

The careers of skilled migrants in the North-East of England

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Abstract

In the UK, migration has been of significant interest to scholars and policy-makers, especially so after the EU enlargement in 2004. Yet, only recently attention has begun to shift from the impact of international mobility upon the host country to migrants' individual experiences. Drawing explicitly upon critical realism philosophy and Margaret Archer's realist social theory, this thesis explores careers of skilled migrants in the North-East of England. Within this framework the study undertakes an inquiry into factors that seek to explain why, in this setting, careers of some skilled migrants are relatively successful.

The thesis relies upon realist evaluation to enhance understanding of contextual conditions, agential career projects and career outcomes. The analysis is based upon an extensive review of existing literature, statistical records and empirical data gathered via interviews with skilled migrants, together with a sub-sample of indigenes. When 'mapping' the context, the thesis considers (supra)-national, as well as region-specific factors. Regarding career projects, the focus is upon reflexivity, social capital and skilfulness. The thesis argues that different career projects can yield different outcomes, with particular modes of reflexivity (MoRs) associated with specific career orientations. Nonetheless, cultural and structural conditions affect the availability of career projects for certain individuals in certain environments and, therefore, relative career success.

The study makes a contribution to career studies by elaborating the link between reflexivity and career projects and, ultimately, outcomes. The thesis also advances realist social theory by demonstrating how cultural and structural factors mediate reflexivity in career projects. It goes even further to investigate the idiosyncrasies of skilled migrants' careers. Ultimately, the thesis offers a better and more balanced account of careers as a social phenomenon positioned at the intersection of agency, on the one hand, and culture and structure, on the other.

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Glossary

AEs – Assigned Expatriates

ARs – Autonomous Reflexives

CR - Critical Realism

CRE – Critical Realist Evaluation

CRs – Communicative Reflexives

CV - Curriculum Vitae

EEA - European Economic Area (EU countries and Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). In this thesis Switzerland is included in this group, as Swiss nationals can live and work in the UK without restrictions.

EU - European Union

HR – Human Relations

HRM – Human Resource Management

MoR - Mode of Reflexivity

MRs – Meta-Reflexives

NE - North-East of England

OECD - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

ONS - Office for National Statistics

PhD – Doctor of Philosophy

RST - Realist Social Theory

SEIs – Self-initiated Expatriates

TMO - The Migration Observatory

UK - United Kingdom

UKCES - UK Commission for Employment and Skills

UN - United Nations

US/USA - United States

Chapter 1. Introduction

International migration is a well-known phenomenon, but its scope, diversity and influence have been developing especially quickly over the last decades. Between 2000 and 2015 the number of people living outside their countries of birth grew from 191.3 million to 243.7 million, meaning an increase from 2.8% of the Earth's population to 3.3% (United Nations, 2016). "The geographical circulation of intellectual elites" (Ash and Sollner, 1996, p.6), however, is a relatively new trend, which is becoming increasingly more salient in the flows of international mobility. There is evidence that in the 21st century the volume of skilled migration is growing faster than the overall number of international migrants. For example, OECD (2013) reports that the number of migrants with tertiary education in OECD countries increased by 70% between 2001 and 2010, as opposed to a 12% increase in the number of migrants with lower-secondary education over the same period. This trend is accompanied by the even more substantial rise in the number of internationally mobile students, a potentially great source of skilled workforce supply (Martin, 2012), which doubled from 2 million in 2000 to over 4.1 million in 2013 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016). Yet, despite their growing presence and importance, our understanding of skilled migrants' individual career experiences remains limited, without a theoretical framework developed at an appropriate level (Al Ariss et al., 2012). Furthermore, little is known about how regional economic, social and cultural variations affect migrants' career experiences and outcomes.

This thesis aims to contribute to this void by exploring careers of skilled migrants in the North-East of England. This chapter will introduce and contextualise this study. It argues that, despite the growing presence of skilled migrants in the United Kingdom (UK), our knowledge of their careers is limited and so more scholarly effort is needed. The chapter reviews the career literature to suggest that modern accounts of careers tend to overemphasise individual agency and downplay the significance of the context. This chapter then narrows its focus to consider studies of careers of internationally mobile individuals. It highlights that existing studies display an asymmetry in conceptualisation of structure and agency, and concludes that career studies, as well as studies of skilled migrants' careers, are both fragmented and under-theorised. Consequently, this body of literature is at risk of disregarding some groups of career agents and factors that influence their careers. The chapter highlights the calls for a robust social theory, which can appreciate the role of agency, structure and relations between them for individual

careers, to be introduced to the discipline of career studies. Finally, this introductory chapter delineates research objectives and the structure of this thesis.

1.1 Migration as a growing trend

The UK has witnessed a long history of international migration. However, until the middle of the 20th century the number of foreign-born residents in the country did not exceed 3%, with only a few sizeable ethnic communities (see Migration Watch UK, 2016). After the Second World War the number of migrants in the UK was growing steadily, propelled by the Polish Resettlement Act of 1947, which offered British citizenship to Polish soldiers who did not wish to leave the UK, and the British Nationality Act of 1948, which exempted subjects of the British Empire from immigration control¹. Migrants from the Commonwealth countries (particularly from the Indian subcontinent and Caribbean) accounted for most arrivals to the UK throughout the 20th century, but the trend began to change in the 1990s when European migration accelerated.

The number of Eastern European migrants, providing cheap labour for the UK employers, started to grow since the late 1990s (MacKenzie and Forde, 2009). However, it was not until the next decade when the scale of migration from Eastern Europe increased dramatically. In 2004 Cyprus, Malta and eight Eastern European countries (A8) – the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia – joined the EU. In 2007 Bulgaria and Romania (A2), and in 2013 Croatia became members of the union. The UK was one of only three ‘old’ member states (the other two were Ireland and Sweden) that imposed no restrictions upon the freedom of movement of workers from the A8 countries. Consequently, the number of foreign-born residents in the UK doubled from 3.8 million to 8.7 million in 1993-2015. The most significant increase was observed after 2005, when Poland became the most common country of birth and citizenship amongst migrants in the UK (TMO, 2016, 2017a). Over the same period the share of the foreign-born population rose from 7% to 13.5% (TMO, 2017b), whereas the proportion of foreign-born workers demonstrated an even more significant growth from 7.2% to 16.7% (TMO, 2016). Unlike earlier cohorts that concentrated in and around London, A8 migrants settled more evenly across the UK. London still has the largest share of migrants

¹ This freedom, however, did not last long, as control over immigration from the Commonwealth countries was subsequently tightened by the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts of 1961 and 1968, the Immigration Act of 1971 and the British Nationality Act of 1981.

(36.8%), with further 12.8% in the South-East. However, a half of migrants reside elsewhere in the country (TMO, 2017a), which stresses the need for more region-specific studies.

At the same time, statistical records indicate that migrants in the UK have become more skilled than in OECD countries on average and the proportion of skilled individuals in the overall inflow of migrants is rising. Eurostat (2015) finds that the UK has the highest share of skilled migrants among the EU member states – more than one half (54.2%) in the stock of the foreign-born residents aged 25 and above have tertiary education. All 15 regions with the highest proportion of educated migrants in the EU are located in the UK, with as high as 81.6% in Aberdeen (ibid). Although the absolute number of educated people moving to the UK has decreased because of recent changes in migration policies², their share in the recent arrivals has risen to 60% (TMO, 2014). As a result, the UK currently presents a rare example of a Western European country where migrants are more educated than the native-born residents, as only one in three the UK-born workers hold a university degree (Rienzo, 2017). In addition, the UK accommodates 10% of the total stock of students pursuing studies abroad (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016). With education attainments often serving as basis to label migrants as skilled (Iredale, 2005), this suggests that the UK retains its importance as a destination for the internationally mobile skilled population.

We, nonetheless, know surprisingly little about skilled migrants' individual experiences in the UK. Even less is known about experiences in various regions of the country. Perhaps this lacuna can be attributed to a historic tendency to study international migration from a macro-level perspective (Ackers, 2005; Carr et al., 2005). Economists, for example, have been concerned with the effect international mobility has for sending and receiving societies. The recent arrival of hundreds of thousands of migrants from the A8 countries has instigated many studies seeking to examine the effect the unprecedented mass migration has on the UK labour market, distribution of wages, availability of jobs and the welfare provision (e.g. Manacorda et al., 2012; Drinkwater and Robinson, 2013; Dustmann and Frattini, 2014).

Skilled migrants have been a source of competitive advantage (Tung, 1988), mobile human resources needed to fill labour shortages in “the context of skill shortages, aging population, and decreasing fertility rates” (Al Ariss et al., 2012, p.93). Studies in the fields of economics and management investigate what benefits skilled migrants can offer and how they can be managed most effectively. For instance, skilled migrants have been found helpful for transferring knowledge between countries and organisations (Wang, 2015), but less likely to send

² See 3.3.1.1 and 5.3 for more details.

remittances to home countries than lower-skilled migrants (Faini, 2007). Studies like those by Turchick Hakak and Al Ariss (2013) and Guo and Al Ariss (2015) examine human resource management of migrants and suggest how core elements of HRM, such as recruiting, training and retention, should be applied to utilise migrants' skills in a more efficient way. Other studies investigate how various international policies, such as migration regulation, tax reductions, recognition of qualifications (Mahroum, 2005), multiculturalism (Ng and Metz, 2015) and "nation branding", i.e. employment conditions, standards of living and acceptance of diversity (Silvanto et al., 2015) affect countries' abilities to attract foreign professionals.

A similar attitude toward skilled migrants seems prevalent in the current political rhetoric, where calls for further restrictions upon immigration to the UK have been at odds with David Cameron's (2013) exhortation to the "brightest and best innovators and entrepreneurs to choose Britain" and Theresa May's (2017, emphasis added) reassurance that "Britain (...) will always want immigration, *especially high-skilled immigration*". Yet, attracting migrants and benefitting from their skills require a comprehensive understanding of drivers, enablers, obstacles, outcomes and other factors that constitute skilled migrants' individual experiences and which can vary across different regions (Smart and Murray, 2017). This thesis seeks to contribute to this lacuna by investigating careers of skilled migrants in the North-East of England. In search for the theoretical and methodological apparatus for such an endeavour this chapter now turns to introducing the field of career studies.

1.2 Careers

As Inkson and Arthur (2001) note, most people appraise their lives through the prism of family life and career, and, from the point of view of individuals, career can be a matter of significant importance. Therefore, exploring migrants' careers is an important step toward learning "the human face" (Favell et al., 2006) of skilled international mobility.

Careers are commonly understood as "the moving perspective in which persons orient themselves with reference to the social order" (Hughes, 1937, p.413) or "the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur et al., 1989, p.8). Conceptualisation of careers often features metaphors, such as the career as a journey, as a role or as a fit (for an overview of career metaphors see Inkson, 2004; Inkson et al., 2006). These metaphors denote that careers should not be separated from their contexts. Indeed, it would be hard to imagine, for example, a journey in a vacuum. Individuals travel, play roles, orientate themselves, experience and,

ultimately, live and work in certain environments, which enable and constrain their actions. It has been acknowledged that careers are a multi-faceted phenomenon that does not belong fully to social agents (Iellatchitch et al., 2003), but occurs at the “intersection of social history and individual biography” (Grandjean, 1981, p.1057). Reviews of career studies (Gunz et al., 2011; Inkson et al., 2012), however, reveal that this discipline historically tends to present careers as a product of either social environment or, more lately, independent agency, whereas attempts to produce accounts that appreciate the complexity of the structure-agency interactions are infrequent and scattered.

Career studies as a field of academic enquiry emerged in 1970s and have been burgeoning since (Moore et al., 2007; see also handbooks by Arthur et al., 1989 and Gunz and Peiperl, 2007). It is rooted in a range of disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, history and economics (Arthur et al., 1989), with the first seminal works published by a psychologist, Edgar Schein, a social psychologist, Lotte Bailyn and a sociologist, John Van Maanen (Khapova et al., 2007). Barley (1989) observed that sociology and psychology had the greatest impact upon the initial development of career studies and Moore et al. (2007) suggest that agency was more prominent in the research rooted in psychology, whereas early sociologists tended to prioritise wider societal factors. It is argued, however, that the field of career studies is not interdisciplinary (Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer, 2011), but fragmented and with a long-lasting tension between structure and agency (Khapova et al., 2007; Moore et al., 2007; Tams and Arthur, 2010).

Reflecting the role of organisations in industrial and post-industrial economies, early career studies focused on the organisational context in which careers evolved (Iellatchitch et al., 2003). Lately, the situation has changed. Social, political, economic and demographic transformations (Mayerhofer et al., 2004; Inkson et al., 2012) encouraged some authors to proclaim the beginning of a new era in careers and propose new ‘modern’ career forms – boundaryless (Arthur, 1994; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996), protean (Hall, 1996, 2004) and post-corporate (Peiperl and Baruch, 1997). They argued that organisations would have less impact upon careers, whereas people would take more responsibilities to promote their career interests. This led to a shift in focus from the organisational and institutional settings to psychological aspects of careers, such as motivation, self-management, personal values and talents (Tams and Arthur, 2010).

The concept of boundaryless careers has proven particularly durable and influential (Baruch et al., 2015). It was developed in opposition to ‘old’ organisational careers and has six specific

meanings or emphases (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996, p.6), where a career (1) “moves across the boundaries of separate employers”; (2) “draws validation – and marketability – from outside the present employer”; (3) “is sustained by external networks or information”; (4) involves breaking “traditional organisational career boundaries”, such as hierarchical reporting and advancement principles; (5) involves rejecting “career opportunities for personal or family reasons”; (6) is perceived by career actors as leading to “a boundaryless future regardless of structural constraints”. What unites these emphases is that all six of them highlight independence of careers from the organisational setting. The impact of the boundaryless careers on the subsequent evolution of career studies is widely acknowledged (Inkson et al., 2012). For example, the concept of individual career capital has been suggested, within this theoretical area, as an instrument allowing agents to navigate their career interests (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994). It argues that individuals purposefully invest in developing competences of three types: knowing-why (purpose, motivation and identification), knowing-how (career-relevant skills and knowledge) and knowing-whom (inter-personal relations). It also contributes to an increasing appreciation of the importance of subjective criteria of success for individual careers (see Tam and Arthur, 2010).

Despite its prominence, the concept of boundaryless careers and the way it has been applied in the literature has been critiqued for creating a deceptive picture of inevitability and ubiquity of the boundaryless career form (Pringle and Mallon, 2003; Feldman and Ng, 2007; Arnold and Cohen, 2008; Inkson et al., 2012). For example, Rosenbaum and Rafiullah Miller (1996, p.350) claim that “the company man, if not entirely extinct, is a rapidly dying species”, Briscoe et al. (2006) discuss the “boundaryless mindset”, and Banai and Harry (2004, p.98) announce that boundaryless careers “have become predominant”. Boundaryless careers, indeed, dominate the discourse of career studies (Baruch et al., 2015), but lack strong empirical evidence. As Gunz et al. (2000, p.48) argue, the boundaryless career “is still just a hypothesis” (see also Lazarova and Taylor, 2009). Despite the rhetoric of new economics, organisations are found to still offer employment security and career support (Zaleska and de Menezes, 2007). In addition, studies suggest that the ‘old-style’ intra-company transactions remain dominant and that more traditional organisational careers are ‘alive’ (Chudzikowski, 2012; see also Rodrigues and Guest, 2010).

The concept can be misleading: what boundaries actually means is ambiguous, as is to what groups of population the concept applies (Pringle and Mallon, 2003). Although in its original meaning boundaryless careers refer to organisational boundaries, some studies apply a wider notion of boundarylessness, portraying various psychological, physical and institutional boundaries as completely permeable (see Arthur et al., 2005; Inkson, 2012). Similarly, Roper et

al. (2010) argue that boundaryless career studies, being related to a wider neoliberal discourse, tend to disregard contextual obstacles. Carr et al. (2005), for example, develop a framework for boundaryless global careers with a focus on individual attitudes rather than regulation of borders and other institutional constraints. Considering boundaries to work transition, Gunz et al. (2007) suggest that they can be either subjective or objective, with the former determined by agency and the latter by structure, and so they thus belong to distinct levels of analysis. Denial of boundaries, therefore, not only disregards the structure, but also provides an inadequate account of agency, as there is no empirical evidence that the “boundaryless mindset” is appealing to everyone. Some authors (e.g. Pringle and Mallon, 2003; van Buren, 2003; Rodrigues and Guest, 2010) point out that boundaryless careers are typically applied to study careers of professional and managerial elites, who have significantly more power to rely on their agency. The same group of authors raise concerns about consequent marginalisation of less privileged groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, lower-skilled workers or those with unrecognised and under-valued competencies. Such inclusion issues have, arguably, led to disputable inferences finding overwhelmingly positive associations between boundaryless careers and career success (Pringle and Mallon, 2003).

This is not, however, to dismiss boundaryless careers from agenda of career studies, but to challenge the notion of its universality and to urge for a better balance in career research. We know that careers are indeed becoming more complex than before (Baruch, 2004). Yet, there is empirical evidence that boundaryless careers co-exist and intertwine with more ‘traditional’ career forms, without replacing them (Chudzikowski, 2012; Chaudhry, 2013). This provides a platform from which to argue that boundaryless careers represent only one of the existent career models. Such arguments are becoming increasingly more acknowledged in career literature. For example, Lazarova and Taylor (2009) distinguish between four types of boundaryless careers, embracing different aspects of boundarylessness. Similarly, Briscoe et al (2006) and Rojewski et al (2017) used career attitude scales to create a typology of careers more or less matching the ‘new career’ attributes. As Inkson et al. (2012, p.330, italics in original) summarised it, boundaryless careers “present a novel ideal type and an appropriate model for *some* individuals, *some* organizations and *some* industries”. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that outcomes of boundaryless careers are not always positive and, therefore, need more scholar attention (Pringle and Mallon, 2003).

Arguably, a comprehensive consideration of a diversity of career experiences and career outcomes requires a nuanced theoretical explanation of structure, agency and relations between them. A robust social theory is needed to go beyond denying career boundaries and focusing

upon individual attitudes as predictors of career success. Such theory should enable investigation of what boundaries structural factors pose for different groups of actors in specific contexts, how these boundaries constrain and enable individual careers, shape career outcomes, and how career agents can deal with them to pursue their career interests (see also Inkson et al., 2012).

Theorisation seems particularly important for studies of skilled migrants' careers, which are often portrayed as quintessentially boundaries, despite being conditioned by a range of social, cultural and legal factors (see Baruch and Reis, 2015). As will be elaborated later, this thesis proposes Margaret Archer's realist social theory as a theoretical instrument suitable for such a task and applies it to generate a more sophisticated understanding of skilled migrants' careers and their outcomes in the North-East of England. This chapter next turns to review studies of skilled migrants' careers seeking to discuss the tension between structure and agency, and the issue of inclusion of different groups of career agents in the context of international mobility.

1.3 Skilled migrants' careers

Global careers, understood as those that involve crossing national borders, are well-known in management studies (Stahl and Cerdin, 2004; Dickmann and Baruch, 2011; Scurry et al., 2013). Baruch et al. (2013), for example, used seven dimensions to identify 20 types of global careers from virtual global employees to students studying abroad. Until recently, however, studies of global careers in the discipline of management have been focussed almost exclusively upon 'traditional' corporate, or organisational, or assigned expatriates (AEs) (see Thomas, 2002). AEs are commonly regarded as qualified professionals who go abroad to undertake international assignments, typically employed by multinational corporations and moving between their branches and subsidiaries (Andresen et al., 2014). Studies of AEs' careers expand our knowledge by examining issues such as motivation to accept international assignments (Stahl and Cerdin, 2004; Dickmann et al., 2008), predictors and understanding of assignments' success (Selmer, 1999; Paik et al., 2002) and repatriation and following career development (Riusala and Suutari, 2000; Stahl et al., 2002).

In addition to assigned expatriates, over the last decades self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) have been receiving growing attention in the management literature (Inkson et al., 1997, Suutari and Brewster, 2000). This term is usually applied to people seeking international experience

independently, rather than through intra-company transfers³. In line with the current trend in the ‘mainstream’ career studies, AEs and SIEs are often contraposed as epitomes of traditional organisational and new boundaryless careers, respectively (see Inkson et al., 1997; Crowley-Henry, 2007; Andresen and Biemann, 2013). Subsequently, a substantial body of literature looking at careers of SIEs (Richardson, 2009; Al Ariss and Syed, 2011; Cao et al., 2012) and contrasting them with those of AEs (Jokinen et al., 2008; Cerdin and Le Pargneux, 2010) has developed.

Studies of both AEs and SIEs careers have undisputedly advanced our understanding of career experiences of internationally mobile population. Yet, there are some shortcomings in the knowledge they provide. Firstly, this body of literature tends to focus on expatriates’ agency. Expatriates are often presented as free to make career choices and decisions, and to pursue their interests, such as where to relocate, when (if at all) to go back and how to apply skills acquired abroad for career benefits (see Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry, 2013). Much effort has been invested into examination of expatriates’ self-management (Carr et al., 2005), motivation to go (Pinto et al., 2012) and stay (Cerdin, 2013) abroad, the development of career capital (Jokinen et al., 2008) and career aspirations (Biemann and Andresen, 2010). For example, Cerdin and Le Pargneux (2010) examine career anchors that motivate expatriates to go abroad and find that managerial competence (interest in problem-solving and managing people to achieve goals) is a more important driver for AEs than SIEs. Similarly, Carr et al. (2005, p.388) conclude that “proactive and internationally oriented attitudes” urge SIEs to cross the borders in pursuit of career advancement.

However, very little is known about the impact of the context in which careers evolve, as the existent scholarship rarely considers factors beyond organisational support (Selmer, 2000; Stahl et al., 2002) and adjustment challenges (Brewster, 1993; Selmer, 1999). Yet, by considering only a limited range of contextual influences, this body of literature oversimplifies the environment. For instance, Cao et al. (2014) suggest that organisational support received by SIEs in host countries influences their intention to stay abroad. This effect is found to be mediated by social networks, as individuals with a greater number of local contacts can receive assistance from them and rely on organisational support less. However, their study does not pay attention to how easy or hard it is for expatriates to develop local contacts and whether these contacts are able to provide assistance expected from them and why. This thesis will explore the impact of

³ Yet, as will be discussed later, there is little consistency in how the term is used.

contextual factors in a particular research setting (the North-East of England) to develop a more nuanced and context-specific understanding of skilled migrants' careers.

Furthermore, studies of expatriates' careers tend to focus on rather privileged groups and are likely to overlook a significant number of career agents. A review of publications in the discipline of management undertaken by Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry (2013) finds that SIEs are often portrayed as managers and executives coming from developed Western countries, whose credentials are universally recognised and who travel freely between countries, employers and jobs. Another review by Berry and Bell (2011) reaches similar conclusions, arguing that the literature depicts expatriates as White, often male people in managerial occupations and, consequently, establishes an overly glamorous vision of international mobility. They urge management scholars to appreciate a diversity of people crossing international borders and to study careers of men and women, White and ethnic minorities, those whose skills may or may not be recognised, rather than an exclusive cohort of professional expatriates. This thesis seeks to answer this call by exploring careers of a broad range of internationally mobile individuals⁴.

Other management studies apply the term 'migrants' and seek to explore their experiences, although they often shun the term 'careers' and use various alternatives instead - labour market transitions (Demireva and Kessler, 2011), labour market performance (Dustmann and Fabbri, 2003), labour market trajectories (Liversage, 2009), employment patterns (Demireva, 2011) and occupational attainments (Green, 1999). Further, this body of literature appears divided into two distinct clusters with different research interests (Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry, 2013).

First, there is a group of quantitative studies that utilise large-scale statistical datasets to conduct objectivist investigations into macro-level phenomena, such as return on education, earnings, employment and self-employment of foreign- and native-born populations. For example, Dustmann and Fabbri (2003) find that proficiency in English increases probability of being in employment, as well as earnings received, for ethnic minority migrants in the UK by 18-20%. Yet, despite their high qualifications, migrants (or, rather, some groups of migrants) often underperform in the UK labour market. According to the Migration Observatory (2016), sectors with the highest presence of migrant workers are manufacture of food products (41%) and wearing apparel (34%). It also finds that migrants are considerably more likely to be employed in processing and elementary occupations, such as construction, agriculture, process operatives, cleaning, food preparation and hospitality. Similarly, Drinkwater et al. (2009) conclude that return on education for A8 migrants is low and many migrants find employment in occupations

⁴ See 4.5 for more details.

they are over-qualified for. Other studies (Demireva, 2011; Demireva and Kessler, 2011) show that migrants from Eastern Europe⁵, Turkey, the Middle East and the New Commonwealth countries⁶ find themselves in a particularly disadvantaged position regarding employment probability and occupational status, whereas migrants from the USA, Old Commonwealth⁷ and EU15⁸ countries tend to over-perform the UK-born Whites. There is evidence, however, that the gap in employment and wages between migrants and the native-born population is narrowing, although significant differences in performance of different groups of migrants endure over time (TMO, 2017b). For example, women from Bangladesh and Pakistan have exceptionally low employment ratios (25% and 26%) compared to the native-born females (70%), whereas women from Australia (79%) outperform other migrant, as well as indigenous women. Studies and reports of this sort can be useful for identifying the existing trends in the labour market and the wider society. Nonetheless, reasons behind the trends remain obscure, as statistics does not (fully) interpret them. To give a thorough explanation of the differences in employment between Bangladeshi and Australian women, we would need to consider gender roles in these two cultures, their historic ties with the UK, discrimination, migration law, mechanisms of recognition of foreign credentials and a range of other factors.

In contrast, the second cluster contributes to our understanding of what underpins the trends identified. These are qualitative subjectivist studies drawing upon in-depth interviews to explore experiences of an underprivileged group of migrants, typically from developing countries. This body of literature addresses issues such as vulnerability of migrants (Turchick Hakak and Al Ariss, 2013), talent waste and downward mobility (Ramboarison-Lalao et al., 2012), barriers to success (Turchick Hakak et al., 2010), underemployment (Pearson et al., 2012), employment discrimination and inequality (Al Ariss et al., 2013) and devaluation of migrants' skills (Wagner and Childs, 2006). Yet, having examined the problems migrants encounter in their careers, these studies rarely make the next step to explore how migrants can rely on their agency to address the barriers (Crowley-Henry et al., 2016). For instance, Qureshi et al. (2013) studied a group of 20 Indian Punjabi skilled migrants in the UK. They found that the respondents experienced significant problems with recognition of their skills. Consequently, underemployment was common, with many forced into an ethnic economy with little employment security and no National Insurance contribution. For some individuals, this resulted in a sense of frustration and

⁵ A8, Romania, Bulgaria, Russia and Ukraine.

⁶ Indian subcontinent, the Caribbean, Kenya and South Africa.

⁷ Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

⁸ Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.

disappointment, segregation and downward mobility, leading them to believe that migration was “a bad decision” (Qureshi et al., 2013, p.189). Yet, it remains unclear what actions they can undertake to deal with these unfavourable conditions.

As opposed to the studies dealing with expatriates, the body of literature that examines the experiences of migrants arguably produces an overly pessimistic view of migrants’ career experiences. Migrants are often presented as victims of the context, bounded by factors beyond their control. This is not, of course, to suggest that disadvantaged groups or contextual barriers are not worthy of scholarly attention. However, we should not, for example, believe that all A8 migrants inevitably perform worse than the indigenes and other European migrants; neither should we assume that all White migrants enjoy career advantages. Instead, this thesis will consider, compare and explain a wide range of skilled migrants’ career experiences, including a variety of contextual conditions and agential responses to them.

1.4 Terminology

The enquiry into skilled migrants’ careers needs a clear conceptual vocabulary (see Suddaby, 2010). This is, however, not straightforward, due to terminological inconsistencies. Migrants, AEs and SIEs are still fuzzy categories. As the Migration Observatory (2017a) suggests, there are at least three possible approaches to defining migrants – by country of birth, nationality and length of stay. They are not interchangeable, as foreign-born individuals are not necessarily foreign citizens. It is also possible to move between these categories if, for example, a foreign-born person obtains a citizenship of the country of residence. Furthermore, intended short stays often metamorphose into long-term residences and vice versa (see Dickmann and Baruch, 2011).

One of the most comprehensive classifications has been proposed by Andresen and colleagues (2014). Having reviewed the existent literature, they distinguish migrants from non-migrants as individuals who cross geographical borders and change the place of their principal residence. They also distinguish expatriates as those necessarily legally employed in the host country, whereas migrants can have no employment or be employed illegally. They further distinguish between assigned and self-initiated expatriates based on who initiated the relocation. Other experts proposed that a simple term ‘internationally mobile individuals’ can be used to refer to both migrants and SIEs (Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry, 2013) or that the terms migrants and SIEs can be used interchangeably (Guo and Al Ariss, 2015). However, the use of these terms in the

literature remains inconsistent and underpinned by stereotypes rather than a robust theory (e.g. Carr et al., 2005), which hampers academic progress.

The notion of skills appears no less contested (see Noon and Blyton, 2004; Grugulis, 2007). We know that skills are (at least partially) socially constructed and some jobs, occupations and some individuals are deemed more or less skilled than others (Kofman and Raghuram, 2005; Hurrell et al., 2013). Csedo (2008) suggests that educated and experienced migrants should be referred to as highly-qualified, but only those who managed to transfer their skills into the country of destination should be labelled highly-skilled. Most studies, however, use proxies, such as qualifications or number of years in education, to classify skilled individuals. For example, Docquier and Lodigiani (2010) define highly-skilled workers as those with more than upper-secondary education, whilst Purkayastha (2005) identifies a bachelor degree as the main criterion for female migrants to be recognised as 'highly qualified'. Other studies use the notion of occupation to separate skilled migrants from unskilled (or lower-skilled). Salt (1997) identified several groups of skilled migrants: corporate transferees, professionals, consultants, entertainers, business people, academics, researchers and students. Others combine proxy measures to develop a more context-dependent notion of skills. Martin (2012) uses qualification (university degree and above) and sector (science and engineering) to conceptualise highly-skilled migrants, whereas Schittenhelm and Schmidtke (2010) define migrants with degrees (qualification) in medicine, engineering and management (sector) as highly-skilled.

As a consequence of this inconsistency, a range of labels, such as skilled migrants, self-initiated expatriates, qualified migrants, educated migrants and immigrant professionals are often used to refer to the same or similar groups of population (see Crowley-Henry et al., 2016). To ensure conceptual rigour, in this thesis migrants are defined as individuals born outside the UK to parents who were neither citizens nor permanent residents of the UK. Migrants are classified as skilled if educated at college diploma level and above and/or possess extensive work experience in occupations defined as skilled by the Standard Occupational Classification (see Iredale, 1999). This approach does not distinguish between migrants and SIEs, but allows for investigating issues common to all internationally mobile individuals. Yet, it also enables the identification of matters idiosyncratic to sub-groups, whether based upon, *inter-alia*, their patterns of relocation, backgrounds, environmental conditions or duration of stay (Crowley-Henry et al., 2016).

1.5 Research objectives: An understanding of skilled migrants' careers and their outcomes

This thesis contributes to developing a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of skilled migrants' careers and their outcomes as a complex social phenomenon placed where individual agency and contextual influences interact. The importance of such endeavours has been recognised and some steps in this direction have been undertaken. Conceptually, Al Ariss et al. (2012) suggest a context-specific relational framework to develop a more detailed understanding of skilled migrants' careers in various historic, institutional and organisational landscapes. This approach, further elaborated by Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry (2013), proposes a multi-level model to explore skilled migrants' careers, where macro-contextual level refers to a range of political, social, economic and cultural forces that shape migrants' career experiences, organisational level considers management practices and corporate culture, whereas individual level is understood as migrants' agency and their individual experiences in the setting.

At the empirical level, Zikic et al. (2010) identified three career orientations from interviews with skilled migrants – embracing, resisting and adaptive. Embracing was associated with a boundaryless attitude: migrants in this group welcomed challenges and were proactively navigating their interests. Respondents with the resisting orientation believed that barriers they encountered were impossible to circumvent. Adaptive orientation meant that migrants were concentrating on dealing with contextual barriers by looking for new opportunities and altering career plans. This study illustrates that pictures of boundaryless expatriates (embracing) and underprivileged migrants (resisting) represent different ends of the same scale, but neither of them explain the whole diversity of career experiences, especially taking into account that the third orientation (adaptive) was the dominant amongst their participants. More recently Fernando and Cohen (2016) continue to challenge the notion of skilled migrants as inevitably disadvantaged relative to skilled indigenes. Focusing on careers of Indian academics in the UK, they find that the respondents managed to overcome career barriers and achieved career progress by strategically prioritising research and publishing over teaching and administrative responsibilities. Migrants in their sample were also able to derive support from ethnic and domestic capitals, applying contacts in India for professional needs and relying on family help with child-minding and housework.

Such efforts, unfortunately, are rather rare and this field of scholarly enquiry remains flawed and fragmented. More could be done to explore and explain how and under what circumstances the context can present migrants with career opportunities, how and why migrants succeed in their careers, what actions and practices they apply, how they manage obstacles posed by the context

and what outcomes they achieve (Fossland, 2013; Crowley-Henry et al., 2016). Yet, further progress seems difficult without a widely-accepted theoretical framework, currently missing in career studies.

It has been proposed that a robust social theory is needed to grasp the complexity of interactions between structure and agency and to appreciate the diversity of agents, contexts and, consequently, careers (see Cohen and Duberley, 2015). Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer (2011, pp.21-22, italics in origin) suggest that better theorisation is necessary to develop career studies into a multidisciplinary field of enquiry. They outline five “touchstones” theories should be able to contribute to. First, the required theory “has to take into account the *contextuality and multilevel quality* of careers by addressing different levels of analysis”. Second, it would “have to deal with *structure and agency*, favoring none over the other”. Third, the needed theory would “have to contain *boundaries* as an important building block”. Fourth, it would “have to account for the *dynamics* of careers (...) with time being the underlying assumption”. Finally, the sought-after theory would supply “the *methodology and methods* (...) more closely linked to the nature of problems that are investigated in career research”. The authors acknowledge that finding the ‘right’ theory is not an easy task, which, so far, has been unsuccessful. They compare this task to searching for a “blue flower”, which in Romanticism was used as a symbol of unattainable perfection.

Yet, the “blue flower” of career studies might be more reachable than it seems. Mayrhofer et al. (2007, p.228) put forward three “grand social theories” – Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice, Anthony Giddens’ theory of structuration and Niklas Luhmann’s theory of autopoetically closed social systems – that arguably could provide a needed framework within which to “make sense of career reality”. These theories were selected for their ability to:

“enable multilevel analysis; offer a reflexive relationship between action and structure; go beyond the organization as the main point of reference; avoid the selective bias or one-sided choice of objective versus subjective career or micro- versus macro-level; and include neglected areas such as power distribution, social inequalities, and so on”.

Whilst acknowledging the contribution of these grand theories, this thesis argues that Margaret Archer’s realist social theory (RST), rooted in critical realism (CR), offers a better pathway out of the mire than Bourdieu, Giddens and Luhmann. The thesis will argue that, when studying skilled migrants’ careers, RST is better than the suggested alternatives at shedding light on all five proposed touchstones of contributions that Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer (2011) highlighted. The thesis provides empirical and theoretical insights into the benefits RST offers to

conceptualisation of skilled migrants' careers as a complex social phenomenon co-determined by the context and individual agency. Reflexivity - a mechanism mediating relations between agency and structure - is introduced as particularly helpful for this endeavour.

This thesis aims at three specific areas of contribution⁹. First, it investigates a range of contextual mechanisms and how they constrain and enable career opportunities available to skilled migrants. By doing so this thesis illuminates factors idiosyncratic for the research setting and calls for more attention to migrants' career experiences outside the "global city" (Sassen, 1991; Beaverstock, 2005). This thesis also investigates factors specific for skilled migrants (in comparison to skilled indigenes) and sub-groups of them. Second, an enquiry into how career agents pursue their interests is undertaken. The thesis considers practitioners of three modes of reflexivity (Archer, 2007), and identifies and explores five types of their career projects. Finally, career outcomes achieved by skilled migrants are examined and explained.

Within a methodological framework informed by critical realist evaluation (CRE), elaborated by Brannan et al., 2017, this thesis undertakes the analysis of primary (semi-structured interviews) and secondary (statistical records and relevant reports) data to explain careers of skilled migrants in the North-East of England. Their experiences are contrasted and compared to those of the indigenes in the region in order to identify and explore idiosyncrasies specific to migrants' careers. By considering a range of career stories the perception of boundaryless careers as ubiquitous and dominant is challenged (Pringle and Mallon, 2003; Inkson et al., 2012). With a focus upon career outcomes, this thesis also advances our understanding of career success and factors that enable and hinder it (Heslin, 2005; Gunz and Mayrhofer, 2011). Finally, this thesis seeks to contribute to further refinement of realist social theory (Archer, 1995, 2007).

1.6 Structure of this thesis

The following part of this thesis is arranged around nine chapters that together seek to investigate and analyse the preceding scholarship and empirical evidence of skilled migrants' careers from the CR perspective. Chapter 2 reviews the grand social theories proposed by Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer (2011). It illuminates their limitations in theorising relations between structure and agency and argues that RST offers a better alternative. This chapter introduces the key principles of CR ontology. Further, it discusses the fundamentals of RST and its applicability to career

⁹ See also 2.3.3.

studies. This chapter also outlines how RST conceptualises reflexivity (autonomous, communicative and meta-) and how this concept can be used to understand skilled migrants' careers. Also, this thesis's research questions are presented.

Chapter 3 undertakes a review of literature about skilled migrants' careers as a first phase of CRE. Within this framework it considers career outcomes, context and agency to start developing CR-informed assumptions about how skilled migrants navigate their interests through the host environment. This chapter conceptualises career outcomes through the prism of career success. This chapter also considers two groups of structural and cultural contextual mechanisms – skilfulness and social capital - which the thesis subsequently advocates as critical in affecting skilled migrants' relevant successes. Further, different typologies of actions that career agents can undertake in response to contextual conditions are discussed.

Chapter 4 presents and debates methodological tools and approaches this thesis employs to answer the research questions. It suggests a CR ontology and methodological pluralism as a robust alternative to objectivist and subjectivist ontologies and associated methodological toolsets. This chapter introduces CRE as a research framework applied to develop a comprehensive understanding of skilled migrants' careers. Methodological instruments of data collection and analysis are presented and explained from the position of CR-informed research.

Chapter 5 combines primary empirical data from the interviews with information from secondary sources to generate an image of the research setting. It documents the industrial past of the North-East and the history of migration in the region before going on to consider (supra) national and regional mechanisms shaping skilled migrants' career experiences. Both structural and cultural factors are considered in order to understand the "room for manoeuvre" of different categories of career agents and how these groups pursue their ambitions.

Chapter 6, 7 and 8 provide empirical analysis of careers of practitioners of different MoRs – autonomous, communicative and meta-reflexivity respectively. Each of these chapters begins with an insight into how the dominant MoRs were identified through the analysis of internal conversations, including concerns and decision-making. Each chapter provides one career story as an illustrative example, before going on to discuss and explain career projects applied by the respondents in this group. The focus of these chapters is upon how career agents select from available projects, utilise them to realise their reflexive concerns and what outcomes they generate.

Chapter 9 undertakes a discussion of findings of this thesis with references to the existent literature. It considers theoretical insights supplied by this project in relation to the availability, development and application, and outcomes of career projects. Further, it discusses the contributions offered by this thesis to fields of boundaryless careers, career success, factors of success and realist social theory.

Finally, Chapter 10 concludes this thesis by outlining this project, discussing its limitations and suggesting avenues for subsequent research.

Chapter 2. In search of a social theory to study careers

2.1 Introduction

The interplay of structure and agency is “inevitably central to any comprehensive theory of career” (Iellatchitch et al., 2003, p.746). This chapter begins with an overview of the three grand social theories proposed by Mayrhofer et al. (2007) as a means to supply a theoretical framework for career studies. The focus is on how these theories deal with the tension between agency and structure, and whether they are able to provide a balanced view of them in relation to skilled migrants careers. The chapter outlines the chief postulates of each theory and illuminates their merits and shortcomings, as well as their relevance to career studies. It ought to be stressed that this thesis is able to do little more than to summarise these three grand theories, which is not an easy task in itself. Bourdieu, Giddens and Luhmann were very prolific authors – they wrote many books and hundreds of articles, some of which are yet to be translated into English (particularly in case of Luhmann’s legacy). It has to be acknowledged that, for this reason, this chapter relies on secondary sources and other authors’ interpretations of the grand theories, as well as on original works by Bourdieu, Giddens and Luhmann. For the same reason, it is not feasible to present a comprehensive review of the theories and the discussion is confined to the core aspects of the interplay between structure and agency.

The chapter then proceeds to suggest Margaret Archer’s RST as a more refined alternative to conceptualising relations between structure and agency. First, the CR ontology, upon which RST draws, is introduced. Next, the core ideas of the theory are presented and debated, with a specific focus on reflexivity as a mediator of relations between structure and agency. Finally, the chapter discusses how RST has been applied empirically and what advantages it can offer to the field of career studies. It specifically identifies three gaps in our understanding of reflexivity in careers that this thesis seeks to address.

2.2 Grand social theories

2.2.1 Pierre Bourdieu and the Theory of Practice

Pierre Bourdieu developed one of the most influential sociological theories of the 20th century. His theory of practice regards the social world from the point of view of domination, which

stems from unequal allocation of resources. Bourdieu explains practice through interplay of three closely connected key concepts – field, habitus and capital.

For Bourdieu all social processes happen in social fields – arenas or playgrounds where individuals ‘play the game’. Fields effectively are networks of positions (Bourdieu, 1977) and the positions that actors occupy define what practices are available for them. The aim of the game is to accumulate resources needed to take a position of power or domination. Each field is characterised by a set of specific rules that agents follow when competing for resources. Eventually, individuals internalise these rules, therefore reproducing the field with all its flaws and injustice. Internalised rules take a form of dispositions to talk, think and behave in certain ways, to which Bourdieu refers as habitus - “structure, internalized into our bodies” (Elder-Vass, 2007a, p.334). Initially habitus is developed through the early-life socialisation and reflects one’s background (i.e. social position in the field). Therefore, it is a product of the field: habitus provides ‘a sense of the game’, enables actors to intuitively identify the rules of the game and ensures compliance with them. Although habitus can be developed and adjusted by life experiences (Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer, 2011), it is rather durable (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) and does not always change in line with the field dynamics. Habitus implies that individuals unconsciously tend to react to similar situations in the same way, i.e. they are ‘programmed’ for certain actions, even if their ‘software’ can be updated. Arguably, knowledge about individuals’ habitus and their positions within the field is sufficient to explain and even predict what course of actions they are likely to undertake (see Mayrhofer et al., 2007).

According to Bourdieu, what social positions actors occupy is defined by resources in their possession. Specific kinds of resources, needed to enter the field and play the game, are referred to as capitals. Bourdieu (1986) distinguished between four types of capital. Economic capital refers to material goods and values. This is the most ‘basic’ form, into which all other types of capital can be converted and from which other capitals can be derived most easily. Cultural capital comprises knowledge, skills and abilities legitimised by artefacts, personal characteristics or formal qualifications. It can exist in embodied (dispositions of the mind and body), objectified (cultural artefacts, i.e. books, pictures and instruments) and institutionalized (educational qualifications) forms. Social capital is an aggregate of actual and potential resources, access to which can be obtained via mutual social relationships, e.g. a group membership. Finally, symbolic capital is connected to prestige, honour and recognition. Within social fields the three other forms of capital must be authorised by or converted into symbolic capital to be recognised as legitimate and useful for ‘the game’. Thus, although capitals have their own distinguishing features, they are closely related and can be transformed into each other.

The relative value of capital possessed by actors defines their position within the social hierarchy and, consequentially, availability of practices (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Those with high volume of capital, especially economic and cultural capitals, belong to the dominant class, whereas individuals with low volume of capital are dominated (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, capital is an essential foundation for power, which enables actors to implement their ideas of how the field should be organised (De Clerq and Voronov, 2009). To summarise, practice can be chosen by individuals, but the choice is unconscious and largely pre-determined by the rules of the field, habitus and a social position commensurate with to the volume of capital possessed.

The theory of practice has been widely used in career studies. Theoretically, for example, Iellatchitch et al. (2003) elaborate career-specific notions of field and habitus. They propose economic and legal systems as major systems of reference to understand career fields. Their study identifies four career sub-fields (company world, free-floating professionalism, self-employment and chronic flexibility) that result from loose or tight coupling (referring to the closeness of relationships) and high or low stability (understood as changes over time in the configuration of relationships) in relations between actors. Career habitus relates to career fields and refers to dispositions to act in a specific way, automatically following the rules of the field. Mayrhofer et al. (2004) develop these ideas further, applying them explicitly to global careers. They conceptualise patterns of global careers as determined by four Bourdieusian types of capital, four dimensions of habitus (social, psychic, dimension of time and of strategy) and global career field's specific rules about how capitals can be gained and transformed.

Empirically some studies apply concepts of field, habitus and capitals to locate careers within a wider environment and explain career (dis)advantages. For example, Corsun and Costen (2001) employed the theory of practice to explore the causes of the glass ceiling faced by women and ethnic minorities in the USA. They found that the historically uneven distribution of resources enables White males to retain their position of domination and obstruct access to capitals for other groups.

In migration research, the theory of practice is often used to inquire into how migrants transfer their capital to the country of destination and what use of it they can make to pursue career interests. Relying on works of Bourdieu (as well as other social capital theorists), Ryan et al. (2008) distinguish between different types of social capital and assess what sort of help migrants can obtain from it and what difficulties they may face. Fernando and Cohen (2016) explored transferability of capitals to study careers of Indian academics in the UK. They developed the notion of the "ethnicized career habitus" to illustrate how pre-migration experience can offer

substantial career advantages contributing to factors such as motivation and fortitude. Despite the benefits for our understanding of the role of capital for migrants' careers, Erel (2010) observes that many studies tend to adopt the "rucksack approach" when applying Bourdieusian notion of capital. For example, they treat cultural capital as a key that migrants take with them and which may or may not suit the 'keyhole' of the host country's cultural system. Erel suggests that it is important to acknowledge migrants' abilities to negotiate the value of existing capital, as well as to develop new capital, which implies they utilise more than habitus as they negotiate their careers.

Although this is a crucial step towards recognising migrants' agency, its further development within a Bourdieusian framework may not be easy. The theory of practice provides researchers with an opportunity to 'go beyond the individual' (Mayrhofer et al., 2004), but it may be at risk of overlooking the individual. Bourdieu excels at conceptualising structural conditions and resources, but individual agency exists at the periphery of his theory: habitus leaves little space for intentional cognition of the world and capital replaces agency as ability to impact upon the world (see Archer, 2007). The theory of practice admits the possibility of the 'rational choice' in times of crisis. Yet, this is a rare exception available only for "actors who are in a position to be rational" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.131) and most actors act "intentionally without intention" (Bourdieu, 1990, p.12), meaning that they pursue their interests in conformity to the rules of the game and their position in the field. Whilst actors' ability to convert capitals into each other implies a certain degree of agency (Walther, 2014), it emerges as strongly influenced by the rules of the game in a particular field.

There is evidence to suggest that individuals might be engaged in reflexive behaviours considerably more frequently than Bourdieu seems to believe (Archer, 2007, 2010). Migrants do not always act with a programmed intention to 'fit in' the field and succeed in the game. Some might attempt alternative patterns of behaviour, whereas others may not be willing to play the game at all (Al Ariss, 2010). Bourdieu (1977) suggests that conscious awareness about the rules of the game and reflexive orientations towards them are only possible when these rules are broken, which is likely to happen in unfamiliar fields. Considering that migration can be conceptualised as movements between different fields, the limited theoretical tools to explore intentional, strategic actions supplied by the theory of practice seem particularly disadvantageous for studies of migrants' careers.

2.2.2 Anthony Giddens and Structuration Theory

In structuration theory Giddens (1984) introduced the notion of duality of agency (people's ability to impact upon the social world through their actions) and structure (rules and resources upon which individuals draw to act), as opposed to dualism. For Giddens (1979, p.5) "structure is both medium and outcome of reproduction of practices", meaning that individuals internalise structure as "memory traces" and reproduce it through their actions. At the same time, structure constrains and enables actions of individuals, but exists only when "instantiated" in agents' actions. Structure is not 'objective' and cannot exist outside actions and relations. Therefore, structure influences practices only at the time of actions. At all other times the structural rules are "virtual" and only have a potential to impact upon practices.

According to Giddens (1984), there are two clusters of rules. Constitutive rules establish what the social world is, whereas regulative rules describe how individuals should operate in this world. Johnson (2008) uses an analogy with sports games to suggest that constitutive rules define the nature of the game (e.g. tennis is a game where players use rackets to hit the ball over the net) and regulative rules prescribe how the game should be played and stipulate penalties (e.g. players have two attempts to serve and if both are unsuccessful the point goes to the opponent). In opposition to typically explicit rules of tennis and other sports games, rules of the social world are often tacit and people may not be aware of them. Besides, being part of the structure, rules exist only within our relations or, as Jones (1999) puts it, in our heads.

The notion of structuration refers to processes when people act in accordance to the structural rules, thus reproducing the structure. Giddens suggests that individuals seek "ontological security" and, therefore, are more inclined to follow well-established routinized patterns of actions, i.e. to comply with the rules and maintain the structure. Nonetheless, in contrast to Bourdieu, structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) depicts social agents as more strategic, creative and reflexive. Social agents do not merely reproduce the social world, but at times transform it. People are "knowledgeable" about their actions and the social reality. They can monitor the outcomes of their actions and alter their behavioural patterns. Agency of individuals defines their 'room for manoeuvre' – despite being constrained by the structure, agents retain some scope for choice. Giddens implies that individuals might have a choice of what actions to practice and, therefore, what systems to reproduce. Ultimately, the outcomes of our structured actions provide underpinning for social institutions, making their existence possible. However, our understanding of the reality is limited and, therefore, abilities to foresee the outcomes of our actions are limited too (Giddens, 1979, 1984).

The theory of structuration is well-known in modern social studies and has been applied empirically to a range of academic disciplines. However, applying it is difficult (see Barley and Tolbert, 1997) and often requires significant re-reading, re-interpretation and, at times, alterations. For example, one of the first attempts to introduce structuration theory to the field of management studies was made by Ranson et al. (1980). They conceptualised organisations as “both prescribed frameworks and realized configurations of interaction” (Ranson et al., 1980, p.3). Willmott, however, argues that these modifications are not compatible with Giddens’ intentions to transcend the dualism between action and structure and claims that “they employed the rhetoric of Giddens’ theory of structuration, while largely disregarding its substance” (Willmott, 1981, p.473).

Introduction of structuration theory to career studies was initiated by Stephen Barley (Barley, 1989; Barley and Tolbert, 1997). Drawing on the theory of structuration and interpretivism, he develops a model of career structuration. According to this model, institutions – “shared rules and typifications that identify categories of social actors and their appropriate activities or relationships” (Barley and Tolbert, 1997, p.96) - create codified career “scripts”, which have to be interpreted by people to understand what actions are legitimate in this context. When interpreting the scripts, individuals draw on institutional resources, interpretive schemes and norms. Over the course of career actions people impact back upon the structures, maintaining or, possibly, changing them.

Development of this framework also involved an important re-reading of Giddens’ work. In order to allow for career scripts to pre-exist agential actions, Barley and Tolbert (1997, p.99) acknowledge that “[u]nless an institution exists prior to action, it is difficult to understand how it can affect behaviour and how one can examine its implications for action or speak of action’s subsequent effect on institutions”. It has been suggested (Edwards, 2015) that such an admission may not be compatible with the essence of the structuration theory. Indeed, the ‘original’ structuration theory is far less sensitive to the temporal relations between structure and agency – e.g. how our today’s actions shape tomorrow’s structure (Bakewell, 2010).

Nonetheless, the notion of career structuration has often been used by scholars interested in the ‘new’ career concepts, particularly to connect boundaryless careers to institutions and to explain the duality of the impact they have upon each other (see Inkson, 2008). Duberley et al. (2006) revise and expand Barley’s model. They demonstrate that institutions do not affect careers uniformly, but organisational, family, professional, cultural and other institutions intertwine to create a ‘web’ within which social agents operate. This study also introduces the notion of

“modes of engagement” to refer to how individuals interact with their contexts and argues that individuals can engage with contextual features proactively, reactively or, most typically, as a combination of them.

At times studies do not explicitly refer to structuration theory, but draw upon its ideas. Richardson (2009), for example, develops modes of engagement further. Her study finds that some academics pursuing international careers adopt a “proactive” and/or “maintenance” mode of engagement to pursue their interests within the existing environment, whereas others apply a “transformative” and/or “subversive” approach modifying or bending the rules. This highlights the importance of agents’ actions for reproduction, transformation and subversion of structural rules.

Structuration theory has also been a subject of criticism. It has been accused of subjectivism (Callinicos, 1985; Porpora, 1989) and of conflating structure and agency (Archer, 1982, 1995). Although Giddens acknowledges the complexity of relations between agency and structure (Giddens, 1990), his theory lacks resources to explore these relations. It does not explain how exactly institutions are reproduced or transformed by our actions under different circumstances (Bakewell, 2010). Archer (1982) notes that inability to distinguish analytically between agency and structure can lead to confusions when powers of structures are ascribed to agency and vice versa. For example, Al Ariss (2010) drew upon the aforementioned studies by Duberley et al. (2006) and Richardson (2009) to study modes of engagement of internationally mobile professionals in France. He identified and described four of them. Maintenance happens when career barriers are recognised and individuals pursue their career interests within these barriers. Transformation refers to attempts to change identified barriers. Entrepreneurship relates to venturing into self-employment. Finally, agents can opt out and withdraw from traditional labour market if they perceive barriers as impossible to overcome or tolerate. One example of transformation provided by Al Ariss (2010) is participants changing names from Arabic to French in hope that it would boost one’s employability. However, as Arnold and Cohen (2013) note, this refers to maintenance of the existing rules, rather than transformation. If anything, in this example migrants transform themselves into more ‘acceptable’ labour market agents, whereas the structural barriers remain intact. Arguably, this confusion originates in Giddens’ notion of the duality of structure and was passed down to Al Ariss through Barley (1989) and then Duberley et al. (2006) and Richardson (2009).

Another important point of critique relates to the notion of reflexivity in structuration theory. Giddens admits agents have an ability to act strategically, creatively and reflexively, but he does

not really explain mechanisms of this (Edwards, 2015). Barley's model attempted to introduce the explanatory power of social agents into structuration theory, but Archer (2007) argues that reflexivity just cannot work or be explored in Giddens' world. Reflexivity exists as a property of social agency and as a consequence of agencies interplay with structure. It essentially depends upon a clear structure-agency and object-subject differentiation. Subjects must be able to identify their concerns and develop projects that, as they believe, will help them realise their concerns. To the same extent reflexivity depends upon objective conditions of the social world that stimulate or discourage certain 'projects'. Agents engage in reflexive analysis when evaluating what impact circumstances might have on their projects and (re)evaluating the projects accordingly. Therefore, conflation of structure and agency erases conditions needed for reflexivity to work and makes its exploration impossible. Similarly, Mouzelis (1989) suggests that in Giddens' world agents are located so closely to the structure and its rules that it is hard to see how agents can reflect upon them and change them deliberately. Finally, Archer (2007) points out that the Giddens' notion of "knowledgeable" actors is too similar to Bourdieusian habitus, for it also champions "unconscious sources of cognition" (Giddens, 1979, p.5), implying that internalisation of the structure leaves little space for reflexive deliberations.

This suggests that, notwithstanding its helpful attempt to emphasise the role of agency in reproduction and (possibly) transformation of social institutions, structuration theory may not be the best theoretical instrument for understanding of how it happens. On the one hand, in its current form the theory does not supply an elaborate analytical tool to investigate how the structure enables and, especially, constrains agency. On the other hand, the under-developed notion of reflexivity makes it difficult to explore how individuals can react to structural influences.

2.2.3 Niklas Luhmann and the Theory of Autopoetically Closed Social Systems

Luhmann developed the biological principle of "autopoiesis", i.e. self-reproduction, into what is claimed to be a universal, transdisciplinary and "self-referential" theory to examine social systems. His theory (Luhmann, 1986) differentiates between three types of systems – living (organs, tissues and other elements of the natural world), psychic (minds of human beings) and social (can exist as societies, interactions or communications). Luhmann's works are explicitly concerned with social systems – societies and, to a lesser extent, communications (Seidl and Becker, 2006). Society, for example, is an autopoietic system, which consists of sub-systems,

such as religion, art, politics and science (Mingers, 2002; Seidl, 2006). Luhmann argues that these systems are becoming increasingly autonomous and ‘autopoiesis’ is a necessary condition for them to exist. This refers to their ability to transform and reproduce themselves using their own elements. All elements of autopoietic systems are generated within and by themselves, and no elements come from the outside – this is referred to as “operative closure”. When a system stops reproducing itself its existence terminates.

Luhmann (1995) argues that living, psychic and social are different domains with well-defined boundaries. For example, there is a clear line between ‘human beings’ and ‘persons’ (ibid). Human beings ‘objectively’ exist outside social systems as aggregations of psychic and living systems and constitute the environment for social systems. However, social systems develop expectations of what ‘irritations’, i.e. influences encouraging certain changes, are possible from human beings. These expectations effectively become a person – an image of a human being constructed by social systems. Therefore, social systems are separated from consciousness of human beings.

