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## **Migrant workers and migrant entrepreneurs: changing established/ outsider relations across society and space?**

**John Lever and Paul Milbourne**

**Abstract:** Drawing on Elias and Scotson's theory of established/outsider relations, in this paper we argue that migrants can be outsiders in one spatial context and established in another simultaneously. Our empirical focus is the situations and experiences of migrant workers from central and eastern European countries based in four towns in Wales. For one group of migrant workers, based inside the strictly regimented occupational spaces of meat-processing factories, employment practices and working conditions largely reinforce their position of outsiders. By contrast, a small but growing number of migrants have engaged in entrepreneurial activities, particularly those linked to the consumption of food, creating new spaces of cultural diversity and integration in the spaces of the shop, café, restaurant and market. Such activities, we suggest are beginning to transgress the boundaries that exist in the occupational spaces of the workplace to have wider affective impacts on established/outsider relations in these places.

**Keywords:** Established/ outsider relations; figurational sociology; migrant entrepreneurs; migrant workers; place; space

## Introduction

The last decade has witnessed the movement of large numbers of migrant workers from central and eastern European countries, and Poland in particular, to the UK (Anderson et al 2006; Burrell 2009; Ciupijus 2011; Cooke et al 2011). Statistics from the latest Census of Population indicate that the number of Polish-born residents in the UK increased nine-fold between 2001 and 2011, from 58,000 to 579,000. In addition to its significance in terms of scale, this migratory process is also extremely interesting in relation to its geographies. Contrary to conventional forms of international migration, which tend to involve the city as the primary destination (Johansson and Rauhut 2002), migrants from central and eastern Europe have largely bypassed large urban places and settled in smaller towns and rural areas (TUC 2004; Scott and Brindley 2012). While such places have long histories of migration – involving the in-movement of affluent groups from cities and the out-migration of young people to urban places – they have witnessed relatively little exposure to the in-migration of people from other countries. Perhaps the exception here is in those parts of rural Wales where the Welsh language remains strong. Here, migration has been constructed by some as involving the crossing of national boundaries – of English people moving to Wales – and connected with complex issues of identity formation and cultural integration, separation and conflict. Our intention in this paper is to explore the migration of workers from central and eastern European countries to different places in Wales. Not only are these migrants not from England, they are characterised by very different income, employment and age profiles to those of established migrant groups. We explore the experiences of these ‘new’ forms of migration from the perspectives of migrants and local stakeholders, and, more specifically, consider the ways in which their differential positions in the local labour market impact on processes of marginalization and integration.

In order to frame the paper we draw on Elias and Scotson’s (2008) theory of established/ outsider relations to argue that migrants can be outsiders in one context and established in another simultaneously (Loyal 2011). Our focus is on the situations and experiences of migrants working in the meat-processing sector in rural and post-industrial places in Wales. Inside the occupational spaces of meat processing factories, employment practices and working conditions reinforce the position of migrants as outsiders in very particular ways (Lever and Milbourne 2014). This situation is underpinned, we suggest, by discourses that structure understandings of migrant workers and conceal their importance for the economy. The wider affective impact of these developments is profound and migrant workers often accept their situation with a sense of resignation (Elias and Scotson 2008). By contrast, outside the workplace, migrants engage in entrepreneurial activities (Harris et al 2014) and symbolic practices across a variety of public spaces (Nowicka 2010) that allow them to mix more openly with established groups and transgress the boundaries that exist in the occupational spaces of the workplace. We consider that such practices, particularly those involving food (Nowicka 2010; Rabikowska 2010), are having a wider affective impact on the established population – and hence on established/ outsider relations.

## **Established/ outsider relations in society and space**

Outlined definitively in a study of community relations across an English town during the late 1950s (Elias and Scotson 2008), improving established/ outsider relations are the foundation on which Elias's (2000) account of the process of civilization stands. The civilizing process moves along in a long and on-going sequence of spurts and counter-spurts, as some outsider groups attain the characteristics and functions of an established order. As Elias comments:

*'[A]gain and again... the grouping of people which has risen and has established itself is followed by a still broader and more populous grouping attempting to emancipate itself, to free itself from oppression...'* (Elias 2000, 382).

