

CHAPTER 6

THE LIMITS OF TRADING CULTURAL CAPITAL: RETURNING MIGRANT CHILDREN AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORY IN HUNGARY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This chapter analyses the effects of social stratification and inequalities on the outcomes of transnational mobilities, especially on the educational trajectory of returning migrant children.

Study approach: It places the Bourdieusian capital concepts (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) centre stage, and analyses the convertibility or transferability of the cultural and social capital across different transnational locations. It examines the serious limitations of this process, using the concept of non-dominant cultural capital as a heuristic analytical tool and the education system (school) as a way of approaching the field. As we examine ‘successful mobilities’ of high-status families with children and racialised low-status families experiencing

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mobility failures, our intention is to draw attention on the effect of the starting position of the migrating families on the outcomes of their cross-border mobilities through a closer reading of insightful cases. We look at the interrelations of social position or class race and mobility experiences through several empirical case studies from different regions of Hungary by examining the narratives of people belonging to very different social strata with a focus on the 'top' and the 'bottom' of the socio-economic hierarchy. We examine the transnational mobility trajectories, strategies and the reintegration of school age children from transnationally mobile families upon their return to Hungary.

Findings: Our qualitative research indicates that for returning migrants not only their available capitals in a Bourdieasian sense but also their (de)valuation by the different Hungarian schools has direct consequences on mobility-affected educational trajectories, on the individual outcomes of mobilities, and the circumstances of return and chances for reintegration.

Originality: There is little qualitative research on the effects of emigration from Hungary in recent decades. A more recent edited volume (Váradi, 2018) discusses various intersectionalities of migration such as gender, ethnicity and age. This chapter intends to advance this line of research, analysing the intersectionality of class, ethnicity and race in the context of spatial mobilities through operationalising a critical reading of the Bourdieusian capitals.

Keywords: Returning migrant children; school reintegration; Bourdieusian capitals; non-dominant cultural capital; 'losses' and 'gains'; transnational mobilities

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to show how migration experience provides both opportunities and difficulties for families with distinct resources. We examine it from the perspective of school *reintegration* of children from transnationally mobile families upon their return to Hungary. We explore the parents', children's and teachers' narratives about 'losses' and 'gains' linked to geographical mobilities. While families and children with more resources tend to profit more from their experiences abroad, a more nuanced and critical understanding of the Bourdieusian concepts of social, cultural and economic capitals provides us with a better understanding of the impacts of migration on school performance, and ultimately on the successful return and reintegration of children. Looking at migration, as a hope or opportunity (Durst, 2018), and including *aspirational capital* (Yosso, 2005) as an important alternative form of cultural capital provides new insights about the advantages and disadvantages of the mobility experience. Aspirational capital 'refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers' (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Studying aspirational capital in the case of returning children provides a valuable contribution to a deeper

understanding of the impact of transnational migration on the future perspectives of children.

To meet the aims of this chapter, we draw on the empirical findings of two of our research projects. The first one investigated the difficulties of school reintegration in the case of return migrant children from different socio-economical family backgrounds in Hungary. In the framework of this project, we conducted interviews with teachers and children in three sites including an elite private school, one serving middle class children and a third school serving children of socially marginalised Roma families. The second research project that this chapter benefits from incorporated two years of ethnographic field work in an impoverished rural town in North East Hungary.

The chapter proceeds in the following way. First, we delineate the theoretical framework that we use as a conceptual toolkit to interpret our empirical findings. Then, we introduce the research context, the background of transnational migration from Hungary and some important characteristics of the education system in the country. Third, we develop our argument by showcasing three case studies from the top, the middle and the low end of the Hungarian education system, in different school environments with elite and disadvantaged students. Finally, we conclude the chapter with theoretical and practical implications following from our empirical findings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION, (NON) DOMINANT CULTURAL CAPITAL, AND SOCIAL POSITION

The gains and losses of migration are commonly analysed in a theoretical framework based on Bourdieu's concepts of social, economic and cultural capital that examines whether migration can provide a way for social mobility. As [Burke, Thatcher, Ingram, and Abrahams \(2016\)](#) explain, capital can be understood as particular resources that individuals have access to, which can be invested or exchanged. These resources locate an individual's position within a social hierarchy or a social space. The position an individual occupies in society will affect not only one's life chances but also one's level of aspirations and expectations from life, what [Bourdieu \(1984\)](#) refers to as the 'field of possibles' (p. 110).

[Bourdieu \(1984, 1989\)](#) identifies four different types of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. Economic capital describes different forms of material possessions. Social capital refers to resources based on connections and group membership. Cultural capital refers to the accumulated cultural knowledge and skills and can exist in three forms. The first one is the embodied state, in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body, such as social styles, schemes of expression, acquired bodies of knowledge, manners of speaking, representational styles, consumption practices and patterns ([Reay, 2004](#); [Skeggs, 1997](#); [Wallace, 2016](#)). The second one is the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (books, etc.). The third one is the institutionalised state, such as educational qualifications.

The fourth type of the Bourdieusian capitals' is the symbolic capital. This is the form the other types of capitals take once they are perceived and recognised as legitimate. As Skeggs (1997) explains, legitimisation is the key mechanism in the capital conversion to power. 'Cultural capital has to be legitimated before it can be capitalized upon. All capitals are context specific' (Skeggs, 1997, p. 8). Thus, people are distributed in the overall social space according to the volume and composition of their legitimised capital in their different social contexts.

Despite Bourdieu's nuanced and specific definition, his concept of cultural capital is commonly deployed in ways that promote deficit views of racial and class minorities (Wallace, 2016). Conventional studies on socio-economically disadvantaged working class and racialised minority families describe this group with a deficit view: lack of economic and cultural capital and low aspirations (see for a critic Mallman, 2018; McKenzie, 2016; Yosso, 2005). Ethnographic studies, however, show that there are two core forms of cultural capital at play in the lives of racialised minorities. Carter (2003, cited by Wallace, 2016) speaks about dominant and non-dominant cultural capital. That is, the legitimated (dominant) and non-legitimated (non-dominant, or alternative forms of) cultural capital. She defines dominant cultural capital in keeping with Bourdieu's original definition – that is cultural knowledge, specialised skills and distinct practices (and tastes) inherited and used by privileged classes to maintain high status and reproduce power in mainstream society. Non-dominant cultural capital, on the other hand, refers to the cultural resources lower status groups convert to capital to manage their lower status within their local communities (Carter, 2003). Those who acquire dominant cultural capital at home and in social contexts such as in a school environment, experience cumulative advantage in school (Lareau, 2011). It is because (traditional) formal education inculcates dominant middle-class cultures and only value dominant (middle class) cultural capital. As Skeggs (1997, p. 129) puts it,

the inability to trade one's cultural capital because it has only limited value or is not recognised in the places where value can be accrued is a substantial disadvantage to and sign of being born working-class.