Communications are a fundamental part of Luhmann’s theory (Luhmann, 1995; 2002) which extends it beyond the discussion of social agents and their actions. They are elements that constitute social systems, whereas psychic systems consist of thoughts (Luhmann, 1986; Seidl and Becker, 2006). Luhmann’s concept of communications is, however, different to more conventional notions of communication (Mingers, 2002). In the theory of autopoietically closed social systems communication is a property of interactions between two and more psychic systems (human beings or, rather, their minds) and for this reason cannot be attributed to a single psychic system (Seidl, 2006). Luhmann develops his own understanding of communication as a combination of three elements, which are conceptualised through the notion of selection (see Seidl, 2006). Information is a selection of what is communicated, utterance refers to selection of how and why it is communicated, and understanding is a selection of a distinction between information and utterance, i.e. a selection of a meaning. Communication happens only when the message is received and understood. Intentions or thoughts of psychic systems are completely irrelevant for understanding of communications – social systems retrospectively detect the meaning of communication through the following communications, i.e. what matters is not what the sender wishes to convey, but what meaning the receiver makes (Seidl and Becker, 2006). This meaning can be rejected or accepted. Therefore, social systems become engaged in reproduction of communications.

Social systems are structured in particular ways that suggest what communications are expected in certain situations – not pre-determined, but more likely to happen (Luhmann, 1995). For example, when asking someone about their work an expected answer should regard this matter, rather than a story about their children. When expectations repeatedly cannot be met, systems might change the expectations. In other words, the environment can encourage systems to change. The topic of communication can be changed from work to children and, if it happens regularly, the expectations can change as well. Thus, being “autopoetically closed” social systems are nevertheless open, in that they are in relation with their environments – ‘interactional openness’ (Seidl, 2006).

Relations between social systems and their environments constitute one of the core elements of Luhmann’s theory, conceptualised as structural coupling. By Luhmann (1989), environments can “irritate” or “perturbate” social systems (and probably the other way around). Systems obtain information about the environment, resonate with it and, if needed, can evolve to deal with environmental conditions in a way similar to plants or animals. The environment can only encourage processes within the system, but it cannot force or determine them. How these processes occur (if at all) is determined by the way the system is designed – thus, ‘managing’ a system is only possible as self-management (see Mayrhofer et al, 2007). For example, social systems do not directly affect thoughts of psychic systems, but only encourage certain changes that may or may not occur.

Applications of Luhmann’s theory in business studies are relatively infrequent. Most examples can be found in organization studies (see Seidl and Becker, 2006), which is not surprising, considering Luhmann’s specific focus on organizations as particular forms of social systems. A rare attempt to introduce the theory of autopoiesis to the domain of career research was made by Becker and Haunschild (2003). They suggest that organisations, as social systems, autopoetically reproduce themselves through a specific form of communications – decisions. Careers have the “evaluative capacity”, in that organisations can evaluate the present and the past of individuals’ careers to form expectations about their future and so make appropriate decisions. This study argues that boundaryless careers are harder to evaluate than ‘traditional’ career forms. Therefore, decision-making becomes more difficult and organisations have to compensate for these difficulties.

Luhmann’s theory offers some further opportunities for career studies. For example, it could be applied to explore inclusion, exclusion and membership in social networks and how it affects careers perspectives. However, some pitfalls should be pointed out. First, Luhmann paid

considerably less attention to psychic systems and application of his theory at the individual level of analysis seems more problematic than at the social level. Whereas Giddens is critiqued for positioning structure and agency too close to each other, it could be argued that Luhmann places them too far apart: arguably, the links between psychic and social systems are so weak that it may not allow for a robust explanation of reflexivity either. Communications seem to substitute for social actions and agency (see Becker and Haunschild, 2003), which complicates inquiries into individual decision-making, motives and deliberations. Even though Luhmann (1995) acknowledges the initial creation of social systems by agents and their actions, he insists that the subsequent reproduction of communications happens solely within the social system – “only communications can communicate” (Luhmann, 2002, p.169). This statement, however, does not explain how communications communicate in practice. As Mingers (2002) argues, it is possible to imagine that communications stimulate further communications, but not literally produce them. More important, if agency cannot impact upon the social world, but only ‘irritates’ it, it can be quite hard to understand what agency is and how it should be studied.

2.2.4 Summary

Whilst all the social theories discussed in this section can be used to make strong contributions to examining careers, there are shortcomings associated with the ways in which they deal with structure and agency. The second touchstone for contribution proposed by Chudzickowski and Mayrhofer (2011, pp.21-22, italics in original) argues that to further our theoretical understanding of careers, theories “have to deal with *structure and agency*, favouring none over the other”. The review of the social theories has sought to demonstrate that none of them perfectly satisfies this criterion. In short, Bourdieu and Luhmann favour structure over agency, whereas Giddens’ structuration theory prioritises agency.

Although Bourdieu’s theory of practice admits the possibility of ‘rational choice’ and Chudzickowski and Mayrhofer (2011) find it sufficient to propose it as a theoretical device for a better-balanced career dialogue, we cannot ignore the fact that this possibility is limited to certain conditions and certain actors, and plays only a secondary role in Bourdieusian ontology. Habitus, as internalised structure, is the dominant mode of actions and there is little room for reflective behaviours. Insisting on unquestioned reproduction of social structures as the main outcome of agential practices, Bourdieu restricts people’s capacity to impact upon the world and, consequently, restricts their agency (Archer, 1995).

Giddens, on the other hand, treats structure and agency as an analytically inseparable whole, and so structuration theory has been accused of being simultaneously voluntaristic (Bhaskar, 1979) and incapable of explaining how agents act reflexively to transform social institutions (Archer, 2007). Furthermore, the structuration theory complicates consideration of pre-existing structural conditions, arguing that structure exists only when agents act. Therefore, analysing the temporal dynamics of careers demands for considerable ‘modifications’ of the theory (see Barley and Tolbert, 1997), which appears to contradict Giddens’ ontology.

Finally, Luhmann’s theory of autopoiesis favours structure over agency. The argument that only thoughts can produce thoughts and only communications can produce communications leaves very little room for individual agency. As King (2004, p.8) formulates it, “in his work, the objective side of this dualism, the system, threatens to obliterate the individual”. The exaggerated autonomy of social structures restricts agential powers to influence upon them and does not allow for the symmetry of the social reality either.

Grand theories are often applied selectively and there is a risk of misunderstanding and misinterpreting them (Whittington, 1992; Jones, 1999). They frequently “require substantial work and ‘translation efforts’ in order to make them applicable to concrete empirical career research” (Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer, 2011, p.31). Although some degree of flexibility is permitted and even invited, we need to treat them with a great deal of caution and not to turn into something incompatible with the author’s original ideas. The three grand theories might appear as having the ‘right’ balance between structure and agency only if we ignore their core ontological underpinnings or modify them to an inappropriate extent.

2.3. Realist Social Theory as an alternative to the grand theories

Considering the limitations of the social theories discussed in the previous section, this chapter turns to a discussion of Archer’s realist social theory (RST) as a more suitable alternative to promote theorisation of career studies, particularly structure, agency and relations between them. This section argues that RST transcends the limitations of theories offered by Bourdieu, Giddens and Luhmann by analytically separating structure from agency and providing a sophisticated model to explain their interactions, prioritising neither of them (see Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer, 2011). This section begins by presenting the critical realist (CR) ontology, upon which the realist social theory draws. Then it proceeds to debate the key aspects of RST – the morphogenetic model and reflexivity. Subsequently, relevance of the theory for career studies is

advocated. The section concludes by outlining three major areas of contribution this thesis seeks to make.

2.3.1 Introduction to the Critical Realism ontology

Critical realism was originally developed by Roy Bhaskar (1975) as a meta-theory for social science, emerging from ontological questions of being and existence, which made it stand out from other, more narrow applications of realism. CR is often seen as a robust alternative to first, empirical ontology, which promotes people as rational individuals and denies existence of structure independently of agents; and second, idealist ontology, which collapses agency into structure and then structure into discourse, so that agency effectively disappears (Bhaskar, 1986; O'Mahoney, 2011; Fleetwood, 2014a)¹⁰.

In contrast, CR ontology is stratified and emergent. It treats the world as an open multi-layered system (as against closed systems that can be re-created in laboratories) of hierarchically organised interconnected things (i.e. entities, wholes, elements), such as molecules, biological organisms, organisations and societies. These things are not always tangible and material, and most of them change endlessly. Some entities can exist without someone socially constructing them, observing them or even being aware of their existence, whereas others cannot. Nevertheless, the world should not be collapsed into our knowledge or experience of it (Sayer, 2000).

CR differentiates not only between the world and our awareness of the world, but also between three strata of the world (Figure 2.1) – the empirical, i.e. social and natural events that can be empirically sensed and observed; the actual, i.e. events and tendencies that happen in the world and can be different from what we witness; and the real or the 'deep', i.e. causal mechanisms or powers, norms, rules, structures, institutions (etc.) that cause empirical and actual events (Bhaskar, 1979). To put it simply, the real refers to all mechanisms relevant to an empirical event¹¹, the actual to those that have been activated (whether experienced or not) and the empirical to those mechanisms that have been activated and can be sensed. This distinguishes the 'stratified' CR ontology from 'flat' ontologies, which are only capable of identifying empirical and actual domains (see Sayer, 2000; Fleetwood, 2014b). Therefore, 'flat' ontologies can

¹⁰ See 4.2.

¹¹ It can be argued, that all mechanisms are to some extent relevant to what is observed (Elder-Vass, 2010a).

account only for events and people's perceptions of them, but not for causes behind the events (Brannan et al., 2017).

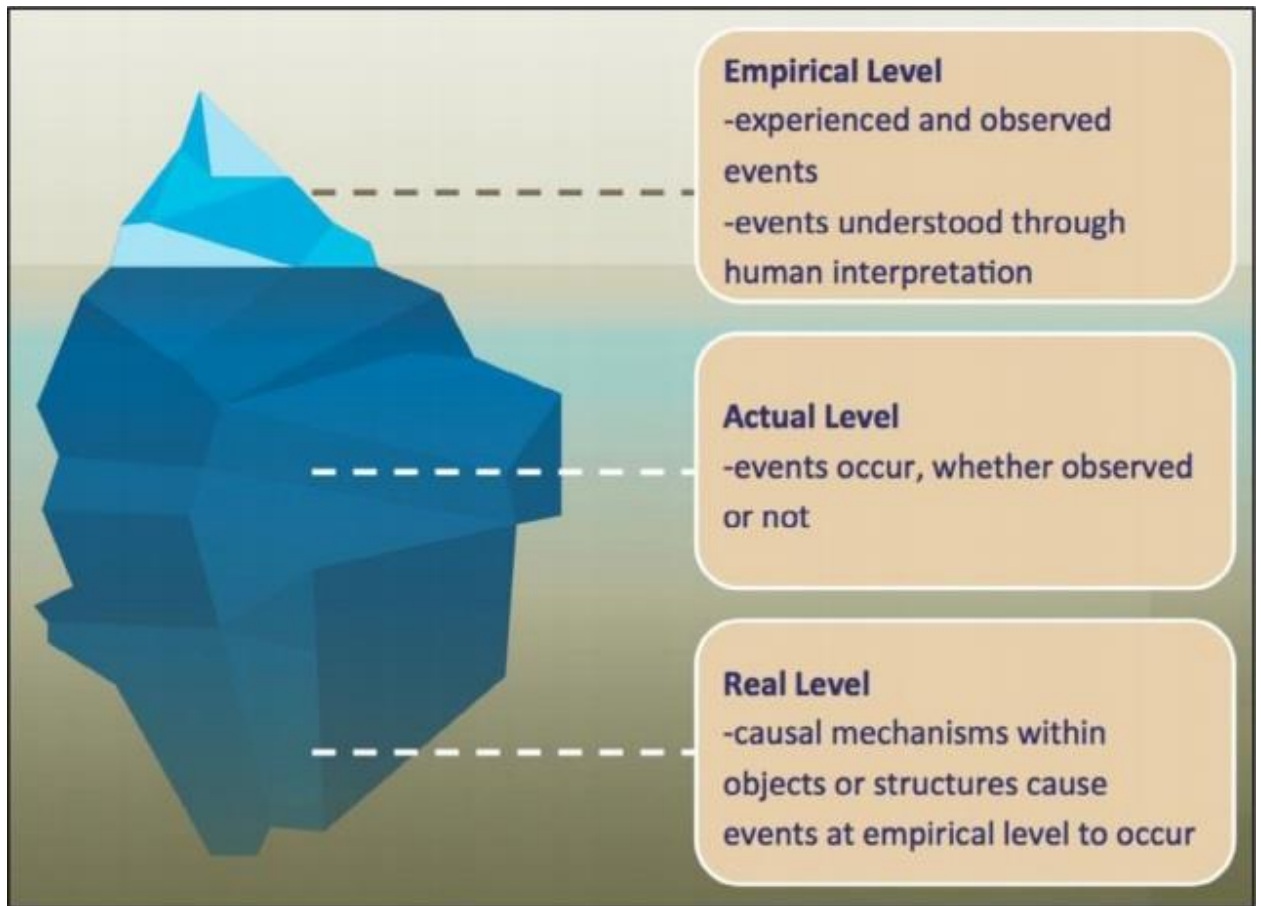


Figure 2.1 CR ontology (Fletcher, 2017, p.183)

Observability does not make existence more or less real, but rather increases our awareness of it. For this reason, CR scholars (see Collier, 1994) accept causality (abilities to influence other things and events) as a necessary and sufficient criterion to make claims about reality of existence of unobservable entities, powers and events. For example, it is hard to assert confidently that reincarnation is real, but the concept of reincarnation certainly is, for it influences actions and behaviours of [some] people.

With a reference to the real domain, CR emphasises properties, powers and structures of entities. Things are real, that is, they have causal powers (i.e. capacities, capabilities, forces, abilities, potentialities) to impact upon the world (Lawson, 1997; Elder-Vass, 2010a), but not all of them are real in the same way (Fleetwood 2005, 2009). Physical entities, such as planets, clouds, trees and stones, are 'materially real' and their existence does not depend on our identification of them. Conceptual or ideal entities, e.g. languages, ideas, beliefs, superstitions and discourses, are 'ideally real', whereas entities like gender and class, social structures and institutes, governments

and organisations are ‘socially real’. Ideally and socially real entities are not palpable or physical. Finally, ‘artefactually real’ entities or things, e.g. chess, DVD players, jeans, cupboards and guitars, are a combination of the other three entities. They are material and physical, but created and ascribed meanings to by people.

Entities have properties (or essences), such as properties of being orange, being rectangular, being a lecturer, having employees or having horns. Most human beings, as entities with a property of having limbs, possess a causal power to, for example, serve an ace when playing tennis. In simple terms, things have properties and these properties determine their causal powers. Entities’ powers can be possessed, exercised or actualised¹² (O’Mahoney and Vincent, 2014). The possessed power to serve an ace in tennis can be activated when a person takes a racquet and starts serving. Yet, this power may or may not be actualised (i.e. empirically observed) because there may be countervailing powers – the player might slip when serving because the surface is too wet or the opponent might happen to be an able player and return the serve. How powers are actualised and what outcomes they generate is influenced by other mechanisms that can change, reinforce or weaken the effect of the power. By acknowledging it, CR prioritises complex causality, which means that an event is caused by an interaction of mechanisms, over simple causality, which assumes that an event is caused simply by the event(s) directly preceding it (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2006a).

In an open system, however, identifying all co-existing mechanisms is not feasible. Therefore, regarding social processes and their outcomes, CR is concerned about tendencies or ‘demi-regularities’ (Lawson, 1997), rather than universal laws (Elder-Vass, 2010a). In other words, if a phenomenon has a tendency to A, it does mean that A happens (Fleetwood, 2014a). For example, A8 migrants tend to work in low-paid and low-skilled jobs, but some of them gain access to well-paid skilled employment. It might be possible to identify and consider some mechanisms that enhance occupational status (e.g. labour market demand for certain skills, formal education or motivation), but not all of them. As Elder-Vass (2010a) notes, a complete explanation of why an event happened would require consideration of mechanisms back to the Big Bang. Therefore, an absolutely accurate prediction of the results of combinations of mechanisms and tendencies is inherently impossible, although a reasonably good understanding of mechanisms can allow for *tendential predictions* (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2006b). The importance of the stratified ontology lies in its acknowledgement that some powers exist inactivated or can be activated, but

¹² The term ‘actualised’ in this context is not related to the actual domain. Archer (2010) refers to this as “realisation” of powers, but effectively both terms relate to the empirical domain – a situation when powers (or their outcomes) become observable.

not actualised. Therefore, what is happening or could happen in the world is significantly broader than our experience of the world and is not exhausted by it. The existence of real entities, with their properties and causal powers, constrains and enables what can happen, but it does not condition what necessarily will happen.

Reality is also emergent: entities are related to other entities existing on different levels, but they are not reducible to them (Brannan et al., 2017). Entities consist of other elements arranged in a particular way (for example, a football team consists of players, who consist of tissues and organs, cells and so on) and the relations between parts determine the structure¹³ of the entity (Elder-Vass, 2010a). Causal powers in possession of entities emerge from their structure. This means that a power of an entity cannot be equated to a mere sum of powers of its parts and the parts possess causal powers on their own rights. A football team can achieve results that a single player is not able to accomplish, but each player has their own capabilities. Arranging the team in different ways influences the team's power to play good football – substituting a goalkeeper with a second striker is likely (although not certainly) to diminish the team's capability to win. CR perceives causal powers as emergent from relational properties of elements which become entities, or things in themselves.

Thus, a causal power is defined by the structure (structure-as-whole) and composition of the entity possessing it, and certain combinations of powers tend to result in particular events (Elder-Vass, 2010a). Individuals are parts of larger social systems, thus our ability to exercise powers depends on our position within the system. For example, the role of an employee cannot be understood if we disregard their relations with employers, and some actions may be available for employers and not for employees (and vice versa). What a person can or cannot do is thus conditioned by relations to other elements of the system.

2.3.2 Realist Social Theory

2.3.2.1 Morphostatic-morphogenetic model

Subsequently social theorists have developed Bhaskar's works and CR ideas evolved from a philosophy of science to a social theory (see Fleetwood, 2014a). Margaret Archer (1995) created her own version of realist social theory (RST) as a framework explaining interactions between

¹³ Here structure refers to a way in which parts of entities are organised to form the whole - structure-as-whole, as opposed to structure-as-relations (see Elder-Vass, 2007c).

structure and agency, and the results of these interactions. This theory stands in opposition to Giddens' structuration theory and, to an extent, to Bourdieusian social theory. Archer argues that structure and agency “*emerge, intertwine, and redefine* one another” (Archer, 2010, p.275, italics in the original), but she ontologically and analytically distinguishes between them as different clusters of emergent entities. Structures are ‘parts’ that constitute society and have a power to orient actors’ choices, goals, actions and dispositions, but not to pre-determine them. Individuals have their own agency - a causal power to interact with the social world and to make an impact upon it.

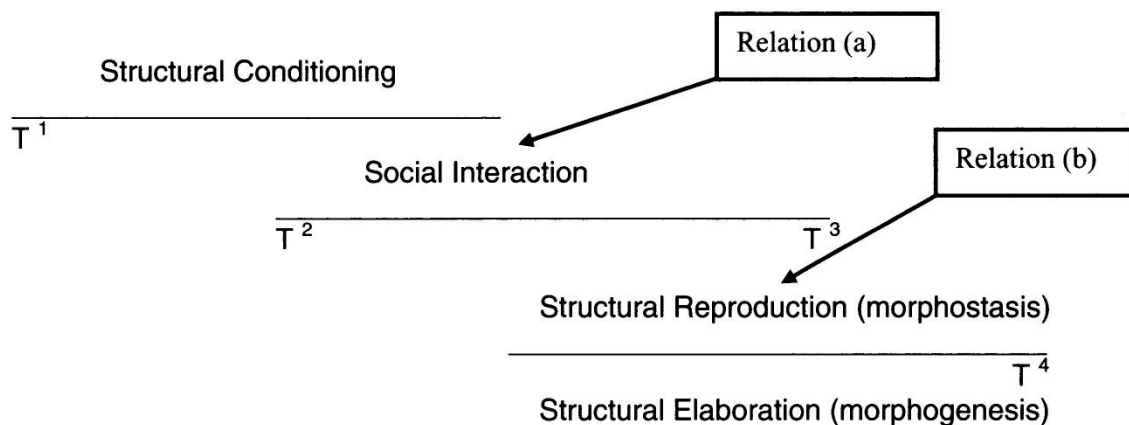


Figure 2.2 The basic morphogenetic cycle (Archer, 1995, p.193)

The morphogenetic approach (Figure 2.2) is a complement to CR ontology, providing the explanatory programme to analytical dualism (Archer, 2010, 2016). First, structure and agency operate over different time courses. Present social conditionings at T1 are products of previous, ‘historic’ interactions and, therefore, they pre-date current social interactions. Conditionings at T4 pre-exist future interactions, in other words the end of one circle is the beginning of another. Second, having emerged from previous interactions, structure has its own properties and powers, which are different to properties and powers of agents. When structure and agency interact, two outcomes are possible – morphostatic and morphogenetic. Morphostasis refers to interactions that sustain social structure and reproduce it as it is. Morphogenesis is used to describe processes that elaborate or change the pre-existing structure.

According to Archer, structure does not refer to rules and resources as Giddens seems to believe; neither is it reduced to Bourdieusian habitus and capitals. In RST, structure is relations between social agents and/or positions they hold (also Porpora, 1989, 2016a). These relations include, but are not limited to exploitation, discrimination, employment, dependency and power. At times morphogenesis changes the incumbents of positions, whereas relations between positions can

remain intact (Porpora, 2013). For example, a board of directors can appoint a new CEO. This does not necessarily entail an alteration of relations (although it may), but nonetheless this change is a result of the board members' agential behaviour in pre-existing conditions. Reproduction or transformation is an imperative condition for society to continue to exist. Hence structure is rooted in agents' actions, but cannot be reduced to them.

Distinguishing rigidly between agency and structure-as-relations, Archer (1988, 1995) also maintains distinctions between structure and culture and between culture and agency. She refers to culture as ideas, and the stock of known ideas or the total sum of "intelligibilia" forms the cultural system (see also Porpora, 2016a; Iosifides, 2017). Socio-cultural matters relate to people who exercise their causal powers to promote, apply, manipulate and oppose ideas. Therefore, a more nuanced version of the morphogenetic approach (Figure 2.3) suggests that agency interacts with both structure (as relations) and culture (as ideas). For example, Porpora (2013), commenting on the morphostatic model, notes that motivation can be structural and cultural. The former stems from the social positions, relations and embedded interests, whereas the latter originates from people's values and concerns. Yet, even pursuing structural interests, agents act in a culturally influenced way. Thus agency is affected (although not determined) by both structure and culture, and simultaneously is involved into their continuous elaboration or reproduction.

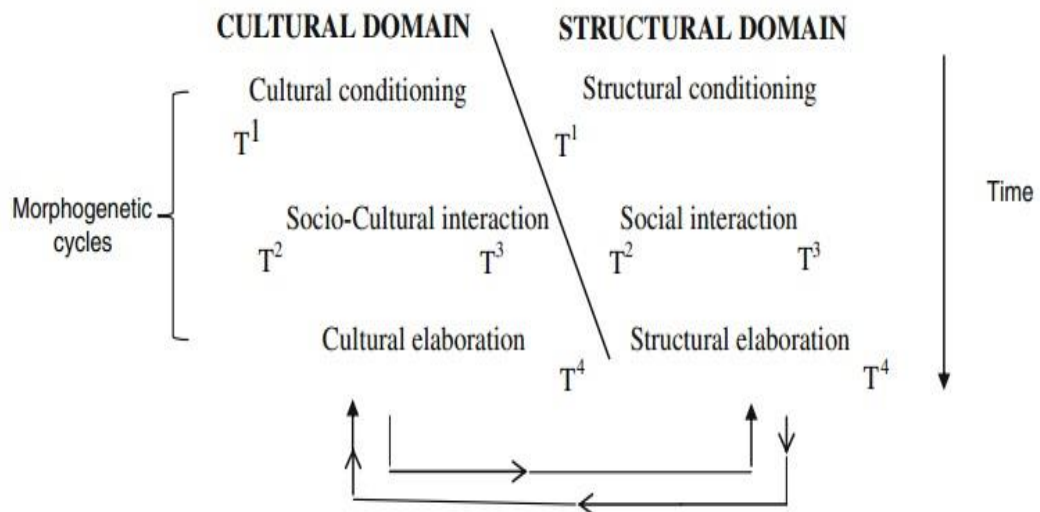


Figure 2.3 Morphogenetic cycle with structure and culture (Archer, 1995, p.323)

Furthermore, RST conceptualises resources as a collective product of agency, structure and culture, rather than a property of individuals or a field (see Lazega, 2015 for a discussion of social capital). We can think, for example, of skills as agential capabilities, but opportunities to

activate and actualise them depend upon positions in the structure agents occupy, cultural ideas about who and how should apply them and other structural and cultural factors. Therefore, RST does not prioritise either structure/culture or agency, offering a valuable contribution to the second ‘touchstone’.

2.3.2.2 Reflexivity

Archer’s (1995, 2010) morphogenetic approach demonstrates that structural (cultural) conditioning influences social (socio-cultural) interactions. Conditioning eliminates determinism of any sort, but allows, potentially, for two possibilities – conditioning through socialization of habits and routinized actions or conditioning through reflexive deliberations of actions. Archer herself, and in sharp contrast to Bourdieu, has been promoting an imperative position of reflexivity in social theory (Archer, 2003, 2007). She defines it as “the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa” (Archer, 2007, p.4). As opposed to structuration theory, RST provides a nuanced insight into how reflexivity functions. According to Archer, reflexivity depends upon conscious deliberations, which are exercised through our ‘internal conversations’. The ability to engage into such conversations is our emergent power. Reflexivity has causal powers too, for it can shape our perception of the world and ourselves, our goals, projects, actions and the results of them.

Archer (2003) suggests that human beings develop *concerns* in relation to three orders of reality – physical (e.g. nutrition and safety), practical (e.g. performance and achievement) and social (e.g. sense of self-worth and self-actualisation). People then develop their own *modus vivendi* – sets of practices that together constitute a way of living most desirable for individuals regarding their concerns. They prioritise some concerns over others and make decisions about how these concerns can be realised in particular structural and cultural conditions (Archer, 2007). This requires engaging in a process that is both emotional and cognitive: we need to deliberate what we care about most and to appraise the world around us in order to identify opportunities to attain it. Our judgement is fallible and agents are unlikely to develop perfect understanding about contextual obstacles and enablers (Vincent et al., 2014). Nonetheless, in pursuit of our interests we are capable of developing *projects* – concrete intentional courses of action aimed at realisation of concerns, which can eventually result in sustainable *practices* which constitute

modus vivendi (Archer, 2007). *Modus vivendi* is developed and assessed reflectively, through self-conscious deliberations exercised as ongoing internal conversations or inner dialogues.

Archer (2003, 2007) identifies four modes of reflexivity – autonomous, communicative, meta and fractured. First, communicative reflexivity requires that the internal conversation be confirmed by other people before it can be used to adjust agential projects. Second, autonomous reflexivity is characterised by self-sufficient internal conversations. They do not need to be confirmed and lead directly to actions. Third, meta-reflexivity is reflexivity of a ‘high’ order. Individuals not only monitor their projects, but critically review their own reflexivity. Finally, fractured reflexivity refers to internal conversations leading to confusion and disorientation, rather than meaningful actions. All agents are engaged with all four MoRs, although in different proportions, and typically one mode dominates our internal conversations. Practitioners of the first three modes are deemed ‘active agents’ in that they actively try to make their way through the social world. Archer suggests that practitioners of different MoRs have concerns regarding different orders of reality - autonomous reflexives (ARs) and achievements, communicative reflexives (CRs) and inter-personal relations, and meta-reflexives (MRs) and values. In contrast, fractured reflexivity yields ‘passive agents’ characterised by social disorientation, feeling of helplessness against the reality and inability to develop strategic projects to tackle their problems.

In RST, reflexivity is an emergent property of individuals. It operates as a causal mechanism and, therefore, has internal and external implications (Table 2.1). Considering the ‘active agents’, Archer (2007) suggests that ARs are sources of production: their actions stimulate social development and are often market-orientated. In contrast, CRs function as the foundation and cement of the society, whereas MRs are “the well-spring of society’s self-criticism” (Archer, 2007, p.99). ARs rely on self-discipline to strategically manage constraints and enablers, which tends to result in upward social mobility; CRs are engaged in self-sacrifice leading to social immobility; and MRs are orientated towards self-transcendence in order to ‘live up’ their values, which results in late mobility or volatility. In other words, communicative, autonomous and meta-reflexivity *tend to* have dissimilar consequences for people who practice them and for the social world.

(i) Modes of reflexivity	(ii) affect stances towards constraints or enablements, hindering or helping social mobility	(iii) through their associated action-orientations	(iv) with consequences for patterns of mobility	(v) and aggregate macroscopic consequences	(vi) whose main institutional impact is upon
Communicative (foundation)	Evasive	Self-sacrifice	Social immobility	Social reproduction	Family
Autonomous (source of production)	Strategic	Self-discipline	Upward mobility	Social productivity	Market
Meta- (self-criticism)	Subversive	Self-transcendence	Later mobility (volatility)	Social reorientation	Third sector

Table 2.1 Internal and external effects of reflexivity (adapted from Archer, 2007, p.316)

In regard to habitual¹⁴ socialisation, Archer associates it with morphostatic processes, but argues that “its days are numbered” (Archer, 2010, p.278). Habitus belongs to the past, to, putatively, now gone times of contextual continuity - conditions of similarity, familiarity and solidarity. Archer admits the existence of morphostatic ‘traditional’ societies, characterised by a high degree of social and cultural homogeneity, where the environment remained stable for so long that it was indeed possible to internalise it. However, even in ‘traditional’ societies reflectivity existed and was crucial for agents’ ability to self-monitor their performance and bridge the gap between the anticipations and outcomes. As diversity in societies was growing, with increasing urbanisation, industrialisation and political participation (contextual discontinuity), the role of reflexive deliberation became greater. When changes started to occur at a faster pace, this promoted the “reflexive imperative” (Archer, 2012). Arguably modern societies were lacking conditions that underpinned the viability of habitus – lasting social relations and conditions,

¹⁴ Archer (2010) uses ‘habit’ to refer collectively to a group of related terms, such as habitus, routinized actions and customary behaviour. This chapter uses ‘habitus’ instead, partly to adhere to a well-known term, partly to reflect Archer’s pointed criticism of Bourdieu.

sustained expectations and goals, repetitive situations. Previous embedded norms were not as useful any longer, whereas abilities to produce, analyse, and apply knowledge became valued and rewarded. As a result, in conditions of contextual incongruity agents extend the degree of reliance on their reflexive practices. Archer finishes habitus off claiming that “the young of the new millennium are no longer Bourdieu’s people because they no longer live in Bourdieu’s world” (Archer, 2010, p.287).

Nonetheless, not all CR scholars believe habitus should be written off. Some of them look for conditions that might restrict or facilitate reflective behaviours. Steve Fleetwood and Andrew Sayer both defend an empirical combination of habitus and reflexivity as co-existing in any context, despite its (dis)continuity or claimed incongruity. Sayer (2009, p.112) acknowledges actors’ ability to analyse the context and reflect upon it to adjust their projects, but argues that “much still gets below our radar”. Thus, habitus continues to play an important role and many actions are still routinized. Also, it might be possible to develop habitus reflectively – we deliberately learn the Highway Code and follow it (mostly) customarily. Similarly, Fleetwood (2008) assigns a significant role to socialisation – for example, norms dictate what jobs are suitable for migrants or, more precisely, for particular groups of migrants. Dave Elder-Vass (2007b, 2012) makes a more radical step, calling for the ontological and theoretical reconciliation. In his view, habitus and reflexivity do not merely co-exist, but co-determine agential projects. For example, our intention to do food shopping can be a highly reflective outcome of needs and desires, but the way we exercise this intention – move legs, let other people pass, even chose what we buy – can be a routine habitual action.

Responding to this, Archer (2007, 2010) admits that some skills can be embodied and become our ‘second nature’, but most of them do not and still require reflective deliberation in order to be actualised. Whilst not completely denying the hypothesis of co-determination, she notes that it can imply anything from an equal 50/50 share between reflexivity and habitus to 1/99 proportion, with the latter (where habitus accounts for 1 and reflexivity for 99) being more likely. The argument of Archer’s RST is that even if habitus is not ‘dead’, its role is negligible. However, with a commitment to the idea of a social reality as an open system, the possibility of habitual behaviour should not be denied. We can assume that the share of routinized and reflective actions in agential projects can vary across societies and situations. For now, it is enough to stress that habitus is compatible with CR ontology and its (in)significance should be seen as an empirical question, rather than a theoretical stance.

2.3.3 Relevance to career studies

Overall, CR and Archer's RST supply a fallible (in that, any account of reality is essentially imperfect), but comprehensive and well-balanced¹⁵ ontology to conceptualise the social world and the versatile theoretical tool to study it. Porpora (2013) suggests that RST should be regarded as a meta-theory, rather than a theory, on the basis that it does not explain any particular change, but provides a universal model for such explanations. Nonetheless, this does not deny its merits in interpretation of how changes occur, because "the morphogenetic approach identifies the inescapable form that every effective account of social change must take when fully explicated" (Porpora, 2013, p.26). Therefore, RST can provide a number of significant advantages for 'socialisation' of career studies, including the field of skilled migrants' careers.

First, as contrasted with the grand social theories, RST maintains a robust balance between structure and agency, without preferentially treating either of them. Furthermore, by separating culture from structure and agency RST offers another dimension to study careers. This can be especially important when studying careers of migrants, who move not just between labour markets, but between cultural settings. Archer's notion of culture might be employed, for example, to explore the issue of recognition of foreign credentials or why some groups of migrants are seen as more skilled than others.

Second, Archer's RST does not depict individuals as programmed robots whose actions are routinized and pre-determined by rules. Neither are they socially disembodied rational agents, unrestrictedly pursuing their interests. Relations between structure/culture and agency are complex and mutual – individuals are purposeful and can choose certain actions in accordance to their concerns. However, agents are located in structural and cultural contexts that pre-date their actions and influence them. RST goes beyond merely accepting existence of historic conditions (see Barley and Tolbert, 1997) by introducing the morphogenetic model that explains how structure/culture pre-date agency and how they impact upon each other. Any agential project is realised as an outcome of two clusters of causal powers – powers of agents to reflectively develop projects and powers of structure and culture to constrain and enable agential projects.

Third, Archer (2007) does not simply 'endow' individuals with a power to be reflexive. Reflexivity is championed as a vital component of RST. It mediates relations between agency and structure/culture and also explains the outcomes of these relations. Agents reflectively

¹⁵ Even though Archer's empirical studies are more concerned about agency than structure (see Caetano, 2015), theoretically and ontologically structure and agency are treated as equally important parts of the social world.

develop their subjective projects. Only when such projects exist, and when they are in relations with potential constraints and enablers, the impact of structure and culture can be actualised. The projects become conditioned (but not determined) by their influence. If, for example, migrants had no career plans, goals and expectations, there would be no constraints and no enablers, because there would be nothing to constrain or enable. Agents then exercise their own power to engage in reflexive deliberations, elaborate appropriate projects in relation to structural and cultural conditions and develop them into practices. Archer also specifies that reflexive deliberations are not homogeneous and can be exercised in four different ways.

Fourth, the morphostatic model is universal in that it can explain any social change. Realisation of career projects typically entails (and requires) changes – changes in employment situation, occupied positions, motivation, satisfaction, reputation, professional relations, etc. Essentially, career as a journey, or as a ladder, or whichever metaphor we choose, is a sequence of changes. It is possible to explain what and how caused these changes through identification of tendencies and ‘demi-regularities’ (Lawson, 1997). This can allow for theoretical understanding of how people can become what they are presently not (Sayer, 2000) – for example, how individuals unsuccessful in their careers can become successful or how migrants can become recognised as skilled in the host country.

Finally, CR (and RST) advocates the science’s entitlement to advise on what the social world ought to be, rather than staying (or claiming to be) value-neutral. By revealing what makes the world the way it is, CR unveils the causes of unwanted and undesirable outcomes and suggests alternatives. In particular, it encourages social studies to look for mechanisms causing the ‘problems’ – “unwanted determinations” (Bhaskar, 1986) or “unmet responsibilities” (Sayer, 1997). Thus, CR questions status quo, looks for the causes of social inequality and commits to explanatory critique. Further, it seeks to find potential ways to transform the world in a way that will be beneficial for humanity (Fleetwood and Ackroyd, 2000). Therefore, knowledge (or at least critical knowledge) has emancipatory potential and CR contributes to linking science and ethics (Gorski, 2013). This is not, of course, to imply that this potential is easy to actualise (Sayer, 1997). As Bhaskar (1989) notes, knowledge development is only the first step towards freedom, whereas the other two are to have an opportunity and to be disposed to act in our agents’ real interests. Thus, although emancipation is heralded and cognitively enabled by explanatory theory, it can only be achieved in practice by individuals’ active undertakings.

2.3.4 Empirical applications and gaps in our knowledge

Despite the opportunities it offers, examples of empirical applications of CR/RST are very infrequent. Whereas organization and management studies have been rather receptive to the ideas of CR (Sayer, 2000) and have recently produced a few much-needed examples of practical implications of its ideas (e.g. Delbridge, 1998; Brown and Hesketh, 2004; Taylor and Bain, 2004; Vincent, 2005), studies applying Archer's RST are far less numerous. Furthermore, RST is virtually unknown in studies of careers and migrants' careers. This is particularly surprising considering that Archer (2007) elaborated the role of reflexivity with explicit references to career biography of individuals. Besides, it can be argued that career concerns are related to all three orders of reality. First, financial compensation for our labour is needed to secure the most 'natural' of our needs – food and shelter (Maslow, 1943). Second, performance is a core component of career domain that enables achieving of other goals (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Third, career is one of the means of social fulfilment and an important component of social identity (Inkson and Arthur, 2001). Further, it is an important element of social life with evident links to social mobility. Thereby it is safe to assume that career concerns are a significant preoccupation of people's internal conversations.

One instance of an empirical application of RST was supplied by Mutch (2007). This study focused upon Archer's notion of autonomous reflexivity, as a better alternative to reflexivity in Bourdieu's and Giddens' theories, to explore the formation of Sir Andrew Barclay Walker as an institutional entrepreneur. Three attributes – individualism, prioritisation of work and contextual discontinuity – were used to explain his biography, including important events, actions and decisions.

A more 'inclusive' example is offered by Delbridge and Edwards (2013), who employ RST to undertake an inquiry into design and construction of superyachts. The authors analyse pre-existing conditions to seek for the rules that shaped the industry the way they found it. They explain how more recently some designers started collaborating with shipyards owners and engineers to develop limited series of yachts for shipyards, rather than private clients. Delbridge and Edwards argue that actors exercised their socially embedded agency to reflect upon the historical context and initiate a new trend in the industry.

Delbridge and Edwards (ibid) couple Archer's MoRs (2003) with Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) temporal agentic orientations to anticipate potential outcomes (Table 2.2). According to Emirbayer and Mische, under different circumstances of 'stability and change' agents can be

principally oriented towards the future, the present or the past and the way they position themselves within temporal dimensions impacts their relations with structure and their own actions. Arguably, orientations towards the past involve an iterational element, which is linked to stability of the social reality and, ultimately, routinized behaviours. The present and the future relate, respectively, to practical-evaluative and projective elements, which require capacities to analyse, judge, imagine and innovate, i.e. to reflect.

Delbridge and Edwards (ibid) argue that individuals who, according to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), are past-oriented in their agency, also tend to engage into communicative and/or fractured reflexive processes, which are likely to yield a taken-for-granted reproduction of pre-existing structures (morphostasis in Archer’s lexicon). Present-orientation is linked to meta- and autonomous reflexivity and leads to negotiated reproduction or transformation of systems, whereas future-orientation is associated with autonomous reflexivity and tends to result in transformed social systems (morphogenetic process). Yet, these are tendencies, inclinations and proclivities rather than rules. As Porpora (2016b, p.347) argues, “attitudes (...) do not relate to behaviour in law-like ways”. Delbridge and Edwards find evidence to suggest that relations between structure and agency are not fixed and pre-determined. Even when actors question pre-existing structural arrangements, they do not always act in accordance to their reflexivity/temporal orientations, because of other mechanisms conditioning their actions.

Agentic orientation (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998)	Action orientation: internal conversation	Potential outcomes: transformation/reproduction
Past	Iterational: communicative/ fractured reflexive	Taken-for-granted continuity
Present	Practical-evaluative: meta/ autonomous reflexive	Negotiated continuity and/ or change
Future	Projective: autonomous reflexive	Change

Table 2.2 The agency-structure relationship: structural transformation and reproduction (Delbridge and Edwards, 2013, p.940)

An example of study applying RST to explicitly address the domain of careers is Tomlinson et al. (2013). Also combining Archer with Emirbayer and Mische’s temporal orientations, the authors identify six career strategies (or career projects on RST’s vocabulary) employed by white

women and ethnic minorities in the legal profession. Assimilation (1) refers to accepting or mimicking behaviours of white males – the dominant clique in the business. Individuals with families and children may choose to compromise (2) in order to manage both personal and professional lives and maintain a desired work-life balance. Some respondents were engaged in the ‘playing the game’ (3) strategy. They were actively seeking opportunities to progress, trying to overcome obstacles they faced. Doing so, they did not try to change the structural barriers, but just to navigate their interests through them. Another strategy used by the respondents was to relocate (4), meaning moving between locations and/or roles in search for better conditions. Prospective withdrawal (5) was employed by individuals who gave up hope to succeed and decided to leave the legal profession. Finally, a minority of the respondents reported attempts to modify the profession (6). They contributed to creating a more equal professional environment for everyone, not only for themselves. Tomlinson and her colleagues found that all strategies, apart from the last one, were associated with morphostatic process, and only reforming the system led to the morphogenetic transformation of the structural conditions.

These studies make a significant contribution promoting empirical application of reflexivity and emphasising the value of RST for understanding of social processes. However, there are certain limitations, most of which are acknowledged by the authors. Although the studies employ the notion of reflexivity, it is only one of the components in the analysis. Perhaps for this reason, Delbridge and Edwards (2013) do not go further to analyse under what circumstances individuals may or may not follow their reflexive logics and why, whereas Tomlinson et al. (2013) do not examine the process of developing and applying career strategies and what role reflexivity plays in it. Also, both studies seem more concerned about outcomes for the structure in terms of reproduction and transformation, than for individuals. With a specific reference to skilled migrants’ careers and reflexivity, this thesis seeks to contribute to filling these lacunae in our knowledge. It aims to make three specific contributions:

1. The thesis will undertake an inquiry into the role reflexivity plays in how agents select career projects - concrete intentional courses of action aimed at the realisation of career concerns.
2. This study will explore how contextual factors influence availability of various career projects, i.e. in what conditions individuals may or may not be able to act in accordance to their reflexive proclivities. This will involve consideration of mechanisms that act as career boundaries.

3. The study will explore what outcomes reflective projects generate for career agents, rather than their environments. It will investigate what career outcomes practitioners of different MoRs achieve when utilising various courses of action.

Filling these gaps will make an important step towards introducing a valuable social theory into the field of career studies and shed light on previously underexplored aspects of skilled migrants' careers. In particular, the principle of analytical dualism should allow for understanding of individual career actions in historic contexts and their outcomes. This will also offer a contribution to the debates on boundaryless careers, illuminating contextual obstacles and enablers. It will also contribute to further advancement of RST by exploring the outcomes of reflexive practices for different social groups and in different situations. This will also contribute to the debates on 'survival' of habitus in post-Bourdiesian world. Whereas Archer (2007) focuses on the influence of reflexivity on how we make our way through the social world, this thesis has a narrower focus on theorisation of careers, with reflexivity mediating relations between the structural and cultural contexts of career projects, career agency and career outcomes. The attention of this thesis now turns to review and discuss the existing literature on these phenomena from the point of view of CR and RST.

Chapter 3. Career outcomes, contextual mechanisms and agential responses: Towards a critical realist evaluation

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature about skilled migrants' careers. Although this thesis' methodology will be presented at greater length in the following chapter, it is important to clarify a few aspects of it now, as it affects the structure and objectives of this review. This thesis utilises critical realist evaluation (CRE), suggested (initially, as realist evaluation) by Pawson and Tilley (1997) and then amended by Brannan et al. (2017). It offers an equation to explore outcomes of social interventions or programmes. The equation reads:

$$\textit{Context} + \textit{Agency} = \textit{Outcomes}$$

This thesis applies CRE to explain careers as complex social 'programmes'. In this thesis, the context is understood as composed by two interconnected, but ontologically and theoretically distinguishable parts – structure and culture (Archer, 1988, 1995), as discussed in Chapter 2. Agents rely (at least to some extent) on their reasoning, which in RST is conceptualised as reflexivity, to interact with the context. Outcomes in career studies are often understood as objective and subjective career success.

This chapter undertakes a review of the existing literature in relation to these three elements. In realist (and, more specifically, critical realist) evaluation, reviewing the literature is an important phase that helps researchers enhance their understanding of the social world and, ultimately, develop realist-compatible, working theories. While reviewing the literature researchers are encouraged to learn what outcomes they are interested in, what context their study will take place in, what projects agents utilise (Manzano, 2016; Brannan et al., 2017). Therefore, the purpose of reviewing the literature is broader than merely to identify the gap in existing knowledge. It is treated as a preliminary stage of analysis, in itself, and provides a ground for further refinement of the theory.

This chapter is structured as follows. First it clarifies outcomes in a career context. The focus is kept on the notion of career success and its theoretical underpinnings. It discusses how career success can be conceptualised and what elements it comprises. Then this chapter proceeds to investigate the context in which skilled migrants pursue desired career outcomes. It considers a range of mechanisms that impact upon skilled migrants' careers. Finally, this chapter enquires

into career projects migrants develop and implement to achieve desired outcomes in their settings.

3.2 Outcomes: Career success

The notion of career success is often used to study career outcomes. Similar to other concepts central to this thesis, career success can be defined and understood in various ways (Gunz and Heslin, 2005; Heslin, 2005; Gunz and Mayrhofer, 2011). Perhaps the most commonly (but not the only) used definition is the positive work and psychological outcomes accumulated as a result of one's work experiences (Judge and Bretz, 1994; Seibert et al., 2001a). As a point of departure for the following sections in this chapter, this thesis employs the classic definition of career success offered by Mirvis and Hall (1994, p.366): "the experience of achieving goals that are personally meaningful to the individual, rather than those set by parents, peers, an organization, or society". This definition, although pointed explicitly at the psychological sense of success, offers an opportunity for a CR reflection, embracing both agency and structure/culture. On the one hand, it appreciates agential powers to *reflexively* set goals and work towards achieving them. On the other hand, it implies the necessity to achieve desired outcomes, i.e. they are not given, and so the context is important for conceptualising (and achieving) success. The notion of achievement reflects the notion of the project, which is central to RST. Success is the outcome of projects developed to realise agential concerns in structural and cultural settings.

This section considers two quite different approaches to conceptualising career success, namely objective and subjective success (Hughes, 1958; Heslin, 2005). Until relatively recently, career studies have been dominated by the objective approach, typically associated with traditional careers research (Heslin, 2005). This approach uses objective or extrinsic factors, such as earnings, salary growth, promotions and occupational status (Judge and Bretz, 1994) as proxies to measure career success. These factors are empirically observable, tangible, measurable and verifiable by a third party (London and Stumpf, 1982).

Measures and criteria of objective success are believed to be valued by the 'general public' (Inkson et al, 2006), but they are also "*contaminated*" and "*deficient*" (Heslin, 2005, p.115, italics in original). *Contamination* suggests that objective outcomes are affected by factors outside of individuals' control – labour market conditions, occupational pay standards, taxations systems and many others. This, essentially, highlights the importance of contextual causal

mechanisms for our understanding of careers and their outcomes. In the UK, for example, nurses almost inevitably earn less than university lecturers, but classifying all lecturers as more successful than all nurses would present a rather superficial understanding of their career experiences. *Deficiency* refers to the fact that at least some people seek more than salary and promotions from their careers. For example, school teachers and university mentors may derive the feeling of success upon the number of supervised students and their subsequent employment, doctors may consider proportion of lives saved or diseases cured, whereas engineers and mechanics might emphasise operating machines without accidents as an indicator of success (e.g. Parsons, 2002). Further, it has been suggested that people have different work orientations (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Individuals with a job orientation are more concerned about financial rewards, those with a career orientation aim towards maximising their income, status and prestige, whereas a calling orientation means that individuals seek a sense of meaning and contribution to the society from their work (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001; see also Heslin, 2005). For a critical realist, this means that people have different concerns and develop different projects, which should be taken into account when assessing their outcomes.

The focus upon individual agency, characteristic of the ‘new era’ career concepts¹⁶ (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1996; Baruch, 1999), has attracted more scholarly attention to the notion of subjective success in career research (Greenhaus, 2002). Subjective or intrinsic success is loosely understood as an individual reaction to career experiences and is associated with feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Judge and Bretz, 1994, Judge et al., 1999). However, its meaning is broader than simply satisfaction with a current job. It relates to previous experiences, future prospects and other aspects of life, such as work-life balance, a sense of purpose and the ability to contribute to the community (Heslin, 2005). Individuals develop their personal definition of success with references to personal aspirations (Inkson et al., 2006), which comprises less observable and less quantifiable indicators, such as personal perception of career attainments, pride and job satisfaction, which derive from individual judgements of success (Burke, 2001).

As any other aspect of career (or life in a broader sense), success is dynamic and contextualised (Tharmaseelan et al., 2010; Al Ariss et al., 2012). To develop personal understandings of success, people consider their own objectives, but also take into account the environment in which they operate and achievements of other people (Gunz and Heslin, 2005; Grote and Hall,

¹⁶ See 1.2.

2013). Heslin (2005) suggests that it is possible to apply either self-referent or other-referent criteria for both objective and subjective success (Table 3.1). The self-referent approach compares career outcomes against one's own goals, whereas the other-referent approach uses outcomes of other people as referent points. For example, migrants can compare their achievements against their own goals or against achievements of other migrants or the indigenes. Each case can generate a significantly different evaluation of success, leading to dissimilar outcomes regarding the sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

	Objective domain	Subjective domain
Self-referent domain	<p>1. Objective/self-referent <i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My financial and promotion aspirations <p><i>Potential correlate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A market culture 	<p>2. Subjective/self-referent <i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My goals for work-life balance and fulfilment <p><i>Potential correlates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A calling orientation • A non-linear career
Other-referent domain	<p>3. Objective/other-referent <i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My colleagues pay and my social standing <p><i>Potential correlates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A winner-take-all market • A job or career orientation 	<p>4. Subjective/other-referent <i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My stimulation and fun, relative to my peers <p><i>Potential correlate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clan culture

Table 3.1 Types of success (Heslin, 2005, p.121)

There have been a few attempts to examine the links between objective and subjective domains and to explore career success as a complex two-sided phenomenon (see Arthur et al., 2005). For example, Nicholson and de Waal-Andrews (2005) argue that the relationship between objective and subjective aspects of success is not equal. Subjective career success, they suggest, is a consequence of objective factors – in other words, people feel successful when they become successful. When objective outcomes do not match subjective expectations, agents can engage in post-rationalisation to sustain the sense of control over one's life and career, and to present this mismatch in the most favourable way. Dries (2011), however, suggests that this needs to be further explored as a reverse causality might be possible and objective career success is not always associated with subjective satisfaction. For example, high earnings and status often entail more responsibilities, which might result in higher level of stress and worsen family situation (Schein, 1978). At the same time, for people with a calling career orientation - meaning that people perceive their work as a life purpose, rather than merely a source of financial reward or personal development - subjective feelings of success can improve motivation and lead to enhanced objective career performance (Hall and Chandler, 2005).

When reviewing the discussions on objective and subjective success measures, it is hard to ignore the resemblance they bear with the more general debates about structure and agency. Indeed, objective success is frequently linked to structure, whereas subjective success is associated with agency (Zikic et al., 2010). A more nuanced understanding of success, therefore, would also require dealing with the tension between structure/culture and agency to comprise both aspects of success, objective and subjective. Although subjective career success provides an insightful account into what people care about, the importance of objective criteria for understanding tendencies in the society should not be overlooked. For example, migrants can bring their own criteria of success (Zikic et al., 2010). Applying these criteria, they might experience a subjective feeling of success, even if objectively earning less or progressing slower than the indigenes. CR's commitment to emancipation suggests that it is also possible (and desirable) to explore what exactly migrants achieve in their careers and why, regardless of their satisfaction with the achievements (Sayer, 2011). Cases of career inequality should not be ignored, even when individuals are not aware of (or not concerned about) them.

Heslin (2005) presents a typology bridging different domains of career success. He identifies four types of career success criteria – objective/self-referent, subjective/self-referent, objective/other-referent and subjective/other-referent – and correlates them with various contextual and individual factors that make them more salient. His study suggests, for example, that people employed in fields with a relatively equal distribution of rewards tend to use more subjective and self-referent success criteria than those employed in winner-take-all markets, where a relatively small number of high performers accumulate the lion's share of rewards. Similarly, organisations with a market culture, characterised by strictly formal contractual relations between employers and employees, promote objective and self-referent success criteria, as opposed to clan organisations with more committed and family-like relations, where subjective and other-referent are more salient. On the personal level, individuals with a calling career orientation tend to apply subjective/self-referent criteria, whereas those with a job or career orientation are more inclined towards objective/other-referent criteria of success.

Heslin's study makes an important step towards conceptualising success as a phenomenon dependent upon both the context and individuals. The existing literature, however, still tends to use individual traits (Judge et al., 1999; Seibert and Kraimer, 2001b) and career capital competencies (Eby et al., 2003) as predictors of success, with occasional attention to organisational variables (Judge et al., 1995). Ng et al. (2005) undertook a meta-analysis to explore the impact of four groups of career success predictors - human capital (e.g. political knowledge and skills, level of education and social capital), socio-demographic characteristics

(e.g. marital status, gender, race and age), organisational sponsorship (e.g. supervisor support, training and development opportunities) and stable individual differences (e.g. proactivity, cognitive ability and neuroticism). They found that human capital and socio-demographic characteristics were stronger related to objective career success, whereas organisational sponsorship and stable individual differences were more relevant to subjective success.

For a critical realist such findings are important, but not sufficient. These studies identify mechanisms of success, but do not explain how they may or may not work. For example, proactive personality (Seibert et al., 2001b) can influence career outcomes, but more should be done to explore its effect in different contexts in combination with other mechanisms. We also need to know more about what exactly people with proactive personalities do in order to achieve career success. In CR ontology and according to the logic of CRE, career success is the consequence of individual career projects realised in specific contextual conditions – i.e. what agents do and how it is influenced by the environments. This chapter next proceeds to review the literature about contextual factors affecting career experiences of skilled migrants, before turning to agential responses to these factors.

3.3 Contextual mechanisms

Career outcomes are achieved in specific environments. Skilled migrants, as reflexive social agents, have a power to develop career projects (Archer, 2007). However, contextual conditions, boundaries or mechanisms can enable or impede their projects (see Delbridge and Edward, 2013). Local laws, economic situation, beliefs, norms, practices and other forces intertwine to generate “a dense web in which people attempt to manoeuvre” (Fernando and Cohen, 2015, p.3). This section considers contextual powers important for our understanding of why skilled migrants may or may not be able to realise their reflexive career projects.

The first step was to identify (or, on CR terms, to *retroduct*¹⁷) causal mechanisms that account for (in)accessibility of career projects for skilled migrants (Lawson, 1997). The researcher used his own experience as a skilled migrant, intuition and ‘scientific imagination’ to develop initial “hypothetical conjectures” (Brannan et al., p.24). These conjectures were refined through an extensive review of relevant literature and tested empirically against the data obtained from the interviews (pilot interviews proved particularly useful for this exercise). *Retroduction* was an

¹⁷ See 4.3 for more details.

iterative process, which was treated as part of the analysis¹⁸ and involved circulation between the data and the literature. As a result, two broad groups of mechanisms were identified: skilfulness and social capital. Both groups comprise a range of structural and cultural factors, where the former refer to relations between social actors or, rather, social positions they occupy and the latter are linked to ideas that define the content of these relations (see Archer, 1988, 1995; Porpora, 2013). For example, migrants' perceived skilfulness can be affected by the structure of the local labour market and stereotypical beliefs that some groups of individuals are more or less skilled than others.

This section begins to *retrodict* the identified groups of causal mechanisms (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2010). It uses the existent theories to develop a general understanding of how the mechanisms operate and what effect they have on (in)accessibility of skilled migrants' career projects. The *retrodiction* will continue in empirical chapters, which will offer a more specific explanation of how the mechanisms operate and intertwine in the particular environment (the North-East of England).

3.3.1 Skilfulness

As discussed in Chapter 1 (1.4), the notion of skills in the literature appears contested (Noon and Blyton, 2004). Many studies rely upon proxies, such as number of years in education or in relevant employment, to grasp individuals' skills – abilities that can be utilised for career purposes. For example, Iredale (2005) confirms that it is common to classify individuals with a tertiary education or “equivalent experience” as highly-skilled, although it remains unclear what the “equivalent experience” is and how it could be evaluated). There is evidence to suggest that this approach does not accurately capture the complexity of skills, because proxies can offer only a loose indication of skills possessed by individuals (Grugulis, 2007). Moreover, some experts argue that possession, exercise and valuation of skills are analytically distinct concepts and must not be equated (Attwell, 1990).

