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Lost in Transnational Space? Migrant Farm Workers in Rural Districts

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ABSTRACT *In recent decades, theories of transnationalism have emerged as key perspectives for analysis of international migration. Drawing on Glorius and Friedrich's (2006) model of transnationalism, the paper analyses the case of migrant farm labour in rural Norway and demonstrates how the social context of migrants' work influences their building of various kinds of social-capital resources which are crucial for development of transnational space. The paper argues that circularity of migration is not sufficient to instigate full-fledged transculturation and hybrid identity-formation processes. In conclusion, the paper recommends that transnational theory should pay greater attention to the social contexts of migration and observe the limits of the theory's application.*

KEY WORDS: Agriculture, migration, rural, social capital, space, transnationalism

Transnational Social Spaces and Rurality

Since the publication of *Nations Unbound* by Basch, Glick-Schiller and Szanton Blanc (1994), there has been an explosion of studies addressing transnational migration (see for example Portes *et al.* 1999, Vertovec 1999 for overviews). Most studies investigate the phenomenon in urban environments, discussing how migrants in the metropolis are embedded in and actively create transnational social spaces beyond the borders of sending and receiving countries. Fewer studies explore transnationalism outside the urban context. Although transnational scholars have studied migrants of rural origin and their journeys through cities in North America and Europe (Guarnizo *et al.* 1999, Portes 2000), immigration to rural areas has tended to be ignored in the field of transnational studies. There are numerous studies in the US literature on transnationalism among Mexicans, of whom many work on American farms (such as. Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005, Durand and Massey 2004, Cohen 2001), but far less has been written on transnationalism in rural Europe. Among other things, this probably reflects the relatively insignificant role of agriculture in the EU economy (Labrianidis and Sykas 2009).

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Over the last few years, however, we have observed a growing influx of immigrants into the rural regions of Northern Europe. It has even been argued that since the enlargement of the EU in 2004, most migrants from Eastern European countries find their employment in rural communities (Jentsch 2007). For example, in Norway the rural agricultural industry has been one of the main employers of foreign labour in recent years (Rye 2007a). In the British context, Stenning and Dawley (2008) similarly note that recent East-to-West migration in Europe diverges from the traditional rural-to-urban patterns of migration and that rural regions today receive a far larger share of migrants relatively to their population. They conclude that '[i]t is not only core cities which are attracting [Eastern European] migrants: they are living and working in everyday, small-town peripheral Britain' (Stenning and Dawley 2008, 279). This reflects the labour demand in the traditional rural industries, which has come to rely on cheap, docile migrant labour instead of family labour and domestic paid workers (see also Green 2007, Labrianidis and Sykas 2009).

The research objective of this paper is to investigate whether farm migrant workers in Norwegian rural districts build similar transnational networks and communities as migrants in urban destinations and, if so, how structural properties of the social context of the rural and the agricultural influence their transnational engagement. Pries (1999) argues that transnational communities develop as a result of massive circulatory migration streams in time and space. With the dynamically growing influx of migrants from Eastern Europe into Norwegian rural areas, where the migration flows have a distinct back-and-forth character, one should expect the development of such transnational communities. Nonetheless, the material analysed in this paper suggests that transnational engagement of migrant rural workers is primarily related to the circularity of movements. Cultural or cognitive processes involved in transnational migration and related to the rise of transnational communities, as described in the literature, are rather limited. Instead, these migrants seem to find themselves marginalised in transnational social space, in between cultures and identities of sending and receiving nations.

Elaborating on these observations, we argue that circular physical mobility may not be sufficient for the establishment and maintenance of viable transnational social spaces and communities. The case of migrant farm workers rather suggests that such developments are dependent on the social contexts that they encounter in the destination country. These contexts affect the size and composition of different forms of social capital that migrants hold, which in turn influences the character and scope of their transnational involvements and, consequently, their opportunities to engage in and create transnational social spaces.

For the migrants analysed in this paper, it is the characteristics of farm work in combination with the rural context of their stay, in particular, that seem to hinder the rise of transnationalism in terms other than phenomena related to circularity of movements between sending and receiving countries. We suggest that these contextual aspects of their migration instigate segregative processes in relation to communities in both sending and receiving countries. Thus, our main argument is a call for greater attention to the structural contexts of migration in transnational theory and research, including awareness of the limits of the theory's application.

Review of Transnational Migration Literature

As noted above, transnational migration has been studied in many national and supranational contexts and numerous papers have documented the rise of transnational networks and communities. For example, in the USA Glick-Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc (1992) examined the situation of Caribbean migrants; Goldring (1997) and Massey (2000) investigated Mexican networks; and Guarnizo, Sanchez and Roach (1999) studied Colombians in New York and Los Angeles. In the European context, Faist (1999), Jürgens (2001) and Pütz (2004) explored experiences of Turks in Germany; Al-Ali, Black, and Koser (2001) examined the emergence of transnational communities among Bosnian and Eritrean refugees in Europe; while Müller-Mahn (2000) studied Algerian migrants in France. The literature identifies a wide range of transnational processes with regard to international migration. Scholars have identified the emergence of transnational social spaces, communities and enterprises, such as those specialising in the transport of goods, people and finances between the countries of origin and destination (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992). The emergence of transnational migration is associated with the shifting global economic and geopolitical context, the existence of social networks, and historical, economic and political connections between the sending and receiving countries. New ways of communication have transformed time and space (Giddens 1994), not only in terms of geography, but also economically, socially and culturally.

Due to the variety of fields in which the concepts of transnationalism and transnational migration were developed, the discipline is highly fragmented and lacks a well-defined theoretical framework (Portes *et al.* 1999). After two decades of research, there is still much confusion and disagreement on definitions, interpretations and units of analysis. Therefore, it seems almost impossible to establish a uniform definition of what transnationalism is, or who transmigrants are. However, there are certain common points in different theoretical elaborations.