In the same line of thinking, Yosso (2005) suggests, by exploring the educational success of People of Colour (as she calls the visible minority groups, often stigmatised by race), that they are not deficient of cultural capital – they just do not possess the dominant type of it. Many of these socially marginalised groups rather accrue an 'array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts that often go unrecognised' (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Yosso calls this (by the dominated majority and by their schools) unrecognised cultural capital 'the community cultural wealth'. Yosso (2005) elaborates on her concepts by bringing in the perspective of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and explains that 'Communities of Color nurture cultural wealth through at least six forms of capital, such as aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital', which are in constant dynamic process and build on each other (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Looking at these different forms of capital and thinking through the 'lens' of CRT is especially inspirational when studying the school

performance of students coming from different social backgrounds, including from racialised minority groups.

Scholars conceptualise migration as ‘a function of aspiration and capabilities to move within a given set of opportunity structures’ (De Haas, 2009). In line with Yosso’s reference to aspirational capital as part of community cultural wealth, they show that the *capacity to aspire* is of key importance to the empowerment of the poor (Appadurai, 2004). Furthermore, *aspirational capital* gained through migration can be a highly important, but in the literature largely neglected, advantage, especially in the case of social groups generally portrayed as ‘resourceless’, such as the Hungarian Roma.

Durst provides a proactive image as she views Roma involved in migration as agents of their own mobility and shows what migration means to them. She explains transnational mobility as a ‘social practice built on hope’ (Durst, 2018). This idea is in line with Hage’s argument that ‘people engage in a physical form of mobility that we call migration because they are after existential mobility’ (Hage, 2009, p. 2). Hage understands existential mobility as a type of imagined/felt movement that is driven by the desire to avoid ‘stuckedness’, and claims that people migrate in order to constitute a more suitable space for their social and existential self.

The type of life that families or people want to achieve with existential mobility can be described as a ‘life worth living’. Narotzky and Besnier (2014) analyse the strategies as to how people enhance well-being for themselves and future generations. The concepts of well-being and a life worth living do not only refer to material conditions but also to emotional and social comfort.

In order to make life worth living, people invest in multiple aspects of existence that appear at first glance to have little economic substance but end up having economic consequences. Among the poor, social relations often constitute a much safer ‘investment’ than petty entrepreneurship. (Narotzky & Besnier, 2014, p. 6)

As we will show based on our empirical examples, families from different social backgrounds engage in transnational migration to avoid stuckedness, but return if they feel that their existential mobility has failed for some reason (typical for elite mobilities; poor families may return for other reasons such as family relations, a rejected asylum application, etc.). Some return from their own will (elite) while others are returned due to different and constantly changing immigration policies (socially vulnerable, racialised Roma). However, what the crucial aspects are in improving their well-being, and what makes life more worth living for them abroad is very diverse and/or subjective and is not only connected to their socio-economic backgrounds but also to their individual agency and aspirations.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Transnational Migration from/to Hungary

The EU accession of Central Eastern European countries and the subsequent mobility of the workforce have resulted in a multiplication of the migration

patterns of the families. The number of those affected by EU migration has increased, and the mobility experiences accordingly have diversified (Koser & Lutz, 1998).

The number of Hungarians moving abroad has increased considerably since 2012/2013, following the relatively low numbers since 1989 in comparison to other CEE countries. Blaskó and other sources (Blaskó, 2015) assessed the number of Hungarians moving abroad yearly to be between 50 and 100 thousand, which adds up to around a half million Hungarians residing in one of the EEA countries.¹ The primary destination countries are Germany, Austria and the UK. It is important to note that the socio-demographic composition is biased towards the highly educated, young, and mobile professionals fluent in foreign languages.

We may differentiate between three larger groups of Hungarians involved in international mobility, with rather distinct motivations behind migratory decisions. The decisive majority of Hungarians involved in EU mobility are guided by the gap in the labour market conditions in Hungary and the country of immigration; i.e., they find jobs or better working and financial conditions in their professions in other EU countries. Many of them are circular migrants, too, or ones who leave family members behind and commute regularly between the job and the family. A smaller group of internationally mobile Hungarians may be described as elite migrants. They possess the highest ranks within Hungarian society, with high prestige jobs but either their incomes and/or working conditions are meagre (i.e., doctors, IT, engineers) and/or sense that satisfying their professional ambitions is possible only in a more global space. Often, they also may feel that the political climate offered by the illiberal political regime is a threat in the long run for them, their profession and their families. And finally, a very specific but visible category of mobility involves Roma, many of whom experience destitute poverty and suffer everyday racialisation and discrimination. They flee from Hungary in the hope of a better, more humane life. The first and largest wave of migration of Roma took place after the 2008/2009 serial killings of Roma in Hungary and the mismanagement of the tragedy by the Hungarian authorities.² Roma families fled to Canada and asked for asylum. Later, following the closure of the Canadian route the direction of their migration changed to the UK, where they arrived as labour migrants. The motivation behind this has, however, not changed: migrants are still looking for a place where they can have a decent life, with human dignity for them and their children.

There is little qualitative research on the effects of emigration from Hungary in recent decades. A more recent edited volume (Váradi, 2018) discusses various intersectionalities of migration such as gender, ethnicity and age. Key research on Roma migration was conducted by Durst, who draws attention to the fact that the mobility of Roma is driven by intersectional disadvantages such as existential desperation, social marginalisation and racial discrimination (Bognár & Kováts, 2002; Durst, 2013, 2018; Vidra, 2013). Durst shows that for Romani families the network capital is the primary resource that they can rely on. Consequently, chain migration is a very typical mobility pattern of socially marginalised Roma.

Mechanism Producing Inequality of the Education System in Hungary

We examine the impact of migration experiences from the perspective of the school (re)integration of children, thus providing a short background about the Hungarian education system is necessary. The Hungarian education system is highly inequitable and selective and is among those that increases initial social inequalities among children the most in the European context (OECD, 2018; Radó, 2021; Varga, Hermann, & Horn, 2019). Mechanisms of selectivity are highly complex and include both institutional and informal processes. The most important institutional mechanisms are ethno-social segregation; the exemption of compulsory intake of children from the school's district for faith and community schools; highly unequal financing of various types of schools by the state (i.e., per capita state financing of faith schools is more than double that of public schools) and ability grouping through various specialisations (language, sports, maths) can include or preclude children from certain backgrounds. But the most important mechanism of selectivity is informal: parents with high social and cultural capital enrol their children in prestigious schools of their choice. In rural towns these are typically the faith schools of the Protestant or Catholic Church, while in Budapest and larger towns, these include high-quality public schools, which set up various specialisations and select children through these or a community school (this later requires fees). Cultural capital is thus accumulated in a small number of schools and is transferred to children as well as into network capital that continues to impact the child's adult life.

