobility for both generations was migrations from towns to cities/larger towns, which were more intense for the younger generation. Migrations in the opposite direction were several times less frequent. Moving abroad has become a distinctive feature of the young generation,¹¹ which in itself is hardly a shock in the context of open borders and international labour markets, as discussed in numerous scientific studies (Jaźwińska and Okólski 2001; Eade et al. 2006; Kaczmarczyk 2018; Grabowska et al. 2017); however, in light of internal migration patterns, moving abroad gains a new meaning. This analysis highlights a declining interest in living in provinces among young

¹¹ In the question about reconstructing the state of the family, the respondents were asked for detailed information about their children. Each reported case of the oldest child living abroad was recorded. The figures presented here (1.1% and 9.5%) reflect the real migration proportions between the Parents and their Children.

persons and a rising attractiveness of international migrations in comparison to internal migrations.

The countryside, or provinces in general, have recovered from the civilisational collapse and the opinion about the rural space has changed. This trend is also present in Poland, as evidenced by Poles (both older and younger) dreaming about a house in the countryside and by the growing residential mobility.¹² Despite this, more young people decide to leave rural areas and migrate rather than stay. Migrations to the countryside – for economic reasons (lower costs of living) and in search of a new lifestyle (closer to nature, a house with a garden, a different kind of neighbourhood) – were observed in 3.6% of young people. In the analogous period of life, migrations from the city to the countryside in the generation of the Parents occurred more frequently and had a different motivation (better jobs, housing). Choosing a different lifestyle (migrations of well-off residents, migrations back to the countryside)¹³ seems to be a more contemporary phenomenon.

As well as the changes induced by the evolving social context, mobility patterns are also determined by the life cycle (Table 3). We are not discovering anything particularly new here – mobility characterises primarily young people looking for the optimal location to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Table 3. Mobility in the Parents' generation – gross changes (internal flows)

Period in life/age (years)	15–30	31–40	41–60	15–60
Time span	1972–1988	1988–1998	1998–2017	1972–2017
Mobility type ↓				
Immobile	74.1	81.6	87.1	69.6
Migrations to provinces	9.1	4.5	7.5	9.2
Migrations to cities/larger towns	14.5	13.1	4.2	20.1
International migrations	2.3	N/D	1.1	1.1

¹² Since 2000, the migration balance for rural areas in Poland has been positive for the first time (Frenkel 2012). It is a trend that, as of yet, has not been observed in any other post-communist state (Szafranec et al. 2018).

¹³ One-way migrations (from the city to the countryside) were reported in 6.1% of the studied Parents, while return migrations (back to the countryside) accounted for 2.8% of the population.

Observation of migrations within the older generation indicates that spatial mobility loses intensity with age and becomes more concentrated on provinces (towns and the countryside). This is where another category of migrations emerges – return migrations – twice as often orientated to the countryside as to the city (2.8% vs. 1.4%). Taking the residents’ current location into account, those who live in the countryside are a population largely composed of people who have never changed their place of residence. Outsiders are a decisive minority in both generations (Table 4).

Table 4. Generations by mobility type and current place of residence

Place of residence	Cities/larger towns		Towns		Countryside	
	P	Ch	P	Ch	P	Ch
Immobile	78.5	64.0	51.0	55.0	74.0	79.0
Immigrants	19.5	36.0	49.0	45.0	26.0	21.0

Most of the respondents from cities/larger towns have also lived there since childhood. However, unlike their rural counterparts, there have been clear generational differences among the urban immigrants. Firstly, there were relatively more young immigrants (as a result of today’s greater pressure placed on the young by cities); secondly, the older newcomers, in vast majority, were of rural origin, and in the younger generation half of the immigrants came from villages and towns, which in terms of mobility are undergoing a distinct metamorphosis. The proportions of permanent residents and immigrants were therefore equal in both generations, yet older and younger immigrants had different roots; with regard to the Parents’ generation, these were predominantly individuals who had previously lived in the countryside, whereas in the younger generation the distribution between the countryside and cities was much more equal. These differences suggest a different status of town migrations in the older and younger generations. While in the former the differences represented civilisational advancement, in the latter they constituted an optimal life choice.