Firstly, proponents of transnational theory argue that there has been an important qualitative change in the character of international migration. Today, many migrants do not settle in the country of migration; instead, they stay there temporarily and/or circulate between their country of origin and the host country (Basch *et al.* 1994, Pries 1999). In other words, migration is no longer a single act of moving from one place to another but an ongoing process, which has multiple consequences both for migrants themselves and for the nation states of their residence and origin. Secondly, at the heart of the phenomenon is the dynamic development of telecommunication and transport technologies (Castells 1996, Vertovec 1999). These technologies connect transnational networks with growing speed and efficiency. Even when they are abroad, migrants can stay informed and involved in the everyday life of their place of origin. Finally, there is a duality in the daily life of the individual migrant and/or his family (Cano 2005). Migrants often interact with multiple nations and communities and form social spaces that span beyond national borders (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992).

These transnational social spaces have been defined as social fields or sets of ties that extend beyond national states and societies (Faist 1998, Pries 1999). They shape everyday practices of migrants and serve as a reference for their social positioning and identity (Pries 1999). Thus, transnationalism refers to cultural, economic and political practices of individuals and groups emerging over time and space as a result of massive, circular international migration flows (Pries 1999).

In particular, social networks have been identified as a crucial element for the durability of migration streams over time (Pries 1999) and for the subsequent creation of transnational space. Guarnizo *et al.* (1999), however, argue that the processes and effects of transnational migration vary depending on the social environment that migrants encounter in their places of origin and destination, the social capital they possess and the social obligations and ties with their kin and communities. The importance of the local context of migrants' destination and their social capital has been also emphasised by Sørensen (1998). Thus, transnationality depends on the characteristics of the migrants as well as the structural properties of the contexts of the sending and receiving communities between which they are migrating.

As noted above, transnational studies offer various definitions and interpretations of the phenomena discussed. As a guide for the empirical investigation in this paper, we find the operationalisation of transnationality developed by Glorius and Friedrich (2006) to be most fruitful, since it captures a broad spectrum of transnational manifestations while taking the different levels of human experience into account. Working from a perspective that reflects the theoretical framework outlined above, they reviewed a number of empirical case studies on the topic and identified several indicators significant in the process of transnational migration and the development of transnational social spaces. They grouped the indicators with regard to two key aspects of transnationalism: firstly, the *physical* aspect of circularity (mobility), and secondly, the *non-physical* movements, the latter further divided into cultural and identity flows. The indicators of circularity are pendular migration, divided family households, remittances, and uncertain duration of stay and future location. The cultural flows comprise the phenomenon that the authors refer to as transculturation, resulting in the partial loss of previous culture and the creation of a new one that also includes the elements of the host country's culture. These are bilingualism, bicultural practices, and the use of media and institutions of the home country in the host country. Finally, transnational biographies may lead to hybrid identity formation expressed by deterritorialised notions of 'home' and multiple regional, national or transnational identities.

Glorius and Friedrich's (2006) model represents a comprehensive set of indicators for transnationality; nevertheless, not all of them will be present in every process of transnational migration, as transnationalism represents dynamic social processes rather than static notions of ties and positions (Faist 1998).

In the Fields: Studying Farm Workers

In this paper, applying the Glorius/Friedrich model, we examine the engagement of Polish migrant farm workers in transnational processes and development of transnational space as they circulate between Poland and Norway. The discussion is based on a study of Eastern European migrants employed in the Norwegian agricultural sector, primarily with seasonal harvesting. We draw on material from the research project [Migrant Farm Workers in Norwegian Agriculture], which was implemented by [Centre for Rural Research, Norway] from 2005 to 2008 and covered a wide range of research questions concerning migrant labour. While the first part of the paper's analysis refers to different secondary statistical resources, the second and major part of the analysis rests on material from the in-depth interviews with migrant workers in this research project.¹

Fieldwork took place in the summer and autumn of 2006 in three rural municipalities in different parts of Norway, each representing different modes of agricultural production, to cover differences between migrants' work contexts. The first municipality ('Indugreen'²) has large-scale and 'industrialised' production of vegetables, fruits and berries. It relies heavily on migrant farm labour, and the largest farms may employ up to 200 people during harvest. It is located in the most densely populated part of Norway, the south-east, about 40 minutes' drive from the capital. The second municipality ('Fjordfruit') lies along the fjords of western Norway and is dominated by small-scale fruit and berry production. Many farmers employ migrant labour, but on a smaller scale – typically one to three workers per farm during the summer. The third municipality ('Familyfarm') in the study, in mid-Norway, is characterised by husbandry and family farming. Fewer of the farmers recruit migrant labour, and if they do, it is not usually on a regular and fulltime basis. The practice of two or more farms 'sharing' one migrant worker is common. The last two municipalities are both sparsely populated and located about 90 minutes' drive from any larger city. The number of farms in the three municipalities ranges from 250 to 350, in total about 900 farms. Based on agricultural statistics and local knowledge of the municipal agricultural administrations and other key informants we managed to identify the quarter of these farms which employed migrant labour (N=223 farms).

The selection of farm migrant informants was grounded in results from a standardised postal questionnaire distributed to these farms. The survey, in which 78 of farmers took part, identified the number and key characteristics of migrant workers (such as country of origin, sex and age), and the basics of recruitment as well as work organisation. In total, we estimated that between 1000 and 1400 migrants had agricultural employment in the municipalities studied.

Altogether 54 interviews with migrant workers selected from this pool were conducted during the fieldwork. The objective was to have a final sample of interviewees that was strategically composed in order to cover migrants' various backgrounds and work contexts (Bryman 2008). Interviews consisted of a standardised questionnaire with key information about migrants and an informal dialogue structured according to a list of topics covering issues such as recruitment and motivation for migration, the stay in Norway (work and living conditions, social relations and leisure), outcome of the stay and plans for the future. Interviews were conducted in Polish and English, depending on the informants' language skills. Prior to the interview, migrants were contacted directly (by telephone or in person) or through their employer at the workplace and asked to take part in the project. Interviews took place on the farm, in the migrants' living quarters, outdoors or in the motor van of the research team. Because of the employer-mediated recruitment of informants and potentially sensitive topics in the questionnaire (such as violations of labour regulations), we put much effort into creating an atmosphere of trust between the researchers and informants. Interviewees were given a letter from a member of the research team enclosing basic information about the project and were assured that none of the information provided would be disclosed to the employers or the authorities. Informants appeared to feel confident about sharing their experiences with the research team; for example, informants spoke openly about violations of wage and other labour conditions. In a few cases migrants declined to be interviewed, but this was most often due to time restraints and not the character or topics of the research project.