Our research encompasses schools of different qualities and ownerships, but all of them are compulsory schools (serving children from 6 to 16) and focusses on children attending schools serving underprivileged and elite communities. But most importantly, we included schools of the three main types: public, faith and private. This is important because they typically possess different levels of autonomy and room for applying alternative (to a mainstream rigid) pedagogies, which becomes significant when it comes to the reintegration of returning children. The Hungarian education system is extremely centralised, rigid and outdated in its pedagogical approaches, preferring discipline, lexical knowledge and suppressing creativity, autonomy and critical thinking—arguing (Moldenhawer, Miera, Kallstenius, Messing, & Schiff, 2009; Radó, 2021; Szalai & Schiff, 2014). These characteristics make it especially rigid in terms of adapting to the individual needs of children in vulnerable conditions or of any need beyond the mainstream. This involves returning migrant children, who experience different school systems and pedagogical approaches while abroad. The difference in the pedagogical approaches of Hungarian schools, where children return to, and the ones they attended while abroad (e.g., Anglo-Saxon schools in the UK and Canada where most of our interviewees returned from) makes reintegration especially difficult. Even though performance focussed education is also a problem in other countries (Neumann, 2020; Neumann, Gewirtz, Maguire, & Towers, 2020) still, UK and Canadian public schools put a much greater emphasis on problem solving, group work and critical argumentation. Meanwhile UK schools value autonomy, independence and creativity, while

Hungarian schools emphasise hierarchy and discipline and expect children to acquire a large amount of lexical knowledge. Unsurprisingly, many returning children end up in some kind of alternative education: either in the form of community schools or faith schools which are less bound by rigid centralised curricula and may have more resources to support individual needs. These schools have more room to navigate the needs of their students and may take a slower pace in reintegrating them.

METHODS AND DATA

Investigating the mobility experiences of adults with children poses numerous methodological challenges due to the complexity of experiences emerging from the different locations and positionality of our interlocutors. Our chapter presents the results of several research periods and two main research projects that took place between 2013 and 2020 in schools and among parents and children. Our primary aim was to understand how children and their parents perceive mobility and the changes of their various forms of capital in a Bourdieusian sense. We explored how schooling, as a major experience in a child's life and an important source of dominant cultural capital (apart from family) shapes the future prospects of children and influences parental mobility decisions.

In terms of actors or agents of transnational mobilities, in the first explorative qualitative project, we interviewed children and parents. We found them through personal contacts, or through educational institutions. Schools served as an important entry point at the beginning of our research, as we looked for localities which were well-known for their high involvement in transnational mobility, thus families and children could be reached through schools. Through this method, we could familiarise ourselves with the perspectives of teachers and the institutional understanding of these processes. During the course of research, we reached out to returning families with children through other channels as well. In our understanding, the three perspectives of parent, teacher and child have provided us with a nuanced picture of the processes of transnational mobility, the role of education in mobility decisions, the importance of children's well-being and the role of school context in the reintegration chances of return migrant children.

We looked at family mobilities and changes of capital composition in different geographical locations. We chose a location in the countryside, in North East Hungary characterised by socio-economic deprivation, marginalisation and multiple types of vulnerabilities. This settlement had a significant Roma population. The other two field sites were two schools in the capital city, Budapest. One school was situated in Pest and can be considered a middle-class institution located in a working-class neighbourhood, while the other school, situated in an up-market part of the city in Buda is a private 'elite school'. The Pest school underwent a face-lift by adopting a bilingual (English-Hungarian) programme, which resulted in a very mixed studentship including children of the local middle-class and lower-middle class, elite children and children with immigrant backgrounds

(mainly Chinese children). Apart from its bilingual programme, the school operates in its capacity as a ‘normal’ state school, with a fixed curriculum, handing down a lot of lexical knowledge and frontal teaching. On the other hand, the Buda school is sought after by the Budapest economic and intellectual elite exclusively. Families pay significant tuition fees, while the school in general applies an alternative pedagogical programme built on the liberal values of nurturing individuality, free expression of opinions and debate as the basis for learning. We have conducted profound conversations, and mostly semi-structured, narrative interviews with teachers and school directors. These conversations and interviews targeted the topics of reintegration of children, and schools’ institutional responses, pedagogical methods, ideas and teachers’ attitudes that may help the process of reintegration. It had been raised whether the school sees the years spent abroad by the children as a ‘loss’ (focussing on what the child has missed on learning material while living abroad), or as a ‘gain’ (learning a foreign language, gaining new experiences, widening the ‘horizon’).

In this chapter, we also build on the empirical findings of a second research project when we construct our argument. This latter project was conducted between 2013 and 2018 in an impoverished rural town with a significant, socio-economically marginalised Roma population. The town was infamous for being one of the most ‘migration-rich’ settlements in Hungary with three quarters of its marginalised Roma population having experienced transnational migration during the last 15 years. The majority of them fled from the everyday racism and ‘racial stuntedness’ in Hungary to Canada where they claimed – typically unsuccessfully – refugee status and later many of them intermittently or circularly went on to the UK as labour migrants (Durst, 2018) in the search for a ‘life worth living’ (Narotzky & Besiner, 2014). Beyond participant observation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with local schoolteachers, returning migrant parents and their children.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Returning Children of the Elite in a Middle-class Bilingual School in Pest

As introduced earlier, the bilingual school in Budapest has hybrid characteristics, with both middle-class and elite students in attendance. The hybrid character of the school is well-reflected in the narratives of both perspectives of teachers and children, when talking about returning children and the challenges they face in an institutional capacity.

Teachers’ Perspectives

Based on conversations with teachers about transnationally mobile children, it became clear that they were mainly preoccupied with the difficulties of catching up with the curriculum rather than the development and gains of children while abroad. They mostly spoke about how students can make up the missed learning materials and pass end of year exams; who helps them to catch up, if teachers

have the resources for it, and who else can coach them. The time spent abroad thus primarily appeared as 'lagging behind' in curricular terms, or as 'missing out' on some lexical knowledge.

We cannot excuse them for long. Tutoring works, and I would use patience instead of excuses. We are constantly improving and catching up sooner or later, because the children still act as sponges at this age. They can adapt relatively well.

In some cases, the time spent abroad also results in Hungarian language problems, at the same time foreign (mostly English) language skills acquired abroad are not recognised. This reveals a one-sided approach instead of a recognition-based pedagogy. It also talks about the unrecognised forms of non-dominant cultural capital and the institutional blind-spot in this regard.

There's a girl who came last year – overall I see that she fitted in well. However, we have a school system that is very data-oriented, which is a serious problem for her. Plus, I also see that she obviously speaks Hungarian on a different level [the child lived abroad for years, she started going to school there], and that education in Hungarian is a problem for her. I see the main difficulty in this.