Elias's (2000; 2005) work thus draws attention to the accepted canons of behaviour within specific figurational contexts, which cannot be broken without upsetting the existing social order and the balance of power between competing social groups. The term figuration was introduced to illustrate how the complex interweaving of human actions, interests and intentions brings about something which is unplanned by any of the individuals and groups involved. Indeed, the pace, direction and consequence of figurational change remains largely unknown to individual actors. Throughout his work Elias (2000; 2005) demonstrates that the position of established – as well as outsider – groups is strengthened not simply due to an accumulation of *power*, but also because of an increase in the number of coordinated positions within a figuration. Power, in this sense, is a structural characteristic of *all* human relations (Elias 2012).

Elias also recognises the significance of *space and place* in shaping the development of established/ outsider relations. In *The Court Society* (2005) he highlights how the social living space of the *Ancient Régime* at the *Palais de Versailles* in Paris was based on a set of hierarchical classifications that maintained cultural distinctions between the aristocracy and the rising economic bourgeois. Elias develops these ideas in his work *On The Process of Civilization* (2000) where he illustrates how the organisational spaces of court society evolved into European nation states through temporal and geographical processes of change. Just as *civilité* became a central feature of court society because of the affective pressures individuals exerted on each other at court, so Elias argues that competitive relations between the establishment and groups of outsiders have driven the civilizing process forward, despite setbacks, within progressively larger geographical spaces.

As social space emerges out of the need for one group to be socially distinct from another, geography becomes implicit in any understanding of figuration. Social distinction is maintained through internal group bonding and established forms of etiquette played out in space; thus varying *'according to how much they regulate behaviour, and the extent regulation is expressed by the tightness of their boundaries'* (Hernes 2004, 82). Creswell's (2004) argument that the meanings of

place are historically constituted as both a site of meaning and as a tool with which the powerful can manipulate present and future action is also clearly relevant to understandings of contemporary established/ outsider relations. Within the UK, migration has become both politicised and spatialised in recent years, with the significance of national boundaries being stressed – metaphorically and literally – along with the threats of European and international migration to the identities and social cohesion of particular places. Spaces such as factories, shops, restaurants and markets are, we would argue, very much part of *place* in this sense, for it is in these spaces that established/ outsider relations between local residents and migrants – and also between migrants – are played out and negotiated in very particular ways (Nowicka 2010; Loyal 2011).

In this paper we want to suggest that figurational sociology provides a useful relational framework through which to examine the growth and geographies of socio-cultural diversity (Vertovec 2006) amongst contemporary migrant groups. In particular, it permits an examination of inter-group relations at the individual and group level, and of the distribution and social positioning of migrants across economic sectors *and* geographical locations (Nowicka 2010). By looking at the experience of migrants inside and outside the workplace, we begin to build up a picture of how these contemporary social processes (Lever et al 2014) maintain and challenge the established social order simultaneously. In addition, this case study sheds light on the relational dynamics of new forms of European migration and the wider affective consequences of increasingly diverse figurations (Vertovec 2006; Nowicka 2010). On the one hand, it highlights how the dynamics of the workplace are having a significant affective impact on the subjective positioning of migrant workers as outsiders. On the other hand, it shows how the increasing visibility of new food and cultures brought about by migrant entrepreneurship is having an affective impact on some established populations – and therefore, as we have indicated, on established/ outsider relations.

### **Migrant workers and migrant entrepreneurs in Wales: exploring the complexities of established/ outsider relations across society and space**

The empirical section of this paper utilises findings from recent research on the situations and experiences of migrants from eastern and central Europe<sup>i</sup> – the A8<sup>ii</sup> and A2<sup>iii</sup> countries – across a number of small town case studies in rural Wales and ex-industrial spaces in the south Wales valleys. We selected case studies on the basis of preliminary statistical analyses of available data sets and stakeholder interviews to identify places that had received large numbers of migrant workers from these countries during recent years. In this paper, we draw on materials from our research in Llanelli and Llanybydder in Carmarthenshire, Lampeter just across the county border in Ceredigion, and Merthyr Tydfil in the South Wales Valleys. Data were collected using mixed methods. Freedom of Information requests were initiated where necessary to access datasets on the number and characteristics of migrant workers, including those derived from the Workers' Registration Scheme (WRS) and Non National Insurance Numbers registrations (Nino). We also conducted around 50

in-depth stakeholder interviews at the local, regional and national levels, and a questionnaire survey of 109 migrant workers and migrant entrepreneurs; in-depth follow-up interviews were undertaken with a small number of migrants.