The interviewee sample is characterised by heterogeneity, as is the migrant labour force at large. Three quarters of our informants were male, 18 to 54 years old, with an average age of 33. Half of the migrants were employed in their homeland, with occupations ranging from unskilled workers to teachers. Students comprised one fifth of the sample, and another fifth had no employment and were not actively seeking work in their home country. The average educational level of the informants was relatively high: 24 had tertiary, 26 secondary, and four only primary education. Two thirds had left their spouses and about half had left their children in the home country.

Poles represent the most numerous national group of migrants employed in Norwegian agriculture. This is reflected in our sample, with 42 out of 54 informants originating from Poland. However, the dominance of Polish interviewees is also related to the fact that one member of the research team was Polish and none of the researchers had qualifications in other Eastern European languages. As most of the interviews were conducted with Polish workers, the paper also draws mainly on their experiences.

To improve contextualisation of the data, the research was further complemented by interviews with local key informants – including agricultural bureaucrats in the municipal administration and leaders of local agricultural organisations – as well as a three-week period of participant observation on one of the farms.

A weakness of the presented material, as in many other studies of transnationalism, is its ‘national’ bias; migrants are only interviewed in the receiving country, often with an emphasis on research issues primarily relevant for the academic-political debate there. Ideally, we would prefer to follow informants across national borders, interviewing them both when in Norway and their countries of origin, as well as interviewing their family and local community members who stay home. As noted by other scholars (Levitt 2004), and also commented on in the present analysis, transnational migration is very much a collective enterprise which should not be ‘atomised’ by focusing on the individuals’ motivations and actions alone. In the analysis, these limitations of the material are taken into consideration, to avoid unjustified generalisations.

Taking these factors into account, we still find the material suitable for discussion of Norwegian farm migrant workers from a transnational perspective. The sample reflects the diverse composition and experiences of the farm migrant workforce, and, given the qualitative research design, the relatively large sample size has allowed for investigations and comparisons across a number of empirical contexts. The material resulting from the interviews, mainly due to extensive introductory fieldwork and contextual analysis of the study areas, the binational composition of the research team, and interviewees’ willing and confident statements, provides a good starting point for discussing their engagement, or lack thereof, in transnational space.

Analysis Part 1: Circularity of Farm Work Migration

We start the analysis by addressing the first aspect of transnationalism in the Glorius/Friedrich model, namely circularity in physical movements. The widespread presence of Eastern European migrants on Norwegian farms reflects long-lasting general trends of increased labour mobility both globally and in Europe. Major differences in levels of economic and social development, incomes and quality of life create

strong incentives for westward labour migration, which has become easier as a result of the EU enlargement in 2004 when eight Eastern European countries entered the Union.³ As noted, among the new EU citizens, Poles have proved to be the most numerous among the Eastern Europeans looking for employment opportunities in Western Europe, including Norway. Between May 2004 and the end of 2006 about 1,100,000 Polish citizens migrated abroad (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2008). Accordingly, migratory flows between Poland and Norway have accelerated rapidly for both work and settlement purposes. While only a few Eastern Europeans were allowed into the Norwegian labour market prior to the EU enlargement, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) issued a total of 98,000 work permits in 2007 and more than half of these were granted to Polish citizens (UDI 2007). A number of these have decided to stay in Norway in the long term. While the number of Polish immigrants in Norwegian society on average increased by 130 per year during the 1990s, the number increased by 6000 in 2009 alone (Statistics Norway 2009). The Polish embassy claimed in the summer of 2006 that as many as 120,000 Poles were living and working in Norway (Aftenposten 2006). In 2009, Poles comprised the largest immigrant group in Norway, ahead of Pakistanis and Swedes (Statistics Norway 2009).

The Norwegian agricultural sector is one of the industries that employs most immigrants from Eastern Europe, especially during the summer season. In 2007, an estimated 27,000 migrant workers were employed on farms, and immigrants accounted for 10% of the total labour input in the industry that year, with workers distributed among 17% of Norway's 55,000 farms (Vik 2008). The everyday life contexts of migrants reflect the heterogeneity of farms, both within and across study areas, and of migrants themselves. However, some characteristics seem to apply to most migrant workers in the Norwegian agricultural sector. Firstly, Norwegian agricultural production is typified by its small scale and family farming, combined with very strong state regulation (Bjørkhaug and Blekesaune 2008). Farms are dispersed across the country, with farmers living on their plots rather than agglomerated in villages. Usually, the farming family both owns the farm and manages the production, including manual tasks. The profitability of farming is low, and farmers face strong pressure to increase the efficiency of their operations. For many farmers, hiring migrants provides a strategy to cope with these challenges. Poles and other Eastern Europeans are welcomed as effective and flexible labour during the harvesting period. For the workers, labour tasks are hard and monotonous (for example, harvesting vegetables or picking berries) and working hours are long. Wages are relatively poor by Norwegian standards, but good in terms of Eastern European standards (Rye and Andrzejewska 2010).

An important characteristic of migrant farm work is its inherently short-term nature. Prior to the EU enlargement in 2004, this was institutionalised in the legal framework, as migrants could only provide seasonal labour, restricted to three (up to 2001) or six (up to 2004) months (Rye and Frisvoll 2007). With the present regulation, no such legal restrictions apply; however, given the seasonal character of agricultural production, most farm migrant workers are in Norway for shorter stays. The average length is 2.5 months (Vik 2008). On the other hand, workers tend to return year after year. In our sample, there were examples of people who had taken on seasonal work in Norway for as many as 18 consecutive years. This is partly due to the way recruitment and employment are arranged: workers are recruited through family networks (see below) and have a direct employment relationship with the farmer. This enhances

employer-employee loyalties and, given workers' satisfactory work performance, strengthens opportunities for repeat employment during the following years.