Instead of recognition-based pedagogy a deficit-centered thinking characterises this school. Most teachers reported that children with good learning abilities can catch up without too much difficulty, while this process is more challenging for children who already had problems in their studies. Their disadvantages continue to grow or accumulate after returning from abroad. Children labelled as 'good students' usually receive more support at home and have more dominant cultural and economic capital, which acts as a buffer and an important resource in times of difficulty. 'Families resolve this', sums up a teacher, suggesting that children and their families are left to rely on their pre-existing resources and capitals, and can expect minimal institutional help.

An important area of reintegration is social relations. Teachers often pointed out that reintegration was more difficult for 'introverted' children than for the outgoing, 'cool' ones. This, we suspect, can easily be translated back to pre-existing middle-class dominant cultural and social capital, especially when it comes to being self-confident, outspoken, and able to 'cope with things' in a child's community.

Whether she was able to fit in and without any worries, I don't know if it comes from her character, or that she's seen so many different things before, that she's better at taking that hurdle, that's an interesting question ... We have another girl, I don't know where she came from, but she joined the class in the fourth grade, she's a disadvantaged girl – she had troubles with integration, and behavioural issues, so she has serious problems in social relationships. But it results from her problems as well.

In addition to there being a large amount of learning materials to be taught, no methodology or guideline is available for integration. It can be assumed that it would help considerably in terms of reintegration if the focus were (also) on the educational gains of mobility, and it would be valued as important knowledge by the teachers. However, it is rare that children presented them in coherent narratives, or with long descriptions, but rather they emerge as small memory snippets linked to a specific context.

'We don't talk about it on a daily basis, it comes up in specific situations that things can be done differently, that I have experienced this differently. But we don't make a special case out of this, we handle it naturally' concluded one of the teachers. The picture is further nuanced by the teacher's opinion that there is a lot of talk about 'abroad' among children, often as a continuation of classroom conversations:

I think they live with different experiences among us, they teach the other kids. These things come up in connection with concrete topics. And the fact that they hear things from each other, and not from me, is completely different for the children. And in some cases they continue the conversation during the break. I think their experiences are much richer. They have seen more, they may have more options or perspectives to choose from ... than the ones who are only used to the way things are here.

All in all, considering whether the period spent abroad is an advantage or a disadvantage from the perspective of the school and the teachers, the teachers' answers make the question a technical one and the emphasis is on the missed parts of the curriculum. The period spent abroad is interpreted as a shortcoming, with all the time and energy of teachers being dedicated to the catching up of students, and the technical minutiae of it. Teachers' interviews served as a testimony to many low-scale practices of school level integration, without recognition of the gained non-dominant capitals from abroad.

Child Narratives

Parents of mobile children of this school moved abroad to pursue their careers abroad, following job opportunities outside Hungary. Moving back was described by these children as a gradual process. Often, the earning family member, usually the father, returned back last. Even though we have not been able to obtain detailed and extensive narratives of their schooling abroad, kids often highlighted that the school they visited abroad was more playful, less strict, in general, and provided them with more freedom. The change in teaching style and different expectations from teachers and the schools was challenging for them.

Returning children emphasised the new types of friendships they were able to obtain as a result of their mobility experience, which worked as different capital for them: previously unknown worlds opened to them, and new peer-networks were established. They explained ways in which they made new friends, among them Muslim children, which is a rare experience in Hungary. An older boy emphasised the benefits of living abroad:

The worldview itself is different. The fact that we don't see what everyone else sees [in Hungary], we see things from a different perspective. It is very different from what they are trying to say in Hungary. A different perspective.

These child testimonies point towards the direction of non-dominant cultural capital gained as part of a migration experience, mostly unrecognised by the school.

Almost all children in the group discussion wanted to return abroad later. Some of them were planning to graduate internationally from a foreign school, indicating that their aspirational capitals grew, others were planning to go abroad to study at university, and some wanted to return abroad as adults and work where they have been living before. Despite the various plans, it can be unanimously said that children who used to live abroad are preoccupied with ‘living abroad’, whatever this complex and rather under-defined concept in the narratives would cover.

EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT SCHOOL CONTEXTS ON CAPITAL DEVALUATION FOR RETURNING ROMA MIGRANT CHILDREN ACCORDING TO THEIR TEACHERS IN RURAL HUNGARY

The next field of our research is two neighbouring semi-urban towns in the economically disadvantaged region of North East Hungary. In both our studied towns, several children spent one or more years in Canada, where they sought asylum. Based on interviews and discussions with teachers and returning children and their mothers, it seems that their experiences of transnational mobility are significantly different from peers raised in middle class families of the capital city. These differences stem from the distinctive motivations that drive family decisions to migrate; the different legal status they obtain; and the very different social realities these families live in. These conditions dramatically shape the chances and strategies of migration and the extent to which children’s needs can be and are regarded in this process. On the other hand, migrating to Canada differs essentially from EU mobility in legal terms. While families apply for asylum in Canada that significantly restricts their chances on the labour market, Hungarian citizens who move to another EU member state have very little legal limitations when applying for a job. Also, as asylum seekers they are entitled to a number of social services and support that immigrants are not entitled to.

‘They Bring Home Nothing’: A Perspective of a Traditional Rural Public School
Péteri³ is a small town of almost 10,000 inhabitants in this region. By the autumn of 2013 when we began our ethnographic fieldwork here, half of the inhabitants of the Roma settlement (a segregated neighbourhood on the outskirts of the town with almost 3,000 dwellers) had left for Toronto, Canada as asylum seekers. Recently, the most common migration trajectory among the Roma from Péteri is their typically recurring but in some cases permanent relocation and work-related mobility to some urban UK cities with abundant job opportunities, facilitated partly by kinship networks but mostly by ubiquitous labour market intermediaries.

Since the beginning of the 2000s, however, but mainly from 2008 to 2014, the most typical migration trajectory among the low-skilled, poor Roma was going to Canada and applying for asylum as refugees. Those whose asylum claim was

rejected, had to return to Péteri, only to move on to England. From our interview data as to why they chose their particular destination countries, it was clear that what mostly attracted the Roma to Toronto, apart from the ever-growing translocal migration network (constituted by kinship ties), was the country's humanitarian treatment of refugees. As many of our respondents articulated, they had fled from racism, hate crime, and poverty, but as one put it, in correspondence with a couple of others, to 'move ahead in life, to have a better life, to create a future for our children'.

For the Roma in Péteri, as elsewhere for low-income families (Stack, 1973), kinship networks as a form of social capital is the biggest (and sometimes only) 'profitable' resource that can be used in the process of migration. Wherever migrants move to, even if they have no command of any foreign language, due to their kinship ties they are well informed about income-earning opportunities, and about strategies on how to overcome unwelcoming, restricting mobility policies (see Nagy, 2016). This is the kind of resource that Yosso (2015) calls 'navigational capital'.