A tripartite model to conceptualise skills as a multidimensional phenomenon has been proposed (Cockburn, 1983) and further elaborated (Grugulis, 2007, Nickson et al., 2017). Firstly, skill in the person refers to individual abilities that can be acquired over time through learning and expertise. Some experts suggest that these abilities may include ‘hard’ technical and ‘soft’

¹⁸ See 4.7.

interpersonal skills (e.g. Gatta et al., 2009; Hurrell et al., 2013). Noon and Blyton (2004) extend the concept of *skill in the person* to include individual attitudes, although Lafer (2004) argues that only abilities that are rewarded in the labour market should be regarded as skills. Arguably, punctuality and good manners can be helpful for getting a job, but in most cases they are insufficient to secure individuals an income. This thesis does not distinguish between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ skills. Rather, it is concerned with all abilities upon which skilled migrants (try to) capitalise to establish and advance their careers in the North-East of England.

Secondly, *skill in the job* refers to the way in which work is structured to develop and deploy people’s abilities. In other words, jobs demand particular abilities, which workers may or may not have. For instance, Warhurst et al. (2004) find that employers complain about difficulties with finding workers with ‘right’ social skills and describe ‘soft’ skills as desirable and important. Individuals can improve their skills, but it does not guarantee that these skills will be exercised or rewarded. Furthermore, even jobs with the same titles can require and reward different skills. For example, lecturers may have more opportunities to utilise their research abilities in research-orientated universities than in teaching-orientated institutions. Therefore, not only individuals, but also jobs can be skilled or unskilled. Skilled jobs are typically conceptualised as those allowing workers for complexity and discretion of tasks and opportunity to use their own judgement about the work process (Abbott, 1988; Grugulis et al., 2008). The relations between skills and discretion are strong, but not always straightforward (Noon and Blyton, 2004). Cleaners, for instance, can work under less supervision than some managers or medical professionals. Moreover, job responsibilities can be revised and workers can be offered more opportunities to use their skills (and get rewarded for them) as they gain knowledge and experience (Grugulis, 2007).

Third, *skill in the setting* is a political dimension linked to social relations. This means that individuals can protect their status of skilled workers through political and social negotiations. For example, professional bodies can require potential workers to meet access criteria (e.g. to undertake specific training or an apprenticeship) to restrict the number of practitioners and maintain a high demand for certain skills. There is evidence (e.g. Noon and Blyton, 2004) that individuals with lower status in the society experience more difficulties protecting their skills. For example, women and ethnic minorities can be seen as less skilled than White male workers (Warhurst et al., 2016). This suggests that skill in the setting might be particularly important for migrants’ careers.

The borders between the three dimensions of skills may not be perfectly clear. For example, it can be argued that jobs are parts of social settings and, therefore, skill in the job is a part of skill

in the setting or that skill in the job is hard to separate from skill in the person when a job allows for exercise and development of skills (see Nickson et al., 2017). From a CR position, however, the tripartite model is important, because it highlights that skills should not be understood solely as property of individuals. Skills are emergent powers of social agents, but a range of contextual mechanisms influence how skills are exercised, recognised and rewarded. This section proceeds to discuss the impact of the mechanisms identified as particularly important for skilled migrants' careers.

3.3.1.1 Migration regulation

A growing number of people move abroad for reasons of education, career and family, and some even commute across borders on a regular basis (Huber and Nowotny, 2008). The world is thus often seen as more open than before (Castles, 2010). Yet, this can suggest a misleading picture of a “quasi-effortless international mobility” (Dries, 2011, p.377). In most cases foreign-born individuals wishing to participate in labour markets of developed countries must obtain a legal permission in form of a visa or work permit. Freedom of movement is granted based on citizenship and not on skilfulness. In the UK, for example, EEA passport holders currently can live and work with no restrictions. While relaxing regulation on movements within the EEA, member states tend to impose greater restrictions on the “outsiders”. Yet, even within the union citizens of some (typically recent) member states may not have full freedom to work and live abroad. Although Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in January 2007, the UK and some other countries imposed restrictions upon the freedom of movement for workers from these states until January 2014. Thereby, a substantial proportion of migrants still have to overcome considerable legal entry barriers posed by national governments and even most skilled of migrants are not exempt (Richardson, 2009).

Present migration policies of most OECD countries rest on two fundamental principles of regulating skilled migration (Chaloff and Lemaitre, 2009). The first is supply-driven and offers prospective migrants an opportunity to take a test (e.g. the Australian and Canadian point systems), which evaluates their potential usefulness for the host country by ascribing points to education attainments, work experience in desired occupations and other proxies used to measure skill in the person. Successful applicants are recognised as skilled and ‘worthy’, and can be granted a permission to move and start looking for a job, if they do not have pre-arranged employment. The second, demand-driven, principle is currently implemented in the UK, where non-EEA migrants are required to secure support from employers willing to sponsor their visa

applications. Ultimately, skilled migrants have to prove their value, i.e. their skilfulness, to employers first and then to immigration authorities.

Iredale (2001) notes that many countries prefer to accept skilled professionals on a temporary basis. They relax immigration policies and allow a greater level of flexibility when specific skills and experiences are demanded, and then urge migrants to move on when these shortages are met, which highlights the political nature of skilfulness as a concept. Both approaches to migration regulation pose further serious problems for skilled migrants pursuing international careers.

Point-based migration schemes ascribe points merely for having a recognised degree or for a certain number of years of work experience in relevant occupations. Employers, however, consider not only the fact of having or not having a required qualification and experience, but the quality and potential value of skills behind it (Ebner and Helbling, 2016). With a sponsorship-based system the transition into employment is relatively uncomplicated, once the visa has been issued, but finding a sponsor can be an arduous task. To meet the requirements set by migration regulations employers must engage in a complicated recruitment process. In the UK, this currently involves (with some exceptions) applying for a sponsor license, completing a Resident Labour Market Test, paying fees for the license and each visa application, providing required minimum wages (depends on the job type, but currently stands at no less than £20,800), and complying with an annual quota on skilled migrants. Potential employers, therefore, can be deterred by the costs, length and difficulty of hiring migrant workers, especially if the vacancy needs to be filled urgently. Instead, they can decide to hire more available, even if at times less suitable, local and EEA candidates (Scullion and Pemberton, 2013; Bloch and McKay, 2015). Therefore, migrants have limited employment opportunities and extra pressure is put on them to signal their skilfulness. Also, once employed, migrants may find themselves dependent upon goodwill of their employers (Blazek, 2015), with the loss of employment resulting in a legal requirement to leave the country.

Turbulent and often unpredictable changes in migration legislation also periodically affect the conditions for skilled migrants (Al Ariss and Syed, 2011). The UK migration policies have recently witnessed a few major reforms (see a report by the Migration Observatory, 2014 for an overview). As a result, the present migration regulation has become even less inviting, even for skilled migrants. In fact, the majority of the changes aimed explicitly at skilled migrants and students, potential sources of skilled labour. For example, the point-based Highly Skilled Migrant Programme was abolished in 2008. Hence practically all routes for skilled migrants to employment in the UK without a sponsor have been closed, reinforcing dependence on

employers. Besides, in 2011 an annual quota was implemented on the number of skilled workers allowed to move to the country with job offers and sponsorship from employers. Further restrictions were applied to students' rights to work and bring dependants. Tier 1 post-study visa, allowing non-EEA nationals to work and live in the UK for two years after graduation, was replaced with a Doctoral Extension Scheme, available only for doctoral-level students and only for 12 months.

The impact of migration regulations goes beyond just posing entry barriers. Migration policies define rights and responsibilities migrants are entitled to during their residence. Once they have entered the labour market, non-EEA migrants cannot change their employers unless they have a new job offer from another employer willing (and eligible) to act as their sponsor. Consequently, migrants' mobility between jobs and employers is significantly restricted (e.g. Shelley, 2007). Furthermore, to become eligible for settlement in the UK migrants must meet certain criteria, including 'continuous residence', which means that individuals must not spend more than 180 days outside the UK in any 12 months prior the application. This can diminish migrants' chances to become involved in international projects their employers might be undertaking (i.e. to demonstrate and exercise skills) and can have serious consequences for the successful execution of foreign workers' duties, as well as their reputation and career prospects. This can be a substantial obstacle in career progression of scientific and academic staff, for example, who may be compelled to refrain from attending international conferences, or business managers, who may not be able to participate in face-to-face negotiations with partners abroad.

3.3.1.2 Labour market mechanisms

This section considers the labour market mechanisms that condition skills demand and supply, access to occupations and availability of jobs. The labour market demand determines what skills are currently more valued and, therefore, more rewarded, meaning that the notion of skill is specific to particular settings (see Grugulis, 2007; Nowicka, 2013). For example, migrants often engage in translation and language tutoring in periods of career transition (Ellis, 2013). However, the situation in the market of language tutoring suggests that individuals fluent in Chinese, German or Spanish have higher chances to benefit from their skills than those fluent in Mongolian or Samoan, regardless of the relative proficiency (see Noon and Blyton, 2004). As a result, opportunities to capitalise upon language skills differ significantly for various groups of migrants.

Csedo (2008) finds that migrants with degrees in business, law and engineering are perceived as being more skilled in the UK than other groups of foreign workers. This is also reflected in the migration policies, as the demand for certain types of workers often provides underpinning for selecting and filtering the 'right' migrants, who might be useful for national economies (see Ho, 2006; Syed, 2008). In the UK, for example, a Shortage Occupations List, which is revised every few years, makes recruitment of foreign workers in the recommended jobs considerably easier. Skills shortages occupations are often re-classified as highly-skilled whilst others similar types of work may be classified differently (Parson et al., 2014).

Governments work in collaboration with organizations to identify skills shortages and address needs of the job markets. A well-known phenomenon is the increasing demand for health and care staff due to the ageing population, which forced developed countries to recruit strategically from abroad, mainly from Asia, especially India and the Philippines (Choy, 2003). In the UK, employers usually present hiring Eastern European workers as a response to the skills deficit, although the skills in shortage are often nothing more than punctuality, diligence and willingness to work harder for the same (or even less) money than the natives (CIPD, 2014). This, however, indicates that under some circumstances migrants are seen as possessors of certain sought-after traits or capabilities, which can enhance realisation of career projects. At the same time, in the UK, like in many other developed countries, there is increasing competition for some skilled jobs (CIPD, 2016). On the one hand, the stock of skilled migrants is growing steadily (Eurostat, 2015). On the other hand, more indigenes graduate from universities than before (UCAS, 2016). Therefore, more native-born qualified professionals are available. In this situation, a perceived surplus of talents in particular areas may lead to more restricted regulations imposed upon migrants and their employers.

The transition into skilled employment may not be straightforward, even for individuals who are not subjects of migration regulation (e.g. EEA nationals in the UK). Opportunities to practice skills are not always stable and equally distributed across regions and professions (Syed, 2008). A report by the Office for National Statistics (2012) exposes dissimilarities between specialisations of regional economics in the UK. For example, Scotland has a high proportion of jobs in extraction of oil and gas, whereas such jobs virtually do not exist in East Midlands. Scientific research and development jobs constitute a considerably (five-six times) greater share of jobs in London, East and South-East of England than in Wales and Yorkshire and Humber. A large share of all skilled jobs is concentrated in London and vicinities, particularly top-level jobs, since many companies choose to locate their headquarters in the capital region (The Financial Times, 2014). Also, whilst London was relatively unaffected by the recent recession and

managed to recover swiftly, the North-East of England, with its traditionally high ratio of employers in the public sector, was severely affected by the recent recession¹⁹. This can mean a stiff competition for skilled jobs, in particular, for those individuals who are looking for employment in a specific region and not willing (or able) to move closer to the prosperous capital area. In this regard, some scholars (Massey et al., 2002; Haug, 2008) use the notion of chain migration to demonstrate that personal ties facilitate international mobility and many migrants prefer to settle closer to communities of ex-compatriots. Further, being partnered and/or having children can make moving to another region for career purposes more difficult. Limited availability of jobs also reinforces migrants' dependence upon their employers, since alternative opportunities might be few and far between, or force them to accept jobs which do not match their skills, interests and ambitions (Blazek, 2015). As a result, conditions of the local labour market affect opportunities available for migrants to utilise their skills and get rewarded for them (Dickmann et al., 2008; Green, 2011).

Even when jobs are available, access to them can be seriously restricted. Employers often stipulate certain qualifications and experiences that successful candidates must have to prove their skills, although it does not necessarily mean that the job will provide an opportunity to utilise these skills (Hurrell et al., 2013). In the UK, for example, academic staff are typically required to have a PhD, even when their actual responsibilities involve mainly teaching and administrative tasks. More formal restrictions can be imposed by professional bodies and associations. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES, 2011) distinguishes between four forms of occupational regulation: licensing (1) requires practitioners to hold a valid license; certification (2) offers a voluntary opportunity to obtain a competency confirming certificate; registration (3) requires practitioners to leave their name and address with a regulatory body; and accreditation (4) refers to an opportunity to get skills and competencies recognised by professional bodies. Although, in comparison to many continental countries, the regulation of occupations in the UK has never been very stringent (Noon and Blyton, 2004), currently between a third and a half of jobs in the UK are subject to at least one of the four modes of occupational regulation, with no less than 14% covered by licensing – the strictest form of regulation (UKCES, 2011).

Professional bodies can vary and combine forms of regulation to create forms of *social closure* – the, at times unconscious, protection of collective interests (Noon and Blyton, 2004). Even de jure voluntary forms of regulation can be crucial in certain occupations (Abbott, 1988), if

¹⁹ Peculiarities of the North-East as the research setting will be discussed in greater details in Chapter 5.

employers and customers strongly favour practitioners whose competence has been confirmed by corresponding authorities. For example, professional registration as a Chartered Engineer is not compulsory, but is often required by employers. A report by the Engineering Council (2013) also suggests that Chartered Engineers have higher earning potential. Thus, regulated occupations are often perceived as more skilled, even if they do not always require a particularly high level of expertise to do the job (Grugulis, 2007).

Regulation and legislation are typically managed and maintained at the national level (Chiswick and Miller, 2009; Bach, 2010). Whereas many EEA qualifications are formally recognised in the UK, migrants from other countries often need to validate their skills, e.g. through sitting professional exams. Further, migrants might be allowed to practice only after having acquired local experience, which is not easy for many of them. Indeed, migrants in the UK are significantly less likely to be found in regulated occupations than the indigenes (Koumenta et al., 2014). Non-EEA migrants are particularly vulnerable (Bach, 2010), considering the interactions between the mechanisms of migration and occupational regulations. For example, the UK and EEA nationals can be hired for junior engineering positions and then work together with employers towards meeting prerequisites for becoming Chartered Engineers. This route is unavailable for non-EEA migrants, who can legally be hired only for relatively senior posts with wages above the national average. Therefore, non-EEA migrants have limited opportunities to enter regulated occupations, unless already in possession of unique and/or advanced competencies.

3.3.1.3 Prejudices and stereotypes

When individuals possess and can prove all required qualifications and experiences, their worth as workers is still a subject of informal valuation by employers, colleagues and clients, who use their own perceptions of skilfulness. These perceptions are biased by local ideologies, norms, stereotypes and beliefs (see Archer, 1996). They can vary between or even within different settings and, therefore, deserve closer examination. Elder-Vass (2008, 2010a) suggests that these ideas are reinforced by *norm circles* – groups of people committed to increase “the tendency of individuals to conform to the norm that it endorses” (Archer and Elder-Vass, 2012, p.100). Individuals who are acknowledged as skilled have more bargaining power to navigate career projects through the context and, eventually, to achieve desired outcomes (Cahuc et al., 2006). Therefore, individuals more likely to succeed are those who are perceived as more skilled than others, and recognition of skills (i.e. skill in the setting) shapes opportunities for success.

It has been suggested that individuals can be seen as more or less skilled because of their origin (Nowicka, 2013), race (Erel, 2007), gender (Maume, 1999) and class (Brown and Hesketh, 2004). At times, prejudices can be positive. One stereotype highlighted in the literature is a widely shared belief that Asians have an aptitude for mathematics (Cheryan and Bodenhausen, 2000). Another well-documented example are Filipinos, who are often seen by Western *norm circles* as having the ‘right’ set of skills and traits for nursing and care work (Choy, 2003). Nonetheless it is argued that migrants, especially those newly arrived, are perceived as less worthy than comparable indigenous candidates (Syed, 2008) or as individuals who were not good enough to get jobs at home (Richardson, 2009). Similarly, Lee et al. (2006) find that migrants can be perceived as lower in “competence” and “warmth” than the indigenes, although with significant variations across the groups.

Stereotypes often serve as normative underpinnings for the labour market discrimination (Bevelander, 1999), which can result in deskilling of migrants (Qureshi et al., 2013; Nowicka, 2014). The ‘similar-to-me’ effect generates a tendency for employers to (sub)consciously prefer workers with resembling socio-cultural characteristics (Tilly, 1998; Dietz et al., 2015), increasing demand for country-specific knowledge and language proficiency (Kogan et al., 2011). For example, foreign doctors in the UK are expected to be familiar with the British codes of labour (e.g. what to say and how to act in a professional environment, how to treat people with disabilities), as well as to possess expertise in medicine, to be recognised as skilled professionals by employers and clients (Hamarneh, 2015). Such expectations, or dominant cultural ideas, can vary across locations and migrants can experience less pressure to accept local conventionalities in setting with a high presence of other migrants²⁰ (Almeida et al., 2015).

The perceived enculturation, or rather a lack of it, can be a cause of ‘different treatment’ (Nee and Sanders, 2001; Binggeli et al., 2013). Knowledge of English in the UK, for example, is not a career advantage, *per se*, and cannot guarantee “access to better jobs, higher quality lifestyle, or nicer friends”, whereas insufficient language skills pose a grave disadvantage for skilled careers (Csedo, 2008, p.816). Indeed, it is hard to imagine a doctor hired for speaking good English, but it is very easy to envision one struggling to become employed for the opposite reason. It has also been found (Hosoda and Stone-Romero, 2010) that some foreign accents are perceived less competent and trustworthy than others, perhaps because of being associated with broader national stereotypes. Even non-native names can undermine career prospects (Oreopoulos, 2011;

²⁰ As will be discussed in Chapter 5, the North-East is a setting with a low presence of migrants, implying a high pressure to meet the local ideas of ‘who is skilled’.

Almeida et al., 2015). Consequently, Eastern-European migrants in the UK have been found to obscure their nationality in CVs (Csedo, 2010).

Yet, in the UK discrimination against white migrants tends to be relatively weak and rarely expands beyond the first generation, especially when not given away by names. In contrast, it is argued that ethnic minority workers in the UK are penalised for generations (Jefferys, 2015). Demireva and Kessler (2011) find that recently arrived migrants from Eastern Europe, Middle East, Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean are most disadvantaged on the UK labour market in terms of employment opportunities and wages (see also Clark and Drinkwater, 2008). Eastern European migrants, however, have better chances to improve their position over time than migrants from countries with predominantly non-white population (Demireva, 2011). Acker (2006) and Al Ariss and Syed (2011) find that discrimination against non-white migrant women can be especially severe, because of their race and their gender. Other studies confirm that skilled migrant women are more likely to be underemployed than migrant men. They are stereotypically seen as more ‘risky’ and less valuable (i.e. less skilled) workers and often experience significant devaluation of their skills (see, among others, Purkayastha, 2005; van der Burgh and du Plessiss, 2012). There is also evidence to suggest that clients discriminate against women and ethnic minorities, doubting their skilfulness. For example, Hekman et al. (2010)²¹ find that customers report lower levels of satisfaction with services provided by ‘low-status’ (female and ethnic minority) physicians.

Also, educational attainments serve as institutional indicators of professional competence and its applicability. Employers, however, can have a limited understanding of foreign degrees and a biased perception of their quality (Ebner and Helbling, 2016). This can result in misunderstanding and devaluing of foreign credentials, and migrants often hold higher educational attainments than indigenous workers, even when employed on the same occupational level (Lindley, 2009; Mazzanti et al., 2009). Friedberg’s oft-cited paper (2000) suggests that the value of credentials is defined by their origin, with degrees from more developed countries seen as more valuable and, consequently, resulting in higher returns on education than qualifications. Demireva (2011) supports this by finding that Turkish and Middle Eastern migrants are significantly less likely to be employed in the UK than, for example, migrants from Ireland or the USA with a similar level of qualification. This, however, does not always reflect the quality of training received and even white EEA migrants are not exempt. Drinkwater et al. (2009) found that the majority of the university-educated Polish migrants in the UK were employed in

²¹ This study does not look at migrants, but identifies cultural mechanisms that migrants are also likely to be exposed to.

low-skilled jobs, with underemployment caused mostly by discriminatory recognition of foreign degrees and experiences. Indeed, despite the international agreements backing mutual recognition of qualifications, degrees from British, German and Polish institutions, as well as work experience in these countries, are by no means equally valuable for building a successful career in London (Altorjai, 2013; Nowicka, 2014). Locally educated migrants are believed to have significantly better opportunities to gain employment, for which they have been trained, than migrants with degrees from home countries (see Friedberg, 2000; Qureshi et al., 2013). In the UK, with its “world-class” universities, employers appear especially selective and sceptical about the value of foreign degrees. Yet, regarding earning and employability, ethnic minority migrants benefit from British education less than the whites (Blackaby et al., 2002).

3.3.2 Social capital

The notion of social capital was introduced by Glenn Loury (1977), but it became the hotspot for social studies only a decade later, when Pierre Bourdieu (1986) presented his theory of domination. However, Bourdieu did not pay much attention to social capital in his later works and the concept was elaborated by other scholars. This section adopts the Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1998, p.243) definition of social capital as “the sum of actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit. Social capital thus comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilized through that network”. Thus, social capital is conceptualized as a combination of two components – capital-as-resources and capital-as-connections.

Like skillfulness, from the point of view of CR ontology and RST, social capital is not an exclusive property of individuals. In other words, resources and connections do not ‘belong’ to one social agent. Rather they are collective properties of the three domains - agency, structure and culture (Lazega, 2015) - and opportunities to benefit from social resources are influenced by contextual conditions. Structure defines what resources are embedded in social networks and how individuals are connected to them. Cultural factors, however, are related to various forms of perceived trustworthiness and solidarity (see Putnam, 2000). These mechanisms are effectively gatekeepers to resources, as they define who might be able to receive social support.

Literature provides various examples of how social capital can enable careers. Access to social resources enhances professional reputation (Mazzanti et al., 2009) and transfer of knowledge (Makela, 2007), helps find jobs (Granovetter, 1995; Yakubovich, 2005), accelerates upward

career mobility (Burt, 1992) and promotes new ideas (Suutari and Makela, 2007). Social capital also provides personal and professional counselling, mentoring and role modelling (Ibarra, 1999; Higgins and Kram, 2001) and facilitates socialisation within a social setting (Ibarra and Deshpande, 2007).

Not all networks are equally rich in resources and not all individuals are equally well-connected to them. Granovetter (1973, 1983) advocates the benefits of weak ties for finding a job. He suggests that members of social groups tend to share information. However, because of homogeneity of social groups, information obtained from strong ties within a clique is likely to be redundant. In contrast, information received through weak ties with members of other groups tends to be more unique and, therefore, valuable. Burt (1992) argues that existence of structural holes in social networks provides a better explanation of why some individuals are better placed to access social resources. He suggests that individuals who are connected to otherwise unconnected units of social networks hold an advantageous position, which offers better control over resources and greater visibility. Seibert et al. (2001c) find that both weak ties and structural holes boost the level of social resources (access to information, access to material resources and career sponsorship) in individual's network. Social resources, in turn, mediate both subjective and objective career success. Yet, the value of social capital also depends on *who* individuals are connected to. For example, horizontal contacts across organization departments have been found less useful for receiving career sponsorship than contacts to higher levels of the corporate hierarchy (Seibert et al, 2001c). In a similar fashion Putnam (2000, p.23) distinguishes between bonding and bridging ties as those with "people who are like [or unlike] me in some important way" respectively. He suggests that bonding ties are more useful for "getting by", whereas bridging ties are more valuable for "getting ahead", i.e. for upward mobility.

Evidence suggests that social resources can be especially important in disadvantageous situations, for example, when jobs are scarce (Drever and Hoffmeister, 2008). Ethnic minorities rely on social contacts to identify non-discriminatory employers (Mouw, 2002). Similarly, lower-skilled migrants have been found to rely more upon bonded (i.e. close) ethnic contacts for career purposes and to overcome conditions of poverty and deprivation (Aguilera and Massey, 2003), than educated and experienced individuals (Drever and Hoffmeister, 2008). There are also strong associations between social support from ethnic networks and the informal economy – income-generating activities undertaken without meeting relevant terms of legislation and regulation. For example, Kloosterman et al. (1998) revealed that in the Netherlands Turkish and Moroccan entrepreneurs recruited other migrants via social networks. Their study found that employees were often paid 'cash-in-hand' wages below the national minimum, when working

longer hours. Thus, although ethnic networks may be able to increase the overall opportunity to obtain a job, they seem less beneficial in mainstream economy and, particularly, skilled labour markets (Portes, 1998; Ryan and Mullholland, 2014).

Employment found through ethnic contacts will not necessarily match qualifications and ambitions of highly educated and experienced professionals (Nee and Sanders, 2001; see also Granovetter, 1995). Further, engagement with ethnic networks may ‘drag’ skilled migrants into routine jobs (Csedo, 2010) and result in ghettoization and social exclusion (Cheong et al., 2007). Arguably, ethnic networks lack resources needed by skilled migrants. As Adler and Kwon (2002, p.26) succinctly put it, “we cannot expect to derive any value from social ties to actors who lack the ability to help us”. Indigenous networks are often believed to contain resources more useful for skilled migrants’ career projects, including access to more valuable information and more prestigious jobs. For example, Ryan (2011) found that establishing bridging connections beyond the ethnic community had a positive effect on careers of highly-qualified Polish migrants in London. Integration into local networks can also help skilled migrants stand out on the jobs market, indicating their higher professional status, since employers may not be able to perfectly distinguish between various categories of migrants (Docquier and Rapoport, 1998).

Indeed, skilled migrants often emphasize their preference to expand networks beyond ethnic contacts and may have more opportunities to do so than low-skilled migrants. For instance, Martinovic et al. (2009) find that in the Netherlands migrants in skilled occupations have more connections with the indigenes. This is, perhaps, because there are fewer migrants and more native nationals in skilled occupations than in unskilled occupations (TMO, 2016). However, even if skilled migrants have more local contacts connecting them to resources, it does not mean that their contacts are willing to share these resources. In other words, migrants may be allowed to participate in the indigenous networks, but with limited access to social resources (Portes, 1998; Raghuram et al., 2010).

Trust and solidarity are crucial drivers of social support (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Adler and Kwon, 2002). In tight-knit migrant communities, the perception of the shared destiny is known as a factor underpinning the sense of trust and reciprocity (Makela, 2007). However, this factor is missing when migrants attempt to develop close interpersonal relations with the indigenes. ‘Network closure’ (Coleman, 1990) can make access to social resources through the indigenes very difficult (Ryan et al., 2008). Acceptance and support migrants receive from the native-born depend on a perceived degree of similarity and trustworthiness (Varma et al., 2011). Host country nationals are more likely to categorise foreigners as ‘in-group’ if they

believe that migrants share the same values and norms, have proficiency in the language and generally ‘fit in’ the society. In Elder-Vass’ terms (2010a, 2012), they act as norm circles that endorse certain cultural norms and ideas and are more inclined to provide social aid to those who conform to these norms and ideas. Similarly, Baron and Markman (2003) argue that receiving support from social contacts requires a high level of social competence (e.g. accuracy in perceiving others and persuasiveness). Upon arrival migrants rarely possess this competence and, consequently, often experience difficulties trying to join established networks of the indigenes (Purkayastha, 2005; Varma et al., 2011).

These difficulties can be even more substantial for women and ethnic minorities (Lin, 2000). Since gender and ethnicity also serve as a foundation of shared identity²² (Lawrence and Tolbert, 2007), women and ethnic minorities might be excluded from important networks in “demographically skewed organizational settings” (Ibarra et al., 2005, p.365) dominated by (white) men. It has been found that women and ethnic minorities are less likely to be referred to good jobs (Peterson et al., 2000). Even when connected to useful contacts, ethnic minorities struggle to benefit from them, because of being classified as outsiders (Seidel et al., 2000; Smith, 2005). Similarly, women have less capital in terms of scope and heterogeneity of contacts, presence of resources and ability to reach them (Ibarra, 1993; Lin, 2000).

This suggests that migrants (and especially women and ethnic minorities) might have better opportunities to develop useful social contacts and benefit from them in more diverse environments, rather than in socially homogeneous settings. First, diversity implies more opportunities to meet similar people and to bond over a sense of shared identity. Second, people are believed to become more tolerant to ‘strangers’ and ‘outsiders’ as they become accustomed to their presence, reducing the risk of social discrimination (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Almeida et al., 2015).

This section (3.3) has discussed skills and social capital as constituted of various mechanisms potentially enabling skilled migrants’ careers. It also sought to demonstrate that migrants’ ability to benefit from these enablers is governed by other contextual factors. For example, the structure of the labour market and cultural ideas endorsed by norm circles (e.g. employers and customers) affect what skills can be used and rewarded and how. As a result, migrants’ competences are often under-recognised, under-valued and under-utilised, and many migrants struggle to access employment adequate to their skill level (Csedo, 2008; Liversage, 2009). Similarly, resources embedded in migrant networks may be insufficient for skilled migrants’ career projects, whereas

²² Although it does not necessarily mean that people are deliberately sexist or racist.

access to resources through indigenous contacts can be complicated due to the lack of perceived similarity, reciprocity and solidarity. Thus, contextual mechanisms pose considerable barriers to skilled migrants' careers. This chapter now proceeds to discuss agential responses – actions skilled migrants undertake to attain desired career outcomes in particular social settings.

3.4 Agential responses to contextual conditions

To benefit from career enablers presented by the context or to deal with obstacles, individuals must exercise their agency and undertake concrete courses of action. Bourdieu (1986), for example, suggests that to develop and maintain social capital people need to invest time and effort in making connections. The literature has started acknowledging that migrants are also not passive 'victims' of contextual circumstances, but rather active social agents who can navigate their interests through the social world (see Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry, 2013; Crowley-Henry et al., 2016). The existing studies provide some fascinating examples of how migrants can respond to contextual barriers to realise their concerns, i.e. to achieve desired outcomes despite (or thanks to) structural and cultural conditions of the landscape. Al Ariss and Syed (2011) explored how Lebanese migrants capitalised on their resources to overcome regulation of migration in France. They found that successful individuals relied on their social contacts, academics qualifications and knowledge of French culture (or a combination of them). One of the particularly useful strategies was to obtain a visa for formal studies in France. Many used this time to develop country-specific knowledge and social contacts.

Further, to gain entry into employment migrants can accept less prestigious and/or lower skilled jobs, but with higher demand and easier accessibility. A study by Raghuram et al. (2010) finds that South Asian doctors in the UK often apply for positions in geriatrics, which is regarded as one of the least prestigious branches in medicine with low earning potential, to reduce levels of competition with the local candidates. Similarly, Malagasy physicians in France find employment as nurses, which is below their qualification, but requires less effort and resources (Ramboarison-Lalao et al., 2012). Those skilled migrants who have a legal permission to live and work in the host country can find transitional employment in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs with a hope to gain access to skilled employment in the future (Purkayastha, 2005; Zikic et al., 2010). However, after some time migrants may not be willing or able to move up to more skilled employment and for many low-skilled employment becomes a 'trap' rather than a 'stepping stone' (Baert et al., 2013), meaning that migrants stay in jobs they are overqualified for through their entire work life.

Some migrants might try to stand out in the jobs markets and organisations. They rely on hard work and fortitude. Migrants often work longer hours and volunteer for difficult tasks to increase exposure to demonstrate skilfulness and negotiate a position within the organization²³ (Fernando and Cohen, 2015). Some might be able to capitalise upon their ‘foreignness’ or a status of migrants, for example, becoming counsellors for other migrants (Liversage, 2009). Fernando and Cohen (2015) provide an example of Indian academics in the UK, who try to publish quicker and in higher-ranked journals than their British peers. To enhance their performance, they collaborate with other academics both in the UK and India, therefore increasing chances for a successful publication. Further, migrants who speak languages in high demand can work as interpreters or provide language lessons. For many skilled migrants, interpreting is not merely a mean of gaining income, but a valuable method of developing contacts and acquiring cultural knowledge about the host society (Ellis, 2013).

Other migrants minimise reliance on their foreignness and attempt to ‘fit in’. To become more professionally and personally accepted in the host society, they imitate or ‘mimic’ behaviours of the dominant group, although some may be reluctant to do so (Thomson and Jones, 2015). This often involves mastering a better command of the local language, improving understanding of the dominant norms, attitudes and beliefs, accepting local dress code, hobbies and cultural patterns of communication. Effectively, they conform to the dominant cultural ideas enforced by the norm circles.

As any other individual, migrants can strategically engage in networking behaviour (see Ibarra, 1993) to get access to social resources. For example, they can join social clubs or sit in committees to expand their networks (Ryan, 2011). Women and ethnic minorities who struggle to develop close personal relations with professional, white, male elites can develop two separate sets of networks: professional contacts with white men and personal contacts with other women and/or minorities (Ibarra, 1995). This enables them to receive emotional support, which they cannot get at the workplace. However, this also means that their ties with those in position of power are underdeveloped, which entails limited access to valuable social resources (Ibarra et al., 2005). Female migrants, especially if they have children, have more opportunities to develop local contacts than men – for example, with neighbours and other parents at school (Csedo, 2010; Ryan and Mullholland, 2014). Yet, these contacts are more likely to provide assistance

²³ This might be especially useful when migrants are not well-placed in the organizational networks and their achievements are at risk of being overlooked.

regarding domestic and community domains than career-related support (see also Vincent, 2016).

Although Bagghi (2001) confirms the importance of weak ties for migrants' careers, their value might also be context-dependent. Sharone (2014) demonstrates that in the USA requesting career assistance from distant contacts is relatively easy and useful, but culturally unacceptable in Israel. It takes time for Israeli migrants in the United States to realise and accept these practices. However, even the US-based studies warn that relying only on weak ties might be dangerous, since distant contacts might lack motivation to share resources. Seibert et al. (2001c) suggest that a better strategy might be to establish a range of weak ties, identify location of resources in the networks and then selectively strengthen some of the relations. When domestic responsibilities do not leave enough time to invest into learning local norms or networking behaviour (Vincent, 2016), migrants may be able to rely on help from family members with, for example, child-minding (Fernando and Cohen, 2015). However, this opportunity might be less available for migrants than the indigenes, since migrants are less likely to have an extensive family in the host country.

Most studies mentioned above consider rather specific migrants' responses focusing on narrow career issues. However, there are examples of more comprehensive typologies of migrants' career projects. Zikic et al. (2010) identified three agential career orientations. 'Embracing' orientation refers to migrants who are particularly active in their career development and optimistic about it. They perceive contextual constraints as a challenge they should find a way to overcome. 'Adaptive' orientation is accepted by migrants who seek an opportunity to achieve their goals within the existing boundaries. And 'resisting' orientation means that migrants wish to overcome the barriers, but cannot do so.

Paying close attention to contextual boundaries, Liversage (2009) identified five 'paths' available for skilled migrants in the labour market of Denmark. Migrants with high-level credentials (often verifying in-demand 'hard' skills, such as IT and medicine) might be able to take a path of re-entry (1) with a direct access to skilled jobs. When recognition of skills is more problematic, migrants take a path of ascent (2). They start with lower level jobs, improve their language skills, develop new contacts, gain country-specific experience and attempt to move back into skilled employment. Path of re-education (3) is typically chosen by migrants seeking to practice in more humanitarian occupations. In this situation migrants might decide to enrol in education in the host country. However, re-education may be available only to migrants with unrestricted freedom of movement or to those with significant financial resources. When these

paths are not available migrants have to accept a path of re-migration (4), moving elsewhere in the world, or a path of marginalization (5), becoming trapped in permanent unemployment (or severe underemployment) and social isolation.

Al Ariss (2010) explores strategies that migrants utilise to manage career barriers with a more critical view of relations between structure and agency. His study aims to design a comprehensive framework for analysing career projects deployed by skilled migrants to navigate through contextual career barriers. Drawing on 43 qualitative interviews with Lebanese migrants in France Al Ariss identifies four 'modes of engagement'. Maintenance (1) refers to a situation when migrants understand the rules of the host society and operate within them to achieve desired outcomes. Migrants 'hide' their difference and accept the dominant practices. Other migrants might attempt transforming the system (2). To overcome contextual obstacles, they engaged in further training, developed their expertise and changed employers in pursuit of better career prospects. When migrants face especially hostile conditions, they can opt for entrepreneurship (3) to escape contextual constraints. They start new businesses to avoid unfavourable conditions of the 'mainstream' employment context. Finally, career barriers might force migrants to opt out (4), i.e. to give up their career ambitions. Migrants pursue their interests outside career domain – for example, concentrating on family responsibilities.

Al Ariss (2010) and other studies discussed above make an important beginning by examining what career projects migrants undertake, i.e. how migrants act. Migrants can respond to contextual conditions in various ways, although not all career projects are easily accessible. Al Ariss (2010) notes that entrepreneurship may not always be possible due to legal regulations. Further, there is evidence that migrants engage in critical and reflexive deliberations of the context and themselves when developing career projects. For instance, individuals who consider themselves as elderly or at late career stages have been found reluctant to engage in re-education and choose other projects instead (Liversage, 2009). However, little is known about how exactly skilled migrants construct their deliberations and design career projects. For example, Al Ariss (2010) does not discuss why some migrants opt for maintenance rather than transformation of the system. This might be, for example, because some contextual factors are easier to transform than others, but more evidence is required. Furthermore, more scholarly effort is needed to explore what outcomes career projects yield for skilled migrants.

3.5 Summary

This chapter sought to explore the existing literature to gain an understanding of the three ‘components’ of CRE – outcomes, context and agency. The objective was to start developing initial theories about how these elements work and interact. The review of the literature has suggested, for example, that migrants can develop concrete career projects, which include, among others, standing out on the labour market or ‘fitting in’. We have also learned that co-ethnic networks may not contain resources needed for skilled migrants’ career projects, whereas the indigenous contacts may be less motivated to provide access to resources. Overall, contextual mechanisms influence skilled migrants’ opportunities to attain desired outcomes. However, the effect of the mechanisms is likely to vary across different locations, highlighting the need for context-specific studies. These conclusions will be incorporated into the research design and further explored in empirical chapters.

This chapter has also illuminated some shortcomings of the existing studies. For example, the literature has established correlations between some personal traits and career success. Yet, our understanding of what exact actions possessors of these traits undertake to achieve success and under what circumstances these actions may or may not succeed is still limited. Another body of literature pays closer attention to career actions, but says little about how skilled migrants develop career projects and what outcomes they generate. We also need a more nuanced understanding of how migrants exercise their agency to develop and apply career projects. To contribute to these areas, more enquiry into migrants’ career concerns and the impact of contextual factors on specific career projects is needed. In general, these shortcomings coincide with the gaps identified and presented in the previous chapter (2.3.4), which further highlights the importance of filling them. This thesis argues that applying reflexivity to study skilled migrants’ careers is an important step towards creating a more insightful and thorough understanding of how career outcomes occur as a result of career projects formed upon agential concerns and realized in particular contexts.

This thesis now proceeds to Chapter 4, which will discuss and debate the research methodology used in this study in greater details.

Chapter 4. Research methodology

4.1 Introduction

The ontological position adopted by a researcher affects their epistemology and methodology – a so-called chain of meta-theoretical concepts (Fleetwood, 2014a; also Brannan et al., 2017).

Although having the ‘right’ ontology does not automatically guarantee a set of ‘right’ theories, practices, methods and objectives, the ‘wrong’ ontology makes it practically unobtainable, other than by a stroke of luck (Fleetwood, 2005; Gorski, 2013). Critical realist ontology and realist social theory guided the selection of the research questions and instruments to answer them. The research questions aim to contribute to filling the gaps in our understanding of reflexive career projects, as explained in Chapter 2 and further in Chapter 3. They are as follows.

The overarching research question:

How do we understand careers of skilled migrants as a complex social phenomenon at the intersection of agency and structure/culture?

Specific research questions:

1. How do skilled migrants develop career projects and choose between them and what role does reflexivity play in it?
2. How do contextual conditions influence availability of career projects?
3. What outcomes do (variously reflexive) career projects yield for skilled migrants and why?

This chapter provides an explanation of the research methodology developed to answer these questions and how this is underpinned by ontological and theoretical assumptions of CR and RST. To do so, it begins with a discussion of what alternative CR offers to objectivist and subjectivist approaches in science and consider how CR can be applied empirically. It then proceeds to present techniques and instruments used for the purposes of this thesis. The focus is on CRE as a broader research framework, semi-structured interviews as a tool of data gathering, and contrastive explanation and retrodiction as analytical methods. The chapter introduces the participants of the research and explains how the data was collected and analysed. It also considers ethical issues and touches on reflexive deliberations of the research process.

4.2 Critical Realism as an ontological alternative

The review of the literature undertaken in the previous chapters suggests that previous studies tend to employ either objectivist or idealist approaches to explore skilled migrants' careers. Objectivist (naïve empirical, quasi-positivist, scientist or deductive) studies are inclined towards reducing reality to observable 'facts' (Fleetwood, 2014a). In other words, within objectivist studies things, events and mechanisms are not real if they cannot be observed. This gave Bhaskar (1998, p.27) a reason to accuse them of "the epistemic fallacy", in that they reduce ontology to epistemology or what exists in the world to what can be empirically known, experienced and observed. Objectivist studies typically use mathematical models and large quantitative data sets to establish relations between various independent factors (i.e. gender, country of origin, number of years in education) and career outcomes (most typically quantifiable 'objective' criteria, such as income and number of promotions). Statistically significant findings are presented as the 'true' knowledge - universal laws or regularities that *describe* particular sets of relations (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014).

Objectivism usually identifies the most dominant trends, but more critical questioning of the phenomena tends to be absent (Fleetwood, 2014a). As a result, these studies are less useful for *explaining* the relations. For example, objectivist research can assert that good local language skills are associated with better employment prospects in a country of destination (e.g. Dustmann and Fabbri, 2003). Yet, they do not typically explain how exactly language proficiency increases employability or under what circumstances this may or may not be the case and why. Arguably, this is because objectivism treats social phenomena as occurring in a 'closed' social world, as in laboratory experiments, overlooking the influence of broader contextual mechanisms (Lawson, 1995; O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014). Fleetwood (2014b, p.80, italics in original) aptly labels it as a "*Procrustean* process" that involves "lopping-off" qualitative components and "stretching" what is left to make it mathematically analysable. Consequently, objectivism studies often produce "measurement without theory" (Brannan et al., 2017, p.18).

On the other end of the scale, subjectivist (idealist, relativist, interpretive or inductive) studies do not give credence to the idea of the 'true' knowledge, denying either the existence of the objective reality outside our subjective knowledge (strong social constructionism) or our ability to comprehend objective reality, even if such thing exists (weak social constructionism) (see Fleetwood, 2014a, 2014b). As a result, many of these studies focus on the discourses and how they create, interpret and re-interpret the meaning of things and events, rather than on things and events as such. Our knowledge of the world and the world itself become reduced to what is said

about the world. Consequently, subjectivist scholars are in danger of confiding themselves to accounts of fragmented ‘knowledge’ in form of local discourses, that allegedly constitute multiple realities.

In denying the existence of the ‘objective’ or ‘true’ knowledge, subjectivist studies recognise the political nature of science. They do not merely focus on the dominant stories, but ‘give voice’ to the under-privileged and marginalised, often missed in objectivist research. This offers a valuable potential for emancipatory initiatives, as all narratives are deemed equally valuable. However, by rejecting any knowledge beyond discourses, subjectivist scholars deprive themselves of ontological and epistemological footings to discriminate between discourses as more or less accurately representing reality (Iosifides, 2017). This means that subjectivists cannot critically evaluate discourses. For example, a discourse claiming that migrants are less useful as workers than the indigenes would have to be accepted because some people believe this to be true. The only ontologically possible solution would be to explore other discourses (e.g. those claiming that migrant and indigenous workers are equally valuable), but even this would provide only an account of an ‘alternative’ subjective reality, rather than a more ‘truthful’ understanding of the objective world.

CR offers an opportunity to reject simplistic objectivist views without becoming an idealist (Fleetwood, 2014a). According to CR ontology, an objective reality is singular and exists independently of our language, observations, ideas and knowledge. Causal mechanisms exist and operate without people’s understanding or even awareness of them, therefore, the world is not reducible to empirical observations (Fletcher, 2017). At the same time, CR acknowledges that some parts of the world are socially constructed and include subjective interpretations of objective reality. Our knowledge is not neutral, or objective, or absolute (Sayer, 2011). There is, however, more than narratives to inform our understandings of the world, and some knowledge (theories, beliefs, ideas and explanations) offer a better explanation of reality.

Knowledge is a subject of critique. Researchers form, test and select theories to generate a better understanding of the world. For example, our understanding of the thunder and lightning may not be perfect and further discoveries are yet to be made, but it is certainly more accurate than previous beliefs in Jupiter’s thunderbolt. Selective approach to knowledge serves as a platform for emancipatory initiatives of CR scholars – they can critique dominant ideas, analyse problems and suggest opportunities for social change (see Fletcher, 2017). The double recognition of the existence of objective world and subjectivity of our knowledge is believed to be one of the most significant merits of CR (O’Mahoney and Vincent, 2014). It avoids the objectivist-subjectivist

dichotomy between the two seemingly disconnected realms – the world of facts and events and the world of texts and meanings – and supplies a deep, stratified and emergent ontology²⁴.

CR's position on what exists in the world (or, rather, what the world is) shapes its standpoints on what about the world can be learned and how (Fleetwood, 2014a). In other words, CR instructs how to ask the 'right' questions about the world and how to answer them. CR-informed studies do not see describing an event as the ultimate goal of scientific inquiry. Neither do they claim to be able to generate accurate measurements or predictions of events. Instead, the CR ontological position encourages researchers to engage in explanation and causal analysis of social events. In accordance to this logic, the research questions of this thesis are explanatory in nature, seeking to understand how and why career projects work.

When explaining events, it might be possible to make tendential predictions if we gain a sufficiently advanced understanding of tendencies within the social setting (Elder-Vass, 2010). There are certain patterns of social events that can be identified, observed and described with relative ease. For example, the review of the literature presented in the previous chapter suggests that migrants experience problems with recognition of overseas credentials. However, because the social world is an open system, this should be referred to as demi-regularities. This means that such patterns are only semi-predictable because of contextual variations (Lawson, 1997). Tendencies are always context-dependent and so are CR-informed studies. They seek to describe relations between events in a more complex manner than simply if X then Y. It can be argued that *some* migrants might experience fewer problems with recognition of foreign degrees and qualifications – for example, those with in-demand skills (see Grugulis, 2007). Therefore, the scientifically correct statement is – an event Y occurs if an event X occurs, but only if conditions A, B and C also met, processes D and E are absent and events E and F happen too. Otherwise, an event Yⁿ, which might be drastically different from Y, occurs. Thus, it would be more correct to claim that migrants sometimes, but not always, experience differences with recognition of overseas credentials (see also Brannan et al., 2017).

Some of the causal powers relevant to the event may not be presently empirically observable (Fleetwood, 2012). Some of them may not be exercised and remain potential (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014), whereas some others can operate transfactually, in that they are exercised, but not actualized (Fleetwood, 2009). For instance, police officers have power to penalize drivers for speeding, but this power remains potential until they start monitoring the roads. This monitoring may or may not result in penalties, but most drivers do not drive recklessly even when speed

²⁴ See Chapter 2 for more on CR ontology.

cameras are absent. Therefore, the power to regulate the speed is real, in that it impacts upon the world. In certain conditions potential and transfactual powers can become actualized, meaning that there is a pool of events that can potentially happen (Sayer, 2000). The objective of social science from a CR perspective is, therefore, to investigate a causal history of events in order to explain how they happen, why, for whom and under what circumstances.

4.3 Critical realist evaluation

To understand tendencies and demi-regularities (i.e. semi-predictable patterns of events) CR encourages immersion into the real domain to unveil underlying causal mechanisms and to identify different combinations of them that make events (im)possible. This explanation typically requires understanding of the broader range of interacting mechanisms and, also, information about the relevant agents. Recognising the multiple determination of events (Bhaskar, 1979) is vital for CR research. As Elder-Vass (2007c, p.473) succinctly words it, “if we want to understand particular events, we need to understand much more than one particular causal power; we need to understand all of the causal powers that are interacting to produce the event, and how they affect each other”. CR explicitly seeks to identify and examine the whole range of causes, including those potential and transfactual (see Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000; Fleetwood, 2009; O’Mahoney and Vincent, 2014), rather than one single mechanism.

The openness of social world means that the multiplicity of causal mechanisms and their effects cannot be either induced or deduced. Instead, researchers have to *retroduct* or *retrodict* them (see Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2010), which implies very different types of reasoning. Retroduction is an approach utilised when our knowledge about mechanisms that govern an event is limited (Lawson, 1997). It is used to identify what mechanisms are in operation to account for the existence of an event under investigation. Once we become relatively knowledgeable about mechanisms in operation, it can be possible to retrodict – to use our knowledge to enquire into how these mechanisms operate in different environments and together with other mechanisms to generate the event (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2010).

Realist evaluation has been suggested as a useful framework for such a task (Pawson and Tilly, 1997). Realist evaluation was developed as a tool to gain an understanding of how social interventions (‘programmes’) work. It has been used, for example, to study human service programmes (Kazi et al., 2002), drug deterrence programmes (Leone, 2008) and HRM practices (Marchal et al., 2010). A realist evaluation seeks to answer a complex question of ‘what works,

for whom, to what degree, under what circumstances, and how?'. This approach is theory-driven, in that researchers are encouraged to develop expectations ('theory') about how the programme works. These expectations can be grounded in previous studies, personal experience or even intuition, with a goal to empirically test and refine them. In other words, unlike a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), a realist evaluation begins with a theory and aims to produce a 'better' theory. Pawson (1996) specifically argues that realist theories should be built upon three basic elements – contexts, mechanisms and outcomes. The equation offered to explain outcomes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) reads:

$$\textit{Context} + \textit{Mechanism} = \textit{Outcome}$$

Whereas conceptualising context (research setting or merely 'everything out there') and outcomes (intended and unintended consequences of programmes of interest) is relatively straightforward, defining mechanisms can cause some confusion, even among researchers familiar with realist terminology. Dalkin and colleagues (2015) call for an explicit separation of mechanisms-as-resources and mechanisms-as-reasoning in realist evaluations. They transform the Pawson and Tilley's formula into:

$$\textit{Mechanisms-as-Resources} + \textit{Context} \rightarrow \textit{Mechanisms-as-Reasoning} = \textit{Outcomes}$$

The revised equation makes a welcome modification by a greater appreciation of the role of social agents (mechanisms-as-reasoning) in achieving certain outcomes and, consequently, in social programmes altogether. Nonetheless, it is not entirely clear how we should distinguish between contexts and mechanism-as-resources. It could be argued, for example, that the context is constituted by aggregation of various mechanisms, which may or may not be activated.

Further, it ought to be stressed that Pawson and Tilly (1997) did not develop their model explicitly from a standpoint of CR²⁵, and so it may not be perfectly compatible with it (see Chernoff, 2007). For example, CR puts more emphasis on social agency and its role in the events. Therefore, this thesis utilises a CR modification of the framework, as suggested by Brannan et al. (2017):

$$\textit{Context} + \textit{Agency} = \textit{Outcomes}$$

It rests upon an ontological assumption that certain mechanisms exist within contexts (structure and culture) and some of them may or may not be activated by agents through their reflective

²⁵ They worked within a 'scientific realism' framework, whereas this thesis endeavours to use a critical realist evaluation.

[career] projects. Mechanisms interact with each other and outcomes of a programme under investigation are the result of these interactions. CR evaluation, therefore, seeks to establish relations between context, agency and outcomes, although these relations are not linear and take form of tendencies and demi-regularities.

There is some flexibility in how this model can be applied. For example, if a researcher has a good understanding of outcomes and agency in the event under investigation, it can be possible to *retroduct* and *retrodict* causes of the event. Alternatively, if a researcher is knowledgeable about the context and [desired] outcomes, it can be possible to make *tendential predictions*²⁶ about what agential actions can result in these [desired] outcomes. Therefore, this approach is essentially theory-driven. If researchers are interested in outcomes of an event, they are encouraged to develop knowledge about the context in which the event occurs and about specific agential actions. This knowledge can be derived from the existing scholarship, researcher's own experience or even common sense. It can be argued that such approach is inevitably biased. However, CR neither seeks to produce neutral or objective work, nor does it advocates such knowledge (Sayer, 2011; Porpora, 2016b). Rather researchers are required to be critical and reflective about themselves and their theories to make their expectations clear and empirically testable.

4.4 Choice of methods for a Critical Realism-informed study

It is important to notice that realist (or critical realist) evaluation does not supply or even prescribe methodological instruments for data collection and analysis. Pawson and Tilly (1997) emphasise that realist evaluation (and, inevitably, CR evaluation) is a framework, rather than a technique. It is method-neutral and can be applied to a range of research methods and approaches. At the same time, critical realism, too, is not associated with any specific methods (Fletcher, 2017). It allows for methodological pluralism and even encourages it, and researchers have considerable latitude in choosing methods most suitable for the research objectives (see Porpora, 2016b). Iosifides (2017), for example, argues that both quantitative and qualitative methods of academic inquiry should be applied in CR studies, as they offer different ways of exploring different aspects of a single reality. Quantitative methods are useful for discovering

²⁶ Tendential predictions must not be mistaken for inductive predictions. Multiplicity of causal mechanisms existing and interacting in an open system makes these predictions rather inexact, but as Fleetwood (2014a, p.210) nicely puts it, "it is better to be roughly right than precisely wrong".

tendencies and demi-regularities, whereas qualitative methods are needed to explore what causal mechanisms account for these tendencies and how.

Although practically all research methods can be compatible with CR, it remains rather unspecified as to how, exactly, they should be applied to explore the stratified world (Yeung, 1997; Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014). Indeed, despite a substantial body of literature on CR philosophy and theory, there is little practical guidance on how CR ontology should inform data collection and analysis (see Edwards et al., 2014 for a rare exception).

CRE should begin with a theory and end with a (better) theory. Similarly, Bhaskar (1979, p.6) suggested that CR-informed studies should begin with initial theories that should be then empirically tested, critiqued and refined: “Once a hypothesis about a generative structure has been produced in social science it can be tested quite empirically, although not necessarily quantitatively”. In other words, existent theories are not taken for granted. They are used to form assumptions and expectations that need further elaboration. No single piece of research is capable of identifying and exploring *all* causal mechanisms influencing the event (Elder-Vass, 2010a). Instead, researchers should focus on those that seem particularly important (or interesting) and explain how they operate and intertwine to produce the outcomes.

The previous chapters provided a review of existing theories and studies to enhance the researcher’s understanding of skilled migrants’ careers. It started with an enquiry into works of Margaret Archer and identified reflexivity as the principal mechanism of interest for this thesis. Then other literature²⁷ was considered to identify and discuss a range of structural and cultural mechanisms important for realisation of reflexive career projects. These mechanisms were discussed within two groups – skilfulness and social capital. Also, various agential responses to contextual factors were considered. In effect, the review of the previous studies (Chapter 3) was governed by *retroductive* and *retrodictive* reasoning in order to form assumptions about what mechanisms account for skilled migrants’ career projects and how they do it. For example, it was established that degrees in some subjects may be more or less valuable depending on the current supply and demand for skills on the labour market.

The next step is to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the research setting (Chapter 5). An extended case study of structural and cultural conditions in which the respondents’ pursued their career interests had been undertaken (Burawoy, 1998). The objective was to locate careers within national, local and historical contexts to “connect the present to the past in

²⁷ Literature used in CR studies does not have to be explicitly critical realist (O’Mahoney, 2011).

anticipation of the future” (Burawoy, 1998, p.5). This approach is compatible with the logic of CR: connecting “the present to the past” is an essential element of retrodiction and retrodiction. Further, once causal mechanisms are identified and explained, it becomes possible to suggest tendential predictions “in anticipation of the future”. Data from statistical records, industry reports, media, academic works, informal conversations with local recruiting specialists and the researcher’s own experience of life and work in the region was used to gain a more nuanced insight into how the mechanisms operated in the North-East of England and how these shaped career experiences. The main purpose was to track any idiosyncrasies, search for context-specific mechanisms and to overall complete and improve expectations formed at stage one (Chapter 3).

The study then proceeded to empirically explore the expectations and to test them against the ‘real’ career stories. Interviews – arguably the most common method in social science – were used to gather intensive data about individual career projects. The interviews were qualitative and semi-structured to ensure an opportunity to retrodict pre-identified mechanisms (explain how they work), whereas also allowing for retrodiction (discovery) of new causalities.

Interviews as a research method are not beyond criticism. Kvale (1994) considers ten most common objections to qualitative interviews. Many of these objections are raised from an objectivist standpoint, claiming that interviews are subjective, biased, not scientific, not generalizable, person-dependent, based upon leading questions, lacking rigour and so on. None of them, however, poses a grave problem from a point of view of CR. Science is not reduced to quantifiable studies and rigour should not be understood exclusively as statistical rigour (see also Harley, 2015). Furthermore, all methods are fallible (see O’Mahoney and Vincent, 2014) and subjectivity is inherent to social science (Sayer, 2011).