Thus, important preconditions for the development of transnational social space in the wake of the Eastern European migration streams are present. Following Pries' (1999) argument that social networks are a crucial element for the durability of migration streams over time and for the subsequent creation of transnational space, the large number of migrants who circulate between sending and receiving countries should facilitate development of the other aspects of transnationalism described in the Glorius and Friedrich model.

Analysis Part 2: Limited Transculturation and Hybrid Identity Formation

In the next part of the paper, we elaborate on the above by analysing the actual scope and depth of farm migrants' engagement in various aspects of transnationality, namely those of transculturation and hybrid identities. In this discussion we draw on the 54 in-depth qualitative interviews.

Ethnic Networks, Remittances and Divided Households

According to Basch *et al.* (1994), 'family processes and relations between people defined as kin constitute the initial foundation for all other types of transnational social relations.' Divided households force migrants and their families to adopt various strategies to adapt to the new situation. Migrants stay in touch with their families through modern means of communication and physical movement between sending and receiving countries (Herrera-Lima 2001, Sørensen 2005). Our research reflects these findings. Family networks are not only the foundation for transnationality, but in some cases the main dimension of migrants' lives in which transnational practices take place. This is particularly evident in that kin or friendship networks are the main and the most reliable form of recruitment. Most of our informants obtained their jobs with the help of family members or friends who already worked in Norway. A quote from Lech⁴, a 23-year-old student from Poland, who has been coming to work to Norway for four years, illustrates this:

My father used to work here during ten or twelve years. I came here with him the first time. At first he helped me to do the work, and the next year I started to work by myself. My father went to Norway with my uncle the first time he came.

Lech, Indugreen

Such employer-employee relations, spanning not only years but also generations, were also reported by several other informants. In part, this reflects the worker-driven mode of recruitment of migrant labour to the farms. As migrants gain experience and the trust of their employer, they are given the task of recruiting additional workers. This facilitates employment for relatives and friends. The practice seems beneficial for both parties. The farmer finds a reliable source of labour and a convenient means of recruitment for employers; the recruiting worker gains a chance to offer attractive work opportunities to his family and friends (see also Guilmoto and Sandron 2001).

Krystian's case is a good example of this practice. Krystian came to Norway for the first time 18 years ago and has since then spent most of the year in Norway, visiting his wife and children in Poland every four months. He got his first job in Norway through a friend, and has later himself helped several people to find work in Norway. Nowadays his wife and children also work in Norway for up to six months a year. This is how he describes the process, in which he seems to more or less take over the full responsibility for the selection of new workers.

The farmer says that he needs workers, I look for people in Poland. I begin from friends and neighbours.

Krystian, Indugreen

These networks are usually the only source of information about work conditions and the host country. All informants had their information about Norway from friends or family.

Furthermore, for many workers, providing for the family is the sole motivation for taking on employment in Norway. This was the case for Piotr, who first came to Norway 11 years ago. Since then he has been travelling back and forth between Poland, where he left his wife and four children, and the farms in Norway where he works. He spends between seven months and a year in Norway, visiting his family in Poland twice or three times a year. Currently he works for several farmers in the local community. His working day begins at 7 am and finishes at 9 or 10 pm, seven days a week. Although Piotr spends most of the year in Norway, all money is spent on living expenses and investments in Poland. He now feels forced to work in Norway to provide for his family back in Poland.

...it's a little bit as if I was forced to it because the conditions that some companies in Poland proposed were not enough to pay my way [...] and my wife had so many operations and you have to pay the doctors. This is a financial struggle, so that you can provide for... because a family cannot function without money.

Piotr, Fjordfruit

Other informants told similar stories about how their stays in Norway were motivated by the need to provide for their family's basic needs or the wish to provide children with a good starting point for their adult lives.

Remittances are among the most common instances of transnational practices (Díaz-Briquets and Weintraub 1991, Basch *et al.* 1994 and Guarnizo *et al.* 1999). Migrants who have their own families at home send their earnings back to Poland. During their stay in Norway, they cut down on all possible expenses in order to save as much money as they can to take it back or send it home. Some migrants even bring food from their home country to avoid higher costs in Norway. The money earned on the farm is then spent on current living expenses or investments in housing for their own family, or for adult children and their families.

As discussed by Sørensen (2005), transnational families have to cope with multiple countries of residence, identities and loyalties. The problem especially concerns the closest family relations of marriage and parenthood. A situation in which one member of the household lives for long periods abroad results in a series of problems and

strategies to overcome them. Separation from the family left in Poland leads to feelings of longing and loss. It is also the most frequently mentioned drawback of going to Norway on a work contract. This was illustrated in an interview with Jan, a 54-year-old Pole, married and with children. His brother-in-law helped him to get a job in Norway ten years ago, and more recently he has found work for his sons and some friends. In the beginning, his motivation for coming to Norway was to earn some extra money, which he successfully did. However, the price is high, as he explains when asked about the relationship with his family back home:

There are no relationships. We call each other on the phone. There are problems with the kids and small ordinary problems. [...] My friends help me. The only thing that I regret are problems with children, when I was going away for the first time, they were still small.

Jan, Indugreen

Another interviewee, Piotr, mirrors these sentiments about the price of migration:

Well, you can say that this is a broken marriage. My wife had a serious accident, she had an operation, she cannot work too hard and when you have four kids there is a lot of work. It's good that my mum's still in good shape, so she can help us. [...] You must have a strong mind here and you cannot think about your family because otherwise it's bad. So, when I'm here I have to 'switch off' my family.

Piotr, Fjordfruit

Migrants working on Norwegian farms keep in touch with their families through telephone calls and the Internet. Such technologies are available even on remote farms, and with low costs, as 38-year-old Algirdas explains when asked about his relationship with the family back home in Lithuania.

I often have contact with them on the phone, by e-mail. I have Internet access here and I can use it whenever I want.

Algirdas, Familyfarm

Occasionally, they take their families with them, at least for a short period. They also try to cope with problems back home with the help of friends and relatives. Nevertheless, the impression is that their migration practices represent a break with their regular, everyday lives in the homeland. Telephone calls, Internet chatting or regular remittances may support the feelings of 'collective welfare and unity' (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002) and mutual obligations. However, the interview material demonstrates how these modes of communication cannot fully replace 'real' physical presence, and they therefore reduce 'the range and depth of in situ emotional and material need fulfilment' (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002, 4).