This mass outmigration, or rather cross-border transnational mobility of marginalised people (mainly Roma) with low educational attainment is unrecognised or viewed only from a deficit view by the majority (non-Roma) local authorities in Péteri. According to the mayor and the headmaster of one of its local primary schools, the migration of the Roma has proved to be an unsuccessful story:

After a year or two, or sometimes three, the Roma families all came back to Péteri. And what did they bring home with them? Nothing. The only thing they managed to achieve with this migration is that their children missed one or two, or sometimes three years of schooling. Because even if they went to school in Canada, they came home knowing nothing. So, we must put them back in the class that they were in when they left. For example, if a child left our school after finishing Year 5 and went with her family to Canada, on her return, let's say after three years, we have to put her back in Year 6 among twelve-year-old pupils, even if she is 15 [years old]. It gives our teachers a lot of headaches teaching these overage children The Hungarians are more forward thinking. In Hungarian families it is only the father who goes abroad, mainly to Germany to work. The mother stays behind with the children. In this way, the educational paths of these kids do not get interrupted.

This excerpt has a deep resonance with the theme of this chapter regarding the valuing and devaluing of certain capitals and the painful process this can cause to many of our study participants in Péteri and the surrounding settlements (for the theorisation of this experience in British sociology by Bourdieusian researchers, see the collected essays in Thatcher, Ingram, Burke, & Abrahams, 2016).

The attitude of local primary schools towards their Roma returnee pupils is a case in point. From our interviews with the headmaster and one of his teachers at one of the local primary schools in Péteri, it was salient how this gadje (non-Roma) institution only legitimises its dominant, non-Roma majority cultural capitals and devalues the alternative forms of (culture and) capital of those pupils who belong to the Roma minority. The social remittances (Levitt, 1998) acquired through transnational mobility of the local Roma, that is, new values, ideas, practices, identities and knowledge, have not been recognised in this local school context.

This devaluation practice of the school as a powerful social institution has even more detrimental consequences for stigmatised minorities or ‘people of colour’ through the intersectional effect of class and race. Scholars of minority groups argue that the decontextualisation and simplification of the Bourdieusian concept of (cultural) capital has resulted in political denigration of ethno-racial minorities and the devaluation of their culture and practices that are seen as ‘lacking’ (Wallace, 2016). However, in opposition to this deficit view our Roma returned migrant children’s case study shows that three of the overlapping alternative cultural capitals have salient significance for their social and educational trajectory. The first one is the ‘aspirational capital’ (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). The second one is the ethnic capital (Zhou, 2005) that some scholars call ‘Black capital’ (Carter, 2003; Wallace, 2016), or simply the social capital of People of Colour (Yosso, 2005). This can be understood as networks of people and other social contacts from one’s ethnic community that can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate society’s institutions. It was the kind of capital, in the form of kinship networks that had made transatlantic refugee migration possible for the financially resourceless Roma from Hungary. Finally, the third one is the so-called ‘navigational capital’ (Yosso, 2005) that refers to the skills of manoeuvring through unfamiliar or racially hostile social institutions. These are the non-dominant, alternative cultural capitals that local public schools in Péteri (and in other parts of Hungary) do not value regarding their former pupils returning from migration.

*‘Some Come Home Better Off’: An Alternative Church School’s
Perspective on Returning Roma Children*

Our ethnographic material, collected in the other poverty-stricken urban setting’s alternative educational institution: a school with elementary and vocational branches, draws our attention to the effect of school contexts and pedagogical practices on returning children’s social remittances or non-dominant cultural capitals. The school in our study is located in the region’s capital city and is maintained by a Christian church. It serves as a last resort for children of Roma families living in extreme destitution in an ethnically and socially segregated part of the settlement. According to the principal, approximately 60% of the students come from outside the town, from a segregated area, a valley five kilometers away from the school, that was populated by weekend houses prior to 2000, but which became a refuge to the socially marginalised and existentially distressed Roma families who were displaced from social housing in the inner city.

The consequences of socially disadvantaged conditions as well as inappropriate housing may surface in school in many ways. The everyday living conditions of these children are usually troubled as most of the time several generations live crowded in one or two rooms, the essential infrastructure is inadequate or missing (such as heating, water and sewage, roads, streetlights and physical security). Also, existential distress brings about psychological illnesses, alcoholism and/or substance use in these families, which creates a particular mental stress on top of destitution for these children. According to the

teachers and the school leadership, the primary aim is that the school provides a safe and stable environment for its students, for many of whom proper heating and regular meals are important motivations to attend the school. In addition, the school delivers teaching that applies innovative pedagogical methods as well as offering a number of classes in arts (including music) and sports that children enjoy and which are motivational and relaxing for those facing constant difficulties at home.

The school introduced a special pedagogical programme in the early 2000s the core of which is a slower pace of teaching and learning for the sake of strengthening essential skills, flexibility and child-centred methods. Such pedagogical approaches become helpful in the reintegration of returning children.

Migration attempts to Canada and the UK are still frequent, as is returning and motivations similar to those in Péteri. However, teachers' interviews reveal a more nuanced interpretation of the outcomes of migration for families and children involved than teachers in the school of Péteri. They explain that migration to Canada is 'a win or lose all' game; families whose asylum application was unsuccessful and were therefore (forcibly) returned to Hungary faced even worse conditions than they had fled from and become significantly more vulnerable and existentially distressed after their return: some lost their homes, which they had to sell to finance the flight to Canada, lost their jobs (if they had any) and had to restart from scratch. Teachers find that moving to the UK is less risky and can be beneficial for those who are educated at least as skilled workers and who are able to find a job fitting their education.

Thus, compared to how they lived before, they are better off now. They were able to bring some money home, could repurchase their houses and buy some livestock. Although, they were not that poor before leaving – they had livestock back then, too. But they bought some animals, a car and started a proper business upon arrival. And some are quite successful, I must say ...

When asked about how transnational mobility affects children, teachers mention primarily but not exclusively disadvantages. They perceive that in contrast to those who left for the UK, those who attempted asylum procedures in Canada did not attend school while there. In addition, because most spent the time among their relatives while abroad, they did not even learn the language of the destination country. Teachers think that the time spent abroad produced more losses than gains for them, as upon return they lost several years in school which had to be made up for.

Marika has to restart again and again. Because nothing has happened to her while abroad. In theory, they attended school there, but she is saying that they sat in front of a computer and were playing all the time, when her mother took her to school. She couldn't even tell whether she learnt anything at all in that school. She didn't seem to be able to speak English, either, although there were children who spoke quite good English after their return. They were older, not first graders.

Students have to take an end-of-year aptitude exam at the end of each academic year while abroad and upon their return to give account of their level of competences. This is the condition to continue studies at the level appropriate for the student's age. According to the teachers, this is however, rarely the case:

Sometimes they take the aptitude test and can continue their studies in a class appropriate to their age. But we cannot consider the studies they conducted abroad, as such. If someone spent let's say three years abroad, s/he will miss those three grades and we cannot consider the school report of the foreign school.