As emphasized in this chapter, previous theories, experiences and knowledge (expectations) are not regarded as hindrances, but rather as valuable resources upon which empirical studies rest (see also Bergene, 2007). The task for CR-informed research is not to produce absolute or objective knowledge, but to generate an account of events, experiences, phenomena and causalities underpinning them. How exactly this thesis utilized interviews for this purpose will be elucidated in the upcoming sections. For now, it is enough to stress that interviewing individuals has been accepted as an adequate tool for CR enquiries into a complex and multi-layered social reality (Smith and Elger, 2014). For example, Archer’s two principal books on reflexivity, *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation* (2003) and *Making Our Way Through the World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility* (2007) are largely based upon

intensive qualitative interviews. Having presented the methods of data collection used in this study, this chapter now turns to introduce the interviews participants.

4.5 Introducing the sample and gaining access

The respondents were selected to maximise opportunities to learn from their career stories. Therefore, the sample is purposeful rather than truly representative. Following Stake's suggestion (1995), the main criterion for including or excluding the participants was not "What stories represent the totality of skilled migrants' career projects in the field?", but "What selection of career stories will enhance our understanding of skilled migrants' career projects and mechanisms that influence them?" The goal was to include individuals with internal conversations dominated by the three MoRs associated with 'active agency' – autonomous, communicative and meta (Archer, 2007). For this reason, the data was collected and analysed simultaneously. Next, the sample was designed to allow for contrastive explanation (Lawson, 1997, 2003; Tsang and Ellsaesser, 2011) as the principal approach to data analysis²⁸. The sample was aiming at a variety of individuals regarding age, gender, origin, ethnicity, occupational status etc. The participants were also selected with an objective to create a diverse sample, reflecting the structure of the economy of the North-East –dominated by jobs in the private sector, engineering, higher education, health and social care.

Skilled migrants were defined as individuals born outside the UK to non-British parents and who were educated at college diploma level and above and/or had experience in 'skilled occupations'²⁹ (according to the Standard Occupational Classification, 2010)³⁰. In line with previous work, this definition aimed to transcend the overly simplistic "skill in the person" approach to classifying skilled migrants by including also the "skill in the job" element. Further, the analysis of the context paid attention to "skill in the setting" (Cockburn, 1983; Grugulis, 2007). Not all respondents were employed in skilled occupations at the time of the interviews – some had previous experience in skilled jobs and/or possessed high levels of education, but were not utilising it for their work. Additionally, indigenous respondents with similar socio-demographic characteristics and in similar education/employment situations were also

²⁸ This approach will be presented later in this chapter.

²⁹ Major groups One (managers, directors and senior officials), Two (professional occupations) and Three (associate professional and technical occupations).

³⁰ See 1.4.

interviewed. This sub-sample was included to enable contrastive explanation, with an intention to explore idiosyncrasies in skilled migrants' careers.

Altogether 45 interviews with skilled migrants and 18 with indigenes were conducted, but six of them were eventually omitted. Once the equipment failed and the interview was not recorded. The researcher was not aware of the failure and no notes sufficient for analysis had been made during the interview. One interview produced data of an inadequate quality, which could not have been used for the purpose of the thesis. It is hard to assert confidently why this happened. The respondent was rather reserved and not keen on providing extensive answers. The researcher, perhaps, lacked experience at interviewing and follow-up questions did not prove helpful. As a result, the data was very thin, lacking depth and richness, and not suitable for the thesis. Four more interviews were rejected at a later stage. An internal dialogue of one respondent was classified as dominated by fractured reflexivity³¹. Unlike the other three modes, fractured reflexives are 'passive agents' (Archer, 2007) and, therefore, were outside the interest of this study. On three further occasions the dominant MoR was impossible to identify, as the dialogues with internal selves appeared to be governed, equally, by autonomous and meta-reflexivity (two respondents) and autonomous and communicative reflexivity (one respondent). Such eventuality was warned of (Archer, 2007) and, therefore, was anticipated. Data supplied by these interviews was interesting, but insufficient for identification of tendencies and making credible conclusions.

In total, 41 migrant respondents and 16 indigenous were included in the sample (Table 4.1). The number of men and women was approximately equal (21/20 and 9/7 for migrants and the indigenes respectively). Respondents' age varied from 24 to 61 years (25-61 for migrants and 24-60 for the indigenes), all of them were active in the labour market at the time they were interviewed. The sample included respondents coming from different countries (19 EEA passport holders and 22 non-EEA citizens) and, therefore, differently affected by regulation policies. Migrant respondents were from countries with substantial (e.g. Poland, Germany, India) and limited (e.g. Kazakhstan, Peru, Serbia) numbers of ex-compatriots in the North-East. To maximise the diversity, no more than two respondents from the same country were included. The only exception was Lithuania with three respondents – partially to represent the recent wave of Eastern-European migrants and partially because the third respondent presented a particularly interesting career story.

³¹ More about how dominant MoRs were identified will be said later in this chapter.

Name	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Education	Occupation	Mode of reflexivity	Career project
Migrant respondents							
Ahmed	Male	37	Iran	Masters	Bank manager	CR	Conformity/Runaway
Akande	Male	42	Nigeria	PhD	Graduate tutor	AR	Conformity
Asel	Female	38	Kazakhstan	Diploma	Accountant technician	CR	Conformity/Runaway
Brandon	Male	45	Ireland	Bachelor	Self-employed accounting consultant	AR	Runaway
Calvin	Male	34	Jamaica	Masters	Engineer	MR	Runaway
Celine	Female	29	Belgium	Bachelor	Engineer	AR	Conformity
Dabeet	Male	38	India	Bachelor	Physician	AR	Conformity
David	Male	44	Romania	Bachelor	Marketing director	AR	Reformation
Ecrin	Female	37	Turkey	Bachelor	Commercial manager	AR	Reformation
Emiliano	Male	45	Spain	Masters	Engineering manager	AR	Reformation/Runaway
Ernie	Male	44	Australia	Bachelor	Strategic planning manager	CR	Conformity/Trickery
Hong	Female	34	China	Bachelor	HR manager	AR	Reformation
Fabio	Male	31	Italy	PhD	Lecturer	AR	Trickery
Gaspar	Male	44	Portugal	PhD	Research assistant	MR	Hideaway
Ida	Female	61	Germany	Bachelor	Self-employed translator	MR	Runaway
Janek	Male	29	Hungary	Masters	IT professional	AR	Conformity
Jennifer	Female	35	USA	Diploma	Administrator	CR	Conformity
Joaquin	Male	41	Colombia	PhD	Lecturer	AR	Trickery
John	Male	25	Denmark	Bachelor	Senior recruitment consultant	AR	Trickery

Kamran	Male	30	Pakistan	Masters	Senior HR team leader	CR	Conformity/Trickery
Karolina	Female	38	Lithuania	Bachelor	Nurse	CR	Conformity/Runaway
Lew	Male	37	Poland	PhD	Lecturer	MR	Hideaway
Margret	Female	55	Germany	Bachelor	Self-employed translator	AR	Runaway
Maria	Female	42	Peru	Masters	Engineer	AR	Trickery
Mira	Female	35	Vietnam	Bachelor	Council worker	CR	Conformity/Trickery
Nuria	Female	43	Spain	Bachelor	Teacher	CR	Conformity
Oleg	Male	37	Ukraine	PhD	Lecturer	MR	Hideaway
Ralf	Male	N/A	Japan (also an EU passport holder)	Masters	Marketing director	AR	Reformation
Reece	Male	24	South Africa	Bachelor	Engineer	AR	Conformity
Roberto	Male	N/A	Mexico	Masters	Intellectual property manager	CR	Conformity
Ruta	Female	32	Lithuania	Bachelor	Administrator	MR	Hideaway
Sara	Female	44	Italy	PhD	Lecturer	MR	Hideaway
Simona	Female	N/A	Romania	Diploma	Interpreter	AR	Trickery
Stojan	Male	27	Serbia	Masters	Project engineer	CR	Conformity/Trickery
Tara	Female	39	Canada	Masters	Teacher	AR	Trickery
Timur	Male	44	Uzbekistan	PhD	Lecturer	AR	Trickery
Tiwa	Female	36	Nigeria	Masters	Accountant	AR	Conformity
Kristina	Female	N/A	Lithuania	Bachelor	HR manager	AR	Trickery
Trisha	Female	42	India	Masters	Head of external relations	AR	Reformation

Uri	Female	42	Israel	Bachelor	Marketing director	AR	Reformation
Zara	Female	35	Sweden	PhD	Business development manager	CR	Conformity
Indigenous respondents							
Ben	Male	53	UK	PhD	Lecturer	AR	Reformation
George	Male	61	UK	Bachelor	Self-employed educator	AR	Runaway/Reformation
Harry	Male	30	UK	Bachelor	Tax advisor	AR	Trickery
Helen	Female	29	UK	Masters	HR consultant	AR	Trickery
Ian	Male	50	UK	PhD	Lecturer	MR	Hideaway
Kevin	Male	40	UK	Bachelor	Self-employed credit manager	AR	Runaway
Lauren	Female	33	UK	Diploma	Tax professional	CR	Conformity
Lynn	Female	38	UK	Bachelor	Charity volunteer/ landlady	MR	Runaway
Luke	Male	25	UK	Bachelor	Engineer	MR	Runaway
Natalie	Female	24	UK	Bachelor	Optometrist	AR	Conformity
Oliver	Male	34	UK	Bachelor	Policy advisor	CR	Conformity
Terry	Male	N/A	UK	Bachelor	Self-employed property manger	AR	Runaway
Theresa	Female	40	UK	Masters	HR officer	AR	Reformation
Tony	Male	28	UK	Bachelor	Accountant	AR	Conformity
Victoria	Female	37	UK	Bachelor	Finance manager	AR	Trickery
Yasmin	Female	33	UK	Masters	Engineer	CR	Conformity/Runaway

Table 4.1 Interviewees

The interviews confirmed the significance of reflexivity for dispositions to develop career projects. All three MoRs under investigation in this thesis were present in the sample and the respondents were divided into sub-groups based on the MoR dominant in their internal

conversations – based upon concerns and decision-making (Archer, 2003, 2008; see 4.7 for more details). 33 individuals (23 migrants and 10 native-born) were classified as pronounced practitioners of autonomous reflexivity, 14 (11 and 3) – communicative and 10 (7 and 3) were registered as meta-reflexives (see 4.7). The analysis of empirical data revealed that concerns associated with different MoRs encouraged proclivities for certain types of relations with the context. In short, when dominant, communicative reflexivity promoted compliance with the social world; autonomous reflexivity was associated with a tendency to re-shape the world; whereas meta-reflexives had a strong inclination towards withdrawing from the existing order.

These proclivities guided the respondents towards developing specific career projects. Five types of career projects have been identified from the interviewees’ career stories (Table 6.1). Three of them were associated with the MoRs, being the preferential choice of their practitioners: ARs and reformation, CRs and conformity, MRs and runaway. However, due to other causal mechanisms operating in the setting, not all respondents were able to apply their preferred career projects and act in accordance to their *reflexive tendencies*. Consequently, many used alternative strategies. Some of the respondents applied career projects associated with other MoRs, whereas some others utilised *intermediate* projects, which were identified as trickery and hideaway.

Career project	Meaning
Conformity	Compliance with the social setting and replication of behavioural patterns of the dominant group
Hideaway	A form of escapism, meaning that agents remain in their current setting, but seek isolation from it
Reformation	Active transformation of the social setting and its conventions and imposing of new norms
Runaway	Movements between employers, jobs, occupations and locations in search for the ‘better’ context
Trickery ³²	Practitioners do not attempt to actively change the context, but seek to become exempt from the governing rules, i.e. to circumvent them

Table 4.2 Typology of career projects

The expectations formed upon the review of the existing studies (Archer, 2003, 2007) did not anticipate considerable dissimilarities between internal conversations of migrant and indigenous practitioners of the same MoRs. The analysis, indeed, did not reveal differences between inner

³² It is acknowledged that this word may have a negative connotation. However, it reflects the essence of this type of career projects, as the respondents’ projects were aimed at “tricking” and “cheating” the contextual norms (see 6.4 and 7.2).

dialogues of migrants and the indigenes and their inclinations for particular relations with the context. In simple terms, autonomous reflexive migrants and autonomous reflexives indigenes had similar concerns, had proclivities for similar career projects and generally had more in common with each other than, for example, autonomous reflexive migrants and communicative reflexive migrants. The major difference, as will be discussed later, was inequality in accessibility of career projects for migrants and the indigenes.

It ought to be stressed that career projects were not mutually exclusive. On the one hand, all MoRs are present in internal conversations of most social agents (Archer, 2007). For this reason, concerns and tendencies can become more or less prominent in some circumstances or at some stages of life and/or career. On the other hand, contextual conditions may not allow for consistent reliance exclusively on one project – e.g. some career obstacles are more difficult to change or circumvent than others and have to be conformed to. As a consequence, individuals can be engaged in different actions at different periods of time or even simultaneously, but, as will be discussed later, a case is made that one type of career projects was particularly important in all individual career stories.

As will be discussed in section 4.8, issues of anonymity and confidentiality were crucial for this study. Many respondents were easily identifiable because of a small number of migrants and skilled (particularly senior) positions in the North-East. Therefore, for ethical reasons only a limited amount of information can be included in the table³³. More parameters, however, were used in the analysis. For the same reason, the table provides a rather broad description of the respondents' occupations. Nonetheless, the table illustrates that the sample was biased towards sectors prominent on the local labour market, such as higher education and engineering. A significant proportion of respondents (20) were employed in the public sector, which is particularly important in the regional economy. Ten respondents (four indigenes, five EEA and one non-EEA migrant) were engaged in various forms of freelance and self-employment activities or had such experience previously³⁴. This suggests an adequate representation of the regional labour market, implying a good opportunity to explore the underlying causal mechanisms.

Skilled migrants are notorious for being a difficult to access group (see Hagan et al., 2011) and this proved to be true. Having few migrants in the North-East (ONS, 2012a) made this task even more difficult. Access to participants had to be obtained via various channels and, so, access

³³ All names and some countries of origin were changed to maintain anonymity of the respondents (see 4.8).

³⁴ Sometimes in addition to day jobs.

took a considerable amount of time. Initially the researcher utilised his personal contacts to identify potential respondents. This gained access to 22 respondents³⁵ – 14 migrants and 8 indigenes. No close friends or family members were interviewed and the respondents were either rather distant acquaintances or ‘friends of friends’. Second, websites of local companies were explored and cold emails inviting to participate in the research were sent to those individuals whose profiles suggested they might fit the research goals. Third, InterNations – a social media platform designed for people who live and work abroad – was used to approach migrants in the North-East, similarly via cold messages. 42 migrants and 19 indigenes were contacted via corporate websites and 67 migrants via InterNations. Altogether 32 agreed to be interviewed and, finally, 26 interviews were conducted (24 with migrants and two with indigenes). Finally, snowballing (Goodman, 1961) was also used. Although this method has proved useful when studying hard-to-identify or hard-to-approach groups of population (Dickmann and Mills, 2010; Hagan et al., 2011), it granted access only to nine participants in this study. Snowballing was more useful for gaining access to the indigenes (six) than migrants (three). This was mainly because of homogeneity of migrants’ contacts – whereas the indigenes were connected to a broad range of different people, migrants were linked mainly to ‘similar’ people, typically other migrants, often from the same country/region and of the same gender. Thus, most of their contacts were not suitable for contrastive explanation. Further, migrants in general had more low-skilled contacts, which did not suit the objectives of the thesis.

4.6 Conducting the interviews

4.6.1 Preparation and organising

A first round of seven pilot interviews was conducted in autumn 2014 to test the interview technique and allow for the researcher to gain more experience. The participants were three fellow PhD students (with work experience in the UK), two skilled migrants and two UK-born professionals. They were asked for feedback regarding the interviews experience. The interviews contributed to the initial ‘theory’: they were analysed to compare the researcher’s expectations with information gathered from the respondents. Subsequently, some questions were re-worded and re-formulated to avoid confusions and some new questions were added to dig deeper into mechanisms that seemed particularly important. One of the most important alterations made was

³⁵ All figures hereafter refer to those 57 interviews that were included in the sample.

a decision to provide the interviewees with a more detailed explanation of the research and its objectives. This is allowed and even encouraged in CR interviews (Smith and Elger, 2014). As a result, it was decided to ask a relatively small number of broad ‘core’ questions, inviting the participants to share their experiences, with follow-up questions to ensure that all mechanisms of interest had been covered. The assumption was that this approach would produce more detailed information than a larger number of precise questions. After that two more pilot interviews – one with a PhD student and one with a professional skilled migrant – were conducted. They supported the aforementioned assumption. Once the respondents gained an understanding of the research objectives, they referred to the mechanisms of interest even when not asked directly about them. None of the nine pilot interviews were included in the analysis – their purpose was merely to elaborate the interviews’ structure and content, and to help the researcher gain experience.

Data collection took place between February 2015 and October 2016. 48 interviews were conducted between February and December 2015. Although the data analysis was iterative and began immediately after the first interview, it took time to systematise it and put in order. It then was discovered that some mechanisms, prominent only in few stories, needed more attention. Despite all effort, the sample was ethnically rather too homogeneous and it was decided to try and approach more ethnic minority respondents. Also, by this time it became known that five interviews were not usable. Consequently, 15 more interviews were conducted in March-October 2016 and 14 of them were added to the analysis. In total, due to access difficulties and the time-consuming iterative process of data analysis, it took 21 months to finalise the sample.

Once the prospective respondents agreed to be interviewed, they were asked to suggest a preferred way of interviewing (e.g. face-to-face, Skype, phone), as well as a date, time and location. Meeting rooms at Newcastle University were proposed as a quiet and comfortable venue, but the researcher emphasised willingness to travel across the region. All possible effort was made to satisfy the respondents’ preferences. 53 interviews were conducted in person – 22 in private meeting rooms at Newcastle University, 17 in cafes, pubs and coffee shops, eight in interviewees’ offices, three at the researcher’s office, two at the researcher’s house and one at a participant’s house. Geographically these interviews took place in various locations across the North-East: Newcastle, Durham, Morpeth, North Shields, South Shields and Whitley Bay. However, this does not represent the geographical distribution of the respondents, as some of the participants preferred to be interviewed at Newcastle City Centre rather than at their actual places of residence or work. Further four interviews were conducted via Skype (three with video and one without), when participants were unable to meet in person due to work and family

commitments. Although these interviews felt less ‘personal’ and building rapport was slower than in face-to-face interviews, these issues did not seem to have affected the quality of the discussions (see Deakin and Wakefield, 2014) and these conversations yielded rich and nuanced data. The interviews lasted between 27 and 105 minutes, with an average being approximately one hour in length. All interviews were conducted in English; due to the participants’ relative fluency in the UK’s official language there was no need to use interpreters.

As mentioned above, the researcher explained the core idea of the research to participants when arranging the interviews. Such information was enclosed with the first emails. Seven participants requested to see the abstract of the thesis. Also, the abstract was voluntarily sent to all respondents in the second cohort (interviews conducted in March-October 2016). In the pre-interview correspondence, the participants were asked about how much time they could spare, so that the structure could be re-arranged in order to at least cover the most important themes. Some of respondents (26) sent their CVs to the researcher prior the interviews. This allowed the researcher to adjust questions to their individual experiences and use time more efficiently.

On the interview day, the participants were provided with more details about the research objectives and their rights as interviewees (see 4.8). The respondents were promised complete confidentiality and access to the research findings. The interviewees were asked again how much time they were prepared to spend and whether they had any questions to ask or concerns to rise. Finally, the participants were asked for permission to record the conversations. 53 respondents granted such permission and these interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim. However, four individuals refused to have their interviews recorded. This is not an unknown issue when researching migrants (Hagan et al., 2011), thus, such eventuality was foreseen and detailed notes were taken during these four conversations.

4.6.2 Interviews: Structure and logic

The interviews were largely theory-driven: expectations (‘theory’) were used explicitly and systematically to design the questions (Pawson, 1996; Smith and Elger, 2014; Manzano, 2016). The theory mainly rested upon the review of the existent scholarship and analysis of the context. Yet, the researcher, as a reflective (and subjective) social agent himself, felt that his own experience, as a ‘skilled’ migrant in the UK, was valuable for forming expectations. This is not unacceptable for CR studies. Furthermore, researchers drawing upon CR doctrine are encouraged to bring their own normative and emotional reasoning if it can enrich the theory (see Sayer,

1992, 2011). This is considered adequate, because critical realists do not take the initial ideas and expectations for granted, but seek to scrutinise and refine them (Bhaskar, 1979). Therefore, the challenge is not to avoid introducing personal experience to the research, but to maintain rigour and consistency when testing it and not to manipulate the data (consciously or unconsciously) to confirm or reject the researcher's ideas. CR researchers are urged to rely upon their own reflexivity to maintain awareness of such bias and to avoid it as much as possible (Kempster and Parry, 2014).

The research objectives were not merely explained to the participants. Although the researcher might have greater expertise in relation to the wider contexts, interviewees are likely to have better (even if possibly fragmented) understanding of their 'inner conversations' and career projects in terms of reasoning, choices, motivations, aspirations and obstacles. Thus, the interviews were designed as a mutual learning process between the interviewer and interviewees. During the interviews, the researcher's theories (or at least some of them) were shared with the interviewees, who were, in turn, asked to share their own knowledge and either confirm or reject them (Pawson, 1996). In other words, participants were asked to 'teach' the researcher about their career projects, reflexive practices and relevant mechanisms. The participants were invited to express any thoughts, concerns and reflections they perceived relevant for the research aims. Nevertheless, the researcher facilitated the conversations to keep focus upon the research questions. Overall, semi-structured interviews, as an exceptionally versatile method, allowed for covering all topics of interest with each respondent, whilst also exploring certain subjects in more details (Galletta, 2013).

A plan used for the interviews is presented in Appendix A. It must be stressed, however, that it is a generalised list of themes, matters and subjects the interviews sought to cover, rather than a set of precise questions. The topics for the discussion were pre-determined, but the questions were selected and worded as deemed appropriate for each interviewee. No respondents were asked all questions, as some questions were omitted and some others added to maximise opportunities to learn from each story. There was no need to ask them all. For instance, almost all non-EEA migrants touched on visa barriers in their narratives about relocation to the UK, even before they were asked a specific question about the impact of migration regulation. Also, the questions were modified considerably in each individual case. For example, self-employed respondents were understandably not asked about moves between employers or relations with colleagues. Instead they were asked to explain why they chose entrepreneurship as a career path and what relations they had with clients and other people in the industry. When respondents admitted importance of social contacts for their careers, more questions were asked to explore these relations and the

nature of help received from them. In contrast, when respondents claimed that social contacts had no impact upon their career, follow-up questions were asked to investigate whether it was because of a conscious decision to minimise reliance on social support, limited availability of social resources in the network or inability to get access to them. In other similar situations, it was attempted to understand the reasons and alternative factors were probed.

The order in which the questions were asked was also frequently manipulated to facilitate a more 'natural' discussion. If a participant explained that the first job after relocation was obtained with help from a friend, it seemed natural to continue asking about the role of this friend, as well as other people, in career projects and then come back to discuss subsequent jobs and positions held by the respondent.

In general, all interviews began with standard opening questions. The respondents were asked to introduce themselves and outline their personal stories of migration and careers, including pre-migration education and employment, and career history in the UK. This discussion was used to build rapport and encourage a more open dialogue (Dunn, 2005). The following discussion offered more specific questions, directly related to the research objectives. The respondents were asked how they moved between jobs and employers, what future plans and ambitions they had and how they were going to realise them. They were asked questions about various possible career barriers, including migration and occupational regulation, labour market conditions, access to social resources, personal and professional acceptance, and how they dealt with them. Also, respondents were asked whether any of these mechanisms proved helpful for careers and how the respondents benefitted from them. The participants were also asked to reflect upon career projects that had not been pursued, including reasons for not pursuing it. For each decision that had or had not been made the respondents were asked to provide a reason and explain how this decision was made. They were asked what role other people played in these decisions and in their careers overall. Further, the interviewees were asked about their ideas of success, career concerns, desired and real outcomes. Towards the end of the interview the respondents were asked to provide specific examples, offer further details, suggest alternative accounts and evaluate accounts offered by previous participants. For example, if a participant tended to make career decisions independently, one type of a question to ask would be "Other respondents found advice from social contacts rather useful when making important career decisions. Do you think it might be helpful for you? How (if yes) and why (if no)?" This invited the interviewees to evaluate, accept, reject, reflect upon the researcher's pre-existing theories, and eventually refine and perfect them (see Smith and Elger, 2014). In the end, all participants were invited to comment upon the interview and to add something extra to it.

Questions about concerns and decision-making were included to obtain information needed to classify the respondents by their dominant MoR. Archer (2008) developed the Internal Conversation Indicator (ICONI) – a set of 13 questions with a seven-point grade scale from ‘Strongly Agree’ to ‘Strongly Disagree’ – as an instrument to identify MoRs dominated people’s internal conversations. Three questions were used to ‘measure’ autonomous, communicative and meta-reflexivity each; further four questions explored fractured reflexivity. ICONI in its original form was not used in this thesis, but the respondents were asked questions based upon it. Although the results obtained from the qualitative interviews may be less accurate than the quantitative questionnaire (see also Archer, 2003), they did not simply provide the ‘label’ (e.g. communicative or autonomous), but elaborated the meaning behind each MoR in each individual case through an enquiry into the respondents’ internal conversations. There was not a separate section dedicated to questions relevant to reflexivity. Instead, these questions were dispersed and mixed with other questions to follow the overall logic of the conversations.

The interviews were treated as “cumulative and iterative” (Smith and Elger, 2014, p.127) rather than a selection of disconnected stories. For example, when the analysis revealed more career projects than the ‘theory’ suggested (see the next section for more details), questions ‘probing’ these projects were included in the subsequent interviews. This was done to explore whether they were indeed new types of career projects or variations of the previously identified projects. Within the boundaries needed to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, later interviews were consciously altered in order to accommodate and test insights that had been gathered from earlier discussions. This facilitated more informative conversations, revealed contrasting opinions, extracted comments on others’ views and experiences, and tested matters that might have been presented in a less plausible manner by previous interviewees. Furthermore, this means that interviews were conducted and analyzed simultaneously.

4.7 Data analysis

All 53 audio recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, which resulted in 589 pages of text. Notes taken during the five interviews that were not recorded produced 17 more pages of textual data. Thus, the total volume of data generated from the interviews exceeded 600 pages (606 in total). The process of data analysis started immediately after the first interview had been transcribed. Effectively it was an iterative process of moving between the literature, already

conducted interviews and those planned. No software was used and the data was analysed manually.

The first part of analysis sought to position the interviewees in terms of their dominant MoRs. With expectations based upon Archer's (2003, 2007, 2008) works, the data was coded around two themes – concerns and decision-making. The respondents whose concerns regarded primarily 'achievements' were classified as ARs, 'inter-personal relations' – CRs and 'values' – MRs. Decision-making was aimed to separate communicative reflexives from the other two groups with more accuracy. Most respondents were concerned (to various degrees) about 'achievements' and 'values', but 'inter-personal relations' proved a particularly tricky category. It included, among many others, family and friends, who understandably were among the central concerns for most participants. In some instances, it was rather difficult to assess confidently whether individuals were concerned more about relations on the one hand and achievements or values on the other. For this reason, interviews explored the role personal contacts played in career projects. The theory suggested that, despite their affection to significant others, autonomous and meta-reflexives would be more independent in their career decisions. In this way, communicative reflexives were classified as individuals concerned predominantly about inter-personal relations, who also allowed and invited participation of other people in engineering career projects.

The second part of data analysis was focused on generating a typology of reflexive career projects – concrete courses of actions aimed at realisation of agents' concerns – and matching them to the three MoRs. The categories identified by previous studies (e.g. Liversage, 2009; Al Ariss, 2010; Tomlinson et al., 2013) were tested, merged and modified to provide an adequate representation of the respondents' careers. The analysis included projects that had been considered, but never exercised; exercised, but not actualised (e.g. when a person attempted to gain access to a particular job or occupation, but did not succeed and had to switch to another project); and those actualised (i.e. those that produced concrete career outcomes).

In theory (Archer, 2007), each MoR should be associated with a specific career type of career projects. Therefore, it was anticipated to identify three types of career projects. However, as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter and as will be discussed in greater details in the upcoming chapters, the analysis distinguished between five kinds of career projects. It became possible to identify the major three career projects after the first seven interviews, whereas all five had been identified after 16 interviews. No new projects emerged from the remaining 41 interviews, which provided a legitimate reason to claim that this stage was successfully completed.

Consequently, the third, and the principal, part of analysis was aimed at exploring the identified projects, to explain how they were formed and applied, and what outcomes they generated. Objective achievements were studied in terms of career mobility from the ‘starting point’, as well as financial reward and status achieved, whilst subjective success was understood as the respondents’ career satisfaction. To undertake this part of analysis the thesis relied upon a contrastive explanation (Lawson, 1997, 2003; Tsang and Ellsaesser, 2011). Brannan et al. (2017) argue that the value of a contrastive explanation for CR research rests on its ability to facilitate retrodiction and retrodiction of causal mechanisms. When applying this method, researchers seek to answer ‘why P rather than Q?’, where P is the fact or event of interest and Q is an alternative (or a set of alternatives) to P. The fact and the alternative(s) should be interesting and surprising. Researchers are assumed to have some knowledge about the case and some expectations about what can be found (Lawson, 1997). When such expectations are not met – when something unexpected is found or something expected is not found – researchers can explore cases with seemingly similar causal history to identify what factors account for this discrepancy. For example, on a few occasions it was found that the respondents practiced career projects associated with a different MoR. Contrastive explanation was applied to answer a question ‘Why do they utilise career project A rather than B?’ Other examples of contrastive questions were ‘Why career project A was available for respondent X and unavailable for respondent Y?’ and ‘Why career project C produced outcomes G for respondent X, but outcomes H for respondent Y?’

By explaining the discrepancy between theoretical expectations and empirical data CR researchers seek to “connect the inner world of ideas to the outer world of observable events” (Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014, p.1), therefore advancing the theory. There were three major dimensions for comparison – between the respondents with different dominant MoRs, between practitioners of different career practices and between migrants and the indigenes. These groups were contrasted to identify any differences regarding what career projects had been applied, how, why and with what results. Once the differences had been found, an attempt to explain them had been undertaken.

The MoRs and associated with them concerns were used to analyse how the respondents developed career projects and discriminated between them. The mechanisms identified at the earlier stages were explored to analyse their impact upon the availability of career projects (*retrodiction* in CR jargon). A range of causal mechanisms related to skilfulness and social capital had been tested, including migration regulation, occupational regulation, demand for skills, social support and acceptance. Finally, all elements of analysis were brought together to

explain the career projects and outcomes, as emerging from the interplay of agential reflexivity and other structural and cultural mechanisms.

4.8 Ethical and reflexive practices

The usual ethical procedures were followed to ensure minimal risks for all respondents. As virtually any project involving human participants, this thesis required ethical approval from the faculty ethics committee. An ethical review form was submitted on 30th September 2014. The project was identified as low-risk with no further ethical review required. All necessary procedures were completed and the approval received before the interviews were commenced. It was ensured that appropriate ethical practices were maintained throughout all stages of the research. No gatekeepers were used to approach respondents. It was emphasised to all interviewees that their participation was voluntary. Further, the respondents were explained that they could skip any questions they did not feel comfortable to discuss or withdraw from the project at any stage. The interviews were recorded and used with freely given consent from participants.

When designing the interviews, it was believed that the focus of the thesis (careers) was not too sensitive and the questions were generally safe and not particularly risky. However, the interactions with respondents proved otherwise. The interviewees alluded to some delicate aspects of their biographies, that could have been damaging for their careers. For instance, some of the participants severely criticised their managers, colleagues, corporate practices and other issues. On many occasions, the interviewees would ask to stop the recording and request that the audio materials and transcripts were not to be shared with a third party, including the researcher's supervisors. Two respondents permitted the researcher to use the interviews for analytical purposes, but asked not to provide direct quotes from them in this thesis or any subsequent publications. Many interviewees remarked, half-jokingly, that they would lose their jobs had everything they said become known to their employers. Some information could potentially lead to negative implications beyond the career domain (see Singer et al., 2000; Liamputtong, 2007). Hypothetically, a sham marriage could result in imprisonment and deportation from the country if disclosed to immigration authorities (e.g. BBC, 2012). Similarly, information about adultery could ruin a family if became known to a spouse.

To minimise any possibility of harm for the participants, the issue of anonymity was addressed particularly seriously (Sieber, 1992; Baez, 2002). All respondents' real names had been changed

to pseudonyms. In some instances, pseudonyms were suggested by the interviewees. Further, all other proper nouns mentioned by the respondents (e.g. specific geographic locations, names of organisations and other people) were disguised. A few skilled migrants in the North-East, as well as a few in high-profile jobs, made some respondents easily identifiable even with changed names. In these instances, additional measures were undertaken (McLeod, 1996). Many job titles were veiled to give an idea of the respondents' occupational statuses, but protect anonymity. In some instances, when career stories were especially unique and revealing, country of origin was changed as well³⁶. No information about employers or any other personal details were disclosed in quotes when presenting and discussing the findings. All transcripts and notes were anonymised and stored securely on the researcher's password-protected personal and office computers. Audio recordings will be deleted after six months from submission of this thesis and transcripts will be held only on the researcher's personal computer.

Certain issues with sensitivity of the topics of interest had been anticipated. It was assumed that not all participants would feel comfortable discussing discrimination, misunderstanding of local norms or unsuccessful career decisions. The respondents were reminded that they could refuse to answer any questions, but this happened only on two occasions. The matter of psychological comfort was also considered when selecting the interview venues. In general, respondents seemed more relaxed and open in their own (e.g. house or office) or neutral (e.g. bars or coffee shops) premises than at the researcher's office. It did not seem appropriate to insist on coming to potential interviewees' houses or office. Inviting respondents (especially female) to bars and cafes also was not considered the best practice. Instead, all individuals who agreed to be interviewed were offered a choice between the university meeting rooms and any location of their choice. This approach also addressed (to some extent) the asymmetry of power in interviews (Kvale, 2006), allowing the respondents for some sense of control over the interviews.

Regardless of the location, building rapport with the participants was important for facilitating candid and frank conversations. It has been observed (Gleshne and Peshkin, 1992) that trust is a necessary condition for good interviews. In this thesis, the sense of shared identity as skilled individuals and/or migrants, served as a foundation for trust between the researcher and interviewees. All respondents possessed at least a college diploma level of education. Most (52) had university degrees, 13 had Master degrees and 11 more were educated at the doctoral level.

³⁶ They were changed into countries in the same region and with similar relations to the UK regarding migration regulation and recognition of credentials.

As skilled individuals, they classified the researcher as a member of a similar group³⁷. Many of them remembered difficulties approaching participants for their dissertations and were keen to assist. Further, being a migrant himself, the researcher felt he was seen as trustworthy by migrant respondents who appreciated an opportunity to discuss their concerns, worries and problems (see Esterberg, 2002; Dean et al., 2009) with a potential emancipatory effect. Many migrant participants made comments such as “*you probably know what I mean*”, “*I think all migrants have been through this*”, “*I am sure you understand this*” and others of this sort, emphasising the perceived similarity of experiences. This was likely to have an impact on how the respondents presented their stories. Individuals can (sub)consciously alter their interpretation of undesired events and outcomes in order to recreate a sense of personal control over their own lives. For example, Gould and Sarama (2004) demonstrate how individuals for whom early retirement was the only available option present it as a deliberate choice in order to preserve some self-respect. It was anticipated that some respondents may not admit certain negative experiences, e.g. obstacles they faced. However, it is believed that migrant respondents were rather frank, because they assumed that the migrant researcher had a good understanding of their situations. As one female migrant interviewee confessed: “*I would try to avoid talking about this [difficulties with making local friends because of cultural differences] with a British person, but you might have been through similar things*”.

Nonetheless, the researcher being a [skilled] migrant entailed some pitfalls too. When migrant respondents assumed that the researcher had similar experience with, for example, issues such as acceptance or recognition of skills, they tended not to go into many details and skip some important nuances. In these instances, follow-up questions were asked and interviewees were invited to elaborate and exemplify their points. It is also acknowledged that the sense of a shared identity may have been weaker between the researcher (White male) and female and ethnic minority respondents.

Also, there was an important ethical issue that stemmed from the underlying logic of CR research. CR acknowledges that complete detachment of the researcher from their research subject is impossible (Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014). RST makes it explicit that social agents are capable of changing the social world in the morphogenetic circle (Archer, 1995). The very act of interviewing subjects is a social intervention that is likely to yield changes for both parties. Although this ability to make changes is vital for emancipatory potential of critical realism (Sayer, 2011), there is no guarantee that these changes will be for the better. The respondents

³⁷ It was mentioned by many respondents during the pre- and post-interview chats.

were encouraged to engage in reflection upon their experiences. However, these experiences were not always positive (see Kvale, 1983). This could have caused discomfort and stress for the respondents. Some participants confessed that they had never been involved in such in-depth discussions and evaluations of their careers. Some admitted that their subjective feeling of success had been questioned as a result of the interview, and some started doubting their previous career decisions.

To mitigate potential damaging psychological effect, the discussions were non-judgmental and categories such as good and bad, right and wrong were not used in the interviews. This is not to imply that the researcher was completely disinterested and dispassionate. As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, critical realists are encouraged to apply their rationality to differentiate between, for example, 'good' and 'bad' career projects. This, however, was done in the analysis and with a great deal of cautious and reflexive deliberations, with an objective to draw 'rational' (although inevitably subjective and fallible) inferences rather than 'sentimental' speculations. During the interviews, a conscious effort was made to avoid any criticism of the respondents' perceptions, accounts and decisions. This was particularly difficult when the interviewees' expressed negative opinions about things of which the researcher was fond. To refrain from protesting and to remain neutral and focused on the research questions was a useful practice of self-command and composure. This was also treated as a valuable reminder of how different people's experiences can be even in the same environment.

A constant endeavour was made to avoid "faking friendship" (Kvale, 2006). A reflexive monitoring was used in order not to abuse the aforementioned sense of a common destiny and associated trust. The researcher attempted to maintain a positive and friendly attitude, but the overall tone of the interviews was kept somewhat distant and not overly personal. The researcher also tried to avoid presenting his own story in the interviews. When the respondents asked questions about this, they were typically answered after the interview.

On a more positive note, many respondents informed the researcher that they found interviews a valuable reflective exercise that helped them structure their own thoughts and ideas. Most participants, but migrants particularly, seemed genuinely interested in the research. Many saw interviews as an opportunity to find answers to their personal questions and were keen to compare their career stories to other participants. It was not always possible to disclose such information – in part due to the issue of confidentiality, in part because not all data had been analysed yet – and some respondents stipulated access to the final version of this thesis as a condition of their participation. Some interviewees commented that the conversations facilitated

their understanding of the context. They expressed an opinion that it was a rare opportunity to contemplate their careers and look for the causes of positive and negative outcomes. Further, some migrant respondents directly asked for career advice or sought for approval of their future plans. Although the researcher did not offer any career suggestions, the respondents remarked that having been able to advance an understanding of their own careers and, potentially, to identify a problem was an important beginning. It was also suggested that the interviews led some individuals to consider alterations in their career projects. It is, of course, impossible to be certain that this will result in any career advancement. Nonetheless, a revision of plans and projects is a significant step towards CR emancipation, even if accompanied by discontent or disturbance.

4.9 Summary

This chapter sought to outline the research methodology used for the purposes of this study. It opened with a discussion of objectivist and subjectivist ontologies and suggested CR ontology as a better alternative. It then explained how ontological position affected epistemological assumptions and the choice of research methods and techniques. The chapter introduced CRE as a framework applied to answer the research questions. This framework suggests that career outcomes should be understood as a product of reflexive agency and contextual mechanisms. This research started with a review of secondary sources – previous studies, statistical reports etc. – to form expectations about agency and the context. It then proceeded to empirically test these expectations through semi-structured interviews with 57 respondents. The chapter introduced the sample and outlined the structure and logic of the interviews. It was highlighted that the questions were modified, added and omitted to embrace the diversity of the respondents and their career experiences. The interviews were (re)designed, in each particular case, to maximize opportunities to learn from individual stories. The chapter then explained the principles of data analysis. Finally, the ethical and reflective issues were debated.

The following chapters, 5 to 8, present the core findings generated by this thesis in response to the three research questions. Chapter 5 will ‘map the context’, whereas chapter 6 to 8 will discuss career projects and their outcomes for autonomous, communicative and meta-reflexives respectively.

Chapter 5. Context in skilled migrants' careers

5.1 Introduction

This research project was conducted in the North-East of England – a rather distinct region of the UK. This choice offers an opportunity to provide a valuable and surprisingly rare account of skilled migrants' experiences outside London. Although in the UK migrants still prefer to settle in the capital region, there is evidence that recently arrived migrants are more likely to settle in other regions than previous cohorts (TMO, 2017a). Yet, most migration studies continue to focus almost exclusively on London. The North-East has some peculiar social, cultural and economic characteristics of its own, creating a specific environment in which skilled migrants enact their careers, with unique obstacles, enablers and, it can be assumed, career outcomes. Therefore, conducting research in the North-East of England is a crucial step towards acknowledging and investigating region-specific factors in migrants' careers.

From the viewpoint of CRE of careers as social programmes, the purpose of this chapter is to inspect the first element – context. To do so, it draws upon the review of secondary sources (previous studies, statistical records, corporate and industry reports), as well as primary data obtained from the interviews. It seeks to discuss contextual factors affecting skilled migrants' careers in the North-East of England. In other words, this chapter combines empirical data with existing theory to explain or *retrodict* mechanisms significant for skilled migrants' careers. Examples and quotes from the interviews will be used to illustrate the most significant points.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of economic and social history of the North-East with a specific focus on migrants' communities and the region's industrial heritage. It then moves on to consider factors shaping career experiences of skilled migrants in the North-East today. In particular, it considers a range of (supra)-national and local, structural and cultural factors and how they intertwine to form “a dense web in which people attempt to manoeuvre” (Fernando and Cohen, 2016, p.3). Moving between levels of analysis from (supra)-national to regional allows for appreciation of the hierarchy of interacting causal mechanisms that form the context of agential career projects and, ultimately, outcomes.

5.2 The North-East of England: A historical overview

The North-East comprises Tyne and Wear, Northumberland, County Durham and the Tees Valley. This is the smallest region of England outside London, the least populous (2.6 million) and with the slowest growing population (only a 2% increase between 2001 and 2011) (ONS, 2012a). Two thirds of the North-East is rural and there are few major settlements in the region. Most of the population is concentrated around the Tyne and Wear (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North Shields, Gateshead, Sunderland and South Shields) and the Tees Valley (Darlington, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Stockton) city regions.

Despite its relative geographical isolation, the region historically has been one of the most progressive industrial hubs on the British Isles (Colls and Lancaster, 2001). It particularly benefitted from the Industrial Revolution and the 19th century marked the era of the industrial boom and advancement. Coal mining was the foundation of the region's prosperity, particularly in County Durham. It was known in the North-East since early times and in the beginning of the past century the region produced one quarter of Britain's coal (BBC, 2008). Iron, steel and chemical industries were other important industries contributing to the local economy. For example, Middlesbrough and Consett were large centres of iron work, whereas South Shields was the major producer of glass in England. Many ports of the North-East were significant hubs of trade and shipbuilding, with the Port of Tyne being strategically important for the country. The region was also at the forefront of technological innovations. Tanfield railway, originally used to transport coal, is believed to be the world's oldest railway; Cragston, a country house of Lord Armstrong, was the first house in the world lit by the power of hydro-electricity; the world's first power station that used turbo generators to produce electricity was built in Newcastle (The North-East England History Pages). The industrial culture dominated the North-East and was shared by both working class and industrial middle-class people (Byrne, 2002).

Bourgeoning progress of the region generated abundant and relatively well-paid jobs. The North-East employed hundreds of thousands of coalminers, and only engineers in London were paid higher salaries than local specialists (Renton, 2008). The most important industries, however, were male-dominated. Unlike in other regions, women in the North-East were not employed for underground mining works, which reduced employment opportunities available for them to 'supplementary' works of various sorts (ibid). The situation slightly changed with a growth of a fishing industry in the early 20th century, but women's participation in paid labour remained very limited (McDowell and Massey, 1984). This resulted in a highly patriarchal society with an enduring ideology of men as breadwinners and women as housewives. Life in mining

communities also promoted and maintained close family ties and the in-group orientation – a feature commonly associated with working-class communities (Charles and James, 2005; Charles et al., 2008).

Availability of jobs in the North-East, combined with established trade links to other ports all over the globe, resulted in a considerably inflow of migrants to the region. Most of these people were coming from other parts of the country, but the region witnessed some international migration too. In the second half of the 19th century thousands of Irish migrants, fleeing from economic depression and famine, settled in the North-East. Many found employment in iron industry and shipbuilding. The percentage of the Irish population in Middlesbrough, Newcastle and Consett was among the highest in England and a town of Jarrow was known as ‘Little Ireland’ (see Swift and Gilley, 1989). German and Scandinavian seamen formed their small communities, with German Protestant Congregations launched in Sunderland and South Shields. Later migrants from Italy settled in the region and established many local businesses (Shankland, 2014). A Jewish community in Newcastle was founded by merchants, but subsequently moved to Gateshead and set up synagogues and yeshivas (colleges) regarded the most significant Jewish institutions in Europe. It later grew with the arrival of refugees from Germany (Jewish Community and Records, 2016). A few Chinese seamen were recorded in the North-East, but migration from outside Europe was virtually unknown until World War II.

From the second half of the last century dramatic, painful and still ongoing transformations of the region have been occurring. Many shipyards were closed during the times of economic depression. Most of the mines were also closed during Margaret Thatcher’s tenure as Prime-Minister. The decline of traditional industries posed acute economic and social challenges for the North-East. The number of industrial jobs dropped dramatically – e.g. from 320,000 to 146,000 in Tyne and Wear in 1971-1991 (Renton, 2008). The number of men in full-time employment fell by one third over the same period. The unemployment ratio has been significantly higher than the national level, with many jobs in the region being part-time, low-skilled and poorly paid (ONS, 2016a).

The proportion of women in employment has been rising over the last decades, having equalled the proportion of men and, at certain periods of time, even surpassed it (ONS, 2016b). At the same time migrants’ communities have become more sizeable and diverse (Renton, 2008). More people of non-European background were coming to the North-East after World War II. Migrants from the Indian sub-continent settled in the region and a small, but vibrant Chinatown was founded in Newcastle. In more recent years migration from A8 countries has become more

prominent: between 2001 and 2011 the number of residents born in Eastern Europe increased by 359% (Vickers et al., 2016).

The remaining part of this chapter will focus on present social and cultural mechanisms to explain (or *retrodict*) their influence upon skilled migrants' career experiences in the North-East of England. Not all mechanisms considered in this chapter are region-specific: some of them operate on different analytical levels. Some factors are specific for migrants' projects (e.g. regulation of borders), whereas others affect all individuals (e.g. labour market demand for skills). The objective is, however, to understand how they interact to constitute the context in which migrants seek to realise their career projects.

5.3 Migration regulation

The first mechanism (or boundary), migration regulation, legally conditions access to jobs in the region for foreign nationals. Despite the recent calls for a localized approach to managing migration to acknowledge regional diversity and address region-specific challenges (Smart and Murray, 2017), regulation of migration in the UK is governed at the national level. Yet, being a member of the European Economic Area (EEA) and the European Union (EU)³⁸, the UK must adhere to the principle of the freedom of movement for workers between member states. As a result, and despite government's attempts to gain more control over regulation of migration (e.g. David Cameron's speech on immigration, 2013), citizens of 30 European states³⁹ can live and work in the UK without any restrictions. It has been noted (Brochmann and Lavenex, 2003) that to compensate for this lack of control over the national borders, developed European countries impose particularly stiff restrictions on access to their labour markets for non-EEA citizens. Thus, regulation of migration is a *supra*-national factor influenced by more global forces beyond the UK borders.

In 2010 the then Prime Minister David Cameron set up a goal to reduce net migration "from the hundreds of thousands to the tens of thousands" (Cameron, 2010). Considering government's inability to regulate migration from the EEA, this aim seemed only possible to achieve at the expense of individuals coming from outside the EEA. Consequently, migration policies in the

³⁸ As of September 2017.

³⁹ 29 members of the EEA and Switzerland.

UK have been tightening ever since to restrain the inflow of non-EEA migrants, with many changes directly affecting skilled migrants and overseas students⁴⁰.

Non-EEA migrants in the sample (22 individuals) obtained legal rights to work and live in the UK via three major paths. First, relocation of eight respondents was family-related. Seven of them (six females and one male) were granted family visas to join their partners in the UK. Despite high costs (£1,195), income requirements for spouses of non-EEA nationals (£18,600 in 2017) and extensive paperwork, all seven described their experiences of relocation as generally unproblematic. One more person moved as a child with his family. Second, eight non-EEA participants applied for job vacancies from outside the UK, were hired and sponsored by their employers to apply for work visas. Only two of them were in relatively early career stages, whereas five were at more advanced stages and held relatively senior posts before migration to the UK. Searching for a job and sponsorship was prolonged and troublesome for both early career respondents. In contrast, four out of five senior interviewees had job offers elsewhere in the world, but chose the UK for various reasons (e.g. more convenient geographical location to visit family, better development opportunities and more interesting projects). This signals that, although high-profile experienced professionals with skills in demand might be able to move between borders with relative ease, international mobility is more difficult for other categories of 'skilled' workers. Finally, six non-EEA respondents studied in the UK and were employed upon graduation. This cluster was particularly affected by the recent changes in migration policies (see Chapter 3). Only two respondents in this group managed to switch directly from a student to work visa. The other four had to go through an intermediate phase on a post-study visa, which was abolished in 2012. This visa allowed them to stay in the UK for two years after having successfully completed their programme of study. This gave them time to find jobs and means to support themselves whilst looking (e.g. doing part-time or temporary jobs), providing an opportunity to develop, demonstrate and prove their skills to employers.

For example, Kamran, a 30-year-old Human Relations (HR) professional from Pakistan, finished his Masters in 2008, the midst of the recent recession. His career prospects were questionable, but he was persistent in his ambition to build career in HR. Kamran successfully applied for a post-study visa and got a temporary one-year teaching contract at a local college. During this time, he continued applying for HR jobs. Soon after his teaching contract finished, Kamran was offered a three-month contract in HR. After three months, his contract was extended for another two months and, eventually, he was offered a permanent position in the same company. Kamran,

⁴⁰ See also 3.3.1.1.

like all other graduates who benefitted from this post-study visa scheme, assumed that getting a job without it would have been much more difficult:

Visa is definitely an issue; (...) organizations are very reluctant now to sponsor anyone. They only sponsor those people who are very niche, (...) like if they are looking for someone who they will not be able to find from here, it's very rare, I hardly know anyone who's been sponsored. (...) I had this Tier1 visa with me, so otherwise I would have had an issue as well. When I didn't have this visa, a couple of people refused me as well on the basis that I hadn't got a visa.

This statement does not seem unreasonable when the recent data from the Home Office (2017) is considered. The number of study-related visas granted to main applicants was relatively stable at around 200,000 per annum over the last decade. However, the number of individuals who switched to work and family visas during or after their study had dropped from 54,000 in 2011 to under 12,000 in 2014. This suggests that abolishment of Tier 2 Post-study visa has significantly undermined overseas students' employment prospects in the UK and that migration regulation, overall, is a considerable barrier for non-EEA nationals seeking access to the UK jobs market.

Migration regulation limits employment opportunities available for non-EEA citizens in the UK in various other ways. Not only does hiring non-EEA workers entail additional costs for employers, it also takes a significant amount of time and, therefore, may not be acceptable when a vacancy needs to be filled promptly. Eleven respondents in the sample were offered jobs on a condition that they would start immediately, e.g. when needed to cover an absence or a leave. Yet, this was only possible for EEA nationals and those non-EEA migrants who already possessed rights to work in the UK (family migrants and recent graduates on a post-study visa). Another disadvantage for subjects of migration regulation is the difficulty of moving between employers. If non-EEA nationals wish to change jobs, they need to find another employer willing to act as a sponsor for their visa application; otherwise they might be required to leave the country. In contrast, EEA nationals do not face such difficulties and can move between jobs and employers freely. Indeed, among nine non-EEA respondents who managed to move between employers, five were on family visas and three on post-study visas. One more respondent undertook a significant career transition after having obtained an indefinite leave to remain. 13 out of 22 non-EEA participants were still with their first employer at the time of the interview, including all respondents on working visas. In contrast, 11 out of 19 EEA migrants and 11 out of 16 indigenes had changed their employers in the UK at least once.

Moreover, to obtain a Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) Visa non-EEA citizens must have access to £50,000 from government programmes or £200,000 of their own available in investment funds, whilst EEA migrants are free in their entrepreneurial initiatives. Non-EEA passport holders can also move to the UK as Investors, but only if they have £2,000,000 to invest in government bonds, share or loan capital of UK registered companies. Understandably, this amount is unaffordable for most prospective migrants and the number of these visas granted is very low – 1,698 and 372 in 2016 respectively (Home Office, 2017). In line with these tendencies, six out of 19 EEA individuals in the sample were engaged in entrepreneurship at some point of their residence in the UK, whereas only two non-EEA respondents had such experience: both entered the country on family visas. Similarly, only family non-EEA migrants and students could take part-time or transition employment, although the latter group is not permitted to work more than 20 hours per week. Like Kamran, many of them saw it as an opportunity to explore the new labour market, gain experience and decide what they wanted for their careers. In contrast, non-EEA migrants on working visas were legally obliged by the visa requirements to stay in full-time works, which allowed for little career flexibility and mobility. Calvin (Jamaica, engineer) expressed a feeling of regret and disappointment with these arrangements shared by many other non-EEA citizens:

I am not sure I would become self-employed even if I could, but it would be great to know that I can do it. (...) You know, just when sometimes you don't want to do what you are doing anymore and you start thinking of other options... It would be good to know that I can leave any time I want, try this and that, explore different opportunities, maybe work part-time for a few months, maybe do more volunteering, maybe have my own business, something more meaningful for me. (...) It is depressing to think that I cannot do any of this, that I only can stay in the country for as long as I keep working, even if I don't want to, even if I don't need to work...

5.4 Regulation of access to occupations

Once access to the labour market has been granted, regulation of occupations⁴¹ impacts on who can practice particular occupations and on what conditions. Although professional bodies imposing regulations operate on a national level, the UK participates in a number of agreements regulating recognition of skills and qualifications within the European Union. Therefore, like regulation of borders, formal regulation of occupations is also a matter of *supra*-national

⁴¹ See also 3.3.1.2.

jurisdiction. These agreements prioritise EEA citizens and make formal recognition of their credentials significantly easier. The process varies across different occupations, as some of them might be regulated in the UK, but unregulated in migrants' home countries. For example, in the EU there is a system of automatic recognition of professional qualifications for seven 'sectoral professions': nurses, midwives, doctors, dentists, pharmacists, architects and veterinary surgeons. To get their qualifications recognised, applicants simply need to contact the local occupational authorities, providing evidence of qualifications. The decision must be made within three or four months (European Commission Directive 2013/55/EU). The UK has similar agreements regarding recognition of certain qualifications with some states outside the EEA (e.g. Canada), which facilitates access to employment for their nationals.

These agreements do not mean, of course, that citizens of these countries are completely free of regulation. In some cases, they might be required to undertake aptitude tests, language tests or adaptation traineeship, which in principle can take up to three years (European Commission, 2017). Nonetheless, even if migrants do not meet regulatory requirements and need to work towards them, EEA citizens are in a significantly more favourable position. They can engage in volunteering to enhance their skills, do part-time jobs to support themselves during this time of transition or start from very junior posts in the industry to gain experience and work their way up. As discussed elsewhere, these paths to regulated occupations are rarely available for non-EEA migrants due to migration regulations. Only possessors of spouse visas and, with provisos, students are allowed such flexibility.

At the time of the interviews Brandon (45) from Ireland and Tony (28) from the UK were fully qualified accountants, members of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. However, both started careers at a rather junior level and spent years working towards a membership in this professional body – de jure voluntary, but de facto prerequisite for senior positions in the occupation. Gaining this qualification required a significant amount of time, effort and support from their employers. During this time, they had to combine work and study to pass a number of tests and exams. Brandon described it:

They run exams twice a year, you either pass exams or you fail exams, that's it. (...) That's the real problem, studying and working at the same time. (...) It took me three years after I graduated. (...) And on the top of that [in order to be awarded a membership] you have to have a record of practical experience signed by a member of the body. You couldn't do exams fast and get yourself qualified; you needed have experience as well.

Similarly, Ahmed (37, Iran) graduated with a degree in accounting and finance from one of the UK's universities. However, at the time of his graduation most starting salaries in accountancy were below the minimum required for a work visa. He believed that it might have been possible to satisfy the wage criterion in London, where salaries were higher, but he did not want to live in the capital. Instead, Ahmed returned to Iran and got a job in the banking sector, which was a shift away from his specialization. Within the next few years he worked for different banks in Iran, Turkey and the USA, where he was involved in significant investment projects. Having gained experience and reputation, Ahmed eventually got a senior job in the UK banking sector. This job was not formally regulated and the salary was more than sufficient for migration regulation.