Cultural Flows

The life of a Polish migrant farm worker in Norway is dominated by work. Long working hours leave only a little time for leisure, social contacts and activities outside

the farm. The following quote from Karol, a 26-year-old freelancer who has been coming to Norway to work at the same farm for the past 12 years, illustrates this:

Here it's different, because every day is work and we don't have big shops or pubs close to here. This is only work and earning money.

Karol, Indugreen

As a result, the workplace becomes the basic arena for social relations both with the host society members and with fellow citizens. Migrants arrange meetings to watch Polish TV and talk about their work or to exchange information about working conditions, social entitlements or the Norwegian tax system. Piotr reflects that:

I have some Polish friends. We are all from the same region. We meet for coffee, tea or beer, we chat. Usually, we talk about the payment. It's because on each farm the rates are different. We talk about home, our plans. If you were here alone all the time, you could go mad.

Piotr, Fjordfruit

Yet the demands of farm work hinder the establishment of more lasting and well-organised social relations. Firstly, the long working hours on the farms effectively exclude migrants from social life. Up to 12-hour working days, six or even seven days a week, are common in the peak harvest season. While this is in conflict with Norwegian labour regulations, the migrants often welcome the intensive work as it enables them to maximise total income during their stay. Krzysztof, a 24-year-old single student, on his first year in Norway, remarked on the absence of friends; however, he accepted this as the price for earning money to pay for his postgraduate studies back home.

I miss my friends – good ones; we are so tired after work that... I didn't come here for leisure.

Krzysztof, Familyfarm

In any case, extra spare time is rarely in demand, among other things because rural communities offer few activities, such as pubs or shopping malls. Tomasz, a 48-year-old contractor who has been staying in Norway on the same farm for about three months each year over the past ten years, elaborates on this:

There is not much to do. It's a small village and when you finish work you are tired and you just think about going to sleep.

Tomasz, Indugreen

The structure of employment, particularly in Fjordfruit – with geographically dispersed farms, only a few migrant workers on each farm, primarily short-term work and high labour turnover – also makes any social organisation among migrants difficult. Even the Catholic Church, which is usually a key social and cultural centre for Polish immigrants, does not play any role in organising the social life of migrant farm workers except for providing an opportunity to meet for a moment

and chat from time to time. The dominant strand of Norwegian religion is Evangelical Lutheran, and the few Catholic churches are located in urban centres.

Neither does work on the farm facilitate contacts with members of the host society. The farmer and their family usually represent the only contact with the local community. In addition, there are no arenas where one could meet Norwegians outside the farm. We discussed this with Adam, a student from Poland. He had been working in Norway during the summer for the last two years:

Interviewer: Are there any places where you can meet Norwegians here in this area?

Adam: It's when you go to the shop and sometimes when we got to [the city], we sit in the park near the fjord and there are Norwegians there. Here, there are not a lot of people. But when I'm with my friends I speak with them, and don't go over to Norwegians saying I want to speak with them because I'm Polish. That would be strange.

Adam, Indugreen

Another informant, 38-year-old Latvian farmer Vladimir, was astonished by the absence of social arenas in the village where he was working.

I have no Norwegian friends – where would I find them? It is rare to come close to people. In Latvia we spend time together in evening, friends and family. That rarely happens here. At 12 pm on Sundays it is all empty in [village] centre, it's like nobody was living here at all.

Vladimir, Familyfarm

Farewell parties for migrant workers in two of the municipalities were exceptions to this rule. These were organised by the farmers and were popular occasions, often the *only* opportunity to meet other members of the local community and to eat and talk together. Lech, the 24-year-old Pole quoted above, talks about this:

Once a year we have a party with all the farms in [the village], where we eat and drink. There are maybe 120–140 people gathered, both workers and employers. This is very good because it is the only occasion to have some conversations with the employers and also meet other people. We know most of the people working at the other farms and can have contact with them whenever we want to, but at this party we can speak with the employers and meet other Norwegians.

Lech, Indugreen

For several years, Darek and his girlfriend have wandered around Norway, finding work and housing as they go. Presently they are painting houses for several farmers in the village. He reflects on his relations with the local society in a very meaningful manner, which neatly describes the lack of social ties in the local communities.

Because everyone knows we are living with [Kaare], we have names. We are not anonymous, like all those ‘Polakkers’. [...] Nobody knows anything about them. [...] We spend much time with Norwegians, but I wouldn’t say we have friends here. [...] We are not a part of the community, we are known by the community but not a part of it.

Darek, Fjordfruit

Most of the other farm migrants, however, as Darek would put it ‘don’t have names’ but are known by the locals as ‘Polakkers’ (Norwegian for ‘Poles’) and are not of any interest as participants in the local community to them.

A very important factor for establishing social ties in local communities is the language barrier. Only rarely do migrants in our sample speak English and even less frequently Norwegian. The lack of language skills is a major obstacle in contacts with Norwegian institutions, and most migrants do not have even the most basic knowledge about Norwegian labour regulations, the tax system, and welfare benefits. They often leave formal arrangements and paperwork to their employer. In some instances, they sign documents without any knowledge about their content. The following quotes illustrate this. Sławek, a first-timer in Norway, and Piotr say:

I’m not sure who does the paperwork but I imagine that the owners do it. We have been at the police station [...] there are a lot of things to be done, a lot of documents. The boss takes care of everything.

Sławek, Indugreen

...I don’t know, probably all the papers are in [the village] and we don’t have our documentation here. [...] In the beginning there was something that I give my consent for processing my personal data...

Piotr, Fjordfruit

The language also creates barriers to involvement with individuals and institutions in Norway in most other regards. It is difficult to approach them or, if initial contact is established, to nurture relationships without sharing the language. The short-term horizon of the workers’ stays reduces the motivation to overcome the language barrier. Thus, few initiatives are taken to engage with the local community. Migrants rather direct their efforts towards their work colleagues. One of the informants, Grze-gorz from Poland, neatly used the metaphor of the reality television show *Big Brother* to describe his life as a work migrant at a Norwegian farm: ‘You are with the same people [Poles], doing the same things, for 100 days.’