There is a significant disadvantage here: returned children have to give an account of their fluency in the Hungarian curricula in all of the subjects taught in the school, irrespective of the school system they studied in for several years. Those who did not take the exam are withheld for several years and attend classes with children who are two to three years younger than themselves. Such a situation naturally causes significant difficulties for all parties: the returning child, his/her classmates and the teachers. In addition to problems resulting from the large age gap, the age of compulsory schooling – which is 16 years in Hungary – was mentioned by several teachers as a significant challenge. Despite the school's aim to help children to acquire the essential education and skills necessary for continuing education in vocational training or for taking a job, transnational mobility and spending several years abroad often lead to the consequence that children involved in mobility are unable to complete their elementary education, which consists of eight grades.

On the Contrary: Returning Roma Children and Their Families' Narratives

Jenni's transnational migration/mobility story and her concomitant educational trajectory is a perfect example of how this devaluation of non-dominant cultural capital of returned migrant children functions and contributes to the way in which disadvantaged and marginalised communities become further marginalised. (This was mostly seen in Jenni's local public primary school, but also partly in her new vocational church school.) Jenni was seven years old when her family left for Canada, following and helped by her parents' kin network. 'My parents thought that we would have a better future abroad. "Cause Roma do not have a future in Hungary.'" They stayed there for three years until, to their dismay, their refugee claim was rejected and they were deported. Jenni liked to go to the Canadian local primary school where she was enrolled soon after the family arrived and were able to arrange all necessary paperwork.

The teachers were kind and welcoming. So were the children. I had Black, Pakistani, and Muslim friends, kids from all over the world. I learnt English quickly as we had a special teacher who took us out of normal lessons three times a week and taught us ESL [English as a Second Language]. But I learnt the most from my school friends from different countries.

When Jenni returned home to Péteri with her family in 2013, what awaited her at the local school was not comparable to her Canadian experience: 'The headmaster asked my mum, where have you been until now? This girl should have come to school, where was she instead?' Jenni found herself in an almost impossible situation: she had to make up the three years of missed school material, all by herself, over the following four months:

I had to take an end of year exam in Maths, Hungarian, History, almost all subjects. But these three were the main ones as they were most interested in how much I knew of them. They just gave me the textbooks and I became a private student. I did not want to be put down three

grades, with pupils three years younger than me. The Hungarian teachers were worried that I did not learn anything in Canada during the three years that I missed their Hungarian education.

With her mother's help, she managed to accomplish the task. As she says,

It was tough. I studied from morning until evening. The teachers did not help me with anything. Mother helped me. Lucky that she could help, unlike many of my friends' mums who do not have secondary level education as my mum has.

When Jenni managed to get back to her former Hungarian primary school from that September, to the class of her age group, she had another disappointing experience.

In Canada (but in England too), the schools teach with different, more playful methods. In Toronto, we learnt a lot by playing and through group works and projects. I enjoyed the school there, I was more interested studying there than back home. In Canada the teachers were nice and caring, they tried to help you. Here they do not pay attention to you.

When Jenni finished primary school in Péteri, the family moved abroad again, this time to an urban city in England with abundant low-skill job opportunities. During the first few weeks, they were accommodated by their relatives who helped them find a job and a flat. Jenni went to the neighbourhood's high school, the only one that was available for migrant students of her class and background.

I really liked my school. Teachers were strict but nice. I liked that we had to wear school uniforms. It was more like in Canada than in Péteri. Teachers sat down with you if you did not understand the school material. They tried to explain it to you. Unlike at home, in Péteri. Here if you do not understand something, they yell at you. Their reaction is why did you not pay attention to my class? Why did you not learn it at home? I do not like school at home.

Last year, after having spent four years in England, Jenni's father lost his job and the family moved back to Hungary, to Péteri, Jenni, who was 16 years old at that time, was not accepted by any secondary school in the neighbouring city.

They do not accept your Canadian or English school certificate here. They say they do not know that school system. Both in Canada and England, you do not get grades but only written reports. They do not take these seriously here. The headmaster of one of the vocational schools I was looking at said to me, that we should go back where we were if we liked the school there. The knowledge we acquired there is not equivalent to what is taught in the Hungarian schools, she said.

Finally, Jenni got into the only (vocational) school that is open to all kinds of children with special needs and learning difficulties.

They accept everyone who has a primary school certificate. They put me down only one class here, so it's manageable. The only good thing in this school is that the teachers take teaching seriously, they are kind of strict. But they do not let me do English GCSE. They say that I speak better English than they. So I have to study German for GCSE. Despite the fact that I wanted to carry on with English. The other problem is the schoolchildren. These kids shouldn't be at school. They do not fit into school ... they are not interested at all in studying here ... I do not mix with anybody here but my cousin. She used to be in Canada, too, we have had similar experiences. I only care about her, I cannot do anything with my other schoolmates. I had a different upbringing, I accept everybody, I do not judge anybody. That's how I was raised in Canada. But here in Hungary people are not like this.

Jenni cannot wait to finish her vocational school where she is studying to be a health care professional. Her future plan is to go back to Canada and to try to apply for a landed residency with her vocational certificate.

I can go to work anywhere abroad with this qualification, my schoolteachers said. I do not want to live in Hungary. I only needed to finish this secondary school and have my qualification. I cannot find common ground with people here.

Jenni's story is one out of many returning migrant children who have experienced transnational mobility and whose educational trajectory has been interrupted. However, most of them had accumulated valuable but non-dominant capitals via migration.

The returning migrant children have started to develop bigger aspirations, thanks not only to their own experience abroad but also with that of their relatives with whom they are in everyday contact through social media. These migrant returnee children aspire after a life that is 'worth living' – one that their parents could not even dare to dream of in Péteri before the Canadian migration experience.

HIGH-STATUS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN ABROAD AND RETURNED

Our third 'field' is best defined not through geographical location primarily, but via the social status of the studied families. They live in the 'elite' localities of Budapest – either in the green and salubrious Buda-side of the city, populated with old villas or newly built, fashionable family houses, or in the cosmopolitan district of Pest sought out by foreigners, Jewish families who have lived in the district for several generations, artists, and the new intelligentsia of Budapest. Due to the multiple difficulties and worsening reputation of the public education system, many of the families belonging to this social strata can afford to 'rescue out' their children into alternative schools – due to their social contacts. They are well informed about alternative schools, can ensure that their child gets into such schools, and most importantly, can afford the more pricey types of schools across a broad range of alternative schools.