Socio-cultural correlates of mobility

Spatial mobility results in human capital flows. Migrating people bring their capital to new places, transforming local resources and contributing

new opportunities and limitations to new communities. At this point, let us focus on the circulation of the fundamental types of capital, related to education and social status, which – as shown by many studies, including ours – continue to have the largest impact on people’s attitudes, choices, and everyday behaviour. Our primary question is as follows: does, and to what extent, the cultural capital coupled with different mobility patterns differ in both generations?

Table 5. Cultural capital of the respondents representing different mobility patterns¹⁴

Generation	Parents	Children
Age (years) ¹	40	37–38
Time span ²	1973–1998	1998–2017
Education →	↓ below secondary – secondary – higher ↓	
Immobile residents of cities/larger towns	18.9–37.8–43.3	6.3–27.9–64.0 ³
Immobile residents of towns	27.8–25.0–47.2	12.0–12.0–76.0
People migrating to the city	30.4–48.3–21.3	8.8–20.3–70.9
People migrating to the countryside	50.0–30.0–20.0	27.2–45.5–27.3
Immobile residents of the countryside	54.7–33.7–11.6	10.9–39.1–47.8 ⁴
People migrating abroad	–	6.9–44.8–48.2

¹ The age at which the respondents reached the level of education specified in the table.

² Periods of time which the analysed mobility patterns refer to.

³ No data available: 0.8%.

⁴ No data available: 2.2%.

Table 5 shows the educational structure of the respondents representing different mobility patterns in both generations. Although certain similarities in trends can be noticed, there are also some significant differences and changes. For the Parents, the probability of urban immobility increased with the level of education, whereas the inverse was true for rural immobility; this means that those Parents with a higher educational status tended to stay in the

¹⁴ The figures in the table correspond to the subsequent levels of education and add up to 100% on a horizontal basis.

city, while those with a lower status remained in the countryside. Meanwhile, for the Children, both urban and rural immobility was subject to the same rules; this seems to suggest that, in modern times, both locations offer certain advantages, allowing young and well-educated people to find a place for themselves. However, to make such a decision they evidently need to have some previous experience with rural life – significantly fewer migrants who moved to the countryside from ‘outside’ had higher education.

In the younger generation, people migrating to the countryside primarily had secondary education, while in the older group the majority did not hold secondary qualifications. Undoubtedly, the younger wave of migration to the countryside introduced a cultural capital of higher quality to this environment compared to the Parents. This is also the case with migrations from the countryside to the city, where young, well-educated people prevailed. The migration balance in terms of cultural capital is still more favourable for cities; however, the educational boom, which translates into better education levels in the younger generation, along with changes in the Polish countryside, mean that the processes of spatial mobility have become more symmetrical.

Table 6. Inherited cultural capital among people representing various mobility patterns

Generation	Parents	Children
Age (years)	40	37–38
Time span	1973–1998	1998–2017
Sampling	panel	quasi-panel
Education of fathers →	below secondary – secondary – higher	
Immobile residents of cities/ larger towns	41.7–38.6–17.3	19.2–42.6–38.3
Immobile residents of towns	52.8–35.0–3.8	37.0–26.0–37.0
People migrating to the city	76.4–14.6–3.4	41.8–29.1–29.1
People migrating to the countryside	85.0–10.0–0.0	45.5–36.4–18.2
Immobile residents of the countryside	86.0–7.0–2.3	47.9–41.3–10.9
People migrating abroad	–	33.1–37.0–29.8

The quality of the changes was also evidenced by their duration. Both the Parents and the Children proved to be the generations of educational advancement. Their higher education statuses were rarely inherited; rather, they were short-lived and based on different social and mental foundations. This had an impact on the actual quality of the cultural capital available to the children availing themselves of such advancement. Moreover, the data presented in Table 6 reveals a fundamental difference between the generations. The Parents migrating to the city represented moderate education levels, while their inherited cultural capital was predominantly determined by the very low education of their fathers. By migrating to the social space of the city, they brought with them the folk culture cultivated from generation to generation. This aspect has been illustrated by various studies, including one conducted in the same area a few decades before (Kaleta and Winclawski 1988). In turn, the Children migrating to the city were not only better educated, but the cultural capital they inherited also had a better educational basis. Coming from the countryside, they introduced a completely different value to the urban space compared to their Parents, because ‘their’ countryside was different, their socialisation took place in a more open and culturally diverse space, and their parents were more modern. Consequently, the social and mental distances within the city between the ‘indigenous’ people and rural immigrants could be reduced; however, this was not necessarily the case for cities/larger towns and provinces where young, well-educated people with equally ‘good’ inherited cultural capital were significantly less represented and where most of the older respondents had a lower level of education founded on an even lower inherited cultural capital.