In his view, they were as isolated from Norwegian society as those spending time in the ‘real’ *Big Brother* houses. ‘This is only work and earning money,’ as Karol remarked in one of the quotes above. As noted, for many migrants, the end-of-season parties hosted by the farmer were the only social setting where they met with the locals in an informal context.

‘Neither Here Nor There’

Migrants lack the skills needed to establish good and meaningful relations with the host community. They spend most time in the company of their fellow citizens,

uprooted from the social life in Norway. At the same time, their recurring trips to Norway detach migrants from their social environments in their homeland, because they miss out on the daily lives of their families and friends. Another result of the circular migration is that relationships with the homeland labour market falter, making a return to 'normal' life harder. A quote from Sebastian, a 54-year-old Pole on his tenth stay in Norway, illustrates this.

I left my job and then began going to Norway to work. [...] Now it would be difficult to get a job back in Poland. [...] This is a ruined life, especially for those who have higher education. I have a friend. He finished law studies and went to work in Norway. Now he's got nothing. He cannot start in Poland again. All the years he studied were for nothing.

Sebastian, Indugreen

Thus, migrants operate in both cultures, but fail in important ways to integrate with either of them. Łukowski (2001) refers to this phenomenon as 'bivalent migration', a process in which migrants are embedded in two cultures and convinced that they are integrated in both, yet they are only drawing on elements of either, which does not constitute a whole.

The result is that transnational practices of migrants are largely evident in the circularity of migration. People move with great flexibility, and at low costs, back and forth between their home countries and their workplaces in Norway.

On the other hand, this very marginalisation seems to hinder in-depth transculturation and multiple or hybrid identity formation. There are some examples of practices related to transculturation, for example the use of media of the home country while in Norway. However, the lack of competence in the Norwegian language effectively restricts the involvement of a wider range of bi-cultural practices. To understand and draw on a new culture would require a conscious and reflective approach, which is difficult without the opportunity to communicate meanings, symbols or values directly with its members or indirectly through literature, press or television. Such exchange of meanings, symbols and values is impossible without at least intermediate knowledge of a common language by both parties engaged in the social interaction.

An important and illustrative exception is the relationships that some migrants develop with their Norwegian employers (Rye 2007b). Because farm workers usually live in farmhouse buildings, and some farmers also work side by side with the migrants, they may develop close ties with each other – particularly when the migrants return to the same farm year after year. Actually, some of the workers reported they had taken part in their employer's family gatherings and vice versa. Thus, informants occasionally reported some degree of emotional attachment to their employer and the farm they worked on.

These employer-worker bonds vary between the study municipalities. In the Fjordfruit municipality in Western Norway with small-scale fruit and berry production, where a few farm workers spend relatively long periods on the same farm, closer social ties develop. Farmers and migrants work alongside in the field. Workers are housed in farm buildings. Such physical proximity invites social bonding, however asymmetric these bonds may be.

In the two other municipalities, the very structure of the agricultural production seems less conducive to such relationships. In the municipality with large-scale and industrialised production of vegetables, fruits and berries, the larger workforces (up to 200 people) necessarily increase the distance between farmers and workers. Fewer workers – typically those with work leader responsibilities and/or years of experience – become familiar with the farmer and his family. In the third municipality (Familyfarm) where farmers employ migrant workers more casually, the social context is less favourable to the development of meaningful and long-term relations between farmers and workers.

Nonetheless, such relationships seemed in any case not sufficient to provide migrants with feelings of belonging to the hosting local or national communities. Most of them positioned themselves only as guests or passers-by. In addition, migrants were more likely to state that their attachment to their home country was severed by their way of life. As a result, many of them had a feeling of being neither here nor there. Strikingly, in a number of ways their conceptualisations of their everyday lives resemble those of Filipino seamen working on Norwegian ships who, in a parallel to the farm migrants, alternate between months at work in international waters and shorter breaks at home. Life at work (on the ship/farm) is perceived only as a means to provide for families back home, but the very life of the family disintegrates as a result of one's absence (Lamvik 2002).

Discussion: The Role of Social Capital and Social Context

In this section of the paper, we will argue that the observed situation is dependent on the contextual properties of the farm migrant workers' everyday lives in the rural communities. More specifically, we maintain that the social organisation of agricultural production in Norway, combined with the inherent *rural* dimension of these migrant farm workers' way of life, necessarily leads to their social marginalisation from both national and transnational spaces. In this discussion, we find the concept of social capital fruitful as an analytical tool to understand why and how different forms of social networks unevenly influence the development of transnationalism.

The importance of social capital for migrants' quality of life is widely recognised among migration scholars (Valenta 2000, Galasińska and Galasiński 2003, Vergunst 2008). Social capital provides migrants with necessary resources for migration and, once they have arrived, it promotes their integration in the host society. As such, social capital is an important prerequisite for the development of transnational social spaces. The character of migrants' social networks, in terms of both numbers and quality, defines their opportunities to interact with others – fellow migrants as well as actors in the sending and receiving countries – and defines how they engage in the transnational space.

However, as reflected in the material presented, different kinds of networks have different implications in this regard. In the following, we use Woolcock's (1998) elaboration of Putnam's early works (1993) to distinguish between three different forms of social capital which we believe have different implications for the rural farm migrants: *bonding* social capital, which refers to the ties between the members of the same social group; *bridging* social capital, denoting the ties between members of different social groups; and *linking* social capital, the social relations between individuals and groups occupying different positions in the social hierar-

chy. We will show how each of them influences the ability of migrant farm workers to develop social relations with the Norwegian community and with other migrants.

Importantly, given that different migrant categories tend to generate different social capital profiles, the very composition of the social capitals has implications for the mode of incorporation of immigrants in the host society as well as their engagement in transnational spaces.