The lives of the high-status families that participated in this study were seemingly 'perfect' in terms of social prestige, and educational and professional achievements. Yet, in each case, there is a feeling of dissatisfaction, of incompleteness. During our interviews with the adult members of these families, it was explicitly spelled out that they did not consider themselves economic migrants – in material terms their lives were complete at home too. What they list instead as the main motivation behind their decision to move abroad were existential considerations – they hated the atmosphere, the quality of public life in Hungary, and were '*disgusted*' with the general state of affairs (institutional politics, corruption). In addition, on a personal level the parents experienced it as a mid-life crisis, one of our main respondents felt professionally unhappy due to his current job. The general feeling of *being stuck* in public life and on an individual level pushed them to go for a change. It had to materialise in a move abroad.

Whatever we did, it reminded us of how shitty we feel in our everyday life, and ‘uh, if we were abroad, it would be much better, that school would be better ... and so on, and we did this for so long that at some point my wife said, ‘We should either stop whining, or we should go and check this out’. So we decided to leave for abroad and to check this out.

From a parental perspective, to get unstuck and to have a fresh start by moving abroad also meant a gain in the upbringing of the children. Other than improving their English, the stay abroad carried the promise of a new worldview, an opening up of the horizon as a major chance and a value in itself. Unlike in the case of lower-middle class people on the move, economic limitations were not a serious limiting factor in decision making. The entire family could move at once, their existing social contacts helped them find a place to live and a school to enrol their children. To exclude any chance of uncalculated ‘risk’ (in economic and logistical terms at least) unlike their much poorer counterparts, many of these families had a trial-run a year earlier for a short summer stay and then for a brief year, to test the waters carefully before their ‘final’ (at the point of the move thought to be final) decision was made, returning to the same city in the UK.

In the following, we showcase one family’s migration story from this group. Beyond difficulties at school as a seemingly technical matter, the parents of this family experienced a second ‘existential crisis’ shortly after their arrival to the UK. This was due to the fact that their perspective has changed at once – all the temporariness and allure of their new place of stay has disappeared – as if the magic spell was gone.

It has an emotional side too – as one sees things in a different colour depending on the state of mind or mood. For a year I saw rats to be squirrels. This is a concrete example. And now that we have moved out there ‘for good’, I immediately saw that these are not squirrels.

While earlier it seemed that the way out from the state of ‘being stuck’ was to change the place of living and get settled in the UK, they quickly realised that they had run into a dead-end street. They felt stuck yet again. The reasons were multiple. ‘Feudal England’, shrinking social capital, and the problems the schooling of their elder child all played into this new realisation.

After some time, we felt that we do not have company, we cannot establish social contacts, as we do not move in the same intellectual and social circles, or that they are not at all open. English people and their seemingly liberal and open attitudes do not exist. This is only on the level of words. And you immediately get into a caste-system in which first comes the white Englishman, then other white Commonwealth people, then the other members of the British Empire, then the Europeans, then the East Europeans ... and it is irrelevant if you are maybe 10 times better than others ... or, maybe your child can work him/herself up in the next 20 or so years ...

Beyond the rigid social stratification and their prescribed position in it, schooling created lots of angst among the parents once they faced the curriculum and study plan of an English grammar school. For a third or fourth-generation elite family from Budapest, it seemed unimaginable that certain ‘basic’ study subjects were off the list for their child and due to the pedagogy of early specialisation, he/she needs to choose too soon which direction he/she wants to take in studies. It was translated as a loss – a loss of education, status, cultural capital and so on, for this family, something which is impermissible for a young

person who is to carry on a certain continuity in being part of a ‘Westernised’ Hungarian intelligentsia.

One of the hard realisations happened along the lines of classical/general knowledge (*műveltség*) when we were called in as parents of a 12-year-old to the school to select subjects for our son for the school leaving examination (*matura*). It was an elite grammar school of a liberal city, say 3rd best gymnasium (grammar school) in the city, where typically they study on iPads, compose music during their music class and so on, which you usually read about in our HVG and other magazines. These are the things everyone who has not been there is praising, how great and liberating these things are, they have wellbeing classes, and gender neutral hangers, and whatever one can imagine, you know all the things that our socio-cultural milieu is bathing in ... how damn good all this is. And you sit and ask, ‘Excuse me, why do I have to tell when he is 12 only what he is going to take his school leaving exams in?’ Because he is going to study those subjects.

And, in the Hungarian elite context, the previously hated and criticised lexical knowledge suddenly regains its value in the eyes of this desperate parent:

It will be three questions: WW1, WW2 and the Cold War. And then I ask about the French revolution. Won't they learn about it? Or Ancient Rome? Or the Middle-Ages? No, no, they won't, it will be these three questions for the next 5 or I don't know 3 years. This is state education.

Whereas in Hungary this family could select the best Budapest schools for their children, one child in a top five public gymnasium, another child in a leading alternative school, in the UK context their space of manoeuvring is strongly limited, as they soon realised. Enrolling their children into an elite boarding-school was definitely out of their scope, and most probably, they lacked the necessary social contacts to manoeuvre their child between different state schools. The only answer to ‘unstick’ themselves from the undesired outcomes of their move, when threatened with losing class belonging and elite identity, was to return to Hungary. As much as they observed with angst the caste-like ethnic classifications of UK society, they also worried for the future prospects of their children, which university they would attend and what actual knowledge they would obtain throughout their education. Both seemed to matter a lot.

One gets into a university [in the UK] with zero general knowledge. You know something about the subject which you apply for but that's it. From my perspective it seems that if one completed Z gymnasium in Budapest, or any other above average gymnasium in Budapest, she knows as much as a UK university graduate. And what in general we see in films about Cambridge or elsewhere, that's roughly the level of the Hungarian universities. So I thought it over and considered what is best for us.

Thus this family quickly decided to return. They sent their gymnasium-age (15 years old) son ahead (to live with his grandparents in Budapest) to rejoin his Budapest gymnasium as early as possible, so as not to miss too much of his studies. The parents and the younger child waited for the academic year to finish before moving back to Hungary. The alternative school their child visited was ready to accept her back.

As our conversations with the teachers from this school revealed, neither the institution nor the individual teachers found it problematic to reintegrate the child. This school is not primarily focussed on lexical knowledge, but instead values foreign language knowledge (the child of this family returned to the English

language programme of the school), and all the other skills. Accordingly, the actual reintegration was smooth and unproblematic. This ease was supported by two factors, the socio-economic capital of the parents (they could easily find and afford a tutor within or outside the school to close any knowledge gaps that arise), and the school was proactive in the process. As a teacher at this school explains, they pay a lot of attention to community building as a class and as a school. It therefore follows that if a child returns from abroad (depending on whether it is a temporary or permanent move), they try to maintain contact with the child, especially in the former case, when a return is expected. Once a child is back, certain pedagogical methods help in reintegrating the child, such as asking her to talk about her experiences abroad and more specifically about her schooling experience. In general, a stay abroad and a foreign experience is acknowledged as a value to be appreciated and talked about. This story is in such sharp contrast to Jenni's school experience, delineated earlier. Once again, it draws attention to the significance of the school context. Namely, that alternative schools for middle class families with reformed pedagogical principles are much better at valuing the social remittances of returning migrants (and their new knowledge) than traditional schools in economically disadvantaged regions, with no multicultural experience.