Table 7. Contribution of the studied generations to the cultural capital of urban and rural environments (2017)

Education → 2017 Place of residence 2017 ↓		Below secondary	Secondary	Higher
Cities/larger towns	Parents	+3.1	+1.0	-4.0
	Children	-1.1	-4.8	+6.4
Towns	Parents	+7.5	+3.0	-10.6
	Children	+6.0	+13.6	-9.6
Countryside	Parents	-5.9	+1.0	+4.8
	Children	+0.6	+3.2	-3.6

Table 7 presents increases (+) and decreases (-) in the number of representatives of the respective education categories in relation to the migration activity in each generation. The figures (in %) were obtained by comparing the education characteristics of all respondents living in the defined type of environment (cities/larger towns, towns, countryside) with the analogous characteristics of the immobile respondents, assuming that the differences between these factors resulted from the migration flows. As expected, the spatial mobility had an impact on the structure of education and the nature of cultural capital within both urban and rural areas. The migration activity of the older generation resulted in the weakening of the cultural capital in urban areas (vs. the capital of the immobile city dwellers) and the strengthening of the cultural capital in rural areas (vs. the capital of immobile countryside residents). In turn, while the spatial mobility of those in the younger generation had a positive effect on the educational structure in cities/larger towns, this influence became negative in towns and villages.¹⁵ In addition, the brain drain effect was particularly visible in towns for both generations.

Table 8. Social and professional status vs. the place of residence of representatives in the studied generations (figures add up to 100% on a horizontal basis)

		Intellectuals/ specialists	White- collar	Blue- collar	Farmers	Entrepreneurs	Economically inactive
Cities/larger towns	Parents	10.7	47.0	29.5	–	4.0	8.7
	Children	42.0	32.7	8.0	–	8.0	9.3
Towns	Parents	3.3	54.4	22.2	3.3	7.8	8.9
	Children	31.6	34.2	15.8	–	5.3	13.2
Countryside	Parents	4.3	31.9	24.1	30.2	4.3	5.2
	Children	13.7	39.2	11.8	11.8	9.8	13.7

Aside from cultural capital, migrations also introduced changes to the social and employment structure (Table 8). For the Parents, two different streams could be observed (in both the migrations to the city and those

¹⁵ It must be emphasised that these findings refer only to the selected generations and as such cannot be generalised. However, even though it was never their purpose, they can provide a starting point for extrapolations regarding the revealed trends.

to the countryside): taking up the roles of white-collar workers (with a lower representation of specialists with higher education) and blue-collar workers (workers and farmers). The Children's migrations were definitely more asymmetrical and at the same time more homogeneous. Indeed, those who migrated were mainly specialists with higher education and representatives of the broadly defined category of white-collar workers, with the former prevailing in the migrations to the city and the latter converging on the countryside. In the younger generation, migrations of people with workers' qualifications were rare or entirely absent in farming jobs. The category of entrepreneurs was less numerous. With regard to the older generation, its representatives were more often found in towns, whereas younger entrepreneurs preferred either cities/larger towns (people with higher education) or the countryside (people with secondary education). The economically inactive respondents (more often present in the younger generation) were primarily found in provinces, possibly suggesting that the labour on offer in those provinces is less attractive for young people. Major migration flows seem to reflect the inherent opportunities and needs of both generations. For the Parents, when they used to be young, for instance, there was a need for clerical staff and physical workers (both in urban and rural areas), while in the younger generation the prevailing requirement was for specialists with higher education and entrepreneurs. Does this cause any changes to the social structure of the identified environments (cities/larger towns, towns, countryside)?