These examples highlight difficulties non-EEA migrants confront trying to access regulated jobs in the UK. It is hardly surprising that migrants, and especially those from outside the EEA, are significantly less likely to be found in regulated occupations than the indigenes (Bach, 2010; Koumenta et al., 2014). The sample generally reflected this tendency. Among 16 native-born respondents seven were either employed in regulated occupations at the time they were interviewed or had had such experience before. Like Tony in the example above, most of them received support from employers. In case of EEA migrants, only five out of 19 had been employed in regulated occupations at some point of their careers in the UK. Four of them were educated and trained in the UK. Three more had relevant education, but were deterred by regulation requirements and pursued alternative careers. Similarly, out of 22 non-EEA respondents five had qualifications in regulated occupations, but chose alternative career paths due to difficulties (perceived or factual) with recognition of those skills. For example, Jennifer (35, USA) was employed as a pharmacist in the USA – one of the seven so-called sectoral professions. As a non-EEA citizen, she was not eligible for automatic recognition of qualifications. Jennifer soon realised that local employers had little trust to her overseas credentials. She knew that she would need to undertake re-training, but struggled to find information and support. Even though she moved to the UK on a spouse visa and had a considerable freedom in her actions, Jennifer eventually decided that re-entering this occupation would be too difficult and took a job as an administrator. She explained:

First of all, they don't understand what qualification you do have. And then when you provide job references they are not going to make an international call to speak to somebody in the pharmacy to find out if you actually worked there. (...) So, you kind of go to the bottom of the list. They have to find out what qualification you have and if it is applicable. And then they have to find out if you actually have it. And they wouldn't know where to start. The other thing is if I want to continue my pharmacy trip, I understood I

would have to be re-trained (...). So that was an expected obstacle, but finding the information (...) was very difficult. (...) So pharmacy I gave up after a while, I tried a couple of places and I didn't... Feedback was very reserved and very – we are not sure about your experience...

Only three out of 22 non-EEA interviewees had experience in regulated occupations in the UK. All three moved to the country on family visas to reunite with their partners and, therefore, had employment rights similar to indigenes and EEA nationals. One of them additionally benefitted from a special qualifications recognition agreement between the UK and her home country. One more possessed engineering skills in high demand and received substantial support from the employer. Finally, Dabeet, a 38-year-old doctor from India, was the only individual in the sample who managed to gain access to a regulated occupation without institutional support. He had a successful career - senior position, interesting responsibilities, good salary and bright prospects - in his home country, before he then decided to move to the UK to be with his fiancée, a British Indian. Initially Dabeet was granted a two-year visa with a right to work and then an indefinite residence permit. Also, his wife's income was sufficient to support them both at that time. Having no visa problem and sufficient financial assistance, Dabeet still had to pass professional exams to prove his competence. It took him nine months and significant financial investments to pass the first round of tests and get his first job. However, he was still unable to get a position of the same level he had in India. Dabeet spent about two years in temporary jobs in NHS before he passed all exams and he was then able to move into a more senior role.

I had to take my professional medical body exams before I could actually work here. (...) They had three exams, two of them I cleared, the third one took me four attempts to clear that exam. Quite expensive exam... And quite an effort I put in it. It was quite pivotal, because only I could join a senior trainer when I clear these membership exams.

Occupational regulations pose significant barriers for prospective practitioners in its own right. They determine who is able to practice certain occupations and on what conditions. However, in combination with migration regulation, it can create systems of closure that are exceptionally hard to penetrate. Requirements for the indigenes, EEA and non-EEA candidates may or may not vary, but the latter group is particularly likely to experience difficulties with recognition of their qualifications. Furthermore, migration policies limit opportunities for 'transitional employment' available for non-EEA migrants. As the examples

above illustrate, these mechanisms can effectively exclude non-EEA nationals from the labour market or, at least, from some occupations.

5.5 Labour market

After migrants have satisfied requirements posed by migration authorities and professional bodies, their careers are still affected by labour market mechanisms. Some of them reflect tendencies of the wider national jobs markets, whilst some others are more specific to the region. This section most notably explores the impact of demand for and supply of skills in the North-East, as well as opportunities to achieve career outcomes in different occupations.

In the last century, the North-East experienced tremendous metamorphoses from the wealthy industrial hub to one of the poorest and most deprived regions in the country (see Renton, 2008). The region has the third smallest GDP per capita in the UK and the smallest in England (£18,927: Harari, 2016), and constitutes just 3% of national output, making it the second smallest region in the UK and the smallest in England (ONS, 2013). However, the analysis of the regional labour market suggests that, currently, opportunities for skilled employment in the North-East exist and are growing in number (ONS, 2016a, 2016b), but remain limited compared to other regions of the UK. Many of the region's most significant companies (The Journal, 2016) operate in 'low-skilled' construction, retail, leisure and social care industries. Manufacturing is still a significant industry in the region. It accounts for almost 10% of jobs in the North-East, compared to just 2.2% in London and 7.6% in the UK (ONS, 2012c). Factories producing food products, chemicals, pharmaceutical products, machinery, electrical equipment, motor vehicles and other products are located in the North-East. Although many of these companies are labour-intensive, some of them employ a significant number of researchers and engineers – e.g. Nissan, Procter & Gamble, Gestamp and British Engines. Similar opportunities for engineers can be found in local electricity, gas and water supply companies, including a nuclear power station in Hartlepool. There are also several 'big players' in software (e.g. the Sage) and financial (e.g. Virgin Money) industries. Further, the North-East is home to five universities, which employ hundreds of research and teaching staff. Despite this, the investment in research and development in the regions are among the lowest in the country (ONS, 2012c). Finally, in recent decades government became one of the major employers in the North-East (ONS, 2012c). Consequently, the share of employment in public sector jobs in the region is above the national average. For example, 5.6% of all jobs are in public administration and defence (4.3% in the UK) and 15.5%

are in human health and social care (12.4% in the UK). The latter group includes medical personnel, who are in high demand due to the region’s older than average population (ONS, 2012c).

In general, the structure of the local economy displays that traditional manual and ‘low-skilled’ industries remain more important for the local economy than in many other regions. As a result, skilled jobs are concentrated in a few occupations (engineers, researchers, higher education lecturers, health professionals and managers) and are relatively low in number. The data on employment by industry and occupation illuminates the underdevelopment of most ‘skilled’ industries in the North-East and relative scarcity of skilled jobs (ONS, 2016a, 2016b). Only 6.6% of jobs in the region are in professional, scientific and technical activities, as opposed to 13.8% in London and 8.8% in the UK. Further, only 2.8% of employees work in the information and communication sector (4.1% in the whole country) and 2.2% in financial and insurance activities (3.2% in the UK). Consequentially, people in the North-East are considerably under-represented in ‘skilled’ occupations (Figure 5.1). Only 8.8% of them are employed as managers and senior officials (10.6% in the UK), 18.1% are employed in professional occupations (20.3% in the UK) and 12.3% in associate professional and technical occupations (14.1% in the UK). Overall, just 39.5% of all employees in the North-East work in one of these three occupation groups, compared to 55.7% in London and 45.2% in the UK.

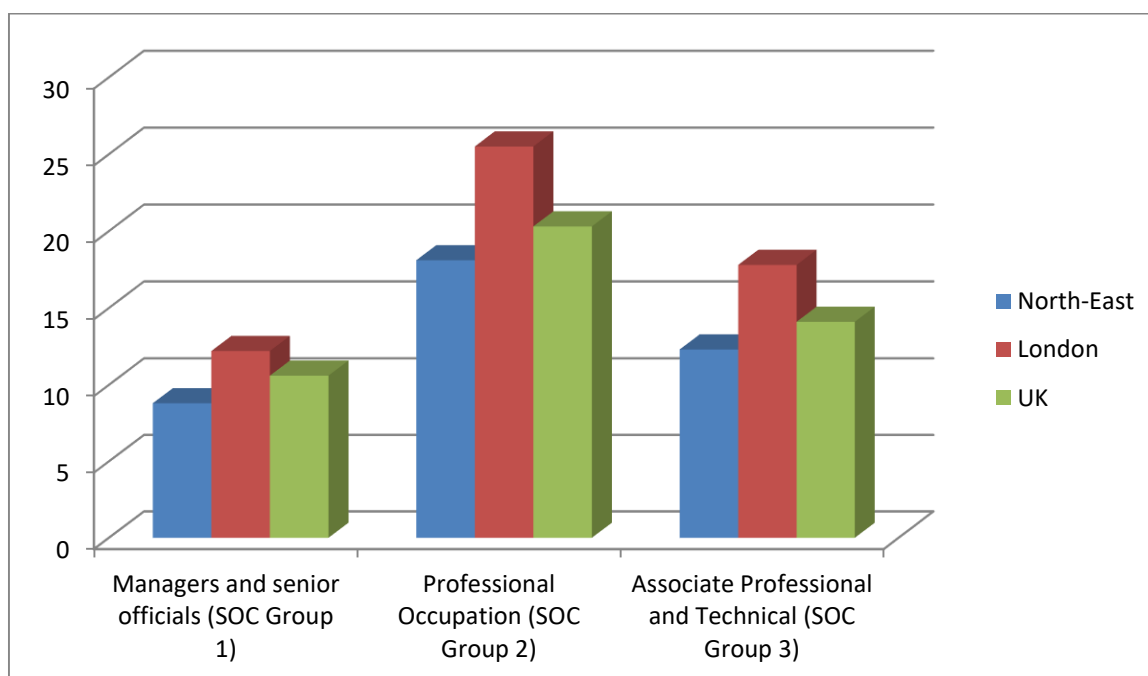


Figure 5.1 Employment by occupations, % (ONS, 2017)

The interviews reflected this distribution. The respondents emphasised the lack of opportunities for developing skilled careers in the North-East. It was a common perception that there were fewer skilled jobs in the region than in many other parts of the country. This was a particularly serious challenge for respondents who were ‘tied’ to the region (e.g. for family reasons). For instance, Ernie, a 44-year old strategic planning manager from Australia, met his wife 12 years ago, when he was working for a large company in the City of London. When they were getting ready to have their first child, the couple decided that London was not the right place to bring the baby up. So, they moved to the North-East, where Ernie’s wife was from. He soon found out that the demand for his trade was not very high in the region. It took him almost a year to find an appropriate job in the North-East, although there were plentiful vacancies in other regions. Ernie’s ambition was to become a board member. However, he did not believe this could happen in the North-East:

There are no jobs of this level here. Over the years there was one [vacancy in another company], but it was not good. (...) Every year I have interest from London, from Manchester, from Birmingham. They find me on LinkedIn or through people I worked with before. But I don’t even consider this. We have kids, they love their school here. My wife is happy, it’s great to have her family around, they help a lot with the kids. (...) She wouldn’t want to move, I don’t even tell her [about interest from other cities]. I am happy, but it feels that as a professional I am a bit stuck here.

This statement illustrates that the principal perceived problem was not merely the lack of skilled jobs per se, but the lack of senior skilled jobs, i.e. scarce opportunities for promotion in the North-East. The interviewees highlighted there were comparatively few senior, most notably managerial positions in the region. Many of them worked in regional offices of large companies, with headquarters and all senior managerial staff located elsewhere in the world. For example, it was difficult to progress for Lauren (32, UK, tax professional), because there were only 300 posts at the level above her in the organisation. Among them, 205 were in London and just three in the North-East.

The respondents also perceived staff turnover in the region rather low. Indeed, the North-East is the region with the smallest inflows and outflows of internal migration (ONS, 2016). The respondents’ experience also suggested that people in the North-East were not likely to change jobs and employers, meaning that relatively rare skilled jobs did not become available frequently (see also Hudson, 2005). As Hong (34, China, HR manager) commented:

There are many foreign people in the factory, but most of them are local. Almost all management people are local. They have been with the company all their lives. I think, even their parents worked here, many of them. They join the company and stay forever. Some of them maybe get promoted, some of them maybe not, but they stay until they retire. (...) I think three most senior HR people have been with the company more than 30 years. Each of them. And about 10 years in their current jobs.

Despite the limited number of skilled positions in the North-East, regional companies are more likely to report skills shortage than businesses in the UK on average (Smart and Murray, 2017). Moreover, compared to the rest of the country, more shortages in the North-East are in ‘skilled’ occupations (Vivian et al., 2015). There are five universities in the North-East, including Durham University, consistently ranked as one of the best higher education institutions in Europe, and Newcastle University, a member of the prestigious Russell Group. However, the population in the region is among the lowest qualified in the country. It has been estimated (UKCES, 2014) that 10.4% of working age people in the North-East have no qualification (compared to 8.8% in the UK) and just 30.7% have qualification of NVQ4⁴² and above (36.9% in the UK and 49.8% in London). In combination with the aforementioned low-mobility of workers in the region, this suggests that employers have a rather limited pool of candidates and skillsets to choose from.

The respondents stressed that in these circumstances it was easier to stand out. For example, Natalie (24, UK) was born in Gateshead, but had to move to another region of the UK to do a degree in optometry, because local universities did not offer such courses. Upon her return to the North-East, Natalie believed she was among very few locally-born optometrists on the jobs market. She received a few job offers almost immediately and could choose between them. Natalie explained:

Most of them [other optometrists in the North-East] were from Ireland, also Bradford-Manchester area, that’s where most universities are. So, to have someone who is actually from here is actually quite rare. So, it was good for them to know I would actually stay in the practice rather than be homesick and want to move. (...) So, it was a big bonus me being quite local.

⁴² Examples of the National Vocational Qualification level 4 qualifications are: diploma of higher education, foundation degree, bachelor’s degree and graduate diploma. Level 5 refers to the postgraduate level of education (Master’s and Doctorate degrees).

Natalie saw that the biggest bonus for her was not merely being local, but being local with a valuable skillset. Migrants, however, were also able to benefit from a limited and homogeneous⁴³ pool of skills available for employers in the North-East. Some migrant respondents felt that their status of ‘foreign workers’ was a significant career advantage. Many believed that employers deemed them as possessors of skills rare in the region, which enhanced career prospects. Roberto (Mexico, intellectual property manager) found a job when his current organisation was strategically recruiting in different countries abroad, including Mexico. He was aware that the company was looking to increase diversity of its workforce with an intention to attract a wider variety of knowledge and expertise. He explained:

I had an impression they were very pro diversity. They realized that in Newcastle it was mainly British people, almost all Geordies, so it was really local people working in Newcastle. The biggest minority was the Scottish people and maybe Indian people or, you know, British people with Indian background. And then when they moved people from the Philippines, from Mexico City, they saw the benefits, because we can speak for the whole world, so if you don't know how the consumers behave, it's difficult to understand, you know, what is important for the consumer. So, then they decided to start recruiting people from Latin America.

Being a foreigner was particularly advantageous in managerial and research occupations, where employers were perceived to be looking for different approaches for problems-solving, a variety of opinions and an ability to “think out of the box”. ‘Foreignness’ was less appreciated in some other occupations, especially where jobs required strict adherence to a uniform practice and allowed for less ‘skill in the job’. For example, Asel (38, Kazakhstan) felt that as an accountant technician her opportunities to utilise foreignness were limited:

They just want you to follow the rules. I tried many times, I said – we did it this way, why don't we try? But they are not interested. (...) They just want you to be like everyone else, even if you are foreign.

In a similar fashion, the structure of the labour market makes achieving some career outcomes easier in some occupations than in others. Even among skilled occupations the level of wages can vary quite significantly. Elsewhere in this chapter, it was mentioned how Ahmed’s (37, Iran, bank manager) had to leave the UK, because the level of graduate salaries in accountancy was not sufficient to satisfy visa criterion. These days the required minimal salary for non-EEA

⁴³ See the following section of this chapter.

graduates of UK universities stands at £20,800. According to the Complete University Guide (2016), an average graduate salary for degree-level jobs in accounting and finance was £23,180 in 2014/15⁴⁴. Although it is safe to assume that salaries are not the same in London and the North-East, graduates in accountancy are still in a better position to satisfy the requirement than, for example, graduates in architecture (average graduate salary £19,864), creative writing (£18,133) or psychology (£19,927). In contrast, most graduates in engineering and medicine should be eligible for a work visa with average graduate salaries between £25,000 and £30,000⁴⁵. A similar dispersion can be observed for the national average salaries for experienced workers in different occupations.

Further, occupations have dissimilar opportunities for promotions and salary growth. For example, higher education lecturers are typically paid in accordance to salary scales adopted by their institutions, often with an annual pay rise. Opportunities for formal promotions are somewhat limited, as a ‘typical’ career in research and teaching involves progression from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer, then to Reader and finally to Professor. Other indicators (e.g. publications and number of supervised PhD students) are used to assess career outcomes. In contrast, many managerial jobs involve progression through numerous levels, individually negotiated wages (at more senior stages) and a commission-led income. For example, the sample included three individuals who left mid-level posts in industry to join academia. All of them stressed that they accepted an income reduction of 30-50%. Even years later, having been promoted, they did not fully compensate for this loss. As Joaquin (41, Colombia, lecturer) exemplified:

So, I think the main difference between my work in [location A], which was consultancy, and my work in [location B], which is academia, is intellectual freedom and I earn less, I still earn less... Yes, I think I still earn less than what I was earning in [location A] six years ago, but I'm free.

Finally, conditions of the labour market influenced opportunities for self-employment. The North-East, with its dependence upon the public sector, was especially severely hurt by the latest recession, when government decided to cut its expenditures. Almost a quarter of children lived in workless households in 2011 (ONS, 2012a), when the unemployment ratio in the North-East exceeded 10%. It should be acknowledged that the economy of the North-East has been growing relatively fast in the past few years, demonstrating some signs of recovering, and the overall

⁴⁴ This is a national-level statistical report. Unfortunately, data by regions is not available.

⁴⁵ Even if it can be argued that such estimations tend to focus on data from large employers and, therefore, produce an overly optimistic picture, they nonetheless outline the trend.

forecast is optimistic (Smart and Murray, 2017). For instance, the unemployment ratio has shrunk to 6.5%. Yet, it remains the highest in the UK and well above the national average level of 4.8% (ONS, 2016a). Employment ratio in the region is the second lowest in the country (70.9%) and over 4% of people claim benefits for the reason of unemployment (ONS, 2016a; see Table 5.2). Density of jobs in the North-East is the lowest in the UK and stands at 70 jobs per 100 people aged 16-64, which is considerably lower than the numbers for London (96) and the whole country (82). Moreover, the North-East is among four regions of the UK where people work the lowest average number of hours per week (31.3) (ONS, 2016b). This suggests that many jobs in the regions are not only low-skilled, but also temporary and/or part-time. And low-skilled part-time jobs do not tend to be generously paid. Indeed, the gross weekly pay received by residents of the North-East (£492.2) is the lowest in the country and significantly less than in London (£632.4) and the UK (£538.5).

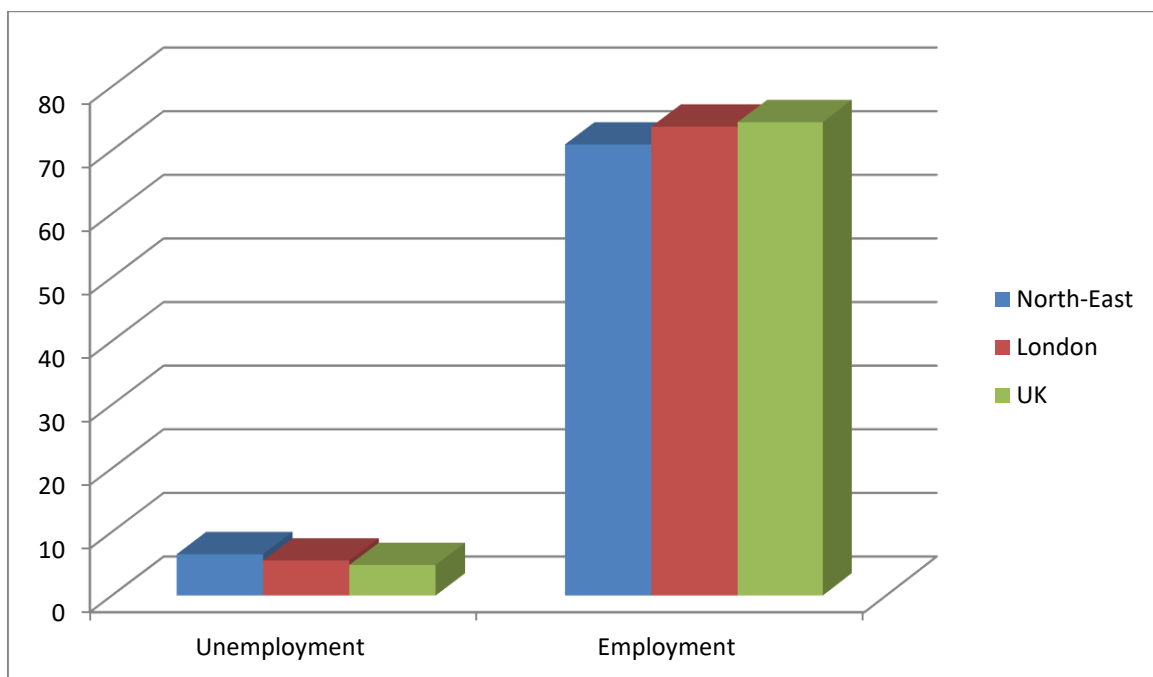


Figure 5.2 Comparative economic activity, % (ONS, 2016a)

A relatively low purchasing power in the region can be the reason of difficulties experienced by some of the respondents who ventured into self-employment. Karolina, a 38-year-old nurse from Lithuania, opened a “natural toiletries” shop in the largest shopping centre in the region. With aid from her husband she invested £70,000 in the business. She knew that these products were popular in the South of the country and on the continent. However, she had to shut the shop down after a few months. Although many people walked into the shop and they liked the

products, very few bought anything due to higher than average prices. At the time when the interview was conducted, Karolina was trying to sell her products online via other retailers and was considering a possibility of opening an on-line store, which would allow her to serve customers with a presumably higher buying power outside the North-East. She explained⁴⁶:

Feedback was very good, but people were not prepared to pay high price for high quality. They just want it cheap. (...) I don't think many people have money here to spoil themselves... Its more about the essentials, many people struggle to make enough for living, so luxury products are out of question. Wish I knew it before (laughs).

5.6 Acceptance and support from social contacts

Although, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter, the North-East has witnessed a long history of migration, its population remains ethnically uniform, especially compared to other regions of the UK (Figure 5.3). Whereas London is the most ethnically diverse region in the country, the North-East is one of the least diverse (ONS, 2012b). The North-East has the highest proportion of White British residents (93.6%) among all regions of England and Wales, and the second highest proportion of White (95.2%). For example, Redcar and Cleveland in the Tees Valley is the local authority with the highest share of White British residents in England and Wales (98%). Ethnic minorities account for less than 5% in the North-East - the shares of mixed ethnicities (0.4%) and Black (1%) residents are the lowest in England and Wales (ONS, 2012a). Similarly, the share of foreign-born population (<5% or 129,000) is the lowest in England and Wales (ONS, 2012a). The largest groups of international migrants come from India, Germany, Poland, Pakistan, China and Ireland, but in absolute numbers they are rather small. Overall, the region's ethnical and national composition experienced very little change from 2001 to 2011 (ONS, 2012b).

⁴⁶ Karolina was one of the respondents who refused to have the interview recorded. She, however, agreed that notes could be used to represent her opinions. This quote is based upon very detailed notes made during the discussion of Karolina's experience of self-employment.

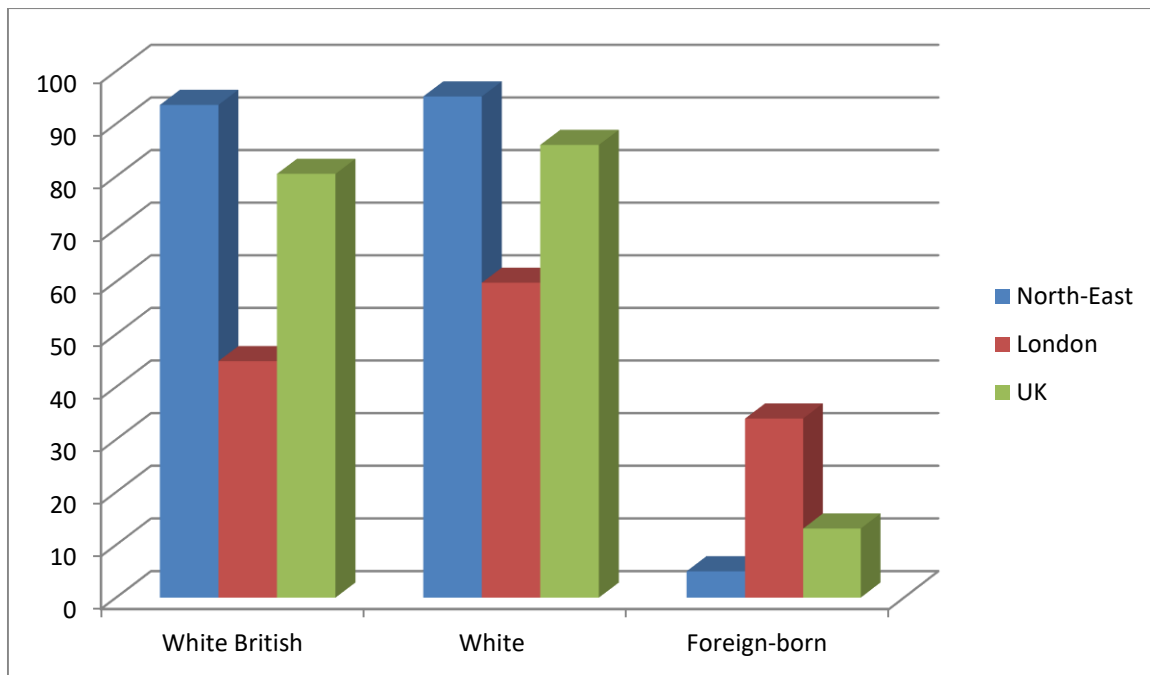


Figure 5.3 Demographic composition, % (ONS, 2012a, 2012b)

The socio-demographic composition of the region is significant for skilled migrants' careers. It has been suggested (Ibarra et al., 2005) that difficulties with acceptance are more likely to emerge in demographically skewed settings, i.e. in settings dominated by one demographic group. Statistical data indicates that the North-East can be regarded as one of such settings. Migrant interviewees, most notably those visibly not belonging to the dominant White Northern European group, felt that they were regarded "a bit like exotic creatures" (Roberto, Mexico) in the North-East. They believed that people were less used to foreigners compared to other regions of the UK and it was harder to win their trust and friendship. At the same time, having limited opportunities to rely on support from other foreigners, migrant respondents felt that personal and professional acceptance by the indigenes was important for their careers and the overall social life and well-being. Acceptance typically depends upon how well individuals fit into often stereotypical perceptions of what it means to be a 'good worker', a 'good friend' or a 'good citizen' (Anderson, 2013).

Some of these ideas are shared by people on the national level. However, some others are influenced by the region's discrete cultural identity rooted in the industrial heritage, specific social and economic arrangements in the North-East and its relative isolation from the other regions (see Tomaney and Ward, 2001). Even though some economic and social changes in the North-East have been occurring, the literature (e.g. Byrne, 2002; Hollands and Chatterton, 2002) suggests that many aspects of life in the North-East are still determined by its unique local culture. It has also been observed that social, demographic and economic disparities between the

North-East and the rest of the country, most notably the capital region, reinforce the regional identity (Tomaney and Ward, 2001), creating a relatively unified and identifiable ‘Geordieland’ (Dobson, 1973).

The term ‘Geordie’ is used as a sobriquet to refer most typically to the inhabitants of Tyneside⁴⁷, as well as the dialect and accent of English they speak. Considering that Tyneside is the most populous area in the North-East, Geordies represent the most influential local sub-culture and the most widely-spoken dialect in the region. Although generally regarded as attractive (The Telegraph, 2010), Geordie-the-dialect is notoriously difficult to understand⁴⁸. Migrant respondents, many of whom studied Standard English, found it very confusing. For example, Maria (engineer, Peru) on her first day in the office thought that her colleagues spoke German between themselves: their strong local dialect and regional slang they used bore very little resemblance to the English she studied and spoke. Language barriers can limit abilities to exchange jokes, have small causal talks with colleagues and, as a consequence, to develop closer personal relationship (Csedo, 2008). Although the situation tends to improve over time, for some respondents it resulted in a sense of alienation at work and social exclusion, especially immediately upon relocation.

Although Geordies are understood as everyone born near the river Tyne, regardless of their class background, ‘Geordieness’ is often associated with working class, ‘lad culture’, ‘hyper masculinity’, extensive alcohol consumption and football⁴⁹ (Hollands, 1995; BBC, 2010). Hollands and Chatterton (2002) observe that such words as ‘charvers’, ‘scallies’ and ‘trevs’ - typically referred to working class males, in low-skilled jobs or involved in criminal activities, often uneducated and marginalised – have a less negative meaning in the North-East, referring to rough manliness and masculinity. Their female equivalents are portrayed as “loud, vulgar and promiscuous” (Hollands and Chatterton, 2002, p.310). The North-East is the only region of England where the ratio of teenage pregnancy (per 1,000 women under 18 years old) is above 10. Currently it stands at 10.5 (ONS, 2015), which is considerably higher than the England’s average level of 6.3. Further, although drinking is generally considered an important part of socialising in the UK, data on alcohol consumption (ONS, 2016c) signals that in the North-East people drink alcohol particularly frequently and at large volumes.

⁴⁷ In a broader sense, ‘Geordieland’ can include Northumberland and County Durham (Dobson, 1973).

⁴⁸ For an amusing example of how difficult understanding Geordie can be even for other native speakers of British English visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zltlmuvEqYU>

⁴⁹ Newcastle United FC is among the best supported European football clubs (WorldFootball, 2016).

More important for migrants in the regions, Hollands (1995) warns that the Geordie culture is rather exclusive and in certain conditions (e.g. shortage of jobs) can promote racism and nationalism. Similarly, Nayak (1999) finds that racial issues can be particularly serious and complicated in the North-East with its dominant ideologies of “Geordiness’ and whiteness. Working class in general is more frequently associated with xenophobia and intolerance (e.g. Gillborn, 2010). This was in part reflected in the results of the EU membership referendum, which took place in the United Kingdom in 2016. Concerns about the level of immigration were among the central themes in the ‘Leave’ campaign supporters. In the North-East all 12 voting districts (with Newcastle-upon-Tyne being the only exception) were in favour of leaving the European Union and the proportion of votes to ‘Leave’ (58.05%) was among the highest in the country.

The interviewees believed that these factors affected their ability to fit into the society, to develop contacts in the region and to receive career support from them. Migrants generally felt that the indigenous population of the UK was very protective of their rules, norms and traditions, especially in comparison to traditional migration societies (such as the USA and Canada). Yet, they believed that in the North-East the importance of these norms was “exaggerated”. As Mira (35, Vietnam, council worker) explained:

In London you can make an excuse, you can say I am foreign, I don't understand your rules. And people are okay with it, they let you be who you are. (...) Here it doesn't work like this. I am not saying that people here are more British than in London, but they certainly want you to be more British here. If you don't become one of them, they are not interested.

This opinion was shared by most migrant respondents who worked in the environments dominated by the indigenes. Local people were described as friendly and social, but not knowledgeable about different cultures (and not particularly curious about them) and generally somewhat narrow-minded. It was believed that understanding and adopting local conventionalities was a necessary condition to gain personal and professional acceptance and to develop closer relations with people. For example, when Jennifer (35, USA) started her work as an administrator, her straightforward American style of communication, which she was particularly proud of, was seen by colleagues as offensive. However, the respondents also emphasised that the rules were often hidden and obscure, and the indigenes were not willing to disclose them. It took Jennifer some time to realise that correspondence in the UK required more

courtesy and “embellishments” than in the USA, because her colleagues did not reveal it to her. Instead, they were reserved and distant, so Jennifer could not understand what was wrong.

Oleg’s (37, lecturer, Ukraine) story is especially illustrative in this regard, as he had an opportunity to provide cross-country and cross-regional comparison. He had completed his PhD and started an academic career in the USA before moving to the UK and getting a job that required him to travel frequently between the North-East and the South of England. Contrasting his experience, Oleg found the UK considerably more conservative and less welcoming to foreigners than in the USA. He felt that in the USA it was much easier to develop contacts with local people, whereas in the UK there was pressure to accept the local norms to gain acceptance from the indigenes.

I feel the longer I live here, the more I feel a foreigner here. (...) Yes, it was completely the opposite when I lived in the States. The longer I lived in the States, the more natural it felt. Here I think for the first couple of years I thought I was integrated, but it took me longer to realize that I was very far from being integrated. (...) Knowing tiny little small things matters and you miss these things, you lack them. I think the language, the accent – everything matters, much more than it matters, say, in the States.

Yet, these “little small things” were not easily detectable. At first Oleg acted in accordance to norms he adopted in the USA. At social events, he was proactive and used his initiative, introducing himself to people and being open and frank. Such behaviour confused the indigenes, who preferred less assertive communication and were not keen on revealing their names to strangers. Nonetheless, none of them indicated his mistakes, which only caused more confusion and awkwardness.

And I think this is what I meant saying the longer I stay here, the more I feel a foreigner. Because when I came here, I did not know these rules, (...) and people were nice around me, they never pointed out that I was doing something strange. And I took me a long time to find out that I was doing something that was strange, that was not normal here. And the longer I live here, the more such things I find out.

Like Mira, Oleg also found people in the South more ‘forgiving’ to foreigners who could not or did not want to follow the rules of socialising. Still in the process of discovering the local normativity, he felt isolated from the mainstream networks in the North-East. Oleg concluded:

People would refrain from talking to you, because we were like aliens to them. Experience like that is harder to get (...) down South.

Also, some of the respondents believed that they had little in common with people of the North-East, who they perceived as working-class and not very well-educated. On the one hand, this perception is not far from the truth, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter (see UKCES, 2014). On the other hand, migrants in the North-East tend to be more skilled than in most other regions: 34% of foreign-born individuals in the regions are educated at NVQ level 4 and higher and 23% are employed in professional occupations (ONS, 2011), suggesting that there is a substantial difference in education between foreign-born and indigenous populations in the North-East.

Interestingly, this issue was raised almost exclusively by non-EEA interviewees. It can be assumed that the costs of migration to the UK make relocation possible mainly for educated and relatively wealthy individuals (especially in case of developing countries). In contrast, freedom of movement within the EEA and, therefore, relatively low costs of migration facilitated mobility of working class in Europe (Favell, 2014). For example, Joaquin, a 41-year-old lecturer from Colombia, moved to the North-East from London. He believed that social distance between him and the population of the region hindered developing networks outside the academia. His social contacts became confined to his partner and colleagues in the department. As a result, Joaquin felt much more isolated than when he lived in the South:

I feel like I don't fit in the North of England easily and I struggle fitting in compared to London or other cities in the South. (...) I find it difficult sometimes, because I feel that I don't connect with your average person on the street (...) in town that I go to visit over the weekend, whilst in London it doesn't matter. (...) And the North-East of England, with the exception of Northumberland, is pretty much working class. And, of course, as a professional migrant you don't necessarily identify yourself with working class fully. (...) I think being in the North of England as a professional migrant (...) is not particularly easy, its actually... yes, you would have to connect with a very particular segment of society and it's not necessarily the segment of society that (...) professional migrants would connect with.

Nonetheless, Joaquin was relatively well-placed. Cultural differences considerably affected his abilities to expand networks beyond academia, but less so his relations with colleagues, many of whom were other middle-class migrants. This was a more acute challenge for migrant respondents working in less diverse environments. It was stressed that migrants had few common interests with their indigenous colleagues, had insufficient grasp of cultural references (e.g. films, TV programmes etc.) and struggled to understand humour based largely upon puns. Kamran (30, Pakistan) explained that his inability to understand cultural references had

effectively excluded him from informal communication with colleagues, which put his membership at the social network at risk:

[W]hen you are at home, you have your local TV programs, local music that you talk about. I am not from here and they are having those kinds of discussions. And I am not able to take part into these discussions, because (...) I haven't been brought up over here, you know. I don't know about those programs, TV programs they watched in their early age or their teens or song they listened or bands they listened or they gone to. (...) I am clueless, I am sitting over there and they might be laughing at a joke which does not make any sense to me. (...) That's way it is kind of very hard for me to penetrate and get involved in those discussions.

Yet, even when the respondents became aware of cultural norms, it did not entail automatic adoption of them. For example, the respondents suggested that going out drinking was the major way to develop closer contacts with colleagues. However, such practices were regarded as unacceptable by many (particularly Muslim and female participants). Consequently, they found themselves isolated from the mainstream networks and social resources, which could mean missing some career opportunities. For instance, on three occasions the respondents were hired for positions that were not advertised at all, and on four more occasions internal and external vacancies were advertised so obscurely that it was possible to identify them only with help from 'insiders'. In these instances, social contacts played a decisive role, and six out of seven respondents in this group were indigenous. The only migrant was Reece (24, South Africa) who moved to the UK as a child with his family and, therefore, had networks comparable to those of the native-born participants. It can be assumed that some migrants, with less social capital, might have missed some opportunities for this reason.

The literature (Almeida et al., 2015) finds evidence that people are less likely to prejudice against dissimilar people when they become more accustomed to them. From the interviews, it was evident that some groups of individuals were believed as more 'legitimate' or suitable for certain jobs than others. For example, according to information provided by the General Medical Council (2017), only 39.3% of doctors in the UK are White British, which indicates that migrants and ethnic minorities are common in the occupation. The second largest ethnic group is Indian doctors (12%). In line with this, Dabeet, a doctor from India, felt that his competence had not been questioned: "*Yes, everybody gives me respect or a kind of... yeah, professional respect. People acknowledge me*".

In contrast, Higher Education Statistics Agency (2016) estimates that higher-education academic staff in the UK is overwhelmingly White (79%). In 2015/2016 universities employed 201,380 academics and only 3,205 or 1.6% of them were Black⁵⁰. Akande, a lecturer from Nigeria, confessed that some students might be less willing to attend his classes, because they “*are not expecting a black guy to teach them*”. Akande believed that students’ dissatisfaction with his teaching could negatively affect his career prospects in the university. He felt compelled to work harder than many of his colleagues to reaffirm his competence as a lecturer.

Similarly, when Maria (42, Peru) was hired as an engineer, she was only the second foreign employee in the company. Her responsibilities included communicating with teams of workers, who were predominantly local working-class mature White males. She felt that many of them were only accustomed to being supervised by other white British males. Thus, Maria’s skills and authority, as of a Hispanic female migrant, were initially questioned and challenged. In the beginning, she experienced issues with acceptance and it took her a few months to win their trust and respect. She explained:

It wasn't too easy when it gets to the point that I have to give instruction on the shop floor, because there are people who are like 60 years old or 55 years old and they have been there 40 years of their lives. And I think for them it's difficult when someone doesn't speak the language with the same accent (laughs), is a woman and is not from here.

It is important to stress that not all acceptance barriers are idiosyncratic to the region and its cultural identity. These problems are well-documented in the literature and have been found in different locations and for different groups of migrants (e.g. Purkayastha, 2005; Raghuram et al., 2010; Varma et al., 2011). It feels safe to assume that the ‘legitimacy’ of Indian doctors would be seen in a quite similar way in, for example, London, Newcastle and Edinburgh. Nonetheless, some of the stereotypes, opinions and prejudices can be particularly salient in the North-East, due to historical and present causal mechanisms. As Maria commented after the interview⁵¹:

I think most working-class White men would be doubtful receiving instructions from a migrant woman. This is common. What makes the North-East different is that there are so many working-class White men here.

⁵⁰ Such numbers are not available on the regional level, but the respondents and the researcher’s observations suggest that in the North-East, too, Indian doctors are significantly more common than Black lecturers.

⁵¹ This comment was not recorded. The quote provided has been ‘reconstructed’ by the researcher.

5.7 Summary

This chapter sought to explore the first element of CRE – context in which migrants attempt to realise their career projects. It did not attempt to provide an exhaustive account of contextual mechanisms. Instead, it tested and examined those that had been identified as particularly consequential for skilled migrants' careers, focusing upon issues related to skilfulness and support from social contacts. To complete this task, the chapter combined the existent theory with empirical evidence from the interviews.

The chapter considered a range of causal mechanisms that intertwine to form an environment that pre-exists skilled migrants and in which they have to navigate their interests. The mechanisms operate on various levels of analysis, but interact with each other. They can act as enablers or obstacles (boundaries, barriers) for different groups of skilled migrants. For example, a relatively high demand for engineering skills in the region indicates good career opportunities for migrants with recognised degrees. However, the lack of diversity suggests that, at least in some occupations, ethnic minorities can face acceptance difficulties. Identifying career barriers is an important first step on the way to emancipation in critical realist studies (see Bhaskar, 1986). The next step is to consider possible ways to deal with inequalities.

The following Chapters 6-8 will discuss how skilled migrants developed and realised career projects within the given context and what outcomes their projects produced for different groups of respondents.

Chapter 6. Autonomous reflexives

6.1 Introduction (for Chapters 6-8)

The previous chapter discussed contextual conditions in which skilled migrants find themselves. This chapter begins to consider how migrants, as social agents, respond to these conditions in pursuit of their interests and ambitions. Utilising data from the interviews, Chapter 6-8 undertake an inquiry into how MoRs dominating internal conversations tend to result in different career projects and what outcomes they generate for individuals.

Chapters 6-8 are dedicated to one MoR each. Each chapter presents an examination of how practitioners of autonomous (Chapter 6), communicative (Chapter 7) and meta-reflexivity (Chapter 8) develop and apply career projects. Each chapter opens with an exemplifying story of one respondent whose internal dialogue was dominated by this mode. Next the discussion moves on to discuss the inner dialogues of the practitioners of a given MoR and inclinations towards certain actions. It explains how the dominant MoRs were identified through the analysis of agential concerns and career decision-making. The chapters then consider causal mechanisms defining availability of projects and how individuals choose between the available projects. Specific attention is paid to the impact of mechanisms relevant to various aspects of skilfulness (e.g. ability to utilise skills, demand for skills etc.) and social capital (e.g. acceptance, discrimination and social support). Finally, the outcomes that career projects tend to produce will be debated in terms of subjective and objective success.

6.2 Autonomous reflexivity: Internal conversations

Uri (42) was born and brought up in Israel, but studied Marketing in the USA⁵² and then spent nearly 15 years working all over the world before moving to the UK. She stressed that she was very independent since her childhood:

⁵² It is demonstrative how she won access to education abroad. A Germany-based charity provided scholarships for Jewish students whose parents or grandparents were born in Germany. Uri was not eligible: although her great-grandparents were German Jews, her grandparents were born in modern Poland and Ukraine, where the family was deported to. Uri sent contacted the committee to explain the situation. She emphasised that her grandparents, still very young children at that time, returned to Germany after the War and lived there for many years before immigrating to Israel. An exception was made and Uri's study was fully funded by the charity.

I always set my own goals and worked hard to achieve what I wanted. Even in school, I was very determined and got angry when I did not get the result I was aiming at. My family are not like this, they are very relaxed, happy with what they have... I think they are afraid of me sometimes (laughs). (...) But yes, I always know what I want. I know it and don't sleep well until I get it (laughs).

After a year in London she wanted to move away from the hustle and bustle of the capital. At this time, she was approached by a company from the North-East seeking to better its performance. Uri found this new challenge appealing and negotiations began. She knew that this was a board-level position, which was one of her major career aspirations. Yet, when all other aspects had been agreed and the contract was prepared, Uri found out that, unlike her predecessor, she would not be a board member. She also realised that there were no female members of the board at all, which led her to doubt the organisation's equality and diversity culture. Uri stipulated that she would only join the company as a member of the board of directors, but the company was adamant. Uri was offered a higher compensation, but not the board membership. The wage was substantially higher than what she was paid in London and, considering lower living costs in the North-East, would allow for a much more comfortable lifestyle. Nonetheless, despite significant pressure from family and friends to accept the generous offer, Uri rejected it. She explained:

As always, I knew what I wished for and didn't want to waste my time where I couldn't get it. I'd never settled for the second best and was not going to!

Three months later she again was contacted by this organization, but now it was Uri's turn to stand her ground. After six months of what turned out to be exhausting haggling Uri got what she wanted. She was appointed as a marketing director, the first female member of the board of directors in the company's 30-year history. However, Uri did not stop there. She observed that women in the organisation were often overlooked when considering for promotions. She decided this must not be the case in her department.

I never shouted: "Let's get more women in top positions! Women are great!" Men can be great too (laughs). I just wanted to make sure that everyone had equal opportunities to progress and that nobody's needs were ignored.

Despite this idyllic picture, Uri was frank about her main concern. She believed that offering equal opportunities to all employees would allow her to make better use of their skills and experiences. Indeed, her department soon demonstrated a substantial increase in performance

and other divisions started adopting her approach. Five years later, three out of seven board members in the company were women and Uri was not overly modest to admit her role in this mini-revolution.

Autonomous reflexivity evidently dominated Uri's inner conversations. She did not seek for completion or approval of her plans, but cherished her independence and freedom to pursue her own goals. Uri was concerned about career objectives and, in order to achieve them, designed strategic plans aiming at transformation of the existing order.

Respondents identified as autonomous reflexives (ARs) were the largest group in the sample – the analysis suggested that for 33 respondents (23 migrants and 10 indigenes) this MoR dominated their internal dialogues. There are two possible explanations for its prevalence. First, Archer's (2007) empirical findings suggest that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to practice autonomous (and meta) reflexivity. Second, Archer (2007) finds that ARs are more willing to take risks than CRs and MRs. Therefore, ARs might be more inclined to venture into international migration.

Archer (2007) found that concerns of ARs were aimed at "achievements". For this reason, the respondents with career and career achievements central in their internal dialogues were classified as practitioners of autonomous reflexivity. As Hong (34, China, HR manager) described:

Career is central in my life, at least at the moment. I think it is my life (laughs). I don't really think of many other things, I don't have hobbies. Maybe later, when I am more... you know, when I am where I want to be.

Likewise, other respondents categorised as ARs were orientated towards achieving practical career objectives. Both migrants and the indigenes had concrete, well-defined goals that typically featured money, status, reputation and/or professional development. For instance, Timur (44, Uzbekistan, lecturer) had a very exact vision of what he aspired to attain:

My personal success would be (...) first of all to establish my own research group where I can actually lead a certain area of research based on my experience. And then supervise PhD students and then have the lab equipment and the facilities, basically to contribute to my research area. Obviously the final destination would be to get some professorship post before you retire or much earlier, it depends.

Similarly, Helen (29, UK, tax advisor) was very outspoken and frank when discussing what propelled her career projects:

I am not going to beat about the bush; money is a very big driver for me. I do want to be successful, successful in terms of how much money I would have made. My mother used to say that when I was little all I used to say was – how is that job paid, how much is this job paid? And I was very money-orientated, even though my parents aren't. And I came from a working-class background; we didn't have a lot of money at all. Maybe that's why I am so driven (laughs).

It is particularly noteworthy that Helen, like Uri and other ARs, stressed dissimilarities between herself and her parents. Autonomy of inner dialogues was used as another factor to classify respondents as ARs (Archer, 2007). Their thoughts, plans and decisions were self-sufficient and did not demand confirmation from the outside. Quite the opposite, to maintain their privacy and independence the respondents in this group rarely sought advice even from their significant others, relying predominantly on information from the Internet and professional services. As Tiwa (36, Nigeria, accountant) exemplified, ARs consciously guarded their internal conversations from interventions and unwanted mutual obligations:

But the downside of that [asking for career advice] is that you have a lot more people involved in your business, people who are involved in your life. So it's just like that – if I am involved in that, I'll have a lot more people around me, people to go to if I need help, support if I need help, but then, on the other side, you'll have a lot more people who know what you are doing, who also need your help, you know. It's not like I don't want to help people, it's just I don't like so many people around me.

Similarly to Tiwa, other ARs preferred to avoid developing many close contacts, being particularly cautious about personal relations at workplace. David (44, Romania, marketing director) expressed a common opinion explicitly stating that he was not intent to develop friendship neither with those above him on the corporate ladder, nor with those below, because it could affect his performance (i.e. an ability to realise career concerns):

So we [David and his boss] are not friends and I don't think we will become friends, simply because I don't feel it's healthy if you have a relationship where you are on different levels of hierarchy. I think it's not good to be friends, I think it can limit the impact you have. And that's why it's difficult to me to be friends with people I work with,

because I might ask things of them that they might not want to do, but I will have the power to make them do it.

This is not, however, to state that respondents identified as ARs were complete loners. Many of them had families and spoke fondly about their significant others, but consciously tried to minimise their involvement in career decision-making and scrupulously demarcated private matters from career domain. For example, Tara (39, Canada, teacher) moved to Singapore to work as a teacher at the age of 24. She emphasised that it was her own decision and even her parents could not have changed it:

Whatever I wanted I kind of got, but then I always convinced them [parents] that there was nothing they could do about what I wanted (laughs). When going to Singapore, that decision was kind of made by me. I kind of said – I am going to Singapore. (...) I already decided I was going (laughs).

In Asia she met her future husband, originally from the North-East of England. When choosing a place to settle, the couple agreed that they would move to a home country of whoever gets a full-time job first. It happened to be Tara's then fiancé and so she moved to the UK. She emphasised that it was not a path of a trailing spouse and she was keen to retain her independence. Tara relied exclusively upon agencies to find employment and gently, but firmly refused help from her husband's family. Tara purposefully decided to start her career in the UK as a supply teacher to gain experience in different schools, learn the curriculum and enter the occupation "on [her] own terms". She particularly enjoyed the fact that, by moving between schools, she could maintain her own teaching style:

I think it's very difficult when you've been so successful doing it one way to be told that you need to do it in a way that you are not necessarily agreed with if that makes sense. (...) So that's one benefit of doing supply work that I am not bonded by that school with a full-year contract.

Because of her "independent nature" Tara appreciated this discretion. The main reason why she wanted to get back into full-time employment was her reluctance to rely on financial support from her husband. When considering future career plans, Tara inevitably took into account her family situation, as she was expecting their first baby. Nonetheless, her pronounced autonomous reflexivity guided Tara towards developing her individual plans, rather than downgrading for family reasons. She postponed her plans to become a diving instructor, but was determined to return to teaching as soon as possible.

Other ARs also preferred to “*leave work at work*”. They did not feel the need to discuss career decisions with family or friends, unless these decisions would have a direct impact on them. For example, Uri and Tara explained how they made their career decisions against their families’ opinions. However, steps such as relocation would be negotiated with partners and adjusted accordingly. When Akande (42, Nigeria, graduate tutor) was going to continue his study in the UK, his wife was going to move with him as a dependant. However, she was rejected a visa and Akande deferred the start of the course until the following year, reluctant to move on his own:

I should have come here in [year], but my wife’s visa request was refused and I refused to come, because there was no point. (...) So in [next year] we applied again, then we had our son and fortunately three of us were granted a visa, so that’s how we came here. For me that’s something very, very important. Well, this is in a line with my plan anyway.

Like Akande, other respondents identified as ARs were not willing to let family business (or anything else in fact) determine their career paths. They were not intent to sacrifice career concerns for family life, but rather sought to keep them apart as much as possible. Moreover, it was especially important for Akande that his career was still developing in accordance to his plan. The analysis found that ARs did not merely set goals, but were engaged in strategic, rational, evaluative, goal-orientated and autonomous career planning. They planned ahead and had very precise ideas of what they would like to attain within a certain period of time. As will be demonstrated further in this chapter, control over one’s career and an ability to adhere to the plan was used a significant criterion of success by ARs. On the journey towards the desired goals ARs were engaged in continuous self-monitoring using self-referent criteria to assess performance. This kept them motivated and determined. Akande went on to discuss his career plan:

In five years I want to be a professor in Nigeria, in a top Nigerian university. It’s as simple as that. And I had my roadmap in achieving that and as I speak to you nothing has changed. Everything I’ve set to do, I am doing those things, so I am fine with it. It is always possible for the plan to change, maybe I integrate something better than my original plan, but as long as there is no problem with that plan, then I am fine with it. (...) So as long as I am achieving that plan, I believe I am successful. When I came here I knew that my finances would take a knock, my social status would take a knock, so I was already prepared for all that. But I don’t feel like if I’ve lost anything, (...) it’s all about having a goal and then achieving that goal.

This statement emphasises how much ARs were attached to their concerns and reluctant to give their goals up. As Uri worded it, ARs “*know what [they] want*” and “*don’t sleep well until [they] get it*”. By demarcating public from personal and making a distinction between themselves and the others ARs protected (to some degree) their internal conversations from conventionalisms of the social settings. Examples in this section demonstrate that the respondents in this group did not seek to align their concerns with the environment. Instead, they were inclined to developing projects aiming at *shaping the context to fit their concerns*. As Ralf (Japan, marketing director) succinctly outlined his attitude towards the context:

After all, it’s just a game we all play to succeed in our careers. I like this metaphor... this is what we all do, whether you like it or not. And I prefer to set my rules, I always have. You know, I did it my way (laughs).

The remaining part of this chapter will discuss what specific career projects respondents classified as autonomous reflexives applied, how they chose between the projects and what mechanisms defined their availability. When relevant, comparison will be drawn between migrants and the indigenes to highlight idiosyncrasies in how differently causal mechanisms influenced their career experiences.

6.3 Reformation

Ralf’s approach reflected that of other ARs and so *reformation* was their preferable course of action. It also was their ‘prerogative’ – CRs and MRs did not apply this type of career projects. Examples of reforms included promoting teamwork and knowledge sharing, developing strategic partnerships, launching apprenticeship schemes, initiating strategic recruitment of niche professionals, making promotion criteria more transparent and developing new insurance policies.

However, only ten participants (seven migrants and three indigenes) were able to practice it. With one exception, all respondents in this group were in their late 30s and occupied senior posts that allowed or, at times, encouraged actions aimed at reformation of the context.⁵³ The

⁵³ As will be demonstrated in Chapters 7 and 8, CRs and MRs can occupy senior positions too, but reformation is less appealing to them. Therefore, it is not possible to assert that promotions and success encourage autonomous reflexivity. At the same time, nine out of 12 most senior respondents were ARs and applied reformation as a career project. This suggests that this causality cannot be ruled out. A more detailed investigation of this phenomenon, however, was outside the scope of this thesis, but is proposed as an avenue for further research in Chapter 10.

interviews explored what helped the participants reach this level of seniority and, consequently, discretion and leeway.

For migrant respondents an ability to stand out from the homogeneous pool of other candidates in the North-East was deemed particularly valuable and important. As Ralf (Japan) commented:

If they seek to replace a manager or a director and they are looking for candidates outside the company, then there must be something they want to change or improve. So they need someone different. Otherwise they'd just promote someone, one of the deputies.

Four migrants in this cluster had extensive relevant international experience prior their relocation to the UK and believed that this was a crucial factor that enhanced their career perspectives in the region. For instance, Ecrin (37, Turkey, pricing manager) had worked for three global telecommunication companies in Turkey before she moved to the UK. Being familiar with the hiring practices of her current employer, she believed that her experience was decisive for getting her job:

In my previous jobs I was senior as well, so past certain number of years in the career the education is not important anymore. In the first couple of years yes, it is important, because that's the only criteria the hiring managers got to understand how clever you are, to understand (...) what you want to do in your life. (...) But regardless of the degree, if you build up your career, the degree is too far away now. What they look is how much revenue you brought in the past, what products you've been responsible for, what companies you worked for.

Ecrin felt that her foreign work experience was not only recognised in the North-East, but seen as especially useful, serving as a testimonial to her ability to offer a novel approach to problem-solving. On this basis she and other migrants in this group were granted permission to initiate reforms. Uri, for example, believed that the only reason why the company agreed to her stipulations and allowed her to govern her department with virtually no restrictions was her extensive experience in different countries and different projects, lacked by other candidates:

It was very bold of me, but they did not really have choice. They were in trouble and needed something radical. All other people who applied, they were similar, most of them were local (...) and they offered similar solutions, those that didn't work before. (...) They knew that I was different, that I knew how to do things differently. That's why they needed me.

Since their perceived ability “*to do things differently*” was championed by their employers, migrants in this cohort were not particularly concerned about language⁵⁴ and cultural issues. They did not hesitate to challenge cultural norms if they believed it would make work more efficient. Migrants felt this liberty was tolerated if they delivered as expected. David (Romania) explained:

I am not trying to deliberately annoy people (laughs), but sometimes I feel that feedback in the UK is a bit too reserved and some people don't take it seriously. I don't try to soften criticism, even if makes some people feel uncomfortable.

The indigenous respondents also emphasised the importance of skilfulness. However, without overseas competences and experience, for them standing out in the local labour market was more difficult. All three participants in this sub-group combined skilfulness with social capital to promote their careers. As was explained in the previous section, ARs valued independence of their inner dialogues and guarded them from the others. However, having set their objectives, they were keen to utilise social resources to achieve these objectives. As Ben (53, UK, lecturer) explained: “*No, I made my own decisions and then had a look around, you know, to see who would be able to assist*”.

The indigenes were significantly better connected to people “*able to assist*”. For example, Theresa (40, UK, HR manager) strategically developed numerous contacts with people in her profession across the region. She actively used them to obtain informal information about job openings and stay up to date with news within the occupation. Theresa described it:

I know quite a few other people in HR and it was a conscious effort to get to know them (laughs). (...) When I see a job that interests me, I almost always can think of someone to contact and ask for more information. Sometimes they already have people in mind; sometimes they don't really make the job description very clear, so these contacts can help a lot.