This encouraging attitude of the school has clearly contributed to the construction of a positive narrative about this elite family's mobility story. The initial existential crisis has been removed (an alternative has been tried out, it did not work) and upon returning, a new positive reading of the earlier situation has been created: one appreciates the familiar to the unknown, the proximity of grandparents and friends as significant social contacts is to be valued, and the merits of the Hungarian education system are recognised. This mental work, which quite obviously, all members of the family went through together, helped them value mobility in times of being 'stuck' as an important tool and also contributes to a sense of 'rootedness'/home arrival when sensing the loss of social position and the strong values it comes with.

It can be restated that members of the upper-middle class presented in the above sections of this text carefully use their socio-economic and cultural capital to plan and implement their mobilities in the European space when an existential crisis arises. However, unlike disadvantaged Roma returning children, who suffer from a devaluation of their cultural capital, upper-middle-class families' geographic mobilities often come with trading/transferability/conversion problems when it comes to socio-economic capitals. As the above example shows, it may lead to another type of 'stuck' situation, where options for 'moving ahead' are heavily limited, or perceived as impossible. A possible answer for this 'stuckness' is a return with a reassessment of future prospects and of existing capitals.

CONCLUSIONS

Our research results indicate that the everyday migration experiences of transnationally mobile families and children from (and returning to) Hungary are highly

diverse, strongly influenced by their social position, racialised class belonging, the available capitals at their disposal and the school context that accommodate the returning children. Therefore, we cannot speak of a generic ‘transnational mobility experience’ neither for families, nor for their children. Our qualitative research indicates that for returning migrants not only their available capitals in a Bourdieasian sense, but also their (de)valuation by the different Hungarian schools has direct consequences on mobility-affected educational trajectories, on the individual outcomes of mobilities, and the circumstances of return and chances for reintegration. While we could find high-status families returning from abroad with children, we could not identify such cases for middle-class skilled workers’ families during our fieldwork due to the fact that mobile parents, especially men, leave their children behind with their mothers (Durst & Nyírő, 2018). These cases thus represent very different mobility-related situations. Among low-income racialised Roma minority families, we could identify many cases of returning children trying to reintegrate either to ‘normal’ state (public) schools, or to a congregational school with some traits of alternative pedagogy.

We departed from the question of asking what difference does social status and the related capitals make in transnational mobilities of families with children? And conversely, how such mobilities further influence the social position of these families once they return to Hungary? Our empirical material suggests that families with high social status and plenty of capital in a Bourdieasian sense ‘gain’ from transnational mobilities, while children from low status or racialised Roma families experience ‘losses’, and objectively end up in a worse position at school than before departure, and also compared to their friends or relatives who stayed. This is partly because the social remittances (Levitt, 1998) in the form of non-dominant cultural capital, acquired through the transnational mobility of the lower class Roma, that is, new values, ideas, practices, recasted identities and also the navigational and resilience capital that helped them get by in an unknown new social space, have not been recognised in their local school context. Their children are ‘disconnected [in the school] from the game within which they function’ (McKenzie, 2016). ‘Their inability to trade their non-dominant cultural capital because it has only limited value or is not recognised in the places where value can be accrued is a substantial disadvantage to and sign of being born into a lower-class’ (Skegg, 1997, p. 129) and stigmatised minority.

This thesis has proved valid throughout our research, and resonated across all the interviews we made, suggesting that social inequalities visibly and unquestionably grow with transnational mobilities. We have also been able to pinpoint the crucial role schools play in the process of the reintegration of children and in the increase of initial inequalities. For that reason, we paid special attention to educational institutions, and to the interactions and relationship between children (and their families) with schools. Our observations and interviews shed light on that while the state education system (i.e., public schools) in Hungary turns out to be absolutely inadequate and unprepared to react to and acknowledge the new forms of non-dominant cultural capital, that is, different knowledge children gain abroad (i.e., skills instead of lexical knowledge), the schools with alternative curriculum have more means and methods to do so. In the latter cases, the

reintegration is more painless for the child. As a consequence, their entire mobility is more easily perceived as a 'success', both from the parent/child perspective and from an institutional point of view too.⁴

Although it goes unrecognised by traditional school contexts, our empirical findings show us that through the course of transnational mobilities of families from the racialised Roma lower class, social remittances are indeed being generated, which may contribute to the 'gains' of their mobilities. Beside the missing dominant cultural capital, often talked about in research related to the Roma, non-dominant cultural capital emerges, including language skills, aspirational or navigational and resilient capital and others, which need to be accounted for when analysing the outcomes of the transnational migration of marginalised groups. Although these newly acquired capitals or skills go unrecognised by the Hungarian public school system, and in general the position of these children and their families becomes worse right after return. Yet, this non-dominant capital may help them in life, outside of school in the mid- and long-term when trying to realise their dreams: they help them to move on (outside of existential 'stuckedness'), to plan for a job abroad, find employment with the help of their newly gained language skills, etc.

In our understanding, our focussing on this earlier unrecognised, non-dominant form of capital helps us to grasp the complexity of the situation and possibilities of underprivileged families, acknowledging their agencies, while highlighting the inadequacies of the public education system too. In the case of the high-status families, it was our intention to diversify our understanding of their mobilities and changing positions in the light of capital transfers across different geographical locations. On the basis of our elite narratives, we could identify unquestionable barriers in these conversion processes, resulting in angst and a returning feeling of 'stuckedness', prompting a decision to return to Hungary. The narrative of a successful mobility could be retained in such cases largely due to the fact that upon return, children of these families were easily reintegrated to their previous private schools using alternative pedagogical models that acknowledge the newly gained skills of children, enhancing the already existing dominant cultural capital of these families.

NOTES

1. European Economic Area, including EU member states + Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

2. The peak of Hungarian Roma's desperation were the serial killings in 2008–2009 by a group of neo-Nazi racist assassins in which 6 Roma were murdered in a series of 10 attacks on Roma over a period of 13 months. The refusal of the police to label the serial killings as racially motivated attacks as well as the inability of the Hungarian authorities to defend Roma caused a complete loss of trust in the Hungarian state and authorities and brought about a spike in asylum to Canada .

3. Fictitious name of a settlement.

4. It must be noted that the compulsory end of year exams in each grade also contribute to increase inequalities between returning migrant children from upper and lower class families. While the former group can afford to buy the service of a private tutor to prepare their children for these exams and therefore enable their children to uninterruptedly carry on their educational trajectories, lower class Roma families cannot provide this service for their children.

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