Table 9. The balance of spatial mobility as reflected in changes to the social structure of urban and rural environments (2017)

Social-professional status → Place of residence ↓		Intellectuals/ specialists	White- collar	Blue- collar	Farmers	Entrepreneurs	Economically inactive
Cities/larger towns	Parents	-6.6	+5.3	+13.0	-	-8.6	-3.1
	Children	+7.7	-3.5	-0.5	-	+4.0	+1.3
Towns	Parents	-5.0	+1.6	+8.3	+0.5	-0.5	-5.0
	Children	-12.4	+6.2	-0.2	-	+1.3	+5.2
Countryside	Parents	+2.0	+13.3	+5.5	-15.1	+0.8	-6.4
	Children	+0.1	+2.8	-1.8	-1.8	-1.6	+2.3

Table 9 presents data analogous to that outlined in Table 7. Here, there are clear increases and decreases in the socio-professional categories due to mobility, and the data is different for both generations. In cities and towns (large and small), migrations within the older generation resulted in increased numbers of blue-collar workers (less frequently white-collar workers) and a reduced share of intellectuals and entrepreneurs. In the countryside, these migrations strengthened the group of white-collar workers (and to a lesser extent the intellectuals), slightly increased the representation of blue-collar workers and entrepreneurs, and, most importantly, they contributed to reducing the percentage of farmers in the social structure. The structural effects of the younger generation's mobility were completely different. In the case of cities/larger towns, their migrations increased the numbers of specialists with higher education and entrepreneurs, yet reduced the share of blue- and white-collar workers. These proportions were reversed in towns, where a significant depletion of the local intellectual resources was observed along with an increase in the number of white-collar workers. Overall, there were no significant changes in the migrations of the young generation in the countryside. The interest in taking up physical work and entrepreneurship was here even lower among migrating young people than immobile countryside residents, which seems to suggest that the representation of both categories is shrinking in rural areas. Evidently, the only people with a positive migration balance in the young generation were white-collar workers.

Summary

This article proposes a hypothesis according to which spatial mobility, in particular the mobility of human capital that comes with it, transforms the internal resources of host communities, while migration-related generational differences, resulting from socialisation differences and changes in the social context, not only contribute to the deepening of the existing differences, but also revitalise and strengthen the social resources of communities which people migrate to. Although the presented analyses concern specific generations, they show that, as a result of migrations, both cities and villages gain the social capital that allows them to perform a wider range of tasks than would otherwise be possible with the resources of immobile residents. New opportunities emerge that change the

existing social space, which in turn generates more diverse options. Although mobility is never a one-way process, cities and larger towns remain its greatest beneficiaries; with the inflow of human capital they are the most innovative, particularly in the modern world. On the other hand, towns experience flights of high-quality human capital not compensated by inflows, thus causing their social structure to become increasingly flattened and homogeneous.

The effect of strengthened human capital – driven by the influx of urban migrants and educational pursuits of permanent residents – is still weak in rural areas and its presence, reflected in the dynamics of the local population growth, can be misleading. Firstly, in a wider social context, the local space of the countryside loses its homogeneous character, as its key components tend to follow different rules. While its institutional and socio-cultural dimension is subject to external pressures, the psychosocial aspects are still governed by patterns typical of a closed community and traditional society (Starosta 1995: 238). As a result, the attitudes and views of small communities in provinces are still highly traditionalist and the impact of any social and cultural capital introduced by outsiders is minimal. This applies to the capital brought both by urban migrants (most of whom are candidates for clerks or residents) and indigenous people who return to their communities having spent years in education and training. Another, rather unfavourable, aspect is the growing expansion of bureaucracy in the countryside due to the implementation of rural and agricultural development programmes. They have created an additional demand for institutions and human resources that has not existed within the provinces before. Their dynamic development has also triggered a bureaucratic loop, becoming the source of many negative forces that have colonised local initiatives and the activities of local governments (Knieć 2012: 220–298).

In such a context, the resources contributed by outsiders (who often only see the exotic side of the countryside and its folklore) can be consumed by activities that do not necessarily strengthen the subjectivity of rural and town communities; such activities are also naturally weak, as they are based on negative identifications and choices. This analysis applies not only to the older generation, but especially to young people who have the illusion of a different (unreal, media-mediated) world in families that have not succeeded in life and whose primary goal is to send their children to the city. In these scenarios, their decisions to leave not only weaken the development potential of local environments, but also contribute to the mental homogenisation of the indigenous community where the local and familiar is preferred and where it becomes extremely difficult for diversity and

otherness to put down roots (Długosz 2017: 320 ff.). As a consequence, rather than providing for a reset of the development potential, the discussed phenomena reveal the complex context of spatial mobility and its current processes.

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