From her contacts Theresa learned about her current job before it was advertised, which gave her extra time to prepare an application. She also received a more detailed description of the job requirements and could adjust her application accordingly. Thus, her social contacts facilitated Theresa's access to a position where she could engage into reformation of the context.

⁵⁴ Although all of them spoke very good English.

The point above suggests that career locations can matter greatly in some circumstances. Foreign experience helped migrants stand out in the labour market of the North-East, whereas the indigenes had better opportunities to develop social networks. This is demonstrated by an exceptional case. Emiliano (45, Spain, engineering manager) was a migrant, but, with education and work experience obtained in the UK, he was not much ‘different’ to the local engineers and had to compete with them on an equal footing. It took Emiliano years of hard work⁵⁵ to prove that he was skilled enough for a post permitting for reformation of professional context. Unlike the four migrants with international experience, but similarly to the indigenes, Emiliano combined his skills with support from social contacts. For example, a university friend facilitated a difficult transition from contracting to consultancy, which significantly accelerated Emiliano’s career:

What was difficult is then getting into consultancy. (...) I looked around for different jobs, but somebody approached me to work in a consultancy, somebody I knew from university. (...) I think he probably knew how I worked at the university, maybe a word of mouth. Maybe he liked my character; he could see that my character, my attitude would be suited for the job at the time. It was a job that required inspections of rock faces in [location], so you had to have climbing skills. It was useful and I was a keen climber at that time and he was also a climber.

Another migrant who moved to the UK at an early career stage, and also the only respondent who practiced reformation without occupying a senior post, was Hong (34). Her degree in law from China proved insufficient to get her a relevant job in the UK, so she started her career journey as a factory worker, whilst studying management part-time in the local university. Then a new director, preoccupied with low productivity and high turnover, launched a committee to learn experiences of the shop floor employees. Hong explained how she was elected to represent her division:

There were some groups of workers (...) Polish, Turkish, Spanish, different nationalities. And I was the only one from China, which is probably a bit unusual (laughs). And these groups, they maybe didn’t trust each other. (...) And because I was the only one from China, I had friends in all these groups. So, they trusted me. (...) Also I think they respected my degree in law, because most people there did not go to university.

⁵⁵ And years of practicing other courses of action, mainly runaway.

Although Hong assumed her education was advantageous, her social contacts played a more significant role. In the sample, this was a rare example of a migrant whose career was enhanced by support from social contacts. Furthermore, as this and the two following chapters will illustrate, it was an exceptionally rare example of a migrant whose career was advanced by support from other migrants.

The committee was designed to work for six months, but Hong persuaded the director to make it permanent. She initiated a number of changes to make labour conditions more tolerable and also proposed a training scheme for the workers that would facilitate movement to administrative and managerial roles. At the time she was interviewed, Hong was the chair of the committee, mediating communications between the shop floor and management.

For Hong, like for other ARs, reformation was associated with upward mobility – she progressed through a few steps from a shop-floor factory worker on a minimum wage to a middle-management position with a salary more than twice as high (£30.000). However, Hong was an exception in that for other practitioners reformation only became permissible at relatively advanced career stages where there was more limited space for further upward mobility. For Uri (42, Israel), like for other ‘reformers’, becoming eligible for reformation secured a promotion to the next level and a significant increase in salary, in addition to *carte blanche* to transform the context. However, she admitted that advancing further in terms of the corporate hierarchy and compensation would not be easy:

I am not bragging, but there is nowhere to grow formally, you know. I am a director, there's just a CEO above me and I don't want to be a CEO. (...) Also I might be able to negotiate more money, but I cannot be paid more than a CEO, which is sad (laughs).

This issue was well-known for the respondents in this cluster, whether migrants or indigenes. Compared to other groups, practitioners of reformation (apart from Hong) occupied most senior hierarchical positions. For eight of them there were no more than two levels above them. As Emiliano (45, Spain) described:

Next sort of step up would be a director position, which I am not that attracted to take, because then you detach yourself from most of the technical work. At the moment being an engineer, I like where I am, I wouldn't mind doing this for 10 more years.

Senior positions were generously paid. The respondents who agreed to reveal their incomes were paid more than £60.000 per annum and those who preferred to conceal this information were

employed in positions with average salaries, according to statistical records, of £40.000 and higher. As Theresa (40, HR manager, UK) explained her attitudes towards money:

Money doesn't drive me [anymore], because (...) [my partner and I] have a reasonable standard of living, we have our own home, we have nice cars, we can have loads of nice holidays still. With the money we earn most things are out of the question. (...) I would like to have a bit more money, but I would probably just buy more handbags (laughs).

In this situation, the main career concern for ARs was constant professional development. For example, the 'reformers' had a power to initiate challenging projects, therefore, creating development opportunities for themselves and other people. Although this was a part of responsibilities entailed by their senior positions, the 'reformers' saw authority as a tool to enhance their professional expertise and actively used these opportunities for personal benefits. Ralf (Japan) elucidated this practice:

Of course, I have to deliver what is expected from me, but I have a chance to do what I personally find interesting, I can invest more of myself into things that help me grow as a professional. (...) There are some marketing strategies, marketing approaches that I want to test and, as long as it's nothing insane, I have the power to do it. (...) I make sure that everyone in the team gets credit for their work, but I also receive recognition if the idea was mine. Having this power makes initiating ideas and getting recognition for them easier, of course. This power is far more important than salary now.

High objective career outcomes resulted in a high level of subjective success for the respondents in this cluster, who, as all ARs, appreciated achievements in terms of status, promotions and compensation. Ecrin (37, Turkey) explained her idea of success:

If I can buy anything that I want, if I go on holidays anywhere I want or if I can eat anything that I want then I am successful. If I have enough money to fulfil all my needs, then I think I am successful. So, I am successful, yes.

Subjective feeling of satisfaction was further reinforced by power and authority that enabled discretion and control over career of the 'reformers'. Similar to Ralf, who valued power more than salary, Hong (the most junior and least well-off person in the sample) commented:

I think I am moving in the right direction. Not there yet (laughs). But not I feel... you know, that I can direct my career and my life where I want. (...) Not sure it makes sense, but I feel that now I have more impact upon what to do, where to go and what to say.

That makes me very happy and this is why I believe I am definitely successful and very lucky.

6.4 Trickery

It ought to be noted that potential for reformation was confined largely to organizational level. Nobody in the sample was able to influence, for example, migration regulation or regulation of occupations, and even the respondents with reformation as a dominant career project had to apply other practices. As a consequence, the second most preferred course of action for autonomous reflexives was *trickery*.

Although most career stories involved some elements of ‘trickery’, for 11 respondents (eight migrants and three indigenes) this was the main career project. This group was young relative to the rest of the sample, with seven respondents below the age of 35. The trend discussed in the previous section, in which migrants tended to rely upon their skills to enhance career prospects and indigenes derived value from both skills and social contacts, was evident here too. However, their resources were not sufficient to change or transform contextual barriers and so the respondents in this cohort were trying to “cheat” (John, 25, Denmark) the context in order to become exempt from its norms.

Like for most other migrant respondents in this cluster, skills played an important role in Fabio’s (31, Italy) career project. Whilst doing a PhD in the USA he mastered very special equipment. This equipment being introduced to the UK and there was a notable shortage of experienced people. That was an evident advantage for Fabio, who received job offers from a few UK universities. All of them wanted him to share his knowledge and expertise with other researchers. Fabio took a job at one of them and felt that this university put much effort into accommodating his needs, at times bypassing the existent norms. As he explained:

It is very nice, as I get pretty much I all need – [preferential] access to [equipment], time at the lab, funding. I have assistants; I also have time for my research... All possible support. And, to be honest, I am not sure everyone else gets the same treatment, so I am feeling quite privileged.

Although Fabio’s rare competence got him a job and advantageous employment conditions, it was not enough to make him eligible to transform the context. He was invited to participate in

meetings and discussions within the department, but felt that his opinion was not very important. He commented:

I do what they want. I show them how to make the best use of [equipment] and they give me everything I need, so I can do my research and publish articles. But, when I suggest that the department can work a bit differently, they don't... they don't really like changes so to say (laughs).

The skills of the three indigenes in the group were less rare. However, they have an opportunity to compensate for it with support from social contacts. All three of them were engaged in strategic networking aiming to facilitate achieving career goals. Helen (29, UK, HR consultant) explained her approach to selective networking for career purposes:

I am going to be honest, if I view them [people] to be good at their job, I made more of an effort in a relationship that I have with them than with the other HR BPs [business partners]. If I don't feel that they are very good at their job, I don't tend to have much contact with them. Two reasons. One - what's the point in terms of my own development? I am not going to learn anything from them if they can't do their own role. And, secondly, if I am building a relationship with somebody who I view that they do know what they are talking about, that is going to help my development enormously. And if I have a good relationship with them and I potentially want to go in their business, hopefully, they'd put a good word for me (laughs).

Helen believed that this approach enabled her to progress career-wise. Networking increased visibility of her hard work and facilitated access to interesting projects. In a similar fashion, Harry (30, UK) and Victoria (37, UK) both benefitted from extended social networks. In contrast, only two migrants in this cohort could systematically rely on social capital. Joaquin (41, Colombia, lecturer) got a job at a university with research interests in Latin America. He saw that strong points of his application were his extensive research networks in the Latin America region, as well as skills of Spanish and Portuguese languages. He commented:

Part of their [the department] research had to do with Brazil, (...) they wanted to do some research in Brazil, it was interesting for them and I speak Spanish and I had done some research in Brazil and I can get by in Portuguese a little bit, so I was like – I can do it, you guys need somebody to do it. (...) And I also said, as part of doing this research I will try to develop or continue developing research networks with different countries in the world, particularly Brazil and other Latin American countries.

Another example was John (25, Denmark, recruitment consultant). He explained that his job did not require a specific degree, but proficiency in one of the Scandinavian languages. Over time John managed to develop a rather unusual relation with his line manager, who seemingly lacked self-confidence⁵⁶. John was promoting the interests of his manager in the department and was even delegated some of her troublesome responsibilities. In return, he was allowed a great deal of discretion over his work and an opportunity to acquire valuable experience:

I provide a lot of support and kind of legitimacy around that by kind of enforcing what she says and ensuring people do it, also sometimes taking awkward conversations from her. When she knows there might be a conflict with someone I have a better relation with, then she gets me to do it. (...) So, more responsibility to me and more freedom to me compared to maybe some of the other guys. (...) It's more like I support her and she lets me do what I want (laughs).

This leeway included access to interesting projects and permission to try unconventional approaches, at times against the company's regulations. As a result of their unconventional approaches, John and other respondents in this group managed to advance their careers, develop professional knowledge, increase exposure and get promoted. Practitioners of trickery were comparatively well-paid and, alongside with ARs who practiced runaway (see the following section), it was objectively the most rapidly progressing group in the sample. The level of income received by this group varied from just over £10.000 for Simona (Romania) to more than £50.000 for Maria (Peru), but all respondents stressed that they were in a better financial situation than their peers – friends, classmates and colleagues. Further, migrants in this cohort were better-off at the time they were interviewed than upon relocation, which supported the claim for consistent upward mobility. Kristina (Lithuania), for example, lived in a shared house with other Eastern European migrants and worked in a local factory upon relocation to the UK. Over time she progressed to a qualified HR manager. For her, as for other individuals in this group, upward mobility entailed a feeling of subjective satisfaction: “*Yes, I remember where I started, so it is a success. (...) I have many goals I have not achieved yet, but I am already in a better position than the people I lived with*”.

Career progress was perceived to be closely linked to opportunities to develop and demonstrate valuable professional competences. Yet, unlike the ‘reformers’, practitioners of trickery could not create opportunities for themselves, but had to compete for them or negotiate them.

⁵⁶ John's comments on this relation suggest that this was in effect a dialogical partnership, with the manager's internal conversation dominated by communicative reflexivity (see Chapter 7).

Therefore, the respondents perceived their position as somewhat less stable. For instance, Fabio was cautious that as other people in the department learned how to operate the equipment, there was a likelihood of his skills becoming less valuable for the university. He was in a hurry to get promoted before it happened and used offers from other institutions to strengthen his negotiation position:

I got some offers for other positions, so I am using it as a sort of incentive to promotion. And I think that has already been the case putting for my promotion. But because I am still on the probation, there might be some delay. Essentially, I think there are some good prospects for promotions at some point in the near future.

Further, as illustrated in the examples, advantages of ‘tricksters’ were often unofficial, which undermined their sense of control and security. ARs perceived it as stressful. For example, John was aware that his leeway was dependent upon his manager’s goodwill. He expressed his concerns:

There are things that I think should be done much more efficiently, but (...) I cannot change them. Sometimes I can do things as I want, but only because she’s [manager] here and turns a blind eye to it. (...) If she leaves, I will lose my ‘bonuses’ (laughs). So, this is what I want – to progress and to have more power. (...) I still believe I am successful and I’m only 25, but until then I cannot say I am fully successful.

This was a common issue for the ‘tricksters’, many of whom who considered trickery as a path to reformation rather than a career end. Therefore, having reported satisfaction with the present achievements, they stressed that it was incomplete.

6.5 Runaway

When the strategies of reformation and trickery were unavailable or difficult, autonomous reflexives *tended to run away* from the context and its influence. Runaway could involve movements between locations, occupations and employers, or take the form of self-employment. Although many respondents were engaged in activities of this sort at some point of their careers, for six of them (three EEA migrants and three indigenes) this appeared to be the principal career project.

Runaway, as a type of career projects, was the first choice for MRs and will be described in greater details in Chapter 8. For now, it is enough to note that due to migration regulation accessibility of runaway was limited for autonomous reflexive non-EEA migrants and only those on family visas applied it. Tiwa (36, Nigeria) explained that she had not been able to leave her employer largely due to her legal status:

Yes, because if I were from the European Union, for one thing I would probably not be working where I am now (laughs), I would have left a long time ago. Yeah, not being from the European Union kind of limits you.

Moreover, family support was often important in transition times and the indigenes were more likely to receive it than migrants of any origin. For example, Terry (UK, self-employed) relied on financial support from his wife when he decided to venture into property rental business:

I would say that the very first house that I bought, because I used a lot of capital to buy several houses at one go, I just had to dig into my wife's savings really a little further. (...) Just for the refurbishing costs, because again, then I wasn't aware of the labour cost for refurbishment.

What made application of runaway distinctive for ARs was that this group strategically deliberated their relocations with an intention of further professional development and/or upward progression. For example, Emiliano (45, Spain) changed employers six times during the 20 years of his career in the UK and each move was made to either get an immediate promotion or to participate in promising projects and develop his professional portfolio and reputation. As he explained:

When I saw there was a point where, because of the structure of company or the way the things were operating, I couldn't progress as I wanted, I just looked for another opportunity. So far I've been lucky in that. In specific companies there will be barriers, because the companies work over specific subjects, which you may not want for the entire life, you may not want to do for the entire life, you need to move on, just kind of look for something else.

Runaway as self-employment was also a strategic decision for ARs. Such decision was made when self-employment was perceived as the most rational way to achieve desired career goals. Brandon (45, Ireland) had a successful career in accountancy when he made a decision to become an independent consultant. His incentive was to gain more control over his life and work, instead of playing “*political games*”:

This job that I currently do allows me to go and do work, work hard, do the job and I don't bring any of the stress associated with the job back home again. And there's no dealing with politics, there's no me thinking – I am going into the job and I need to be promoted next week. I don't need to worry about upsetting the chief executive, I don't need to worry about upsetting the board of governors, I don't need to worry about any of that internal politics.

Brandon stated that self-employment was a risky enterprise. In his case it initially required a step down in terms of income and status. However, runaway for ARs was a carefully engineered and thought-through project. Decisions to move horizontally or downgrade were based upon a firm belief in better opportunities in the future and, indeed, ARs soon progressed further. Emiliano (45, Spain), for example, progressed from a junior geologist to an engineering manager reporting only to the company's director⁵⁷ as a result of his moves. Eventually, he was vested with authority sufficient to practice reformation.

Likewise, other ARs who ventured into self-employment did so with a very clear business plan and with pragmatic intentions to enlarge their income and gain more control over their lives and careers. The sample contained examples of enterprises of various types and at different stages of development. Although they yielded different outcomes, the projects of ARs were more lucrative and more durable than those of meta-reflexives (see Chapter 8). For example, Brandon calculated that working 150 days a year as a self-employed consultant he earned more than in a full year in his last traditional employment:

So I could probably work six months a year. I could happily work six months a year, I don't really need to work twelve months a year, I could work 150 days a year that would be enough, maybe 100 days, you know, that would be nice. And I'd still earn more.

Subjectively, the respondents in this cluster appreciated good objective outcomes and derived subjective feeling of success from it, despite reported stress and fatigue from relocations. Further, runaway allowed for retaining or even augmenting the sense of control, much valued by ARs. For instance, Margret (55, Germany) chose a path of a self-employed translator and language tutor over a career of a school teacher (and a few other options). Like other ARs, she particularly enjoyed self-managing her career and appreciated discretion runaway permitted:

And my mother just said – you become a teacher, a language teacher, you'll have a job for life and a good pension, you'll have a really good life. And at first I thought – okay,

⁵⁷ Emiliano did not disclose his salary, but the average wage for this position exceeds £40,000.

maybe. But then I thought – no, I don't really fancy teaching at school with discipline problems and having set hours and it didn't appeal to me. (...) When I started tutoring, I thought – well, I can have my freedom that way as well. (...) I say to my students – well, I'm not here that week and that week, we just have to continue two weeks later. Or I can say – (...) we can double the lessons this week if you like and then I'm not going to be here the next week. You know, it's very, very flexible, and this is what I really like about my job.

6.6 Conformity⁵⁸

All ARs confronted some factors that could not be changed, 'tricked' or run away from and so had to be *conformed* with. Ecrin (37, Turkey), for example, admitted that even her authority as a senior manager was insufficient to compel people in her department to work longer hours when projects needed to be finished urgently. She believed that indigenous workers in the North-East prioritised personal matters over work - an issue, perhaps, rooted in the mining communities and working-class background of the population (see Chapter 5). Ecrin was overwhelmed by their resistance to cooperate:

I think that in Newcastle people are a bit more concerned about their families and social life and commitments outside of work than their professional commitments. (...) I tried to say – look, you can't leave. But it's not one person, most of them are like that. (...) No, they have strict rules, they have kids to look after or they have evening courses to attend or things like that, so... (...) Now I am a bit less strict about this. So, if they have something to do outside of work and they want to leave, then this is it, I get away with it.

For Ecrin, like for most ARs, conformity was an uncommon exception that only confirmed their principal projects – reformation, trickery or runaway. However, for a small group of ARs this was the major career project. The analysis revealed two distinct sub-groups within this cluster - those who conformed '*forcibly*' and '*voluntarily*'.

⁵⁸ Conformity was communicative reflexives' preferred career project and more details about it will be provided in Chapter 7.

6.6.1 'Forced' conformity

For three non-EEA visible ethnic minority migrants conformity was a “*last resort*” – it was practiced reflexively, reluctantly and only when all other types of career projects were unavailable. The respondents had to learn local rules and to compete for career opportunities, and believed it was not the most efficient way to use their skills and time. They were at middle career stages and had pre-migration work experience which, nonetheless, did not allow them to “*stand out*” in the UK labour market. They believed that recognition of their work required more endeavor from them than from their co-workers. Akande (graduate tutor, 42, Nigeria) explained:

I realize as a foreigner you need to put in a lot more effort to gain... [long pause] ...you need to put in a lot more effort to be recognized within the organization. The outcomes are usually very different. As a foreigner I realize that I need to be a lot more careful in everything that I do, you know. (...) You know, sometimes as a foreigner you come with an idea – okay, this is how we behave where I am coming from. As I told you, I worked in my country for about nine years before coming down here, so there are some you can call it work ethics that I already developed. But then these work ethics don't, they are basically inconsistent with what you have here.

To re-establish their careers the respondent in this sub-group had to accept jobs that were below their level of expertise⁵⁹ and below their ambitions. For Dabeet (38, India) policies regulating access to occupation in medicine posed the major obstacle. Nobody in the sample was able to reform or circumvent them and Dabeet reluctantly had to comply. His career in India was advanced and rewarding, and he “*was the man in charge*”, but in the UK he had to re-sit professional exams, undertake various training and start from junior levels whilst continuing re-education. Dabeet felt that the system was unfair and discriminated against non-EEA medical practitioners:

We need to take the [exam], which is a professional and Linguistic Assessment Board and not European people. So, some people coming from Greece, or Italy, or Germany, or Poland, or somewhere, they don't need to give this exam, which is unfair, because their linguistic assessment is also different. But they should undergo the same scrutiny as non-Europeans should undergo, that's my idea.

⁵⁹ Like Hong (34, China) before she got a place in the committee (6.3).

Another example was Tiwa (36, Nigeria). She graduated with an MBA from one of the universities in the North-East and then joined a large multinational company as an accountant. Tiwa was keen to achieve a senior level of financial management. However, she did not believe it would happen in this company. As opposed to John, who gained access to opportunities through social contacts (6.4), Tiwa believed she was seen as less skilled and, therefore, overlooked for opportunities because she did not belong to the dominant network:

I don't know, it's the culture in the place is like, people are more comfortable with you, you know, opportunities are given to people they like, people they are comfortable with. (...) Because in Nigeria if I based on my skills, my qualifications do my work, you know, those opportunities that are available would come to me. Because my managers, I would be one and same, but here the opportunities come around, people who don't work half as hard as I do, maybe even half as qualified, but they have better rapport with managers based on they are comfortable with each other. They get these opportunities.

Upward mobility for this cohort was possible, although at a slower pace than for other ARs and this mobility was rather limited. The respondents eventually compensated for the initial downgrading, but nobody exceeded their pre-migration level. The participants felt that they faced the notorious “glass ceiling” (Lyness and Thompson, 1997). For them career blocks occurred at the middle occupational level with a commensurate level of income, but the respondents believed that further advancement would be very difficult under present circumstances. In other words, they faced mechanisms or boundaries they were not able to manage.

This cohort did not perceive conformity as their final outcome. Tiwa and Akande were going to stay with their employers as long as was needed to gain experience and then take a job in their home country or elsewhere in the world (see 6.2 for Akande's strategy). Dabeet was engaged into further education to obtain rare and in-demand skills that, as he believed, should allow him much more recognition, respect and freedom. This was reflected in the respondents' discussion of subjective success. However, their immediate level of satisfaction was the lowest in the sample. Having faced the “glass ceiling” and currently not being able to overcome it, this was the only group that openly reported frustration and disappointment with their careers. Nonetheless, all of them believed that it would eventually pay off if rationally incorporated in the long-term career plans. Tiwa expressed her opinion:

No, I am not successful, because I didn't study an MBA to end up in a non-management role. (...) There is nothing I can do at the moment. (...) I believe with this experience... I would be able to get a job that is equal to my skills [in the United States or Nigeria].

6.6.2 'Voluntary' conformity

There was another group of five ARs who practiced *conformity*, but, in contrast to the previous group, they applied it willingly and in a somewhat customary manner. All of them were young (up to 35 years old) and at relatively early career stages. Two respondents were indigenous, two EEA nationals and one (Reece) was from South Africa, but grew up in the UK and obtained British citizenship whilst still at school. The EEA migrants were employed in large multinational and multicultural companies, whereas the native-born respondents and Reece worked in organizations heavily dominated by the indigenous workforce and culture.

Regardless of the dominant MoR, projects and courses of actions are designed to bridge the gap between concerns and the context (Archer, 2007). However, the respondents in this group had not (yet) experienced this gap. This does not negate the fact that their careers were conditioned by structural and cultural factors, but these conditions were continuous over the course of their lives and careers. Furthermore, the conditions had not (yet) posed significant barriers for their early stage careers or these barriers had not (yet) been encountered.

The indigenes in this group were originally from the North-East, staying in a familiar setting. Their skills were in demand in the labour market (see Natalie's story in 5.5) and they had a good understanding of the local normativity. As Natalie (24, optometrist) noted: "*I find [communicating with people at work] very easy. We are all the same, from round here*".

They set their career aims reflectively, but their perception of contextual factors was *habitual*, rather than critical and reflexive. In other words, they were reflexive about what they wanted to achieve, but habitual about how they were going to navigate their interests through the context⁶⁰. When Tony (28, UK, accountant) described his goals (mainly concerned professional recognition and rewards), he was asked what actions he was undertaking in order to achieve them. He explained:

⁶⁰ See 2.3.2.2 for a discussion of how projects can be co-determined by habitus and reflexivity. See also Elder-Vass (2007c, 2012).

At this stage your success depends entirely on how well you perform. You just try your best to do your job well. (...) There's not much you can do apart from it really, so it's quite simple (laughs). I assume it must be more complicated than that at [more advanced stages], but so far it's been working (laughs).

This statement illustrates how the indigenous respondents in this cluster believed that common practices were (still) efficient and conformity provided sufficient opportunities to achieve desired outcomes. It was more surprising to find that conformity was deemed sufficient by some migrant ARs. Consider, for example, Celine (29). Her life had always been very cosmopolitan – Celine was accustomed to different cultures and multicultural environments. Born in Belgium, she moved to France with her family at the age of 15, studied a degree in engineering there and then did an internship in the Netherlands. Then the same company offered her a permanent position, but in the North-East of England. In contrast to most other migrants in the sample, upon arrival Celine did not encounter any new mechanisms or boundaries she had to manage - *“it's not that different, you're still in Europe by the end of the days”*. Despite her relocation to a different country, she experienced very little impact of the external context, and the internal organizational context remained largely unchanged. Effectively Celine continued to work within the same corporate environment:

The company I work for, they have big sites, they have a big site here, a bigger site in the Netherlands, in Asia as well. We work with a business model kind of thing. If I moved, in terms of job it would be exactly the same. They have the same mentality; they want people to work together. (...) That's why I think we are not feeling like strangers here.

Cultural factors were neither novel, nor problematic for Celine, who worked mainly with other foreign-born colleagues. Consequently, she did not feel pressure to develop more advanced knowledge of the local culture:

It's a different culture, but you still have your own way of doing things. (...) If you would look at the level of English of certain of my colleagues, I could have had a lower level of English and still manage to do my job.

Structural factors either did not pose significant obstacles – she was not subject to migration control, her occupation was not regulated and she was not senior enough to be involved into *“political games”* in the company. As a result, Celine was still able to rely on her pre-migration patterns of behavior: *“I don't think I had to change anything... I am still myself (laughs). There was no pressure to do it, no... Nothing particular to the UK, I wouldn't say”*.

Other migrant respondents in this group were in a similar situation. On the one hand, they remained in stable familiar conditions. On the other hand, these conditions were not (yet) career obstacles. At least at early-stages of their careers the participants had enough freedom to pursue their reflexive career interests by habitually conforming to the context, without questioning and challenging it.

Objective outcomes were commensurate with experience. The respondents had to compete for opportunities, but at junior career levels it was easier than for the previous cohort ('forced' conformists). All respondents in this cluster had been promoted once or twice and were receiving incomes of £20.000-25.000 and more. Their careers progressed steadily, although slower than for 'tricksters'. Reece (24, South Africa) commented:

I am progressing as a typical engineer, not the best and not the worst one. Some people have overtaken me, but I'm still gaining experience. (...) At this point it is more important that I'm not stuck and have good opportunities to develop more and progress with this company.

This statement exemplifies that subjectively the respondents were pleased with their performance so far and, although their ultimate goals were more ambitious, felt that they were "on the right track" (Reece) for achieving them. Like for other ARs, their subjective satisfaction was based upon an ability to adhere to one's own strategic career plan. Since this group had not (yet) encountered significant barriers, they reported good levels of satisfaction. As Janek (IT professional, 28, Hungary) clarified:

I feel reasonably successful, but it does not matter at the moment. My career is not over; I think it's okay if I don't have everything I want right now. Much more important is that I feel that, you know, I am where I should be at this stage, everything is as I imagined and I have good prospects to move on.

6.7 Autonomous reflexives: Summary⁶¹

As will be seen, compared to CRs and MRs, ARs applied the broadest repertoire of career projects, perhaps because their first and second choices – reformation and trickery - were not easily available. The only project this group did not practice was hideaway (the form of escapism

⁶¹ See also Summary in Chapter 8.

implying relative isolation from the context) - not only because it did not presuppose any significant impact upon the context (conformity did not either), but mainly because escapism precluded accumulating power needed to advance to trickery or reformation. This cohort was also the most mobile, moving between different career projects in reaction to the circumstances – contextual or personal changes.

ARs tended to develop relatively high objective achievements – income, status, position in the hierarchy. The majority experienced upward mobility benefitting from opportunities they had created, won or negotiated. Appreciating career outcomes, this group reported high levels of subjective satisfaction. However, the satisfaction was complete only when the respondents retained control over their careers, i.e. progressed according to their plan. This was the major source of discontent for ARs who complied ‘forcibly’ – barriers they faced were (currently) impossible to overcome and their subjective satisfaction was the lowest in the sample, despite objective achievements comparable to those of CRs and MRs.

Chapter 7. Communicative reflexives

7.1 Communicative reflexives: Internal conversation

Nuria (43) was educated in a Catholic boarding school for girls in Spain. She was advised to study law and, despite limited knowledge about the industry, she did a degree in law. However, after graduation she realised that access to the occupation would be too difficult. So, she took a job as an administrator and was giving private language lessons, but then lost her job during the recent economic crisis. Nuria then decided to move to a small coastal town in the North-East of England where she had lived before for one year with her ex-partner and still had some friends. She wanted to work as a Spanish school teacher, but did not have the required qualification. To find her way into the occupation Nuria started volunteering at a primary school. This was an unpaid position, so she followed advice from a friend and applied for Jobseeker's Allowance. Eventually, Nuria started to work as a cover teaching assistant in local schools, but confronted numerous difficulties, which she attributed to her imperfect English and voids in understanding of cultural norms. For example, she once was reprimanded by the headmistress for calling a child with special needs "lazy", although her only intention was to urge him to try and walk without assistance.

I probably still need more time here to know how people work and to know when you can say things and when you can't. I have to be careful with things I can say and things I can't say. (...) So things like that I still don't know how they work.

At the time she was interviewed, Nuria was in a relationship with an Englishman called Ainsley, who she described as encouraging and inspiring, but who also, perhaps unwillingly, put extra strain on Nuria to re-establish herself as a professional.

In one way, he's pushing me to achieve more steps. He's an ambitious man, he wants me to get something better. So, he's been sometimes a little bit... No, it's very good, but sometimes I can feel that pressure as well. He's certainly a big, big help for me, obviously with my English as well. He's a very ambitious man and he wants me to build a career. I want it, I came here with that idea as well, it's not because he wants, I want that. But he's pushing me as well.

Ainsley became important part of Nuria's internal dialogue. He reinforced her belief in herself and persuaded her to alter her plans. Consequently, Nuria decided to gain a UK degree. She was considering different subject areas, actively learning English and familiarising herself with

cultural and structural rules and regulations. Her communicative reflexivity produced *modus vivendi* that facilitated relocation to a particular town, paved access to employment whilst receiving benefits and, eventually, guided her towards shaping her career plans to fit the context.

Communicative reflexivity was identified as the dominant MoR for 14 respondents (11 migrants and three indigenes). The most important factor used to classify participants as CRs was the need for a *dialogical partner* or an interlocutor (Archer, 2007) to complete and confirm their conscious deliberations. CRs are capable of independent reflexive thoughts (ibid) and the respondents in this groups were, indeed, engaged with such deliberations. Yet, their internal reflective deliberations needed endorsement through external dialogues with other people – a pattern labelled “thought and talk” by Archer (2007). These external dialogues, as will be demonstrated in this chapter, were consequential for careers of the respondents, often leading to considerable revisions of their career plans.

Among 14 communicatively reflexive respondents eight out of 11 migrants and all three indigenes had dialogical partners at the time they were interviewed⁶². For the UK-born participants, dialogical partners were family members – a father and partners (on two instances). However, other family members and friends were also involved as interlocutors. These bonds were often formed when relatively young and remained intact for years. For example, Lauren (33, UK, tax professional) met her partner when she was 18 and, like Ainsley for Nuria, he became her interlocutor. She admitted that his opinion was very important for her decision-making, but she also sought opinions of other people:

Last time I was thinking about getting a new job I had pretty much everyone around (laughs). (...) I just needed to know what they thought. And then when they left I turned to [partner's name] and asked him – okay, so what do you think now?

Establishing a dialogical partnership required trust and, therefore, was not unproblematic. Archer (2007) suggests that trust in this type of relationships is bi-dimensional – first, it is trust in partner's good intentions, i.e. aims to give good advice, and second, trust in expertise in a certain domain, i.e. ability to supply good advice. Communicative reflexive migrants also developed dialogical partnerships with family and many explained the role their parents and/or grandparents played in personal and professional development in home countries. However, these relations were less enduring and only three communicative reflexive migrants retained dialogical partnership with family members after relocation abroad. For Asel (38, Kazakhstan)

⁶² And the other three migrant respondents expressed a strong desire to have a trustworthy interlocutor.

and Kamran (30, Pakistan) it was relatively easy, as their interlocutors – sister and brother respectively – had moved to the UK before them and, therefore, were still ‘trustworthy’.

A notable exception was Ahmed⁶³ (37, Iran) and his relations with uncle Farhad. When he returned to Iran, Ahmed felt uneasy and insecure, because there was no reliable dialogical partner to discuss plans with. For a few months, he did not know what to do and, eventually, accepted a rather low-level job in accountancy, because it felt like “*the safest thing*”. Having found little satisfaction in job, Ahmed decided to follow his friends’ example and get married, even though he was not partnered at that time. That was when his uncle Farhad took early retirement and returned to Iran from the United States. The two had been close in Ahmed’s childhood and re-established their ‘partnership’. It was his uncle who suggested that Ahmed should have deferred his marriage plans and focused on a career instead. Farhad advised him to change specialisation and apply for a banking job. Later Farhad pushed him to move abroad where, he believed, there were more opportunities. All Ahmed’s subsequent major moves (between jobs and/or locations), including his most current relocation to the UK, were confirmed by his uncle, with many directly initiated by him. Ahmed still felt the need to call his uncle at least weekly to discuss current affairs:

It’s like talking to a psychotherapist (laughs). He is my councillor, my mentor, my friend. (...) I always knew he wanted the very best for me. He wants me to realise my potential and always wants me to climb higher. He gives me the motivation when I just want to give up. He always has the right words.

The relationship between Ahmed and his uncle illustrates the importance of dialogical partnership and the need for guidance experiencing by CRs. This partnership survived, most likely, because Farhad himself had an impressive career in banking and worked abroad for many years. Therefore, his trustworthiness had never been questioned by Ahmed. For other migrants, involvement of dialogical partners from home gradually diminished, because their dialogical partners’ ability to provide required guidance reduced due to a limited understanding of their new context. Mira (35, Vietnam) explained:

I was very close with my mother in Vietnam. Every time I had doubts I came to her and we would talk as long as needed and she always helped me find the answer. (...) We still talk to each other a few times a week, we are always in touch on Facebook and WhatsApp, but... (long pause) when I moved to the UK, after a certain time I started

⁶³ For more details about Ahmed’s story see 7.3.

feeling that she was not able to help me as she did before... I tried to ignore it, but then I had to admit – she doesn't know the country, she doesn't know the people. (...) And I still discuss everything with her, and she tells me things like “whatever you do, be honest with yourself” or “treat people the way you want to be treated”. This is true anywhere I think (laughs), but I don't rely on her advice when I make important decisions now.

Similarly, other migrants remained close to their friends and family at home and still regarded them as an important source of emotional support, but emphasised the need to search for interlocutors in the new setting. Four of them, like Nuria, found interlocutors in British partners, but this option was not available for everyone. Some of the respondents tried to engage into ethnic/national communities. However, even though the sense of shared identity was pronounced in these networks and ‘good intentions’ were undisputable, co-ethnic contacts were perceived as lacking expertise needed in skilled careers. Consequently, they were not seen as trustworthy enough and their involvement in career projects was insignificant. For example, Asel (Kazakhstan) developed close ties with a group of Russian-speaking women from the former USSR countries. She explained why this group was a source of emotional support, but not career advice:

I find it very fun gathering with these girls, because we have similar traditions. (...) I don't feel they can help me with my career if I'm honest. Many of them are housewives. And other girls work as waitresses or maybe cleaners and they can't really help me with my plans.

As a result, communicatively reflexive migrants felt they were almost inevitably pushed towards looking for dialogical partners in their immediate work environment. It might be a coincidence, but nine out of 11 communicative reflexive migrants in the sample were employed in organisations heavily dominated by the local workforce. They had none or very few fellow migrant co-workers and were surrounded by the indigenous colleagues. Many sought to develop closer relationships with them, which could potentially evolve into dialogical partnership. Supervisors and mentors were often identified as trustworthy (at least regarding their expertise) and the respondents explained that ‘special relations’ with them were highly desirable. As Mira (35, Vietnam) said: “*My manager knows things and I would want to have less formal relations with her, you know, if we could go for a coffee and talk and discuss things. Maybe she could answer my questions (laughs)*”.

Yet, developing these relations was not an easy task. Only Ernie (44, Australia) and Jennifer (35, USA) managed to develop a close dialogical partnership with indigenous colleagues. It can be

assumed that they were in an advantageous position, considering close cultural ties between the UK and their home countries. Ernie commented:

I don't like saying it, but the fact that I belong to the English-speaking world probably helped. Maybe it's also the fact that we belong to the Commonwealth, I'm not sure. But yes, when I joined the company I never had any problems; I've always been treated as one of the guys.

For other migrants, however, this was significantly more problematic. Migrant respondents in this group generally believed that professional acceptance was not too problematic and that indigenous colleagues were ready to cooperate. As Stojan (Serbia) commented half-jokingly: “*I don't think anyone would try and, you know, sabotage what I'm doing. Our good work depends a lot on team work, so if I fail they will fail too*”.

Personal acceptance, i.e. an ability to develop close trustworthy ties needed for a dialogical partnership, was seen as more difficult. As discussed in Chapter 5, the indigenes may be culturally distant, disinterested in ‘outsiders’ and not particularly keen on engaging in meaningful personal relations with them. The respondents believed that to break the ice they needed to develop knowledge of the local culture and even then success was not guaranteed. Asel (Kazakhstan) provided some insights into her experience in the region:

I find it hard to mix with people here, because first of all I didn't understand them well when I moved and we couldn't carry on the conversation because you don't know what to talk about first of all. Second of all, they just don't, they don't feel comfortable in your company. (...) And it's very hard, it is very, very rare that people will be interested about you unless you have the same interests. People are not that curious here, (...) my age girls don't give a damn where you are from, what you do. If she or he doesn't find the same interest with them, there is no further conversation you can have.

The issue of inter-personal relations and social acceptance was suggested by Archer (2007) as central concerns for CRs and was also used to identify respondents for whom this MoR was dominant. CRs perceived relations and acceptance as superior to career interests. They rarely set long-term career goals. Even when they did, CRs did not have elaborate (especially compared to ARs) plans of how these goals could be achieved and their attitudes were to “*wait and see what life brings*” (Jennifer, USA) and “*do your work, hard work will be rewarded*” (Zara, Sweden). Respondents with family responsibilities treated careers as a mean to provide for their families and were quite happy to maintain the status quo with rather modest ambitions, whereas single

interviewees expressed an intention to adopt a similar approach in the future. For example, Ahmed was getting married a few months after the interview. He admitted that his uncle had overseen career strategizing, but confessed that they agreed to “*take it easy*” in order to allow more time for Ahmed to spend with his wife and future children. He explained that he was satisfied with career achievements and, although he would like to achieve more, it would not be a “*catastrophe*” if it never happened. Ahmed accentuated that uncle Farhad was not against him getting married as such, when pushed him towards an international career in banking:

He just thought that it was not the right moment back then. He thought I could do much more with my life. But now he thinks it's the right time to slow down a bit and become a family man (laughs).

Ahmed emphasised that he would marry his fiancée regardless, but receiving a confirmation of his plan was a massive relief. When interviewed, he was “*looking forward to humbling [his] ambitions*” and to enjoying a quiet life without being constantly nudged to move further. Like for other respondents identified as CRs, his primary concern was inter-personal relations and associated with them safety, security and stability. This was even more so for migrant respondents, who struggled to ‘fit in’ and to gain a sense of social belonging. For example, Mira (35, Vietnam) commented:

It would be great to have someone who I could trust, someone I could talk to. I don't feel that comfortable making decisions on my own, I have to say. But also... how do I say... I think without friends I struggle to develop a sense of belonging. And without this sense I don't feel secure if it makes sense. (...) Yes, I admit that this is what worrying me most at the moment.

The desire to forge links with the environment and gain the much-valued sense of belonging orientated communicative reflexives towards “*fitting concerns into the context*”. As the following section will debate, this typically involved career projects aimed at conformity with the context and its norms.

7.2 Conformity and trickery

Conformity was the first choice for CRs, in line with their intentions to fit into the context. Archer (2007) observes that changing the self is easier than changing the context. Indeed,

although only one third of ARs could apply reformation, all CRs were engaged in conformity. However, as will be discussed later, some of them merged it with other career projects.

ARs applied conformity willingly and customary, but only for as long as it allowed for a pursuit of their reflexive goals. When conformity became less efficient, they tended to (endeavour to) move to other types of career actions, which they may or may not be able to do. In contrast, for all CRs conformity was a conscious choice made because of reflexive deliberations and often encouraged by dialogical partners. They realised that conformity was not the most advantageous career project, but were prepared to sacrifice career interests for inter-personal relations and the sense of belonging. There was no significant difference in this regard between migrants and the indigenes. For example, Lauren (33, UK) avowed:

I could go and live in London and would probably get promoted fairly easily. But I don't want to live in London (laughs). (...) I have lived in another place before and didn't like it. We have friends and family around... And I am 33, we are planning on having children, I can't imagine raising children there, it would be so awful (laughs).

Roberto (Mexico, intellectual property manager) provided a very similar account explaining his career project:

I know that what I am doing is not the best way to advance my career (laughs). But I just can't be bothered. I have colleagues and friends outside of work, and it's just so nice and cosy that I don't want any changes. I am happy with how things are.

What made, however, an important difference for the indigenes and migrants is how they applied conformity. The former group largely relied on practices embodied in early years, rather similarly to ARs who practiced conformity 'voluntarily' (see 6.6.2). As Lauren commented: "For example, it's easy with clients. It's natural, we speak the same language (laughs). (...) So sometimes you just trust your instincts and go with the flow".

Migrants, nevertheless, needed more than just instincts. Communicative reflexive migrants were largely employed in organisations with predominantly indigenous and, more specifically, local employees. As a result, they believed that advanced knowledge of the local culture was required to be classified as insiders and 'fit in'. For example, Mira (Vietnam, 35) moved to the North-East from London, after a divorce, and took a job at the local council, where she was the only foreign-born person, as well as the only person born outside the North-East. Although Mira had been living in the UK for 13 years, most of her contacts in London were with other migrants from South-Eastern Asia. Therefore, she did not "really know much about real England, people and

their life". She did not feel it was an issue in the multicultural capital, but in the North-East the situation was different:

In London people spoke to me so that I could understand them. Here... sometimes it feels that they try to choose words that I don't know or they talk about things that I don't know (laughs). (...) It's like they are testing you, whether you are, you know, assimilated enough to be their friend.

To pass this 'test' and gain the feeling of acceptance, security and belonging migrant respondents were actively engaged into practices reproducing the existent social order. For example, when needed, they undertook re-training and re-education to meet the UK occupational standards. ARs were also engaged in such activities, but saw them as waste of time, skills and resources (see 6.6.1). In contrast, communicative reflexive migrants did it willingly, as such activities were in line with their concerns. Stojan (27, Serbia, project engineer) had to start his career in the UK as a trainee, although in Serbia he was a relatively experienced professional. As opposed to Dabeet (6.6.1), Stojan saw it as a positive experience: *"It makes you more legitimate, it kind of verifies your competency. So, it's very valuable"*.

Yet, CRs went further than complying with formal requirements. They were engaged in active development of language proficiency, strategic learning of cultural norms, adopting hobbies and customs prevailing in the community. For instance, many male migrant interviewees in this group reported having developed a keen interest in cricket, rugby and squash, and admitted that this served as foundation for closer relations with other male colleagues. These initiatives were readily confirmed and encouraged by indigenous interlocutors, who also served as sources of information about informal conventions behind the logic of behavioural patterns. In the story provided at the beginning of this chapter, Nuria turned to Ainsley to learn what words should and should not be used when addressing special needs children.

For communicatively reflexive migrants without indigenous dialogical partners, obtaining such information was more problematic. To put it simple, they were willing to comply, but did not know what to comply with and the indigenous were not deemed keen on explaining unspoken rules of the society to foreigners. At the time she was interviewed, Mira was spending most of her spare time reading about the region's history and culture. However, she was aware that many of the norms were tacit and for her it was a long way of trial and error:

I say something and everybody just gives a look, but they don't say anything. (...) I feel I am making mistakes all the time, but I don't understand what I am doing wrong. And they are too polite to explain me, maybe they don't want to be rude.

It ought to be stressed that communicative reflexive migrants did not always conform automatically. They reflexively considered rules of the setting and deliberated opportunities to reconcile them with concerns. At time, social norms contradicted some of their most fundamental values and CRs had to engage in *trickery*. For example, migrants could minimize visibility of their pre-migration habits without forsaking them. This occurred when dialogical partners did not belong to the dominant group, e.g. other migrants. Yet, as opposed to ARs, who attempted to 'trick' the context to stand out, CRs applied trickery with an intention to fit it.

Consider, for example, Kamran (30, Pakistan) who worked in an HR department with almost exclusively White British colleagues. He was aware that imperfect cultural knowledge was an obstacle on the way to 'fitting in' and tried to negotiate around it. He was quite enthusiastic about learning the new culture, but, as a Muslim, Kamran did not consume alcohol and was not going to pubs and night clubs. Adherence to the norms of Islam was encouraged and sustained by his brother. However, after-work drinking was an important element of socialising and inability to participate could be punished by ostracism and social exclusion. Kamran attended all social gatherings, went out with colleagues and enjoyed dancing. Nevertheless, he only consumed soft drinks (e.g. coke or tonic without spirits) and felt that this little 'sin' was overlooked, but still preferred not to draw this fact to people's attention. As he facetiously commented:

I am feeling a bit like a rebel (laughs). (...) It is a small thing, but makes such a difference. (...) Touch-wood, in last five and a half years nobody asked me, nobody forced me to drink (laughs).

Another interesting case was presented by Stojan (27, Serbia). He was the most recent migrant in the sample – less than a year since relocation – and was in a process of transforming his dialogical partnership. He was very close to his friends and ex-colleagues in Serbia who he referred to as "*brothers*" and remained close to them after relocation. Stojan followed the well-trodden path suggested by the "*brothers*" and applied for a job at the UK's company that also operated in Serbia, was familiar with Serbian education in engineering, and regarded it highly. He believed it was "*a bit of cheating*", but helped overcome obstacle of migration regulation and recognition of skills. Having successfully done this, Stojan thought that he could 'cheat' other

rules too. He was determined to continue using his Serbian practices (although without trying to impose them to other people) and this determination was supported by his friends at home:

It's just because people here are very cold. I am not the only guy from Serbia or from the Southern part of Europe who can tell you that. It's we are used to more warm behaviour, if you know what I mean. (...) I don't try to be over polite. I am not used to that – every ten seconds thank you, thank you and so on. We discussed it with my colleague from Belgrade, (...) and he agreed with me (laughs).

However, adherence to norms openly contradicting the dominant culture precluded forging close personal relations with colleagues. This started making Stojan feel uncomfortable and uneasy. He was also concerned that this might affect his future prospects in the company, as teamwork was an integral part of it. Consequently, Stojan started looking for an opportunity to reconcile himself with normativity of the setting (“*I will have to accept it*”), if not to adopt it. At the time he was interviewed, Stojan was actively seeking to develop dialogical partnerships with some of his colleagues, but he also felt that his imperfect understanding of norms of communication made it more difficult. He described a recent episode when an acquaintance from work stopped by to return “*something*”, but would not accept Stojan’s warm, but somewhat overly persistent hospitality:

He texted me and he apologized the whole text because he texted me during the weekend. He just said – I am in the neighborhood, I forgot to return you something (...) and can you open the door and I will give it to you. And I said – no, you will have to climb up and just stop by, and come for a coffee and just for a talk. I mean, it's just to take the [item] – it's not in my culture. Of course, you would offer a guy who knocked at your door – would you like to come in, and they would say – no, no, no, I don't feel comfortable. Why not? I mean, I invite you and why not feeling comfortable?

For communicative reflexive migrants and indigenes alike, their concerns with acceptance and inter-personal relations shaped career outcomes. They had a proclivity to replicate career models of their interlocutors and none of them progressed further than their dialogical partners. When dialogical partners were absent, the respondents adhered to the “*average*” path - most common among the group with which they sought to be associated. In most cases this yielded “*average*” results for the practitioners. All but two CRs were no further than the mid-level of occupational and corporate hierarchy. They had been promoted no more than twice and their income did not exceed £35.000, although this varied across different occupations and organizations. When

discussing their outcomes, CRs admitted using the other-referent criteria to ensure that their careers were developing according to the 'appropriate' standards. As Mira (35, Vietnam) noted:

I think I have been doing like everyone else. (...) This makes me comfortable, you know, I know I am not on my own and if we make a mistake we will have to find a solution together, it won't be just my problem. So, I think my career has been like everybody else's too.

On rare occasions when interlocutors were considerably more senior, the outcomes were rather different. Senior dialogical partners urged CRs to seek for career opportunities and utilize them, fostering upward mobility. Sometimes such opportunities became available with assistance of dialogical partners endowed with sufficient power. For example, Ernie (44, Australia) found a dialogical partner in Janet, the company's financial director. This was at the time when Ernie downgraded to move to the North-East with his pregnant wife and was preparing to give up his ambitions for the family, like his own father did. Janet's role was crucial for Ernie's decision to combine career and family:

Janet has been a great help. She has four children and (...) I thought my career was over when we had the second daughter (laughs). She said: you mustn't stop; you can do better than this. In fact, she dragged me into some projects I wouldn't even think of. Sometimes I don't believe I can do it, but she doesn't give me a choice – she is a bloody director (laughs). Very annoying one, but she inspires me loads.

Ernie managed to compensate for the downgrading and made another step further. He stressed that promotions did not happen because of his friendship with one of the most senior officials in the company, but Janet boosted his confidence, urged to be more proactive and connected to important people in the industry, from whom he was able to learn. Even though Ernie eventually decided that further progress would jeopardize his family life, he avowed that without Janet "pushing [him] up" he would have restrained his aspirations at an earlier stage. As a result, for Ernie the outcomes were above the "average" level – he was just a level below Janet and was paid a generous wage of more than £50,000. Yet, even he did not outperform his dialogical partner.

Upward mobility was not always initiated by dialogical partners. Unlike ARs, CRs did not deem social contacts as valuable career resources. However, due to the need to be accepted, they tended to maintain good relations with a large number of people. Sometimes, when the respondents were seen as possessors of valuable skills that were in shortage, they were offered

opportunities by their contacts. For example, Nuria (43, Spain) was referred to a director of a language school by one of her friends. She was contacted by the director and offered a part-time job, which enabled Nuria to engage in volunteering needed to enter primary school teaching.

Career opportunities, nonetheless, ‘occurred’ significantly more often to the indigenes than to migrants. As was mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, Ernie was one of only two who at some point in their careers in the North-East had a native-born senior dialogical partner. In contrast, all four indigenes reported having engaged in such relationships, with two of them having senior interlocutors more than once. Similarly, six migrants in this cohort reported four instances of substantial unsolicited aid from social contacts, whereas four indigenes mentioned eight. Perhaps for this reason the indigenes in this group tended to surpass migrants in career development.

This illustrates that CRs did not create career opportunities for themselves; neither were they actively competing for them. Their “*hard work will be rewarded*” attitude led for opportunities to be expected to emerge, somehow, or to be given by someone when/if this hard work became noticed. Yet, even these opportunities were not always utilized. Like autonomously reflexive practitioners of conformity, the respondents in this cohort faced somewhat of a “glass ceiling”. However, in their case it was created by communicative reflexives’ own reluctance to leave what Ahmed called “*the comfort zone*”. Like Ernie, who was not considering advancing a career any further, many CRs rejected upward mobility. Being the only foreign-born person in the council office, Mira (35, Vietnam) had once been invited to participate in a project aimed at integration of migrants into the local economy, which would result in higher pay and, potentially, a promotion. However, she turned this offer down:

I didn't feel comfortable leaving other people and doing things on my own. (...) I was afraid they would envy me, because I did not really deserve it. I was selected only because I was foreign... I felt it would maybe make me too special.

Career opportunities were rejected consciously, after reflexive deliberations and discussions with interlocutors (when available). As a result, no interviewees reported dissatisfaction with the “*average*” objective career achievements, highlighting that it was not their main concern. Both migrants and indigenes appreciated good salaries and comfortable lifestyle, but regarded careers as successful only when satisfied with work-life balance, acceptance and relations at work. As Ernie put it:

I am glad with what I've done and it makes me feel proud. I still have some plans, some ambitions, but it is not my main worry. (...) If I can earn enough for the family and my

wife does not complain about me too much, if I can be around to see my daughters grow and if people think I am a nice fella, then I am happy. This is my idea of success.

When inter-personal relations did not complement career achievements and the major concern remained unrealized, the respondents experienced lower subjective career satisfaction. Considering that the indigenes did not report acceptance problems, it is not surprising that migrants were more likely to discuss issues with subjective feeling of success. For example, Mira explained her discomfort:

I would feel much more successful if I had more friends. My social life has gone downhill recently and it makes... it doesn't make me happy. (...) If I had a group of other girls to do things together or even one person, someone to talk about things, to go shopping or for a coffee together, I would probably feel content and successful.

7.3 Runaway

Another type of career projects adopted by CRs was *runaway*. The respondents moved between jobs, employers and locations and there was one instance of (unsuccessful) venturing into self-employment. However, they engaged in such activities rather unwillingly. The respondents were attached to dialogical partners and environments, and reluctant to move away from them. As Lauren explained in the previous chapter, her desire to stay next to family and friends led her to reject better career prospects in London. Interlocutors also often discouraged such moves. For example, acceptance issues forced Asel (38, Kazakhstan) to consider relocation elsewhere in the world. Yet, these ideas had never met approval from her dialogical partner, her sister. Asel explained:

I had a few attempts to leave the country. Every time when my sister rings, I am like – I am going this time to Canada, I am immigrating to Canada. Yeah, one month later – I am moving to Australia (laughs). I had so many attempts to leave this place, but I was so scared, because (...) she didn't think it was a rational, right thing to do.

It is interesting that Asel next proceeded to admit that she was “*scared*” that one day her sister might support her spontaneous urges. Likewise, other communicative reflexive migrants found relocation very stressful and were not willing to undertake it again, even though they considered a runaway back home as a possibility in the (rather indefinite) future. Mira, for example, moved to the North-East from London only because she could not afford a very expensive life in the

capital. She described this experience as “*very, very stressful*”. The indigenous respondents had similar attitudes, as Yasmin (33, UK) confessed that moving to a new organization was very difficult to her: “*Not something I enjoyed. (...) New people, new rules, it just made me stressed. Don’t think I will be rushing to move again (laughs)*”.

This illustrates that CRs were engaged in runaway rather unwillingly. For most of them it was a one-off undertaking, rather than a long-term project. Furthermore, when runaway occurred, it was typically instigated by dialogical partners. For example, Karolina⁶⁴ (38, Lithuania, nurse) was one of only two CRs in the sample who applied runaway regularly and systematically. Her career as a medical professional was suggested to Karolina by her mother. Some of her Lithuanian friends moved to London and Karoline later followed their advice and moved too. Karolina then followed them to another city in the UK, where her friends hoped to have better career opportunities. Karolina moved to the North-East when she married a local man, who also encouraged and supported her business attempt suggested by a friend (see 5.5).

Another example of a communicative reflexive practitioner of runaway was Ahmed, who had worked in four countries and six companies. All his moves were encouraged by his uncle, since Ahmed was satisfied with where he was. Moreover, Ahmed was reluctant to relocate and every time he had to be encouraged:

I think I can be happy wherever, as long as I feel comfortable... (...) He [uncle] is a lot more strategic, he knows when there’s nothing left for me and it’s time to move. But it’s always been hard to step out of the comfort zone and start again. We had... not arguments, but very intense discussions (laughs). (...) But in the end, I always felt it was the right thing to do, as it paid off.

Indeed, in terms of objective success it did pay off for Ahmed. Occupying the most senior position and enjoying compensation of more than £70.000, he was the most objectively successful individual among all CRs in the sample. He admitted that this success would not have been possible without his uncle.

The role of interlocutors was similarly important for Karolina. She used her friends’ recommendation and applied for a job at a general practice that appreciated and recognized skills of Eastern European nurses. Following their advice, she established a stable career and her salary rose from £10 to £18 per hour. Her business, however, was far less successful, because the advice she received was less advantageous in the North-East context. Her friend, who run a

⁶⁴ This interview was not recorded, so not quotes are available.

similar shop in the South of England, was not aware of the economic situation in the North-East and Karolina's husband, although caring and supportive, lacked experience in toiletries business.