Bonding Social Capital

On the one hand, the informants in the present study possess wide-ranging bonding social capital, and they use it extensively. As shown above, family and kin networks as well as ‘weak ties’ (Granovetter 1973) to compatriots are pivotal in the very initiation of migrant careers. These contacts provide access to employment, facilitate arrival at the farms and provide practical information and mediation with the authorities. Most of the migrants had received information about Norway from their relatives and friends. Several had in turn served as mediators for the recruitment of other family members and acquaintances. The analysis further shows that the nurturing of bonding social capital with fellow countrymen plays a key role during their stays in Norway. They keep in touch with their families through e-mails, phone calls and visits. Meetings with fellow citizens working on other farms are one of the most important elements of social life, and make the stay away from home easier to bear for many migrants.

However, bonding social capital may also have negative implications for migrants’ incorporation at large. It leads to the development of ethnic niches in the economy (Martin 1993), at the same time blocking employment opportunities on the wider labour market and leading to the processes of deskilling (Iosifides *et al.* 2007).

Other scholars (Gold 1995, Hagan *et al.* 1996) argue that immigrants who lack ties in broader social networks compensate for them by placing more focus on bonding social capital and keeping a strong cultural orientation towards their country of origin. Such an orientation is also evident in the material presented. The Polish informants have access to Polish TV and the Internet, which gives them an opportunity to follow the political, social and cultural events taking place in Poland.

Nevertheless, for some of them, working periods of employment in Norway are too long to allow the physical presence required for fulfilment of emotional needs in Poland. They become observers rather than participants in the everyday lives of their families, kin and friends.

Bridging and Linking Social Capitals

On the other hand, the analysis suggests that migrant farm workers fail to build bridging and linking forms of social capital. They keep to fellow countrymen, both during work and in their limited spare time. Migrants only rarely interact with and develop ties to actors in other social categories, whether they consist of other migrants or Norwegians. The physical isolation of farms, which often represent both dwelling place and workplace (Rye 2007b), combined with long working hours, makes it difficult to seek out new environments.

As noted, relationships with employers are exceptions (Rye 2007b) as some migrants develop close ties with farmers. Yet the employer-employee relationship has a distinctly paternalistic character, and rarely extends beyond the farm sphere.

Moreover, farmers often take care of many of the practicalities in relation to the work engagement: work permits, tax matters, providing living quarters and so forth. Migrants might have benefited from using these occasions to gain experience in contacts with Norwegian institutions, authorities and organisations, which could provide them with linking social capital. However, some informants reported that they had absolutely no contact with Norwegian authorities and left all paperwork to the farmer or colleagues.

Other examples of social interaction with members of the host community were also rare, both horizontally (bonding social capital) and vertically (linking social capital). An obvious reason is the language barrier, while another may be Norwegian prejudices towards foreigners. In any case, the result is the absence of arenas where migrants may build bridging and linking social capitals in Norwegian society. Without insight into Norwegian social life, customs, practices and language, the development of bicultural practices or multiple identifications and identities seem rather difficult.

This obviously hinders their integration in the receiving society as well as the establishment of transnational communities. Some level of familiarity with the host country's culture and social life developed through meaningful interactions with its members is a precondition to the development of bicultural practices and multiple regional, national or transnational identities, as described in Glorius and Friedrich's (2006) model.

In total, the composition of migrants' social capitals (predominantly bonding capital combined with scarce bridging and linking capitals) directs migrants' cultural and identity orientation exclusively to their homeland while hindering the development of cognitive transnational practices. Thus, we argue that migrants' transnational engagement is largely limited to *physical* movements as Glorius and Friedrich would put it, namely circular migration, divided households and remittances.

The Context of the Rural and the Agricultural

The specifics of the composition of the farm workers' social capital is inherently related to the structural properties of the context of their stays, which significantly differs from that of most other migrants discussed in the transnational literature. These are differences which originate in the specifics of work (agricultural sector) and locality (rural). We shall briefly elaborate on these.

First, the hired agricultural labour force in Norway is more or less entirely dominated by migrants, leading to the development of ethnic niches (Martin 1993). The migrant workers' social relations at the workplace are limited to their fellow citizens and, more occasionally, their employing farmer. This enhances the formation of bonding social capital but at the same time hinders the development of bridging and linking capitals. Such a pattern is to be expected in an economic sector such as agriculture, where low profitability combined with high demand for unskilled labour invites the recruitment of cheap and docile migrant workers. In the Norwegian case, the ethnicisation of harvesting labour was accelerated by the recent economic boom, which resulted in a sharp decrease in the traditional seasonal labour force reserve, as even those marginalised in the domestic labour market would find jobs that were more attractive in other sectors of the economy.

Secondly, the very characteristics of seasonal farm work play an important role. Migrants usually work long hours, six or even seven days a week, and their work tasks are physically demanding. These are work practices at variance with both

formal labour regulations and institutionalised practices in most parts of Norwegian labour life. However, in practice the nature of harvesting work demands intensive labour periods. As noted above, migrants themselves eagerly accept long working hours, as the motivation for their stay is to earn as much money as possible in a short period, with a view to spending their incomes in their homeland rather than on spare-time activities in expensive Norway.

In any case, such a work regime does not leave much spare time or allow for social activities and relations outside the farm. The temporariness of stay and high labour turnover hinder the possibilities of establishing contacts with local population or viable ethnic organisations that could have facilitated bridging and linking social capital resources.

Finally, Norwegian farms are predominantly located in sparsely populated areas, in small rural communities where there are few places to meet the members of the host society, and where ethnic organisations, often present in cities, do not exist. There are few or no places for meeting peers: no religious services in a familiar language, no bars where one can find company, no squares and markets for informal mingling, and no arena beyond the farm for discussing the trials and pleasures of their work. In Putnam's words, migrants' mode of sociality is dominated by that of the 'schmoozers' rather than that of the 'machers' (2000, 93–94). This is a mode of sociality fostering bonding rather than bridging and linking social capitals.