It should be highlighted once again that, for CRs, runaway was not the principal career project. Whereas ARs applied runaway to gain enough resources needed to move to trickery or reformation, CRs applied runaway as a temporary project with an idea to settle down and engage in conformity. As the previous section discussed, Ahmed felt relieved having an opportunity to "take it easy". Being objectively the top achiever, he nonetheless did not report higher subjective satisfaction with his attainments than other CRs. Like other respondents with the same dominant MoR, he derived the feeling of subjective success from work-life balance, personal relations and family domain. As he commented:

Had you asked me about success a few months ago, I would say no or kind of... Now it is a yes. I am getting married. I am feeling much more fulfilled and relaxed. Happy, I have to say. Career is one of the bricks in my happiness, but before it was not enough on its own... I didn't really need it for my own.

7.4 Summary

Ahmed's desire to reach the "comfort zone" was common among communicative reflexives. For them it meant integration into the setting by adjusting concerns to the context, which, indeed, was easier to implement than adjusting context to the concerns (Archer, 2007). This required more effort from migrants than the indigenes, as norms and rules of the setting were not necessarily easily observable. This made the impact of dialogical partners particularly important.

Projects applied by CRs were rather homogeneous, especially compared to a wide arsenal of ARs. They were the only group where all respondents were able to practice their preferred course of action – conformity. Trickery was relatively rare and was largely aimed at imitating conformity, when contextual normativity contradicted some fundamental personal values. Runaway, in turn, was even more infrequent, applied temporarily and only when initiated by dialogical partners. Furthermore, it was practiced unwillingly and with an intention of settling down and engaging into conformity. Reformation and hideaway implied drastically different relations with the context and, therefore, were not applied by CRs in the sample.

This cohort believed that hard work would be eventually noticed and rewarded, and was not involved in active competition for career opportunities. Considering intentions to stand out less

in order to fit in, it is perhaps unsurprising that CRs did not receive many opportunities. Migrants, however, were in a particularly disadvantageous position, because their social connections were either under-developed or less useful for career purposes than those of the indigenes. As a result, careers of CRs demonstrated slow progress (if any at all). Although opportunities were at times presented by other people, CRs often rejected them when deemed dangerous for acceptance or personal life, effectively creating their own 'glass ceiling'.

Subjective satisfaction for CRs was not in line with objective measurements of career success. Their career ambitions were confined to having a job and being able to pay the bills, which was relatively easy to attain for skilled migrants. Absolute satisfaction, however, was not possible without social acceptance and satisfying inter-personal relations.

Chapter 8. Meta-reflexives

8.1 Meta-reflexivity: Internal conversation

When Calvin (34, Jamaica) was 19, his older homosexual brother, Billy, was beaten up by a gang of homophobic hooligans and died in hospital four days later. Calvin was “*exceptionally close*” to Billy and was the only family member who was aware of his sexual orientation. This loss, as he explained, “*completely changed my world and me as a person*”. He was devastated to discover that the police were not keen to put much effort into investigating Billy’s death. The family, mourning Billy’s demise, came to an unspoken agreement that it was his own fault and were mainly concerned about saving the family reputation than finding the criminals. The following year Calvin, himself heterosexual, left Jamaica to study engineering in Canada and had never been to his home country ever since.

Billy was kind and caring. I couldn’t wish for a better brother. I never understood what he was facing... And when he got murdered just for being who he was... something inside me’d changed. I couldn’t stay with my parents and pretend nothing happened. I just couldn’t be in the society when things like that were normal.

Since this tragic incident, Calvin developed a remarkable sensitivity to homophobia. After graduation, he was offered a job in Canada, but left it after less than two years. Within the next seven years he changed employers four times in the United States and Canada. Every time he left for the same reason – realising that policies of diversity and equality did not work perfectly. Calvin explained why he had quitted his last job in America:

There was a man at work, he was gay. And everyone was nice to him, no problem. But behind his back all other guys and many girls were making jokes, really nasty jokes. And because I am Black and from Jamaica, they assumed I was homophobic and were very outright when talking to me. They called this guy names, mocked him and tried to frame him and all this behind his back.

After this he decided to move to Europe and took a job in the UK. Yet, although Calvin found the new society more tolerant to LGBT community, he encountered another difficulty. Calvin stressed that he was not aware of an ideal way to promote equality:

We can call for more laws against discrimination, but we already have laws. And if we persist, this can annoy people and the effect will be quite the opposite. People can abide by the laws and

still hate you, because you are different. (...) Frankly, I don't know where to begin and how to change people's minds.

So instead of engaging into anti-homophobia campaigns, in the USA and Canada he volunteered for charities providing support for homosexual teenagers and their families and was intent on doing so in the North-East of England. However, Calvin learned that a few Jamaican families who knew his family and were involved into his father's international business projects resided in the region. Calvin thought that this made his LGBT-supporting activities potentially dangerous for his family. Calvin believed that *"having one gay son and another son gay activist"* would be insufferable for his relatives and could endanger their business interests and, potentially, safety in Jamaica. Despite promising career prospects and good promotion opportunities, he decided to move again to *"stay true to myself"*. At the time he was interviewed, Calvin was looking for an opportunity to relocate to Scandinavia, where, he believed, people were also tolerant, but there were fewer ex-compatriots who could expose him.

Meta-reflexivity dominated inner conversations of ten respondents – seven migrants and three indigenes. Their dialogues with inner selves bore some resemblance with autonomous and communicative reflexives, but were distinct from both (Archer, 2007). Like ARs, MRs did not require confirmation of their deliberations and purposefully avoided involvement of interlocutors. Calvin emphasised that his decisions to move between countries and employers were made independently, not being discussed with anyone: *"No, it was just me. (...) I don't have a need to discuss my plans to be honest. I talk to myself a lot (laughs)"*.

Like for CRs, objective career achievements were not central in inner dialogues of MRs. Yet, neither were inter-personal relations and acceptance. Archer (2007) finds that concerns of MRs are their strong values, beliefs and principles. This was used to classify respondents as MRs. For Calvin the main concern was his extreme intolerance to homophobia, for others - matters such as intellectual freedom, spirituality and environmental issues. Conflating *"doing and being"* (Archer, 2007, p.161), respondents identified as MRs were seeking for vocation that would encompass their values, rather than merely a career. Having found it, the respondents stayed devoted and Calvin declared his commitment:

I miss home sometimes. I miss not thinking about things like this. Sometimes I think what it would be like if I could stop caring. You know, just take it easy and maybe ignore some things. But this is my way now.

Concerns of some of MRs, like Calvin's, were unrelated to their professional lives, although impacted upon it. Concerns of other participants were more integrated into careers, but not orientated towards objective achievements. No difference in this regard was found between migrants and the indigenes. Remarkably, a half of MRs (four migrants and one indigenous participant) were employed as lecturers and researchers in higher education institutions. They deemed teaching and/or research as their mission, their way to contribute to the society and to make a change, which was an important part of living in accordance to the values. To retain the ability to practice it was not uncommon to avoid promotions, if they would have required a shift towards managerial and administrative responsibilities. For example, Sara (44), a lecturer from Italy, avowed that she was not interested in progressing further, as she believed it would leave her with less time to teach:

If you get promoted, you get a little bit more money, that would be good. But also because you are a promoted member of staff they will give you a lot of administrative job to do and I don't like the paperwork. So, I prefer to keep myself humble as a lecturer, but doing stuff that I like, as compared to become a reader or a professor with a lot of work to do that I don't enjoy. And I don't care, here they think you are weird if you say you don't want to get promoted, so it's not something that I am going around and saying.

It was evident that Sara's own normativity contradicted conventionalities of the institution she worked at. This was typical for MRs: because their internal conversations did not need external completion, the respondents elaborated their personal systems of moral and ethical norms. This, in turn, resulted in considerable gaps between their values and the social reality, particularly in the case of migrants who transferred their pre-existing values to a new environment. For example, Lew's (37, Poland) described his experience as a lecturer in the UK as utterly disappointing, especially compared to his previous experience in Poland. He believed that research and teaching were organised in a formalistic way that discouraged intellectual creativity and left little space for enjoyment. He also had an impression that fear was imposed as the major motivation – students were afraid of bad marks and academics were afraid of low students' satisfaction and bad reviews.

Although this was against Lew's personal beliefs of how higher education should be arranged, he was feeling increasingly under pressure to conform to the rules incompatible with his values. He emphasised that he "*didn't want to produce fear*", but a few initiatives he proposed to reduce the 'fear' were not welcomed by students and colleagues alike. At the time of the interview, Lew was looking to move back to Poland, even though it was likely to entail up to five times decrease

in income. He was considering joining one of the Polish universities or continuing career as a research in the software industry where, as his previous experience suggested, there was “*more fun and less fear*”.

Both Lew and Sara felt that their values were misunderstood. This opinion was common among MRs, migrants and the indigenes alike, and led them to accept a somewhat solitary lifestyle. They often had even fewer close contacts than ARs and did not have strategically extended networks. For example, Ida (61, Germany) labelled herself a “*loner*”, whereas Lynn (38, UK) jokingly called herself a “*hermit*”. However, family duties were not ignored by meta-reflexives. This was perceived a moral obligation, although not to a degree of CRs’ self-sacrifice. Calvin, for instance, had to adjust his plans to incorporate family’s interest. Similarly, Luke (25, UK, engineer), whose main concerns were related to equal opportunities in life, wanted to spend some time in Africa working on charity projects as a teacher. Yet, he decided to defer the realisation of his project so that he could support his recently widowed father. Neither Calvin, nor Luke, however, had given up on their values and their intentions to move abroad. Their decisions to relocate were far from atypical. All MRs were ceaselessly analysing themselves and the social setting, being quite critical about both. Lew, for example, provided a very detailed insight into his vision of why the university system was deficient and why he struggled to fit it. He concluded:

I think unless you naturally fit into this framework and it works for you it is fine, but I think for me since I got this job I’ve been gradually losing interest in what I am doing and I kind of been looking for what I could be doing, losing these ideas that were motivating me before somehow. (...) In my career, it was like unacceptance of this functioning in this kind of framework. And I cannot force myself to be otherwise, it is like from a lower level, not just intellectual unacceptance, unacceptance of the entire system, it is not the right environment for me to function. Probably it is mostly that I don’t accept the environment that principally based on fear as a motivation for work, because the core of it is like that, although it is not a very conscious aspect of functioning.

Yet, in contrast to ARs whose preoccupation with the context was directed towards searching for the way to achieve desired outcomes, even if it required an alteration of the setting, MRs are not achievement-, but value-orientated (Archer, 2007). Therefore, they developed far less pragmatic projects aiming at staying loyal to their values. As Calvin tersely put it: “*If I cannot do it as I believe is right to do, then I’d rather not do it at all*”.

Having identified discrepancies between their values and social reality, MRs typically had a clear idea of what the social world should be and were willing to contribute to its transformation. Yet, unlike ARs who set concrete goals and developed plans to attain them, MRs rather had a *dream* of an ideal, but no elaborate course of action. Their internal conversations considered a range of scenarios and eventualities, many of which, as they admitted, would probably never occur. This encumbered their decision-making and, like Calvin, other MRs didn't know "*where to begin*" changing the world in accordance to their ideals. It was not different for the indigenes, who were expected to be more familiar with the context. For example, Luke believed it would be easier for him to contribute to equal access to education in Africa than in the UK. He felt deeply disappointed with the results of general election in 2015 and the government's policies in education. Luke commented:

We won't have any justice with them and their plans for more grammar schools. And then the university fees, how many people can actually afford them? (...) I'm kind of giving up hope. We won't have education for everyone, not with this government, and sadly there's nothing we can do. So maybe I could help somewhere else.

The rest of this chapter will discuss how dialogues with inner selves orientated MRs towards particular projects, why these projects were not equally available for all respondents and what outcomes they generated.

8.2 Runaway

As explained in the previous section, MRs were concerned about moral values and emphasised the need for changes in the existent social order. Yet, none of MRs in the sample appeared to have either resources to transform the context or a detailed plan of what modifications should be made and how. In contrast to ARs, whose concerns were pragmatic and could be realised through changes on the organisational level, realisation of value-centred concerns of MRs required more global reforms. Like Calvin admitted, he did not know how "*to change people's minds*" and was not convinced by efficacy of anti-homophobia legislation. Therefore, their good intentions remained unrealised and all MRs in the sample had to settle for the second or the third best.

Runaway appeared as the "second best" option. Unwilling to exist in the 'imperfect' world and unable to create a better one, MRs were looking for a 'better' world that would match their

values. For example, Lew (probably quite rightly) did not feel that it would be possible to reform the higher education system on his own. He also discovered that changes were not desired by most other people. It made him believe that academia was not the right place for him. As he interpreted his deliberations regarding further relocation:

I think it is difficult to change it unless a lot of people together become conscious about how we function as human beings, that's the thing. (...) I think it's two-sided, because [continuing an academic career] would require certain changes in myself as well, maybe deeper than I am able to produce right now. It's mostly about acceptance things as they are somehow. I accept things as they are in a way that I would not give you ideas how the job should change or how the environment should change. I think it's okay for this place to function as it functions, because people are agree on that they want to function like that. And I don't have to modify it or something, or make a big theory about that, I just move on to something that is more suitable for me.

In search for the 'better world' MRs had a proclivity to changing locations, employers and jobs. It must be stressed that, as opposed to ARs who strategically pursued career interests and moved vertically, MRs were engaged predominantly in horizontal mobility. Calvin's intolerance to homophobia led him through three countries and five employers to the UK and was pushing further again, but only two of his moves entailed immediate promotions.

However, Calvin was exceptionally fortunate in his freedom to move. He was financially independent, single and without any commitments; besides his rare and prestigious education, experience in some of the best engineering companies in the world and Spanish citizenship (through his mother) undisputedly facilitated his mobility. Other respondents often were subjected to strict migration policies significantly limited their ability to move and/or had family responsibilities. The former reason made relocation significantly more difficult for non-EEA migrants (see also 6.5). Oleg (Ukraine) explained that his mobility was very limited until he obtained an EEA passport:

It definitely gives you more opportunities and freedom. (...) You can take some time away from work potentially and think about what to do next. Also I believe you are more employable. It is not a great deal of a problem in academia, but if you already have a right to work in the country, you can be hired right here right now, for example, when they urgently need someone to teach.

Family commitments influenced opportunities to ‘runaway’ for all respondents, regardless of their origin. Oleg, even when he became an EEA citizen, did not runaway, because his children were in school and he did not want to interrupt their education. However, the indigenes were more likely to receive support from families, whereas for meta-reflexive migrants, family ties were more constraining. Two out of three meta-reflexive indigenes provided examples of how family help enabled them to continue looking for the ‘right’ place. For example, Lynn (38, UK) had changed workplaces seven times since she graduated with a degree in English Literature at the age of 23, because none of them could give her the sense of purpose. All her decisions to quit were instant and without plans for next employment. Every time after resignation she spent some time (from two to nine months) unemployed, pondering what she would like to do next. During these periods Lynn was supported first by her parents, then by husband. A few months before the interview she had inherited a property from her grandmother and immediately left her job again. She decided to rent her inheritance out and join an animal charity as a full-time volunteer to pursue her childhood’s dream.

In contrast, four out of seven migrant MRs could not apply runaway due to family commitments. Lew, for example, had nearly handed in his resignation a few months before the interview, but retracted his resignation letter. He had a brother with a disability and was transferring a significant proportion of his salary to support the family. He felt that leaving without having secured alternative employment would have jeopardised his family’s financial well-being. Consequently, Lew had to postpone pursuing his values due to family matters.

I quit earlier this year (...) and it was quite liberating, but then I realized that because I have certain commitments to my family in terms of finances and so on maybe it’s better to find another job first and then move, rather than just quit and then try, you know. (...) Because for me it was very liberating and freeing just to resign and say that I am just cutting the line and then looking for something else. But then my family started to be afraid about sort of arrangements that we have that they may not function and I didn’t want to produce fear.

For these reasons only five MRs (three migrants and two indigenes) practiced runaway as a specific project at some stage of their career in the North-East. Compared to ARs, migrant and indigenous MRs applied runaway in a less strategic manner. Decisions to move were often spontaneous, without a clear idea of where to move. Lynn (38, UK) avowed that her moves between jobs were “chaotic” and this was also the case for the others. In a similar manner Calvin (34, Jamaica) explained:

Sometimes I leave instantly. (...) Something happens, and I don't want to be in this place anymore, I just cannot. So, a few times I submitted my resignation, but then there was a notice period and I was looking for a new job then.

The objective outcomes of the runaway project were also different for MRs. Their moves were typically horizontal and entailed no (or little) vertical career mobility. In some cases, downward mobility occurred. For example, Ida (61, Germany) at some point made a deliberate decision to become a cleaner in a supermarket, because she wanted to “*mind [her] own business*”, meaning less control and pressure. In general, this group demonstrated limited career advancement and was receiving income close to the lowest possible in their occupations (in most cases up to £25.000). As an exception, Calvin achieved considerable upward mobility, benefitting from his valuable education and experience. He progressed to managerial level and was paid more than £50.000 per annum. Yet, he was candid enough to admit that ‘running away’ slowed his progress down and more could have been achieved had he stayed with one employer longer:

My classmates, people I know in the industry, people of my age and similar education, you know, most of them are higher than me now. Some of them think I am a failure, you know, wasting my skills hopping from one company to another (laughs).

Yet, MRs reported no problems with a subjective satisfaction. It was not complete, because the world remained ‘imperfect’, but they appreciated an ability to keep looking for a better world. In the pursuit of their values, careers were not central for their concerns. No difference between migrant and indigenous respondents was found in this regard. As Calvin commented:

I just felt bad and just handing my leaving notice made me feel better. I was looking forward to leaving soon, going somewhere better, and it was a relief, it really was. (...) Even if I am behind them [ex-classmates] it doesn't bother me so long as I can pay my bills and be honest with myself.

8.3 Hideaway

Most migrant MRs in the sample did not have the luxury of Lynn's extensive family support or Calvin's exceptionally valuable skills, not to mention the effect of legal restrictions imposed upon movement of non-EEA nationals. Therefore, six of them (five migrants and one indigene) had to settle for *hideaway*. Even when the context contradicted their values, individuals had to stay in employment. Nevertheless, they tried to minimise contacts with the context and to

fashion their own micro-worlds where they could live up to their values. This course of action was MRs' exclusive domain and was not applied by either autonomous or communicative reflexives.

Oleg (37, Ukraine) had completed a PhD in the USA and worked in several European countries on short-term contracts when his partner (also from Ukraine) got a permanent post in the UK. To stay close to the family Oleg accepted the first position in a UK higher education institute he was offered. He soon realised that this university was teaching-orientated, leaving him very little time for research. Oleg also discovered that in order to get promoted he was expected to do some "favours" to the department, mainly in the form of unpaid administrative work, which would leave him even less research time. However, staying research-active was Oleg's most important career concern, which he was not prepared to compromise on:

I was due to promotion a long time ago, (...) but I was told pretty much explicitly by my line managers, by my head of department that in addition to the scientific component I have to do something useful for the department. To do something for free, so to say. (...) But it's not something that I would like to do, I think I am better doing physics. I am not willing to change my attitude, so I will never get promoted unless I get a job somewhere else. (...) Bureaucracy is thriving, it's gigantic and I just don't feel like being a part of it. It is useless for the society; it's certainly not something that I would like to do.

Opportunities for jobs in research-orientated universities were limited for Oleg. Although he obtained an EEA citizenship and therefore had more freedom to move, he wanted to work within a commutable distance from his wife and children. He believed that only two universities in the region could provide him with a research-focused position. Whilst looking for other jobs, Oleg was doing research in his spare time. He was trying to guard his privacy and stayed away from administrative work and other activities that he saw as distracting. Oleg was aware that such escapism undermined his career perspectives, but, like for other MRs, money and promotions were not among his principal concerns. As he commented:

Promotion is basically more money. (...) If I wanted to optimize my profits I could just stay [in Ukraine] at the end of 1990s and I would be in charge of some business like many of my former classmates are now. I think I would be making much better money than now. I chose my career not just because of money, but because I enjoy what I do and want to do it.

This became particularly evident in case of Ida (61, Germany). Her main concern was her freedom and independence. She was trained as a teacher in Germany, but felt that teaching was “*too much security and control*” for her. Upon relocation to the UK she took a job as a cleaner and was very fond of an opportunity to work with her hands and “*mind [her] own business*”. She then joined an advertising company that was recruiting native German speakers. In her constant pursuit of freedom, Ida stayed with the company for as long as was needed to undertake training required for translators and language tutors. Being unable to ‘runaway’ and find the environment that would offer her enough freedom, she found refuge in self-employment immediately after having obtained the necessary documentation. Ida constructed a very isolated and secluded microcosm of her own. She had extensive virtual networks, stayed in touch with other translators in the area and her former students, but her immediate world was confined to herself and a dog:

With direct clients you tend to have more personal contact than you have with agencies, but people I’ve been working for more than 20 years and I’ve never spoken to them. (...) I don’t have any close friends, (...) I quite enjoy my own company. Really, I depend very much on the dog (laughs). I do a lot of things by myself, I think not many people do it.

In contrast to ARs, who were also very independent but ventured into self-employment to achieve other goals, for Ida independence was the ultimate goal in itself, for which she sacrificed a stable and well-off future in Germany:

I think from the financial point of view if I’d stayed in Germany my life would have been a lot safer, I would have earned more money. However, I think in a way I’m happier with my life here. (...) I do like a challenge (laughs). I like self-diversity and I like challenges in different areas.

Another interesting example was provided by Ruta (32, Lithuania). She had moved a few times before, but settled in the North-East as an administrator. Ruta was engaged to a local man and her main concern was healthy lifestyle. She wanted to open her healthy food business, but this required substantial investments and an elaborate business plan. Whilst working on this, she had to continue her current work. Ruta and her fiancé created their own micro-world of a healthy life to separate themselves from what was perceived as a local culture of excessive drinking and other unhealthy habits. She explained:

I don’t know, what is English cultural practice? Drinking? (Laughs). No, not that, I am not a big drinker, neither is my fiancée. So, we are quite healthy. I think we are a bit more like odd people if you like in a way that we don’t go with the crowd; we don’t go

drinking every weekend or anything like that. We are more into our gardening, healthy eating, things like that. So, I don't think we are traditional Geordies, even my husband-to-be, I don't think he is like a traditional Geordie in that sense.

The objective outcomes of hideaway depended upon a career stage at which the practitioners applied it, for hideaway effectively precluded any further career progress. In most cases the respondents 'hid away' rather early, after having been promoted no more than once. However, because four MRs in this cohort were employed in comparatively well-paid research and higher education jobs, even at junior and medium grades the income of this group was generally no lower than £30.000-35.000. Similarly, as an engineer, Luke enjoyed a relatively generous salary even at a junior level. One exception was Ruta - she 'hid away' as an administrator with a salary of about £20.000.

In some instances, hideaway was only possible at the expense of downward mobility. For example, Ida's self-employment supplied much-desired independence, but was not very lucrative, especially compared to what she earned as a linguist before or what she could have earned as a school teacher in Germany. In fact, she reported the lowest incomes among all respondents in full-time employment – about £12.000 per annum. So, her plan B was to invest inheritance money into properties and rent them out to secure her forthcoming retirement. It is somewhat paradoxical that Ida could maintain her independence only with substantial financial aid from her family. She avowed that without the inheritance funds she would not have been able to “*hide from the world*” and would probably have to return into the landscape of traditional employment. However, for Ida, like for all MRs, subjective satisfaction was not aligned to objective criteria of success. For instance, Ruta described her vision of success:

For me success in my head is working towards your passion. Like working for your business or making your own business, something that you absolutely love, something that you are passionate about and helping people in process, you know, with healthy eating and things like that. (...) Yeah, something that you are passionate about and that you are making a difference, actually helping people – that's my definition of success.

Hideaway was chosen as the lesser of two evils and the respondents reported somewhat mixed satisfaction. On the one hand, they made conscious decisions to escape the imperfect world to realise their values, and believed it was the right thing to do. On the other hand, there were still factors beyond their control that penetrated their hideaways and 'escapism' had never been absolute. For example, focusing on his research projects, Oleg (37, Russia) was deliberately avoiding activities that could help him get promoted, such as administrative responsibilities or

networking, seeing them as unethical and distracting. Diminishing his promotion opportunities, Oleg nonetheless felt fortunate for having an ability to carry on doing what he felt was most important thing to do. However, he still had quite a heavy workload of teaching and was deeply worried about teaching being the main priority of most universities:

I consider myself a happy person, because yes, my job is not ideal, but this is not the most important thing in my life. I get paid for something that I more or less like. Okay, teaching is not my dream activity, but it's okay. I still get a possibility of doing research and this is what I really like. (...) I would like to take a professor position in a research-oriented university, somewhere I would be allowed officially to do research and this would be valued. But to be honest I no longer think about it much, I just have many ideas in my research and with time I get more and more ideas and I'm just busy solving problems in physics. (...) I would be more successful in that, but I am not trying to be successful, I don't think it's ethical.

8.4 Summary

Although reformation would have been the preferred course of action for MRs, none of them had been able to apply it, and runaway and hideaway were practiced instead. *Conformity* and *trickery* were not appealing, because both implied compromising to a degree unacceptable for the respondents. Meta-reflexive interviewees were very reluctant to 'betray' their values and ideals, and neither of these career projects was pronounced in their careers.

Objective achievements of MRs were comparatively modest and were characterised by either career immobility or limited mobility with commensurate levels of income. Not infrequently the respondents ignored or rejected opportunities that they saw as menacing to the values cherished by MRs. Nonetheless, their subjective satisfaction was rather high, since this group appreciated the ability to "*be honest with myself*" and stay loyal to personal credo more than money and status. Yet, their satisfaction had never been absolute, because the complete isolation from the 'imperfect world' was not achievable and the 'perfect world' was hard to find. Thus, neither runaway nor hideaway led to complete realisation of concerns. This sentiment was shared by migrant and indigenous respondents. As Lynn concluded her deliberations: "*I am not really sure that it's possible to be fully content... Not in this world perhaps. And not for me...*"

8.5 Conclusion (for Chapters 6-8)

Findings presented in Chapters 6 to 8 have demonstrated that the five types of career projects were applied in different manners by the three groups of respondents and produced dissimilar outcomes. Furthermore, features idiosyncratic for the migrant and indigenous sub-samples have been identified.

Reformation was applied exclusively by ARs and appeared to be the most advantageous career project in terms of objective and subjective success. Migrants strategically relied upon their foreign expertise to gain resources needed to practice reformation, whereas the indigenes combined skillfulness with assistance from social contacts. *Trickery* was practiced by ARs and CRs, but with intentions to realise different concerns. ARs used it to enhance their career achievements when reformation was inaccessible, whereas CRs relied on it to imitate conformity and fit better in the society. Consequently, objective career outcomes were significantly higher for ARs, although both groups reported good subjective satisfaction. Also, migrants tended to utilize their skills to circumvent contextual obstacles, whilst the indigenes had more opportunities to combine skills and social support. *Runaway* was the only career project applied by all three groups; however, it was used more often by the indigenes than EEA migrants, whereas non-EEA migrants could not apply it because of contextual boundaries/mechanisms. Strategically utilized by ARs and CRs (when guided by a dialogical partner), it tended to facilitate upward mobility and, particularly in case of self-employed respondents, led to high financial compensation, comparable only to ‘reformers’. In contrast, for most CRs runaway involved mainly horizontal movements and, therefore, limited upward mobility. *Hideaway* was practiced only by MRs and predominantly by migrants. It effectively precluded upward mobility, although this did not concern the practitioners. Finally, *conformity* was used by ARs and CRs. Upward mobility was possible, but it was limited and relatively slow. This mode of practice tended to result in a ‘glass ceiling’. Breaking through it was possible with support from social contacts and was more likely for the indigenes than migrants. Also, a sub-group of ARs (indigenes and EEA migrants) applied conformity in a customary or habitual manner, rather than critically and reflexively.

The respondents were not ‘condemned’ to practice certain types of career projects and were able to move between them when circumstances changed. For example, ARs who conformed ‘forcibly’ did not see conformity as a final career destination. Dabeet complied with the rules only to get access to occupation, work his way up and earn eligibility to preferred practices, whereas Tiwa and Akande were not intent to stay in the UK longer than was needed to

accumulate enough experience to progress in another setting. Thus, all of them accepted compliance as a transitional stage, leading to more acceptable career projects – reformation or trickery for Dabeet and runaway for Tiwa and Akande.

To recapitulate, ARs were the most successful group regarding objective career achievements. They were better paid, progressed quicker, had more opportunities for professional development and occupied higher hierarchical positions than the other two groups. CRs progressed further in the occupational hierarchy than MRs; however MRs reported higher income than CRs. This was mainly because MRs were employed in occupations with higher paid entry level jobs, such as research and higher education.

Yet, objective outcomes did not necessarily correspond to the subjective feeling of satisfaction. For all three groups, complementary factors were required: control over life and career for ARs, inter-personal relations and acceptance for CRs and loyalty to values for MRs. ARs, nonetheless, were the most heterogeneous group in regard to subjective success. Appreciating objective achievement, they also were strategic in keeping things under control and had more opportunities to realize their concerns than other groups. ‘Reformer’s in particular reported the highest level of satisfaction in the sample, and practitioners of trickery, runaway and ‘voluntary’ conformity also had good subjective satisfaction. The only cohort that openly discussed career dissatisfaction was ARs ‘forced’ into compliance. CRs satisfied with family and social life also reported satisfaction with their careers. Since acceptance was more problematic for migrants, they were more likely to experience issues with subjective success than the indigenes. Finally, for MRs living in an imperfect world had been the constant source of discomfort, and their satisfaction had never been absolute.

This thesis will now proceed to discuss findings produced by CRE with references to the relevant literature. The next chapter will debate the main contributions made by this thesis and its significance for enhancing the existent theories.

Chapter 9. Discussion

9.1 Introduction: From the ‘grand social theories’ to realist social theory

This chapter will discuss the findings with references to the existing scholarship. It emphasises the complexity and significance of the findings and highlights the contribution of the thesis. The purpose of this thesis was to generate a more informed and more balanced account of skilled migrants’ careers, as a social phenomenon positioned at the intersection of agency and structure, to illuminate career outcomes achieved by skilled migrants. Chapter 2 has argued that there are shortcomings associated with the way in which the three grand social theories (Bourdieu’s Theory of practice, Giddens’ Structuration theory and Luhmann’s Theory of autopoetically closed social systems), championed by Mayerhofer and colleagues (2007) as a way to further understanding of careers, address structure, agency and relations between them. In particular for migrants careers, the results of this thesis have found empirical evidence to confirm these shortcomings and to suggest that other theoretical tools are needed to enable further development of career studies.

Firstly, contextual conditions are less malleable than structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) suggests (2.2.2). Systematic modifications of the social setting were available only to a small sub-group of senior respondents, requiring significant resources and an elaborate strategic approach. Further, not all contextual factors were changeable and nobody in the sample was able to alter, for example, migration regulation or underlying principles of the dominant culture (see Chapter 6). Yet, even when complying with conventions of the setting, the majority⁶⁵ of respondents drew a very clear line between themselves, as social agents, and the context (see also Tomlinson et al., 2013). Compliance was emphasised as a reflexive decision based upon conscious deliberations of agential concerns and contextual circumstances. This was the case even for CRs, suggesting greater ‘distance’ between structure and agency than structuration theory advocates (Mouzelis, 1989) and underlining the fallacy of conflating the two of them.

Secondly, the ‘rational choice’ was more significant for the respondents than Bourdieu asserts (2.2.1). Even intentions of CRs to ‘fit in’ were largely reflexive, and the price for them was consciously accepted and paid. Arguably, migration is an example of a situation of crisis, at which time Bourdieu admits the possibility of the ‘rational choice’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The more barriers migrants must overcome, the more stressful it is. Indeed, the cohort

⁶⁵ ‘Voluntary’ conformity of ARs is a notable exception.

least engaged in reflexive deliberations was the respondents experienced most contextual continuity: indigenes and young EEA migrants in unregulated occupations (6.6.2). This group was not particularly reflexive in their relations to the context only because the context had not (yet) posed any considerable barriers to their career goals, which were, however, still set in an apparently reflexive fashion. Nonetheless, instances of habitual behaviours accounted for a minority in the sample (five out of 57 respondents) and the clear majority, indigenes and migrants, were reflexive in considering both the context and their concerns. This indicates either that the ‘rational choice’ occurs not solely in times of crisis or that the times of crisis are more frequent than Bourdieusian theory suggests (Bourdieu, 1977). Either way, reflexivity requires more attention to develop a more insightful account of the skilled migrants’ careers.

Finally, the significance of reflexivity, as demonstrated in this thesis, illuminates the drawbacks of Luhmann’s theory of autopoiesis. The respondents were engaged in active, complex and reflexive relations with the social setting, which went beyond mere ‘irritating’ the context. Explanation of these relations within Luhmann’s theoretical framework appears highly problematic. The principles of autopoiesis argue that communications and thoughts originate entirely from and are produced entirely by pre-existing communications and thoughts (Luhmann, 1986). This leaves little space for agential reflexivity, implying that our projects and practices are “determined by some higher logic” (Elder-Vass, 2007a, p.422) rather than developed through conscious deliberations. The findings of this study demonstrate that social actors can go off the beaten path to transform or circumvent contextual mechanisms (6.3 and 6.4) and their agency is more important for existence of social systems than pictured in the theory of autopoiesis (Luhmann, 1995).

Considering the acknowledged limitations of these ‘grand social theories’, one of the primary contributions made by this thesis is to demonstrate the benefits CR and Margaret Archer’s RST can offer. Arguably, these resources enable a better theorisation of the independent powers of social structure and agency, which promotes a more robust interdisciplinary approach in the terrain of career studies (Mayrhofer et al, 2007; Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer, 2011).

As argued in section 2.3, CR and RST can be helpful to all five ‘touchstones for contribution’ outlined by Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer (2011). The principal focus of this study was to address the balance between structure and agency in career studies. Nonetheless, it also exemplifies how CR and RST can contribute to the other four areas. First, this thesis positions careers of skilled migrants within a broader structural and cultural context, with focus on mechanisms operating on different levels – from supra-national to local (Chapter 5). Second, it

explicitly considers career boundaries, in particular when examining why migrants may or may not be able to follow their reflexive logic and how different factors can constrain and enable career projects of different sub-groups (Chapters 6-8). Third, although the study was not longitudinal, RST and this project include a temporal element. This thesis provided some details about how migrants develop career projects, realise them and move between them (Chapters 6-8). Finally, this thesis illustrates the possibility of methodological pluralism in CR (Chapter 4).

Appreciation of context and contextual boundaries are central in CR ontology (Fleetwood, 2005), whereas temporality is the foundation of Archer's morphostatic-morphogenetic model. Therefore, the value of CR and RST for these 'touchstones' is somewhat self-evident. In contrast, CR's ability to contribute to the field of methodology has, perhaps not groundlessly, been questioned (see Yeung, 1997) and, therefore, required more attention. This thesis argues that, even though CR does not supply its own unique methodological devices, it is ontologically and epistemologically compatible with many of the existing tools, either in their current form or after an appropriate modification (see Edwards et al., 2014). This allows researchers a great deal of discretion to choose methods most appropriate to the problem under investigation (see also Schein, 2007), fostering interdisciplinarity and diversity in career studies.

This study supplies a rare example of empirical career research not only philosophically and/or theoretically, but also methodologically rooted in CR. It utilised a CR adaptation of Pawson and Tilley's realist evaluation (1997), offered by Brannan and colleagues (2017), as a helpful framework to investigate skilled migrants' careers:

Context + Agency = Outcomes

This equation, by and large, reflects Archer's morphostatic-morphogenetic model (see 2.3.2), where Context represents pre-dating structural and cultural conditioning, Agency accounts for social interaction and Outcomes coordinate with structural elaboration or reproduction. The findings presented in Chapters 6 to 8 illustrate that, although the outcomes do depend upon both context and agency, it is more than a mere sum of the two. The relations between the context and agency are complex and mutable. Furthermore, they are bi-dimensional in that context and agency impact upon each other – the phenomenon called double morphogenesis by Archer (2015).

RST has put forward reflexivity as a mechanism mediating relations between agency and the context (structure and culture) and explaining the outcomes of these relations. On the one hand, reflexivity is a property of social agents, formed upon agential concerns and, therefore, ought to

be considered within the confines of agency. On the other hand, “our internal conversations are context dependent” (Archer, 2007, p.81) and MoRs are associated with particular contextual conditions⁶⁶. Once reflexivity has taken its shape, it remains the causal power of social agents, but mediates their relations with the social world and, as this study argues, deserves more explicit appreciation of its role in careers. Furthermore, as will be discussed later in this chapter, some actions can be co-influenced by reflexivity and habitus. Therefore, this thesis suggests another step forward in elaborating CRE as an explanatory framework:

$$\textit{Context} + \textit{Agential (Reflexivity and/or Habitus)} = \textit{Outcomes}$$

The amended equation is more neatly aligned with RST and can be applied to a range of methods and techniques to explain careers as social programmes. This study, for instance, combined it with contrastive explanation (Lawson, 1997) to identify tendencies and idiosyncrasies for different sub-groups in the sample – e.g. indigenes and migrants, EEA and non-EEA migrants. The following sections of this chapter will undertake a discussion of the findings generated within this framework and what contribution they make to the existent perspectives.

9.2 Reflexivity in careers: Filling the gaps

As was discussed in Chapters 1-3, the existing scholarship offers a few examples of career projects and, more specifically, migrants’ career projects (e.g. Al Ariss, 2010; Zikic et al., 2010). However, these examples rarely go beyond developing a taxonomy of career projects to explore what factors define their availability, how practitioners choose between available projects and what career outcomes they generate. Some studies have begun empirical introduction of reflexivity into the discipline of career studies to produce a more elaborate account of career projects. Tomlinson et al. (2013) offer a novel insight into what results distinct types of career projects generate for the social system and touch on the mechanisms of their formation. Delbridge and Edward (2013) do not refer explicitly to careers, but make an important step forward by suggesting that reflexive projects may not necessarily be realised and, therefore, may or may not result in corresponding actions or practices. Yet, applications of reflexivity in career research remain infrequent, and so a better understanding of its role is needed.

⁶⁶ Archer (2007) couples autonomous reflexivity with contextual discontinuity, communicative reflexivity with contextual continuity and meta-reflexivity with contextual incongruity.

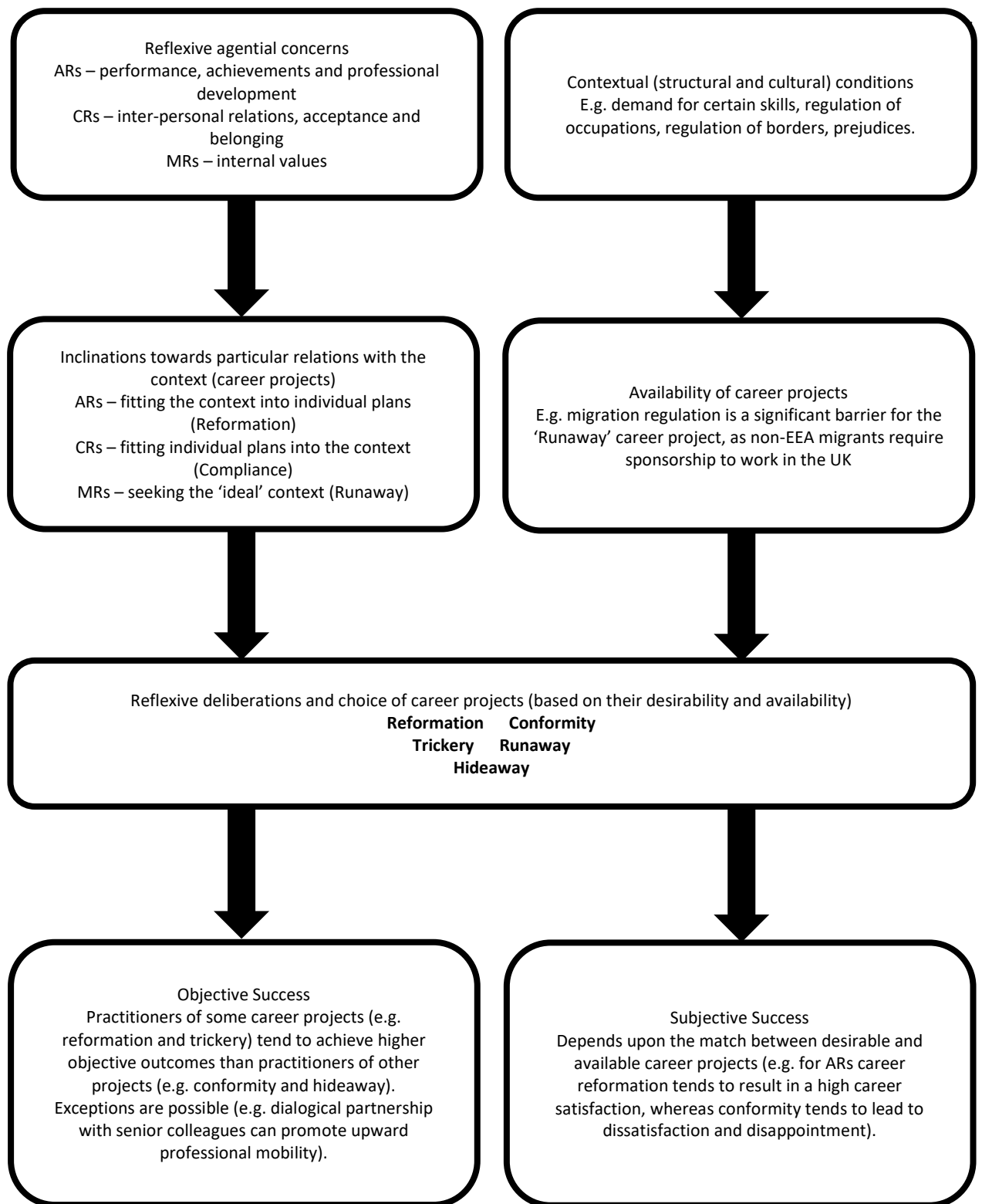


Figure 9.1 Reflexive careers

This thesis has contributed to elaborating our understanding of the role reflexivity plays in careers – particularly, in developing career projects and achieving career outcomes (Figure 9.1).

This framework explicitly aims to fill three gaps outlined in Chapter 2 (2.3.4). First, it sheds light onto how contextual factors influence accessibility of career projects for different groups of the population. Second, it explores how reflective agents chose between available practices and deploy them. Finally, it undertakes an enquiry into what outcomes career practices yield for the practitioners.

This section discusses the findings from Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 with an intention to elaborate this framework and illuminate its value for understanding of career experiences in general and, more specifically, career experiences of skilled migrants.

9.2.1 Context and availability of career practices

Archer (2007) argued that MoRs were associated with distinguishable concerns aimed at social reproduction (CRs), social productivity (ARs) and social reorientation (MRs). Similarly, Delbridge and Edwards (2013) found relations between the MoRs and inclinations to follow particular patterns of action (Table 2.2), but assumed that individuals may not always be able to operate in accordance to the reflective logic. With a specific focus on careers, this thesis has found three types of projects linked to the dominant MoRs: ARs and shaping the context to fit the concerns, CRs and shaping the concerns to fit the context, and MRs and looking for the best context matching the concerns. To realise their concerns individuals are inclined to apply corresponding projects – reformation, conformity and runaway⁶⁷ respectively. However, the analysis confirmed Delbridge and Edwards’s (2013) assumption that agents may not be able to follow the reflexive logic when realising their concerns, and some respondents were engaged into practices associated with other MoRs, whereas others applied the intermediate courses of action – trickery and hideaway⁶⁸. This thesis argues that the main reason for these deviations is accessibility of career projects, which is restricted by the structural and cultural mechanisms or boundaries.

Conformity, the course of action linked to communicative reflexivity, was accessible least problematically and all CRs in the sample could practice it (although at time in combination with

⁶⁷ The idea of changing the society to make it a ‘better world’ was appealing to MRs, but since they lacked understanding of how it could be done, no systematic attempts to reform the setting had been made and reformation remained a dream or a fantasy, rather than a project. In reality, runaway was the first choice mode of practice for this cohort.

⁶⁸ They are referred to as intermediate, because these two modes of practices were not the first choice for any of the three groups.

other projects). The principal challenge identified related to the domain of culture. Cultural norms are often tacit: they may not be easily observed and, therefore, adopted (Fox, 2004). It is unsurprising that this posed a significant problem primarily to migrants and, to a lesser extent, to the indigenes who moved to the North-East from other regions of the UK. Discovery and understanding of cultural conventionalities required guidance from the locals. On the one hand, the respondents believed that understanding of the local culture was necessary to develop closer personal relations with White British (or Geordies), the dominant group in the North-East. On the other hand, obtaining cultural knowledge was easier with assistance of the locals, who were deemed less inclined to provide support in the absence of close personal bonds. This observation supports the argument from the previous studies that the indigenes are more likely to provide support and assistance to migrants when they perceive them as similar and trustworthy (Varma et al., 2011) and that migrants often struggle to receive such support from the networks of indigenes (Raghuram et al., 2010). Nonetheless, this challenge affected the application of this mode of practice, rather than its availability, and all respondents who wished to apply this course of action could do so, conforming to the cultural norms as they understood them.

The availability of the runaway career project, associated with meta-reflexivity, was determined predominantly by structural conditions and was more limited. Migration regulation proved a pivotal mechanism which significantly restrained mobility of non-EEA nationals in the sample. They could remain in the UK only as long as they were sponsored by an employer and could only move to another pre-arranged job. However, the respondents' experience of job search suggested that the recent restrictions upon employment of non-EEA migrants undermined their opportunities to change employers (Scullion and Pemberton, 2013). Further, substantial financial requirements imposed upon prospective non-EEA entrepreneurs restricted opportunities for self-employment. Consequently, only those non-EEA respondents who possessed family visas or had obtained the UK passport were entitled to such modes of practice. Another significant obstacle was posed by the labour market – limited availability of skilled jobs in the North-East complicated mobility for all respondents, regardless of their origin, whereas mobility between the regions and countries was particularly troublesome for individuals with family responsibilities (Forster, 2000).

Finally, the mode of practice associated with autonomous reflexivity – reformation – was available only to a small group of respondents. Interestingly, availability of this course of action could not be reduced to individual agency or the skill in person (Cockburn, 1983; Grugulis, 1997). Practitioners of reformation were neither most educated (e.g. no PhD-holders applied it), nor necessarily most experienced individuals in the sample. Rather they were distinguished as

possessors of expertise valuable and rare in this environment (skill in the setting) and endowed with a legitimate power to make changes (skill in the job). Thus, accessibility of reformation is problematized as governed by both structural and cultural factors. On the one hand, an ability to reform the setting required a relatively high managerial position to authorise changes. On the other hand, prospective practitioners had to meet the cultural ideas about who is skilled. Some migrant respondents in the North-East, for example, benefited from their ‘foreignness’ – a perceived ability to provide an alternative view to the problem. At the same time the indigenes had less opportunities to rely upon the supposedly ‘different’ skillsets. Yet, they were more likely to be able to benefit from aid from social contacts than migrants, due to the aforementioned acceptance issues. These barriers elucidate why only a small share of ARs could apply this mode of practice.

Trickery and hideaway were utilised as alternative options, but access to both was not unproblematic. Like for reformation, skills and social resources were important to those who wished to apply trickery. It was available for individuals whose skills in the setting were valuable and rare, but not enough to secure a position that would allow for reformation, and support from social contacts could (to some extent) compensate for the ‘insufficient’ skilfulness. All respondents who wanted to practice reformation or trickery, but were unable to apply either of them and had to conform ‘forcedly’ were ethnic minority migrants (6.6.1). This fact highlights how ethnic minority migrants are not only less well connected to social resources than indigenes and White migrants, but also are seen as less skilled workers.

In turn, access to hideaway was largely depended on pay-level, and so was mainly structurally informed. Since this career project virtually precluded (or, rather, purposefully evaded) any opportunities for upward mobility, it was only workable if the current situation was sufficient to sustain the practitioners and their dependants, presently and in the future. This typically required getting promoted a few levels up or employment in occupations with relatively well-paid entry level jobs, such as research and higher education.

To summarise, availability of conformity is virtually unrestricted, but access to all other career projects is affected by contextual conditions. Some factors (e.g. availability of jobs) affect all practitioners, whereas other (e.g. migration regulation) target specific population groups. Nonetheless, most career projects are not easily available and social agents usually have a limited choice of them to apply.

9.2.2 Agency and the choice of career practices

Although the choice of career projects is restricted, the findings suggest that social agents can usually access more than one of them, meaning that they have a choice. Whereas availability of projects is shaped by contextual influences, the way they are chosen and applied relates to the agency, particularly to agential concerns. Archer (2007) finds that in their internal conversations ARs tend to be concerned with performance and achievements, CRs with inter-personal relations and acceptance, and MRs with values. This thesis suggest that career projects are chosen for a perceived opportunity they offer to realise these concerns and some are deemed more helpful for attaining specific outcomes than the others (status/money and reformation, personal relations and conformity, values and runaway). When a preferred project is not available due to various boundaries, actors choose the next most suitable and apply it in a way aimed at achieving the desirable consequences.

This choice is not always practical or, rather, it is not always rational from the perspective of the *homo economicus*. This means that choosing the course of action individuals do not always seek to maximise personal monetary gains or accelerate vertical progress. Yet, economic rationality is not the only type of rationality (Sen, 1979). Choices of career projects made by the respondents were not random; they originated from conscious deliberations⁶⁹ and were guided by specific interests. The interests, however, belonged to different realms – professional for ARs, societal for CRs and moral for MRs. For example, we have seen how Mira rejected a promotion opportunity, which she perceived a threat to her social belonging (7.2). These observations elaborate the role of reflexivity in careers decision-making and provide a promising platform for further investigations, particularly from a psychological perspective (Super, 1957; Savickas, 2012). What is especially important for this research is that the respondents were aware of consequences of their choice. Indeed, nobody applied reformation to achieve acceptance by the colleagues or conformity with an intention to find (or create) the fairer world. Mira, for example, had a good understanding that rejecting opportunities would not improve her financial well-being, but believed it would be beneficial for her social life and acceptance at the workplace.

Throughout this thesis actions of ARs have been called ‘strategic’ to emphasise their orientation towards performance and achievements, and engagement in long-term planning. Indeed, this was the only cohort whose concerns were largely aligned with the traditional understanding of career success – financial compensation, promotions and status (Chapter 6). Yet, practices applied by

⁶⁹ With an exception of the five ARs who chose career projects (conformity) in a customary way.

CRs were also strategic in a sense that they deliberately and persistently sought acceptance in the social setting. The respondents demonstrated a high degree of awareness that such practices were not helpful for career progress, but made a conscious decision and were prepared to pay the price (Chapter 7). MRs were less strategic in their attempts to create a better world, because creating a viable plan for such task was, apparently, very difficult. It was demonstrated, for instance, how Calvin felt powerless to change people's minds and purge the world of homophobia (8.2). Nonetheless, their endeavour to minimise contacts with the imperfect world was voluntary, relentless and, in its own way, strategic. Like CRs, MRs realised that their actions were unlikely to produce significant career rewards, but consciously accepted this (Chapter 8).

Our choice of practices reflects the present situations and is not set in stone. Our circumstances, contextual or agential, can change, affecting availability of career projects and we might be able to move between them. This change is not always for the better – for example, if the 'tricks' lose their efficiency, practitioners might be compelled to accept conformity as a principal career project. More often, however, individuals create, seek and negotiate opportunities to 'qualify' for more desirable practices. ARs are particularly mobile. Their repertoire includes at least four out of five modes of practices and they consciously monitor the context for constraints and enablers. Furthermore, they actively develop skills and networks to reach a practice most suitable to their concerns.

This section argues that, although availability of projects is shaped by the structure and culture of the setting, individuals are not detached asocial rational agents (see also Elder-Vass, 2012) and skilled migrants, as other social actors, are capable of pursuing their interests. They chose career projects after careful reflexive deliberations of their concerns in relation to the context. However, as their judgement is fallible (Archer, 2007), they may or may not obtain the desired outcomes.

9.2.3 Outcomes

This study was concerned with objective and subjective outcomes to grasp the different dimensions of career success (Heslin, 2005). Objective attainments have been explored in terms of career mobility from the 'starting point', as well as financial reward and status achieved, whereas subjective success was studied as individuals' reported career satisfaction. For an overview of career outcomes achieved by practitioners of different MoRs and career projects see Appendix B.

CRs tended to follow the most conventional career paths. Their career mobility tended to be slow but steady, up until the level considered ‘average’ in the group individuals sought acceptance from. Once this level was reached, the respondents had a tendency to ‘freeze’ further progress in fear that it might compromise belonging to the group. This usually resulted in a few steps up and, eventually, placed agents nearer the middle of the occupational ladder with a commensurate income (£25.000-35.000 in this study’s sample). This thesis has identified two scenarios when careers of CRs can progress beyond the average level. First, upward mobility can be fostered by senior dialogical partners. Second, opportunities for upward mobility can occur in a particularly advantageous environment - for example, they can be offered to individuals who possess valuable skills that are in shortage and who are sufficiently visible in the professional network. In “demographically skewed (...) settings” (Ibarra et al., 2005, p.365) dominated by the native-born population (such as the North-East), the indigenes have better chances to develop dialogical partnerships with the superiors or to be visible in the network and, therefore, tend to achieve higher outcomes.

For MRs in the sample career practices resulted in either career immobility (hideaway) or volatility (runaway). This study argues that due to factors such as migration regulation and availability of family support, moves between jobs, employers and locations are more problematic for non-EEA migrants than for EEA passport holders, but more problematic for EEA nationals than for the indigenes. Consequently, hideaway and associated immobility are more prominent in case of migrants’ careers. Archer (2007) discovered a link between autonomous and meta-reflexivity and higher levels of education. Supporting this observation, in this thesis all respondents (with one exception) educated at a doctoral level belonged to these two groups. Further, PhD-holders composed most of meta-reflexive participants and many were employed in research and higher education industry with relatively well-paid entry level jobs. As a result, despite being placed closer to the bottom of occupational hierarchy, MRs generally received higher (or at least no lower) monetary compensation than CRs.

ARs have demonstrated the greatest and fastest upward career mobility, and, because they applied the wider range of career practices compared to the other two groups, their outcomes were also more heterogeneous. Practitioners of reformation are placed closer to the top end of the occupational hierarchy and enjoy substantial financial reward⁷⁰. Runaway and trickery result in rather similar outcomes – relatively rapid upward mobility and the middle-high position in the hierarchy. With respect to occupational variations in wages and status, practitioners of these two

⁷⁰ Yet, more effort is needed to explore the causality between reformation and outcomes.

career projects tend to achieve outcomes higher than practitioners of conformity, but lower than practitioners of reformation. Since conformity allows for very limited impact upon the environment, the outcomes are conditional upon the contextual factors. Autonomously reflexive practitioners of conformity advance their careers towards the middle-level of the occupation, but struggle to progress further until becoming able to move to another type of career projects.

Although objective career achievements for ARs vary significantly, in general they perform better than comparative cohorts of CRs and MRs. To account for this difference, this study asserts that career outcomes are a product of complex and dynamic interactions between the context and agency. The context can be 'handicapped', neutral and 'advantaged' (Portes and Borocz, 1989), offering different career opportunities. Different groups of population can have different opportunities in the same context – e.g. the context neutral for the indigenes can be handicapped for migrants if their rights to work are restricted by migration policies and their skills are not recognised, but advantaged for those migrants who are perceived as possessors of valuable and rare skillsets.

The main difference between autonomous, communicative and meta-reflexives lies in their relations with the context. ARs tend to be objectively more successful in a given environment, because they use their agency to maximise contextual enablers and minimise obstacles to realise concerns aimed at obtaining money and status. They create, negotiate and look for career opportunities, readily accepting them when offered. Even having encountered the 'glass ceiling' (Lyness and Thompson, 1997) posed by gatekeepers to opportunities - institutions and individuals (professional bodies, recruiters, managers, supervisors etc.) – ARs consciously address this career block by acquiring new skills, developing social networks or moving to other settings. In contrast, CRs and MRs are less proactive and persistent in pursuing career outcomes, because they were, arguably, preoccupied with different concerns. For them objective career success is only possible in the advantaged context, when practitioners of these MoRs are presented with opportunities. For example, in contrast to ARs, communicative and meta-reflexive migrants in the sample did not seek to capitalise upon their foreignness and skills associated with it. Further, they tended to self-construct career blocks if believed that further progress could endanger concerns more significant to them.

In an equivalent way, subjective career success is conditioned by contextual possibility to realise agential concerns. ARs are the only group whose concerns are directly related to objective criteria of career performance. This group appreciates objective outcomes, but also values an ability to progress according to plan. Most ARs have a clear idea of what they want to achieve

and where they want to be at each stage of their career. There is a degree of flexibility in career planning and ARs can adjust their plans to the changing circumstances. This thesis suggests that this is the reason why individuals in this cluster move between career projects more frequently than the other two groups. However, the judgement of ARs and their understanding of contextual factors were imperfect⁷¹ and plans did not always generate the expected (and desired) outcomes. Lack of control over career development and deviations from the plan could result in frustration and discontent, which explains why ARs 'forced' into compliance reported a relatively low career satisfaction, whereas the reformers reported particularly high levels of satisfaction. The latter group had the greatest control over the environment and, consequently, their own careers, whilst the former had to submit to contextual conditions against their will. The finding that all ARs practicing conformity 'forcibly' were ethnic minority migrants signals risks for this group in achieving subjective career satisfaction, as well as objective outcomes.