The common assumption among some transnational migration theory proponents is that migrants simultaneously integrate in various social contexts in two or more countries where they live. However, as Glorius and Friedrich (2006) argue, the equally possible outcome is that instead of integrating in two countries, migrants can disintegrate in both. Others recognise that many migrants face increasing difficulties in relating to or producing locality (Vertovec 1999). The reasons for this are that transnationalism is characterised not only by the growing disjuncture between territory, subjectivity and collective social movement, but also by the steady erosion of the relationship, principally due to the force and form of electronic mediation, between spatial and virtual neighbourhoods (Vertovec 1999). This development is especially striking in the case of seasonal U-turn migration. Most of our informants spend up to half a year working in Norway and the other half at home in Poland. The constant back-and-forth movements make long-lasting relationships and serious attachments difficult. As a result, migrants live two separate and loosely interconnected lives: one in Norway reserved for work, and another one, in Poland, reserved for family, friends and leisure, in which they try to make up the lost time.

Lost in Transnational Space?

The research question of this paper was whether migrant farm workers in rural areas built transnational communities and, if so, how structural properties of the social context of the rural and the agricultural influence their transnational engagement. The theoretical backdrop of the paper was the assumption among scholars that transnational communities develop as a result of massive circulatory migration streams in time and space (Pries 1999). With the dynamically growing influx of migrants from Eastern Europe into the Norwegian agricultural industry in rural areas, we might expect the development of such transnational communities. However, the data presented indicates that the transnational engagement of migrant rural

workers is rather limited and mostly related to the physical movements: pendular migration, remittances and divided households.

The non-physical aspects of transnationalism in Glorius and Friedrich's (2006) model – transculturation and hybrid identity formation – are far less pronounced among the migrating farm workers. They are hardly ever bilingual, despite their recurring stays in Norway, and they do not engage regularly in other bicultural practices. They have almost no knowledge about Norwegian culture and customs. They do not become familiar with Norwegians and do not participate in social gatherings in local communities. Accordingly, migrants in this study hardly display signs of evolving hybrid identities. They define themselves as 'Poles in Norway' rather than 'Norwegian Poles', 'Polish Norwegians' or anything else that would suggest the formation of transnational identities.

Our study thus confirms that social networks (including those involving locals) and cognitive relationships rather than mobility are the crucial element in transnationalisation (Jurgens 2001). Even though some migrants admit that they feel a certain level of attachment to the place and to their employer – some even refer to the farmer's family as their 'second family' away from home – their frame of reference is predominantly that of their home country (Rye and Andrzejewska 2010). Moreover, when engaging in practices often seen as indicators of transnationalism (such as recruitment practices and use of new telecommunications) these strengthen their sense of belonging to their homeland community instead of leading to transnational cultural practices and hybrid identities. Traces of transnational practices predominantly originate in informants' social networks that tend to foster bonding rather than bridging/linking social capital. Examples are the close networks between migrants and their families and close friends in the sending communities and those between migrant workers at the farms. This is helpful to maintain networks with other Poles, but at the same time makes it more difficult to develop social relationships with native Norwegians. The result is that the workers experience their stays in Norway as taking place in small-scale ethnic enclaves.

Further, the paper's discussion demonstrates how the development of transnational social space strongly depends on, among other factors, the social contexts that migrants encounter abroad. The social context of rural communities excludes and segregates migrants in the host society. The physically demanding and intensive harvesting work on farms locates migrants in a social void that disrupts their lives at home, and makes it difficult to create social networks in the host country. This hinders development of transnationalism in forms other than those restricted and related to circular migration.

Rather than being in the midst of transnational cultures and identities, the migrant farm workers seem to occupy a rather marginalised position in the transnational space. In some cases, their social relations with their home communities are severed while at the same time they lack ties in the host country, making them in a sense lost in transnational space.

Importantly, the limited participation in transnational social space does not necessarily imply a failure or represent a problem from the migrants' point of view. Ethnic neighbourhoods, where some residents may never engage in the culture of the larger society, often provide acceptable social environments for their residents. For most Eastern European farm workers, the objective of their stays in Norway is to make money to spend back home, not to put down roots in Norway. The same applies to the migrants' more or less exclusive focus on the work sphere while in

Norway; many other migrants, as well as non-migrants, also spend many hours at work and less time socialising outside the workplace, but without necessarily becoming socially marginalised.

Taking these reservations into account, the paper's findings invite a number of reflections on the phenomenon of transnationalism. First, the discussion shows that the structural properties of both the agricultural production and the rural social context of migrant farm work are important in analyses of development of transnational space. In various ways, these contexts invite development of different social capitals, which in turn influence the rise of transnational spaces and migrants' engagement in these.

Thus, the paper's discussion suggests that future research on transnationalism needs to pay greater attention to the structural properties of the economic, social and cultural contexts of migration and to the ways that these influence the composition of migrants' social capitals. This paper has shown how rural as well as agricultural context strongly influences the daily lives of migrants. Working alone at a farm in a rural district, remote from any town centre and/or from larger groups of other migrants, provides a framework for developing transnational communities that is quite different from that of migrants in a metropolis. Further research may provide nuanced insights into these issues. On the one hand, a number of similarities between rural and urban regions are to be expected, as well as between the agricultural industry and other sectors. For example, cleaning work in private homes, most widespread in cities, seems to show some of the same characteristics as the work situations discussed in this paper (for example, small/one-person work units, long working hours, absence of trade unions, and so on). On the other hand, there are probably also differences between the agricultural sectors in Western countries, as the national rural and agricultural policies necessarily lead to variations in the social context of migrant farm work. In other words, transnationalism seems to be more contingent on structural contexts than usually assumed in the literature.

Notes

1. The data collection in the main project was based on both quantitative and qualitative methods, and we interviewed farmers as well as workers. While in the present paper we primarily employ the qualitative in-depth interviews with workers, the project's other materials have been helpful in providing a better contextualised overview of the phenomenon. See Rye and Andrzejewska 2010 for further information on the research design, methods and material.
2. Names of the study municipalities have been assigned by the authors and reflect the key characteristics of the given municipality.
3. While Norway is not a member of the European Union, it takes part in the free labour market arrangements through the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement of 1994, which makes migration far more feasible than it was under previous regulation regimes in Norway.
4. All informants' names have been changed to protect privacy.

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