For CRs and MRs satisfaction with career achievements is just an element, important for the broader sense of success, but less significant on its own rights. CRs consider careers as a mean of integration into the wider society. Career achievements must be complemented by a sense of social belonging, usually derived from inter-personal relations, to result in subjective satisfaction. As opposed to ARs, CRs use the others-referent criteria to assess career achievements (Heslin, 2005). Individuals in this group do not have an elaborate career plan, but strive to keep up with the members of the group they seek association with. Inability to do so, due to exclusion from the dominant network or misunderstanding of contextual norms, results in lower career satisfaction. Considering this, it is not surprising that communicative reflexive migrants reported lower career satisfaction than the indigenes.

MRs are least interested in career achievements among the three cohorts, but also least likely to experience high levels of satisfaction (see also Archer, 2007). In their concerns, this group is focused upon values, which may or may not be related to career and employment. In any case, MRs' interests in careers do not normally go beyond the ability to do what they believe is worth doing and to pay the bills. Practicing hideaway and runaway creates the opportunity to stay loyal to the values. Yet, neither finding the 'ideal' world nor completely eliminating contacts with the 'unideal' world is feasible. Individuals cannot completely isolate themselves from the society. For meta-reflexives, this is a prime cause of constant disappointment and distress. Subjective satisfaction, therefore, is only partially related to objective career attainments and complete satisfaction is impossible to gain the social reality does not fit the values.

⁷¹ This is also true for any other social agents.

By examining career outcomes as a result of interactions between agency and the context this study has sought to contribute to explaining career success of skilled migrants. To summarise, structural and cultural factors condition what career opportunities skilled migrants have. They can act as enablers or constraints offering advantages and disadvantages compared to the indigenes and other groups of migrants, but it is up to migrants how they exercise their reflective agency to deal with these factors.

9.3 Further contributions to theoretical development

9.3.1 Contribution to boundaryless careers

This thesis also contributes to the recent debates on ‘new era’ career concepts, in particular boundaryless careers (Arthur, 1994; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). It sought to provide an empirical response to the call to bring the boundaries back (Inkson et al., 2012) by addressing two fundamental questions suggested by Pringle and Mallon (2003) and presented in Chapter 1. First, how do we understand boundaries? Second, what clusters of population do we study? This study advances these areas of inquiry by scrutinising multiple contextual mechanisms and examining a diverse sample of respondents from various backgrounds and with different socio-demographical characteristics.

Although, as Gunz et al. (2000) observed, Arthur and Rousseau (1996) mention a range of boundaries, the principal definition (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996, p.6) is focused explicitly upon organisational boundaries and movements between employers. Subsequent interpretations have proposed a broader view that understands boundaries as any contextual (structural and cultural) factors that constrain the agential power to pursue career goals. Some studies (Tung, 2008) place particular emphasis on geographical boundaries and increasing mobility between nation states, effectively equating boundaryless and international careers. Other studies accept a more radical approach and champion diminishing influence of the context altogether and inevitable disappearance of career boundaries of all sorts (see Banai and Harry, 2004).

For critical realists denying of contextual boundaries is, effectively, denying the impact of contextual mechanisms. This is fallible of ontological voluntarism, widely critiqued in CR scholarship as the disregarding of real structural and cultural forces (Bhaskar, 1979; Archer, 1995). It is hardly surprising that such statements of boundarylessness have not received much empirical underpinning (Inkson et al., 2012). This thesis argues that structural and cultural

mechanisms continue to play a pivotal role in careers by defining accessibility of career projects and, ultimately, career outcomes. Individuals can exercise their agency to navigate their career interests through the context, but the leeway to do so is by no means absolute. Thinking about career as a journey (Inkson et al., 2006) we should not imagine it as a recreational walk over an open field. Rather it is making one's way through an obstacle course, which can be more or less gruelling. It is well-documented in the literature (e.g. Ibarra et al., 2005; Demireva, 2011) that some categories of career agents, e.g. migrants, non-EEA nationals and ethnic minorities, encounter different (and often more serious) challenges than others, e.g. indigenes, EEA passport holders and White population. This tendency has also become evident in the findings presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

ARs as a group had a tendency to what Briscoe et al. (2006) labelled the "boundaryless mindset". Yet, the only sub-group in the sample that had not (yet) experienced the significant constraining effect of the context were the ARs voluntarily (or habitually) practicing conformity. This group had much in common – early career native-born and EEA White professionals, predominantly employed in engineering and IT occupations. They were free from migration and occupational regulation and operated in culturally 'fit' environments (multinational corporations in case of migrants). Their transition from education to employment was smooth and typically occurred through work placements and apprenticeships, often organised by their institutions. Individuals in this cluster conformed to the rules and norms of the setting, but these rules and norms had not (yet) presented considerable restrictions upon their agency. All other cohorts faced more substantial barriers that had to be dealt with. Even the reformers, the group engaged into the most proactive and transformative relations with the context, confronted factors beyond their control.

In some instances, boundaries can be subjective, i.e. self-created. As discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, CRs and MRs deliberately avoid career opportunities when perceive them as a danger to more important concerns. No individuals with internal conversations dominated by communicative or meta-reflexivity applied reformation even when having an opportunity to practice this type of career projects. Perhaps the most illuminating example is runaway – the project encompassing moves between jobs, employers and locations, and essentially synonymous to boundaryless careers. Due to multiple barriers, such as migration and occupational regulations, availability of jobs and family responsibilities, some individuals who were prone to practice it had to apply other projects. This is how, for example, many meta-reflexive migrants ended up in hideaway. At the same time, CRs were disinclined to practice runaway even when they had the opportunity to do so. In contrast to suggestions (Rousseau, 1996) that agents increasingly choose short-term

less obligatory ties with organisations, in this thesis CRs reported a strong preference to stay in a comfort zone and maintained the sense of belonging based upon long-term psychological contracts with employers. Arguably, this is because their reflexive concerns contradict the logic of boundaryless careers.

This is not, however, to dismiss the boundaryless careers from scholarly agenda. Inkson et al. (2012, p.330, italics in original) suggest that boundaryless careers are only one of many possible career forms appropriate for “*some individuals, some organisations and some industries*”. This thesis sought to supplement this account by supplying an empirical ground to demonstrate that boundaryless careers are neither available, nor appealing to everyone. Like some other studies (e.g. Chudzikowski, 2012; Chaudhry, 2013), the findings in this thesis challenge the view of boundaryless careers as becoming a dominant and ubiquitous model. Indeed, runaway is only one of possible career practices and instances of unproblematic career journeys are so infrequent that they prove this ‘rule’ (or demi-regularity in CR terms) rather than refute it. Although some boundaries might become less pronounced (e.g. freedom of movement within the EEA), not everyone can and want to benefit from it.

Having in part addressed the questions posed by Pringle and Mallon (2003), by considering different types of boundaries and their impact on projects of different groups of career agent, this thesis calls for a shift in the debates toward scrutinising the boundaries which condition agency in careers, for what groups of individuals, organisations and industries boundaryless careers may or may not work and how differently they can be experienced. It further argues that CR and RST offer a better theoretical platform from which to start a search for the answers than alternatives.

9.3.2 Contribution to career success

Careers success is not easy to conceptualise and there is no agreement of how it can be studied or what it means (Gunz and Heslin, 2005; Heslin, 2005; Gunz and Mayrhofer, 2011). This thesis has no ambitions to supply a panacea for this disease. Rather it sought to contribute to these efforts by further problematizing careers success as a complex social phenomenon that is difficult to quantify. This study argues that, as any other career (or, in a broader sense, social) aspect, success requires a more careful consideration of contextual and agential factors, regardless of whether we seek to distinguish between objective and subjective success (Judge et al., 1995; Heslin, 2005) or scrutinise an over-arching concept (Gunz and Mayrhofer, 2011).

As Chapters 6-8 emphasise, we should not assume that people have equal or even similar career objectives or ascribe the same value to career attainments (Schein, 1990). ARs have much more interest in their careers than the other two groups. This is the only cluster that is concerned about 'traditional' criteria of success (Abele and Spurk, 2009) beyond the mere financial security. CRs and MRs have completely different concerns altogether – inter-personal relations and values respectively. This supports the view that agents have various orientations towards work (e.g. Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) and various career goals (e.g. Dweck, 1999). For example, MoRs can be broadly aligned with different work orientations (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001; see also Heslin, 2005), where ARs can be seen as having a career orientation (greatest personal investment, goals focused at income, status and prestige), CRs as having a job orientation (goals are confined to financial rewards) and MRs - either job or calling (work as a vocation and a mean of fulfilment) orientation, depending on whether their concerns-as-values are related to work or not. It can be argued that the work orientations framework is not exhaustive and that it disregards, for example, CRs' strive for social acceptance. Yet, it illustrates the importance of taking into consideration what really matters for people when studying career success. It would make little sense to state that an autonomous and meta-reflexive are equally successful just because both occupy the same position in the hierarchy and receive the same amount of financial reward for their work.

If we adopt the objective versus subjective success dichotomy, then we also need to disentangle relations between them – whether objective career achievements impact upon subjective satisfaction (Nicholson and de Waal-Andrews, 2005), or vice versa (Hall and Chandler, 2005), or whether they mutually influence each other (Seibert et al., 2001). As Arthur et al. (2005) argue, such contradictory views nurture further fragmentation of the discipline of career studies and obstruct development of a broader career theory. This thesis finds evidence to suggest that subjective satisfaction does not always stem from objective success as measured by income and promotions. This might be the case for ARs, but not for the other two groups. Yet, even for ARs, income and promotions result in lower subjective satisfaction if unaccompanied by the sense of control over one's career (6.6.1). Of course, individuals, as reflexive social agents, can tune their projects in response to contextual and personal circumstances. For instance, CRs unable to gain acceptance at the workplace can seek it in the community (ethnic, religious or residential).

However, this thesis has observed that principal concerns are not prone to change (providing that the dominant MoR remains the same). For example, CRs' reasoning was 'even if my career is not great, I still feel successful, because I have good friends at work, time to spend with my family and overall feel happy in this environment', but never the other way around – none of

them felt successful with objective outcomes when unsatisfied with inter-personal relations. In these circumstances, satisfaction with average (or even lower than average) objective outcomes is not necessarily the “*ex post* rationalization of experienced success ... where one has limited control over outcomes” (Nicholson and de Waal-Andrews, 2005, p.143). As this thesis argues, control may or may not be desired by individuals, and career satisfaction is possible even with modest objective outcomes.

This thesis also urges for more sensitivity to social embeddedness of career outcomes and success. Gunz and Mayrhofer (2011) suggest that career success should be theorised with consideration of contextual boundaries that individuals encounter when pursuing their interests. The contribution this study makes to ‘bringing boundaries back’ has been discussed in the previous section. For now, it is enough to remind the audience that this thesis is critical of the view that two individuals are equally successful because they have attained similar outcomes. We can think of, for example, two migrants of a similar age employed as engineers in the same UK’s company and doing the same job. One can be an EEA national from a wealthy family with a degree from a prestigious home country university paid for by parents, staying in a relatively familiar cosmopolitan professional environment. Another migrant can be from a far worse-off family outside the EEA, educated at a home university and perhaps engaged in illegal or semi-legal activities to save money and immigrate through a sham marriage. It is, indeed, hard to claim that their success is equal, even if the outcomes are similar. Gunz and Mayrhofer (2011, p.255) admit that to an extent such arguments are “like comparing apples and oranges”. Yet, it happens frequently in positivist studies of migrants’ careers when researchers seek to explore the difference in career outcomes between different groups of migrants or migrants and the indigenes (e.g. 1.3 and 4.2). In their endeavour to find relations between the outcomes and variables such as gender, age, ethnicity and education, these studies often fail to appreciate the whole range of mechanisms and interactions between them.

This is not, however, to dismiss the objective criteria of success or to contest the appropriateness of a researcher’s expert judgement, but rather to encourage a scholarly interest beyond them. Traditional quantifiable measures can play an important role in recognition of various inequalities, but more effort is needed to explain what causes them. For example, among CRs who practiced conformity, the indigenes performed better than comparative groups of migrants. Migrants may not see it as a problem, since career achievements are not their chief concern. Yet, for a social researcher, and particularly for a researcher committed to the CR idea of emancipation, this is an issue worthy of investigation. Even migrants who reported no problems with acceptance at work tended to receive less career support than the indigenes. Further

investigation may find evidence that migrants are granted ‘limited memberships’ in the indigenous networks, without full access to resources (Raghuram et al., 2010). In any case, situations when some groups of individuals earn less or progress slower than other similar groups should be examined, regardless of the individuals’ (dis)satisfaction with it.

9.3.3 Contribution to understanding of the factors of success

This section addresses the contribution that this thesis makes to understanding of the role social capital and skills play in skilled migrants’ careers. There is little novelty in a claim that skills are important for skilled careers, whether of migrants or any other groups of population. This thesis, nevertheless, argues that what truly matters is not merely individuals’ capabilities confirmed by a relevant degree or experience – proxies typically utilised to define migrants as skilled. Instead this study advocates conceptualising of skilfulness as a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted phenomenon (Cockburn, 1986; Grugulis, 2007; Green, 2011; Hurrell et al., 2013). It is evident from Chapters 6-8 that some respondents had advantages in respect to the availability of career practices and outcomes they were able to achieve. However, they were not necessarily the most educated or most experienced in the sample.

The broader view of skilfulness suggests that education and experience (skill in the person) only indicate – more or less accurately – possession of skills (Grugulis, 2007). Skill in the setting, however, comprises a range of structural and cultural factors that define what skills are valuable and who is perceived as legitimate to practice them. Although the formal recognition of foreign credentials is a procedure regulated on the national level, scarcity and homogeneity of skills available in the North-East resulted in some migrants being deemed as possessors of valuable and scarce skills. Those who are recognised as legitimate possessors of skills can be hired for jobs designed to allow for utilisation of the skills (skill in the job) and, consequently, can claim a commensurate reward. Those whose skills are acknowledged as particularly valuable can be permitted to change the setting or liberated from some norms. Moreover, they can be offered preferential access to opportunities to develop their skills further (e.g. through participation in interesting and challenging projects). Therefore, skilfulness rests upon four overlapping, but distinguishable processes – development, utilisation, recognition and valuation (Green, 2011; Hurrell and Vincent, 2014; Kozhevnikov et al., 2017).

Dimensions of skills are context-dependent. For example, Green (2011) argues that skills are productive, as well as social. In other words, in the labour market people are seen as skilled in

terms of the amount of value they are believed to be able to add and, from the economic perspective, skilled jobs are nothing more than jobs with high wages. Also, it has been shown that the existence of substantial communities of recently arrived migrants can increase demand for interpreters (Ellis, 2013). This, consequently, creates opportunities for bi-lingual migrants to capitalise upon their language skills. This thesis supplements these views by demonstrating that it is the perceived value of skills, rather than a relative level of skilfulness, that accounts for availability of career practices and associated with them opportunities to achieve career results. For objective attainments, there is only little more use in skills that are recognised, but not valued than in skills that are not recognised at all, and the value of skills is not the same in different settings. Yet, more insights into the labour market conditions, demand for specific skills and their availability are needed to generate a more nuanced account of skilled migrants' careers. This should better our understanding of the role boundaries play constraining and enabling skilled migrants' careers (see Inkson et al., 2012). This can also encourage career studies to move beyond picturing migrants as victims of the context (Crowley-Henry et al., 2016) and pay more attention to migrants' agency (Al Ariss and Syed, 2011). As this thesis has found, rare foreign skills can be a significant advantage for migrants, at least in some labour markets.

With regards to social capital, there is a significant body of literature that demonstrates its importance (e.g. Granovetter, 1995; Ibarra, 1999; Makela, 2007). In migration studies the focus has been on disadvantaged groups of lower-skilled migrants (Aguilera and Massey, 2003); however, there is little empirical evidence of the impact social capital has upon skilled migrants' careers. This thesis finds support to the idea that social capital can be helpful for skilled migrants, too. This can mean providing information about jobs, promotions, trainings and challenging projects or preferential access to them. Chapters 6-8 illustrate examples of benefits received from strong and weak ties, as well as structural holes (Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 1992). Strong ties to superiors, such as dialogical partnership between Ernie and Janet, are, in essence, career sponsorships (Turner, 1960; Wayne et al., 1999). Sponsors can provide personal and professional counselling, tutoring, as well as institutional support, such as lobbying career interests of a supervisee (see Kram and Isabella, 1985). Weak ties can increase individual's visibility within the network and connect to a broad range of resources. Nuria, for example, was offered a job in the language school by an acquaintance of her acquaintance. Finally, Hong (34, China) was selected to represent her co-workers in the committee because she was connected to otherwise disconnected ethnic cliques (Burt, 1992).

This study has not undertaken an in-depth social network analysis and does not wish to contribute to the debates of what types of connections are more useful than others. The first

argument it seeks to make instead is that, through facilitation of opportunities, social capital can ease access to particular career projects and maximise career outcomes gained by them. For example, it has been demonstrated that individuals who receive career sponsorship tend to gain higher outcomes in terms of salaries and promotions (Scandura, 1992; Wayne et al., 1999). Access to opportunities can also help with development and recognition of skills, as those who get access to challenging tasks have an opportunity to demonstrate the existing skillset and advance it further. This suggests that social capital can effectively complement skilfulness and, to some degree, compensate for it. However, this study finds that its role is largely supplementary and social capital cannot substitute skills. For example, offering support to someone incompetent can be damaging for reputation (Migliozi, 2011) and career opportunities tend to be offered to individuals recognised as worthy of these opportunities⁷².

The second argument states that migrants in the North-East are less likely to benefit from social capital than the indigenes (e.g. 6.3 and 6.4). On the one hand, ethnic networks are a valuable source of emotional support, but their ability to support skilled careers is limited (Ryan and Mullholland, 2014), and skilled migrants do not tend to rely upon them for career purposes. This reflects the fact that the vast majority of the population in the region are White British (ONS, 2012a) and the dominant group controls most resources. On the other hand, even if migrants are connected to resources-rich indigenous networks they often have limited access to their resources. This study has argued that individuals are more inclined to support those who they perceive as similar (or at least not too dissimilar) to themselves (see also Varma et al., 2011), which can be particularly evident in socially and demographically homogeneous settings. In the predominantly White British North-East migrants and ethnic minorities are at particular risk of social exclusion. When migrants are unable or unwilling to follow the normativity of the dominant group they can be penalised and denied career support. For example, career sponsorship is based upon personal closeness and trust (Liden et al., 1997). If the degree of similarity and trustworthiness is perceived low, such relations are unlikely to develop.

To conclude this section, the impact of both skilfulness and social capital should be appreciated. The relations between the two are complicated and need further examination, but this study highlights that the role of social capital is less significant for skilled migrants' careers than other contributions suggest (see also Portes, 1998; Raghuram et al., 2010). It can be effective for accelerating career progress or circumventing some boundaries, but in combination with recognised and valued skills. Although skills and social networks can provide access to career

⁷² Unless there is an exceptionally strong incentive to promote their interests (e.g. nepotism), but it was not the case in this thesis.

practices and offer opportunities to augment career outcomes, individuals do not necessarily accept these opportunities (Chapter 7). Both factors are context-dependent⁷³ and cannot be conceptualised as exclusive properties of individuals. The small share of foreign-born population and lack of sizeable ethnic communities in the North-East can promote the vision of migrants as bearers of valuable and scarce skills, but also diminishes migrants' opportunities to receive career support from social contacts.

9.3.4 Contribution to Realist Social Theory

It should be stressed that Archer (2007) conducted her research on reflexivity in a specific setting (Coventry) and for a sample that contained very few migrants. Having RST in a different environment and for a different group of population, this thesis sought to support its further development. In particular, it offers two major contributions. First, it scrutinises associations between MoRs and patterns of mobility identified by Archer (2007) by putting reflexivity in context and exploring other mechanisms that influence upon these associations. Second, this study aims to supplement the debates on viability of habitus in RST (Archer, 2007, 2010; Elder-Vass, 2012; Fleetwood, 2008; Sayer, 2009) arguing that, although reflexivity plays a more significant role in skilled migrants' careers, it is too early to write habitus off.

In respect to the first area of contribution, Archer coupled MoRs with particular internal and external effects (Table 2.1). This study suggests that, although reflexivity tends to orient social agents towards achieving certain outcomes, their abilities to achieve them or to realise the reflective tendencies are conditioned by other mechanisms. Archer linked CRs to social immobility and social reproduction, arguing that individuals with internal dialogues dominated by this mode do not progress further than their original social level. This study finds evidence to support this idea. Career mobility of CRs tends to be limited, if it occurs at all. Progress is usually limited by the level considered average by the group individuals seek association with (e.g. middle-management). Further progress may be dangerous for the sense of social belonging cherished by CRs and, therefore, deliberately avoided.

Nonetheless, upward mobility for CRs is possible. Archer found that most interlocutors were family members or close friends. Social immobility, therefore, was a result of agents' desire to stay close to their dialogical partners. However, this thesis suggests that, for migrants,

⁷³ And agency-dependent.

partnerships with friends and family at home tend to become insufficient after relocation as they become less capable of providing trustworthy advice (at least in relation to the career domain). As a result, migrants seek new interlocutors among people deemed competent and reliable, typically professional contacts. Impetus to develop careers beyond the average level can be given when new dialogical partnerships are formed with people at a significantly more advanced career stage. Yet, CRs tend to stop upward mobility at a point when they start seeing further progress as more incompatible with their major concerns (inter-personal relations).

The discrepancy between Archer's (2007) account and this study's inferences can, perhaps, be attributed to the contextual conditions. In RST, communicative reflexivity is coupled with contextual continuity, which means that the environment remains relatively stable and dialogical partnerships retain their utility and, therefore, endure through time. However, as Archer herself (2010, 2012) argues, the context is becoming less continuous. CRs in this study (often reluctantly) move across the borders, pursue higher education despite their working-class background and choose professions different to those of their immediate social circles⁷⁴. Consequently, dialogical partnerships lasting from childhood are replaced or supplemented with new interlocutors, some of whom could impel upward mobility.

MRs in Archer's work (2007) are portrayed as a very mobile cohort associated with lateral mobility or volatility and social reorientation. This thesis supports the view that MRs have a strong preference to movements between social settings in search for the environment most aligned to their values. It finds evidence, however, that volatility may not be easily available for individuals whose movement is subjected to extensive regulation, such as non-EEA migrants. Volatility may also be restricted by other mechanisms. For example, it has been found that family responsibilities can preclude relocations or at least hinder them. Having dependants means that moves must be carefully planned and at time postponed or given up. Further, this study suggests that although MRs believe contextual changes are necessary to align the world with their values, the absence of an elaborate plan can stop them from undertaking any serious steps in this direction. One can argue that, for example, Calvin's efforts to provide food, shelter and counselling for LGBT teenagers are important, as they can change people's lives. Nonetheless, considering the broader picture, it is hard to claim that his undertakings result in reorientation of the setting. Moreover, many MRs opt for a form of escapism seeking estrangement from context and having very little influence upon it.

⁷⁴ This also suggests that upward mobility can be encouraged by, for example, parents wanting better life for their children. Such matters, however, are beyond the scope of this thesis.

It ought to be acknowledged that, as a group, MRs are more heterogeneous in respect to their concerns than the other two groups. Values can refer to quite a broad range of things. It can well be a peculiarity of this study's sample that the respondents' values make social reorientation hardly feasible. Further endeavours are needed to investigate how MRs can be engaged in reformation of the society.

With regards to autonomous reflexivity, Archer linked it to upward mobility and social productivity. This thesis finds evidence to support this view, but with some provisos. ARs, indeed, aspire for the upward mobility in their careers. Their concerns are aimed at achievements and productivity, and individuals in the position of power create career opportunities for themselves and the others. This MoR encourages the most proactive attitudes towards the context. Nonetheless, opportunities for upward mobility are context-bound. As the empirical Chapters have demonstrated, ARs can face the 'glass ceiling' that prevents further career progress. Individuals with internal conversations dominated by autonomous reflexivity are more concerned about upward mobility than the other two cohorts and are more pragmatic in their interactions with the context. Consequently, they do, indeed, have better chances to achieve upward mobility, but it is not guaranteed for them.

There is no doubt that Archer, as a critical realist, sought not to uncover universal laws, but to outline tendencies or demi-regularities (Lawson, 1997). This thesis confirms that associations identified by Archer are not inevitable patterns of mobility, but rather agential proclivities for undertaking certain paths. These proclivities can be seen as tendencies which produce, empirically, outcomes which are more consonant with their chief concerns. The empirical findings also shed light onto under what circumstances and for whom these demi-regularities may or may not work.

Reflexivity as a mechanism does, indeed, encourage different types of mobility and orient agents towards achieving particular outcomes. However, it operates in the interplay with other contextual mechanisms that can reinforce or debilitate effects of reflexivity. CRs can experience upward mobility, even if against their will, when promoted by ambitious dialogical partners. ARs, in contrast, can be trapped in career immobility if, for example, their skills are unrecognised or unvalued. Social agents, of course, are not passive victims of the context. However, their ability to resist the circumstances, as well as the rightness of their judgement about the environment, varies quite significantly. This suggests that, even though ARs have a strong desire for upward mobility, it would be very naïve to expect all of them to achieve it. This

thesis has sought to contribute to exploring the link between the dominant MoRs and career outcomes by placing reflexivity in the context. Yet, more efforts are needed in this direction.

The second contribution this thesis seeks to make is advocating the viability of habitus even in the ‘post-Bourdieuian’ world. Archer (2010) claims that the role of habitus in the modern society is negligible, because factors underpinning its existence – repetitive situations, stable conditions and lasting relations – are passing away. She suggests that habitual patterns of action are insufficient to navigate actors’ interests through the context lacking continuity. This thesis, however, finds evidence to argue that examples of contextual continuity in the modern world might be more frequent than Archer believes and even migrants can rely on habitual patterns of career behaviour.

As discussed in Chapter 6, a group of young respondents who experienced lasting contextual continuity has been identified. This cohort contained the indigenes, typically born and bred in the North-East to professional middle-class families. They stayed in close proximity to their families and friends, were employed in local companies dominated by familiar conventionalities and overall remained in the ‘natal context’ (Archer, 2007). Considering the region’s strong self-identity and resistance to changes (Chapter 5), this is perhaps not an overly unexpected finding. What needs more attention (and, also, is more in line with the focus of this thesis) is the fact that this cohort also included some migrants for whom contextual continuity remained largely intact even after relocation.

It is not a novel observation that some migrants attempt to transfer pre-existing career methods to the new setting. Sharone (2014) finds that Israeli migrants upon relocation to the USA tend to utilise strong ties for the job search as the only strategy acceptable by the Israeli norms. After this approach proves futile in the new environment, migrants adopt new practices and rely more on distant contacts. Similarly, Erel (2010) observes that migrants in the host country attempt to unpack their “luggage”, but because it is unlikely to fit in migrants exercise their agency to develop new practices. This thesis, however, argues that in some circumstances pre-migration career repertoires remain successful after relocation, reducing the need for reflexive monitoring.

It has been observed that international mobility is becoming easier in the increasingly globalised world (Castles, 2010). It is safe to presume that with the freedom of movement within the EEA, recognition of foreign education and availability of ethnic services (e.g. food shops and leisure clubs) relocation to London for a young Lithuanian professional is, presently at least, less laborious than 50 years ago. Further, the growing presence of multinational corporations allows for moves within a somewhat uniform environment, shielded (to some extent) from the national

and regional normativity. Indeed, migrants in this group came from the EEA member states. They often had a very cosmopolitan upbringing and employment history in global companies. In the North-East they took jobs in large organisations with very diverse personnel. Their colleagues (typically other migrants) became their friends and contacts with the outer world were very limited.

The example of this group supports the view that careers of some individuals and/or at some stages of development are less obstructed by boundaries. This, nonetheless, does not negate significance of contextual mechanisms altogether. These individuals encountered career obstacles and enablers as anybody else in the sample, but dealt with them habitually. In a similar routine way, we step over a puddle or use a toothbrush, without reflexive monitoring of how or why we do it. This does not mean, however, that these individuals were not capable of reflexive deliberations or that all their actions were inherently habitual. The analysis of this cluster suggests that their careers were co-determined by habitus and reflexivity (Elder-Vass, 2007b, 2012). They set career goals with a reflexive consideration of concerns, needs and desires, but habitually applied their pre-existing stock of techniques and methods to achieve the goals. How these methods were originally developed – habitually or reflexively (see Sayer, 2009) – is beyond the scope of this study. The argument is, however, that these practices remained successful even after relocation and were applied in a customary manner, because the agents had not (yet) faced factors that would require a more reflexive re-consideration of career actions.

It would be unjust to critique Archer and RST for not providing an unconditional account of reflexivity. As a theory based upon the CR philosophy, it is supposed to offer a more accurate explanation of social reality than previous theories, rather than an ideal explanation. This study finds empirical evidence to support the chief postulates of Archer's vision of reflexivity – it does play an important role in career outcomes (career mobility) and its role is more important than that of habitus. However, CR ontology does not allow for universal laws and perfectly ideal predictions. This study argues that relations between reflexivity and career mobility should be seen as tendencies. Since reflexivity is a mechanism, the way it manifests itself and outcomes it produces is conditioned by other mechanisms in the setting. This thesis contributes towards further development of realist social theory by investigating under what circumstances MoRs generate certain career results and suggesting in what conditions routinized actions are still possible.

9.4 Summary

This chapter has discussed and debated the findings made by this study in relation to the existent scholarship. This thesis has made an important step towards better theorisation of the discipline of career studies (Mayrhofer et al, 2007; Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer, 2011) by introducing Archer's (1995, 2007) realist social theory as an alternative to the 'grand social' theories elaborated by Bourdieu (1977, 1984), Giddens (1979, 1984) and Luhmann (1986, 1989). The introduction illustrated that RST can offer a contribution to all five 'touchstones', but emphasised that the objective of this research was to focus on finding the right balance between structure/culture and agency and to explain skilled migrants' careers as a complex social phenomenon conditioned by them. It concluded that this thesis was a rare example of an empirical study philosophically, theoretically and methodologically rooted in CR and RST.

The chapter has discussed the contribution made to our understanding of how reflexivity mediates structure/culture and agency in skilled migrants' careers. First, this study has explained how contextual conditions influence career projects for different groups of the population. Second, it has undertaken an enquiry into how reflexivity drives the agential choice between accessible projects. Third, this study has sought to investigate what career outcomes three MoRs (Archer, 2007) tend to generate for different cohorts of practitioners and under different contextual circumstances.

The final part of this chapter discussed further contributions offered by this thesis to the existent theoretical perspectives. This study contributed to debates on boundaryless careers by addressing the call to consider how we understand boundaries and what groups of population we study (Pringle and Mallon, 2003; Inkson et al., 2012). This study also attempted to contribute to conceptualisation of the notion of career success by demonstrating its context-dependent nature (Heslin, 2005) and the significance of taking into account agents' concerns. By investigating the impact of skilfulness and social capital upon availability of career practices, this study has highlighted their role in skilled migrants' careers, whilst also problematizing them as a shared property of agency, structure and culture (Cockburn, 1983; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Grugulis, 2007). Finally, this research contributes to further refinement of RST by putting reflexivity in context to re-examine the links between dominant MoRs and career mobility, and to argue that at least some careers can be co-determined by reflexivity and habitus.

Overall, by moving beyond theoretical assumptions prioritising agency over structure, or vice versa, and developing a more nuanced understanding of the role reflexivity plays, as a

mechanism mediating complex relations between agency and structure/culture, this thesis generates a more informed and balanced account of skilled migrants' careers. This stance enables a more insightful explanation of career outcomes as conditioned by both agency and structure/culture, and offers a platform for the following studies from which to undertake further enquiries into career experiences.

Chapter 10. Conclusion

This thesis has drawn upon critical realism (Bhaskar, 1975) and realist social theory (Archer, 1995) to explore careers of skilled migrants in the North-East as a complex social phenomenon occurring at the intersection of structure/culture and agency. CRE and contrastive explanation were applied to contribute to the existent career debates. The data came from 57 qualitative semi-structured interviews and secondary sources, such as statistical records and industry reports. The analytical aim was to identify specific career projects the respondents applied to realise their concerns and to shed light onto how contextual conditions shaped availability of career projects, how individuals chose between them and what career outcomes the projects generated.

By answering these questions this project sought to introduce reflexivity (Archer, 2007) as a mechanism mediating relations between structure/culture and agency to the discipline of career studies. From the CR ontological and theoretical perspective, this thesis argues that careers in general and careers of skilled migrants in particular do not solely belong to either career agents or to the environment in which their careers evolve. Instead, they are co-determined by individual agency and contextual causal mechanisms. Individuals have reflexive tendencies for certain career projects. The context, however, defines which projects can be legitimately utilised by particular population groups and what outcomes can be generated. Yet, practitioners of different MoRs are likely to apply same projects in a dissimilar manner and, therefore, gain dissimilar career outcomes even in comparable environments. By considering career projects applied by different clusters in the sample this thesis complements the debates on boundaryless careers; in particular, the discussions about to what groups of agents this career form may or may not be attractive and applicable (Inkson et al., 2012). By asking what career outcomes different groups of population achieve in comparable contexts and accounting for the discovered dissimilarities, this thesis sought to contribute to the discussion of objective and subjective career success and factors that (at least partially) explain it. Finally, this thesis offers a contribution to development of realist social theory. It explores tendential associations between MoRs and career outcomes and clarifies when they may or may manifest themselves.

This concluding chapter commences with the summary of the research project. It outlines the content and the rationale of each chapter from 1 to 9 to account for their significance for this thesis. The chapter then proceeds to discuss and debate the limitations of the thesis. Lastly, it turns on to suggest avenues for further academic inquiries.

10.1 Summary of the thesis

Chapter 1 addressed the current tendencies in the discipline of career studies and, more specifically, studies of skilled migrants' careers. Despite the recent calls for a more overarching approach to careers, the existent scholarship continues to prioritise either agency over structure or vice versa, which results in an unbalanced image of careers. This trend has been reinforced by the concept of boundaryless careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996), (re)interpreted to portray individuals as agents engaged in career self-management with practically unrestricted freedom to move between jobs, employers and nations states (Inkson et al., 2012). Yet, our understanding of what groups of individuals may or may not be willing and able to apply this career form and under what conditions remains limited (Pringle and Mallon, 2003). Likewise, studies of careers of foreign-born workers are somewhat fragmented without a comprehensive theory incorporating a diversity of their career experiences (Crowley-Henry et al., 2016). Further, little is known about how contextual factors influencing skilled migrants' career vary across different settings. Whereas some steps towards disentangling these issues have been made (e.g. Zikic et al., 2010; Al Ariss et al., 2012), it is suggested that a complex social theory is needed to allow for further advancement of the discipline of career studies (Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer, 2011; Cohen and Duberley, 2015).

In Chapter 2 we searched for a suitable theory to create a more balanced account of structure and agency in careers, but also to contribute to other 'touchstones' outlined by Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer (2011). We began with a critical review of the three grand social theories proposed by Mayrhofer et al (2007) - Bourdieu's Theory of practice, Giddens' Structuration theory and Luhmann's Theory of autopoetically closed social systems. The review illuminated shortcomings of each of them. In brief, it argued that Bourdieu and Luhmann prioritised structure over agency, whilst Giddens' theory favoured agency. The chapter then turned to introduce Margaret Archer's RST and its notion of reflexivity as a more advantageous alternative to the grand social theories. The existent examples of empirical application of RST were considered to identify three areas of contribution for this thesis. The first aim was to explore how migrant and indigenous practitioners of different MoRs developed career projects and selected between them. The second line of inquiry was to examine how structural and cultural factors defined availability of career projects for various groups of career agents. The third objective was to scrutinise career outcomes generated by career projects for their practitioners.

Chapter 3 made the first move towards CRE. It reviewed the preceding scholarship in regards to its three components – outcomes, context and agential responses. Career outcomes were

understood through the prism of career success. It can be subjective or objective, self-referent or other-referent (Heslin, 2005), and is used to assess career achievements and satisfaction with them. Since careers occur in specific environments, a range of contextual mechanisms influence what outcomes can be achieved within the setting, for whom and how. The chapter focused on the groups of mechanisms – skilfulness and social capital. Finally, the chapter explored how individuals can rely upon their agency to develop specific courses of action to attain desired outcomes in any given context. The review of the literature found evidence to support the significance of the three areas of contribution introduced in Chapter 2, but also provided information to form expectations and assumptions (‘theory’) that would be empirically tested in this thesis.

Chapter 4 introduced and discussed methodological instruments deployed to fill the aforementioned gaps in explaining careers from the point of view of RST. This chapter argued that CR offered a better alternative to objectivist and subjectivist ontologies and discussed how it could be applied for purposes of data collection and analysis. CRE (Brannan et al., 2017) was introduced in greater detail. The idea was to start with a theory, then test and refine the theory empirically and conclude with a ‘better’ theory. It was highlighted that CRE was a framework, rather than a specific method and that CR permitted and even encouraged methodological pluralism. The chapter justified the choice of research methods recruited to answer the research questions. Secondary data was combined with semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding of the context, agential projects and their outcomes. Contrastive explanation (Lawson, 1997, 2003) was utilised as a primary approach to analysing the data. The sample was divided into sub-clusters, which were then contrasted and compared in order to explain the identified ‘surprising’ differences in the identified career projects and achieved outcomes. Ethical and reflexive practices were also considered with a specific focus on the researcher’s status as a [skilled] migrant and CR commitment to emancipation.

In Chapter 5 the context of this thesis was introduced to consider a range of contextual mechanisms affecting careers in the North-East. The chapter stressed the industrial heritage of the region and outlined the history of international migration to justify the choice of the research setting. Data from interviews and statistical reports were consolidated to provide a representation of the present environment in which the respondents’ careers unfolded. Migration regulation stipulates access to the labour market, whereas regulation of access to occupations determines who is permitted to practice certain professional activities. At the same time, conditions of the labour market constrain and enable pursuits of career goals. Finally, we considered issues of social acceptance rooted in prejudices regarding cultural (dis)similarities. By investigating the

context as the first element of CRE this chapter sought to explore causalities significant for skilled migrants' careers. It suggested that within the same context different categories of career agents had unequal opportunities to realise their concerns.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 presented findings regarding internal conversation and career projects of autonomous, communicative and meta-reflexives respectively. Concerns and decision-making were utilised to discover MoRs dominated inner dialogues of the respondents (Archer, 2007). ARs were preoccupied with career achievements and guarded conversations with inner selves from the 'outsiders'. MRs were concerned with values and also did not require confirmation of their internal dialogues. Inter-personal relations and social belonging were prime concerns for CRs who sought completion of internal dialogues from interlocutors. Five types of career projects emerged from empirical data. Three of them were associated with particular MoRs – reformation and ARs, conformity and CRs, runaway and MRs. However, due to contextual barriers desired career projects may or may not be available. Consequently, some respondents were engaged in projects associated with different modes of reflexivity or into one of two intermediate projects – trickery and hideaway. The chapters considered objective and subjective outcomes generated by different career projects for practitioners of different MoRs.

Chapter 9 sought to review the findings of this thesis with references to contributions it made to the preceding theory. First of all, the thesis contributed to conceptualising career as a complex social phenomenon that does not solely belong to either individuals or their contexts, but is co-determined by them. It was demonstrated that some career projects are more easily available for some groups of career agents than for others. For example, migration regulation made relocations between jobs, employers and settings more difficult for non-EEA nationals. At the same time, practitioners of different MoRs were found to have proclivities for certain types of career projects. For CRs compliance was the preferred project, whereas reformation was perceived as less attractive and was not applied even by respondents who were able to practice it. Further, it was illustrated that ARs tended to achieve more significant upward career mobility than CRs and MRs. Their orientation towards career achievements guided ARs towards strategic planning and rational decisions. For example, they applied runaway to maximise career opportunities, whilst MRs utilised this type of career projects to escape social settings that did not fit their concerns. Consequently, ARs were top achievers in the sample.

The study also contributed to the debates on boundaryless careers by suggesting that this career may be more or less attractive for practitioners of different MoRs. CRs, for example, did not appear as possessing a 'boundaryless mindset' and were reluctant to move between employers,

jobs and locations. This thesis also emphasised the importance of contextual barriers and enablers. Even when respondents perceived boundaryless careers attractive, they were not necessarily able to cross the boundaries and only one half of meta-reflexives were able to ‘run away’. A contribution was also made to studies of career success by demonstrating that objective and subjective success do not always coincide. Practitioners of different MoRs have distinct concerns and only concerns of ARs are in line with objective career attainments (e.g. wages and promotions). CRs and MRs derive subjective satisfaction from inter-personal relations and an ability to adhere to one’s values respectively. The thesis also advanced the understanding of factors influencing career success. The role of social capital and skills in achieving desired career outcomes was highlighted. However, the indigenes received more opportunities to benefit from support from social contacts. In contrast, migrants relied predominantly on rare in-demand skills to pursue their interests. Finally, the thesis offered further contribution to RST by placing reflexivity in context to re-explore the relations between dominant MoRs and career mobility. It also revealed that at least some careers can be co-determined by reflexivity and habitus.

10.2 Implications for stakeholders

In addition to theoretical contributions, the findings of this thesis have implications for a range of stakeholders – career advisors, employers, regional authorities and nations states. Although the respondents were aware that some career projects (e.g. hideaway) were less likely to facilitate upward mobility, they were prepared to make the sacrifice. Understanding that practitioners of different MoRs aim at different outcomes and tend to choose different career projects can be useful for career advisors and career councillors. Knowing their clients’ MoRs, they could offer recommendations most adequately matching their inclinations, goals and ambitions. Findings on reflexivity and career projects could also enhance understanding of how to achieve desired outcomes within the frame of a preferred career project. For example, more information about cultural features of the host country and the region could be provided to CRs migrants, as it could improve their chances to develop social contacts with the indigenes and, ultimately, gain the sense of acceptance and belonging.

Following on from the above, understanding individuals’ drivers and concerns can refine organisational HRM practices. This thesis has illustrated that income and promotions cannot be used as the only incentive to motivate workers. Therefore, employers should consider different alternatives. For instance, the findings suggest that CRs would appreciate opportunities to

socialise at the workplace and develop networks. Providing such opportunities (e.g. in a form of corporate events, social clubs or informal mentoring) could increase attractiveness of organisations for potential employees. Similarly, many MRs choose to apply hideaway, which minimises their involvement into the organisation and its business. If employers demonstrated more sensitivity to values of MRs and promoted them within the company (e.g. stricter anti-homophobia measures in case of Calvin), this could stimulate meta-reflexives to engage more with their employers, enhancing the so-called psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989). This, in turn, would allow organisations to benefit from skills of their meta-reflexive employees more effectively.

This issue appears particularly important in the present conditions, when companies and nation states must compete for an internationally mobile skilled workforce (Mahroum, 2000). If CRs experience (or anticipate) difficulties in establishing inter-personal relations at the host environment or if MRs perceive the setting as particularly intolerant to their values, they will be less willing to stay and invest their time and effort in the setting's development. This seems especially consequential for economically handicapped regions experiencing shortage of skills, such as the North-East. Understanding of why skilled migrants come and why they go is vital for attracting foreign professionals and enabling the region to benefit from their knowledge and experience (Smart and Murray, 2017). Thus, awareness of skilled migrants' concerns should be taken into account when developing relevant policies. For example, Akande's story demonstrated that prospective migrants would deter or even cancel their relocation plans if family members accompanying them experienced visa issues. Policymakers should consider such consequences carefully, in order to ensure that migrants are not discouraged by barriers to bring dependents to the country. On the regional level, the North-East could launch a programme to improve its image as a region where skilled migrants are valued, appreciated and welcome to. Although fundamental cultural and social changes are hardly possible in the short-term, the region, for example, could do more to celebrate migrants' communities and promote their activities. This should be advertised more widely to newly arriving and potential skilled migrants considering relocation to the region.

10.3 The limitations of the thesis

Despite the valuable contributions this thesis has made, its limitations must be acknowledged. Inherently to the nature of a PhD research, resources available for this project were limited,

which affected the research design. For example, it was not possible to interview the respondents twice and track how their careers developed over time. The interviews involved reflection upon previous experiences and career projects were discussed retrospectively, which generated plentiful information for the analysis. Nevertheless, it would have been favourable to investigate whether the respondents moved between career projects as they planned and what factors enabled or prevented these moves. For example, Tiwa and Calvin expressed strong intentions to leave the UK and settle elsewhere in the world. Adding another round of interviews to discover whether they managed to realise their ambitions could have further enhanced depth and complexity of the analysis. It could have also been beneficial to inspect any changes in the respondents' dominant MoRs.

With respect to the latter point, using Archer's ICONI questionnaire (Archer, 2008) could have boosted rigor and accuracy of categorisation. The key features of MoRs were discussed in great details during the interviews and it is reasonable to suggest that this approach was sufficient for the purpose of this thesis. Moreover, it allowed for a greater explanatory potential, as the respondents were asked to explain how they developed concerns and made decisions aimed at their realisation. Nonetheless, using questionnaires to measure the respondents' inclinations towards different MoRs would have allowed for another, quantitative dimension of the analysis.

Another limitation of the thesis concerns the composition of the sample. It was justified in Chapter 4 that the number of the respondents was sufficient. The sample included practitioners of all three MoRs this project was interested in and all five types of career projects were identified after the analysis of only 16 interviews. Yet, when the sample was divided into sub-categories, the size of some of them was rather small. For instance, the pool of respondents included only one self-employed meta-reflexive respondent. Consequently, it is possible that some causal idiosyncrasies specific for particular clusters of population had been overlooked or underexplored. The sample yielded enough evidence to identify and explain trends common for migrant career agents and for practitioners of different MoRs. However, increasing the size of sub-groups could have resulted in richer data. For example, including more meta-reflexive top achievers could have furthered findings on under what circumstances this group can attain high objective career outcomes.

Finally, reflecting upon the researcher's personal experience as a skilled migrant in the North-East of England, it is necessary to acknowledge the role it played in developing the initial theory (as discussed in Chapter 4). On the positive side, it enriched and complemented theoretical assumptions this thesis sought to test and refine empirically. Nonetheless, it also means that the

researcher was inevitably biased in his expectations, favouring some ideas over others. For instance, contrastive explanation aims at explaining “surprising” observations (Lawson, 2003), but what is considered “surprising” is (at least partially) defined by the researcher’s consciousness. Further, interpretation of findings is a subjective process influenced by the researcher’s personal beliefs and knowledge. Preceding experience can ‘guide’ researchers towards conclusions supporting their assumptions. This is compatible with principles of CR studies, where researchers are not seen as dispassionate objective investigators. It is admitted that researchers as ‘normal’ human beings are subjected to feelings, propensities and emotions (Sayer, 2011). The CR approach to empirical studies suggests that this issue is unavoidable and there is no objective knowledge (Fleetwood, 2014a; O’Mahoney and Vincent, 2014). To decrease the bias, primary data from interviews was combined and compared with secondary sources. It could have been minimised further by, for example, having the analytical categories double checked and verified by another researcher. Nonetheless, the nature of a PhD thesis and limited availability of resources precluded such measures.

10.4 Opportunities for further research

Findings and contributions made by this thesis suggest opportunities for further academic investigations. One opportunity would be to expand the approach adopted by this thesis and apply CRE to study careers of different groups of skilled migrants and in different settings. Subsequent studies could focus more explicitly on how the environments shape opportunities to follow the reflexive logic for different categories of skilled migrants in regards to their gender, age, ethnicity, class and/or education. Combining, contrasting and comparing these features could help disclose and explore covert mechanisms specific for these groups of population. At the same time, exploring accessibility of reflexive career projects across various regions, industries and organisations would shed more light on the impact of contextual obstacles and enablers. For example, it would be useful to explore careers of female migrants in Scotland’s universities and compare them to careers of male migrants in Scotland’s universities, female migrant engineers in Scotland or female migrants in London’s universities. A larger volume of studies, but with a more precise focus, would be advantageous to generating a more nuanced and comprehensive image of [skilled migrants’] career experiences. Also, careers of individuals whose internal conversations are dominated by more than one MoR need more attention. There is an opportunity to explore their concerns and career projects, as well as career outcomes.

More scholarly effort could be put to illustrate the value of RST for the other ‘touchstones’ of contribution (Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer, 2011). A particularly fruitful area of investigation would be to apply Archer’s morphogenetic circle to explore the temporality of [skilled migrants’] careers. This, for example, could further advance our understanding of how agents move between career projects. One interesting opportunity would be to study how ARs ‘progress’ through different types of career projects to reformation and how it affects their career outcomes. Further, longitudinal research would refine the theory in relation to reflexivity and its impact upon skilled migrants’ careers. Little is known, for example, about whether a dominant MoR can change and what factors can provoke such changes. Such shifts would likely result in changed proclivities for different career projects and, ultimately, career outcomes. Therefore, this knowledge could significantly enrich the discipline of career studies. Also, causal relations between autonomous reflexivity and the level of seniority need more attention. This thesis does not provide a definite answer of whether senior managerial positions encourage autonomous reflexivity and reformation or vice versa. This line of academic inquiry would further contribute to ‘putting reflexivity in the context’.

Following on from the point above, more could be done to explore empirically under what circumstances MRs are capable of transforming the context to shape it in accordance to their values, as suggested by Archer (2007). It remains unclear whether it depends on particular values or contextual conditions or a combination of both. Further, more attention should be devoted to habitus in careers and how it is intertwined with reflexive projects. One fruitful area of investigation would be to examine how autonomous reflexive ‘voluntary’ conformers deal with encountering conditions that make habitual compliance less effective.

Overall, this thesis has made a first step towards a better theorised, more comprehensive and balanced understating of skilled migrants’ careers. It has offered a number of valuable theoretical and practical contributions. Nonetheless, more effort is needed in this direction and subsequent studies should advance our knowledge further by expanding the application of critical realism and realist social theory in the field of career studies.

Appendix A. The interviews schedule

Introduction

1. Can you please introduce yourself?
2. Follow-up questions asked about age, origin, marital status, time since migration, education and current employment situation.

Pre-migration experience

1. Can you tell me about your education and work experience before you moved to the North-East?
2. Follow-up questions asked about the last position held and previous experience of international migration.

Relocation to the UK/North-East

1. Why did you move to the UK and the North-East particularly?
2. How did you make this decision? Did you consult with anyone?
3. Did you know anybody in the country/region?
4. What did you know about the country/region? Do you feel this knowledge was sufficient?
5. How difficult was it to obtain a visa? Did you face any legal difficulties? How did you overcome them?

Career biography

1. Can you list all jobs you did/positions you held since relocation and explain how and why you moved between them? In case of only one job/employer – have you considered changing it and why it did not happen?
2. How did you make these decisions? Did you consult with anyone? Why did you choose these jobs and employers?
3. How did you obtain information about jobs? Was it hard? Did you ask anyone for help?
4. How did you apply for jobs? Was it competitive? In case of promotions – were the criteria clear and transparent?

5. What do you think helped you get these jobs? Did it involve any negotiations?
6. Have you ever applied for jobs/promotions and did not succeed? Why do you think you were unsuccessful?
7. Do you think your status as a (non-EEA) migrant has been an advantage or disadvantage? Why? How did you deal with it?
8. Have you encountered any factors you perceived as career barriers? What did you do about them?
9. Is there anything you do not like about your job? Have you been able to influence it?

Skillfulness

1. Do you feel personally and professionally accepted?
2. Do you feel your skills are appreciated? Do you have a chance to use them?
3. Was your education/experience helpful for (re)establishing a career in the North-East? How and why?
4. Have you had a chance to engage into training and development? How did it happen? How useful was it?

Social capital

1. Do you rely on help from your contacts for career purposes? Why?
2. Do you think you are socially well-connected in the North-East?
3. Who are your contacts in the North-East (e.g. migrants, indigenes or a mix of both; what do they do etc.)? How did you get to know them?
4. Have you experienced any difficulties developing local contacts?
5. Have you been strategic in your networking? How and why?
- 5.1. Do you think it has been an advantage/disadvantage for your career?
6. Have your family and friends been important for your career? How?
7. Who do you normally discuss problems at work with?

8. Are you a member of any professional societies and organizations? What effect does it have for your career?

10. What relations do you have your colleagues and you supervisors/managers? What impact have they had on your career?

11. Have you ever had a role model?

Career success

1. Do you feel your career is successful?

2. What does success mean to personally? Does it involve objective achievements; inter-personal relations; moral values?

3. What do you think has made you (un)successful?

4. Do you regret any of your decisions?

5. What expectations did you have before migration?

6. Do you feel you have met them and how does it make you feel?

7. Have your expectations changed?

8. Do you compare yourself to other people? Who are they?

Future prospects

1. What are your future career plans? Is there anything you want to achieve?

2. What exactly are you doing (planning to do) to achieve it?

3. What do you think can help you achieve it?

4. Can you see any obstacles on your way? How are you planning to deal with them?

5. When do you think you will be promoted? Do you know what to do in order to get it?

6. Do you think you will stay with your current employer/in the North-East much longer?

Work and life in the North-East

1. Is there anything you found surprising in the UK/North-East? How different does it feel compared to your previous place of residence/home country?

2. Do you feel you have changed some of your practices, habits or attitudes since relocation?

How did it happen?

2.1 Do you feel you had to change some of them in order to 'fit in' better?

3. Is there anything that troubles you/makes you unhappy in the North-East or the UK?

Appendix B. Career outcomes

MoR	Career project	Objective outcomes	Subjective satisfaction
ARs	Reformation	Upward mobility to high occupational levels with commensurate financial rewards.	High levels of subjective satisfaction, as concerns can be realised. <i>If I can buy anything that I want, if I go on holidays anywhere I want or if I can eat anything that I want then I am successful. If I have enough money to fulfil all my needs, then I think I am successful. So, I am successful, yes. (Ecrin)</i>
	Trickery	Rapid upward mobility to medium-high levels with commensurate financial rewards.	Satisfaction with provisos, as control and leeway are limited. <i>I can do things as I want, but only because she's [manager] here and turns a blind eye to it. (...) If she leaves, I will lose my 'bonuses' (laughs). So, this is what I want – to progress and to have more power. (...) I still believe I am successful and I'm only 25, but until then I cannot say I am fully successful. (John)</i>
	Runaway	Consistent upward mobility, although initial downward mobility is possible (particularly in case of self-employment).	High levels of subjective success, as concerns can be realised. <i>I could work 150 days a year that would be enough, maybe 100 days, you know, that would be nice. And I'd still earn more. (...) I decide what to do, how I do it and I manage my own time. (...) This is success I think. (Brandon)</i>
	'Forced' conformity	Upward mobility is possible, but the 'glass ceiling' is likely to be faced at mid-levels of occupation.	Low levels of immediate subjective success, but with hopes for the better future. <i>No, I am not successful, because I didn't study an MBA to end up in a non-management role. (...) There is nothing I can do at the moment. (Tiwa)</i>
	'Voluntary' conformity	Consistent upward mobility to mid-levels of occupation. Further progress is less likely.	Satisfaction with provisos: satisfied with the progress so far, less so with the status, wages etc. <i>I feel reasonably successful, but it does not matter at the moment. My career is not over; I think it's okay if I don't have everything I want right now. Much more important is that I feel that, you know, I am where I should be at this stage, everything is as I imagined and I have good prospects to move on. (Janek)</i>
CRs	Conformity and Trickery	Upward mobility to the level considered 'average' in the group practitioners seek association with. Further mobility is possible, e.g. if promoted by dialogical partners or if in possession of rare/valuable skills.	Subjective satisfaction depends upon social acceptance rather than objective career achievements and, therefore, tends to be lower for migrants. <i>I am glad with what I've done and it makes me feel proud. I still have some plans, some ambitions, but it is not my main worry. (...) If I can earn enough for the family and my wife does not complain about me too much, if I can be around to see my daughters grow and if people think I am a nice fella, then I am happy. This is my idea of success. (Ernie)</i>

	Runaway	Upward mobility is possible, but depends upon interlocutors' ability to provide guidance and advice	Satisfaction is somewhat problematic, as runaway contradicts fundamental concerns of CRs – social acceptance and stable inter-personal relations. <i>Had you asked me about success a few months ago, I would say no or kind of... Now it is a yes. I am getting married. I am feeling much more fulfilled and relaxed. Happy, I have to say. Career is one of the bricks in my happiness, but before it was not enough on its own... I didn't really need it for my own. (Ahmed)</i>
MRs	Runaway	Horizontal mobility (volatility) with commensurate levels of financial rewards.	Satisfaction does not depend upon objective career achievements. MRs appreciate an opportunity to look for the 'better' world, but it is hard to find and satisfaction is incomplete. <i>I just felt bad and just handing my leaving notice made me feel better. I was looking forward to leaving soon, going somewhere better, and it was a relief, it really was. (...) Even if I am behind them [ex-classmates] it doesn't bother me so long as I can pay my bills and be honest with myself. (Calvin)</i>
	Hideaway	Immobility	Satisfaction does not depend upon objective career achievements. MRs appreciate an opportunity to hide from the 'imperfect' world, but absolute escapism is impossible and satisfaction is incomplete. <i>I consider myself a happy person, because yes, my job is not ideal, but this is not the most important thing in my life. (...) I would like to take a professor position in a research-oriented university, somewhere I would be allowed officially to do research and this would be valued. But to be honest I no longer think about it much. (...) I would be more successful in that, but I am not trying to be successful, I don't think it's ethical. (Oleg)</i>

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