Before highlighting key findings from our research, it is useful to provide some brief details on the migratory histories of our case study places. Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion have witnessed strong population growth over recent decades, fuelled by the migration of groups moving from urban areas and more particularly towns and cities in England. This last point is an important one for these two areas still contain significant numbers of Welsh speakers, which has led to a series of high profile cultural and linguistic tensions and conflicts between established and newly arrived groups of outsiders. Indeed, the theme of identity formation and cultural re-composition in rural Wales has been the subject of academic scrutiny over the last couple of decades, with attention given to the complexities associated with the cultural assimilation of English migrants within Welsh-speaking parts of rural Wales (see Cloke and Milbourne 1992; Day 2011; Milbourne 2011). Research has also highlighted the net out-movement of young people from rural Wales, in part due to the lack of local employment opportunities and the low quality and wage levels associated with local labour markets (Milbourne 2011).

#### **Table 1 about here**

During the last ten years, rural Wales, and these two counties in particular, have seen the in-movement of large numbers of migrant workers from central and eastern European countries, which have added a further dimension to established/ outsider relations. Table 1 provides an indication of the scale of this in-movement, with the Workers Registration Scheme recording an influx of 10,140 A8 migrant workers to rural Wales between 2004 and 2011 and a further 8,500 moving to semi-rural parts of Wales. Together, rural and semi-rural areas account for 59 per cent of migration from the A8 countries across this period. Analysis of the Nino data points to a more significant movement of migrant workers to rural Wales, with almost 16,000 migrants from the A8 countries relocating to rural areas during this period. Looking at the country of origin of these migrants, the vast majority were from Poland (76 per cent) with Slovakia (seven per cent), Hungary (five per cent) and Lithuania (five per cent) accounting for the bulk of remaining migrants. The geography of this migration within rural Wales, though, has been far from even. Our two case study local authority areas of Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion attracted 49 per cent of all migrant workers moving to rural Wales, largely due to the presence of employment opportunities in the food and meat processing sectors in these areas.

#### **Map of Wales about here**

Moving to our second case study area, the south Wales valleys developed as an important coal mining area in the nineteenth century, attracting large numbers of economic migrants from other parts of Wales, the UK and further afield. At the height of the economic boom in 1913, the region employed over 230,000 people and

produced almost one third of the world's coal exports (Nicol et al 2013). Coalfield employment peaked in 1920 and between the wars around half a million people left the Valleys to look for work in the New World (Morgan 2005). Whilst migration from the New Commonwealth increased in many parts of the UK in the postwar period, the economic decline of region meant that the Valleys remained largely white. Data from the 1991 Census indicated that less than 1% of the total Valleys population were from ethnic minorities. What research exists highlights the sense of unease experienced by small groups of outsiders across the region (Scourfield et al 2002; Threadgold et al 2008).

More recently, the manufacturing and service sectors have taken over as the primary sources of employment, with growth of these sectors particularly strong in the southern areas. The food processing industry has also become an important sector in particular parts of the Valleys, and it appears to be the presence of the sector that has attracted A8 migrant workers to the region. Between 2004 and 2011, WRS data indicate that 4,080 such migrants moved to the Valleys, while Nino statistics point to in-migration of 6,920. As with rural Wales, Polish workers dominate, accounting for more than 80 per cent of all arrivals. It is also the case that migration has been geographically uneven, with two of the seven local authority areas – Merthyr and Bridgend attracting 59 per cent of all migrant workers from A8 countries.

#### Contemporary established/ outsider relations within the workplace

It is widely acknowledged that economic power structures established/ outsider relations in the workplace across all employment sectors (see Ruhs and Anderson 2010; Loyal 2011). The food and meat-processing sector in Wales is a case in point and it has been argued that working conditions and employment practices in this sector maintain the position of migrant works as outsiders in very specific ways (Lever and Milbourne 2014). Although we did not focus solely on migrants in the meat-processing sector, jobs in food and meat-processing factories dominated migrant employment across our case study localities. Indeed, in Merthyr Tydfil and Llanelli, around 80 per cent of survey respondents were employed in local meat processing factories. In the following sections we examine a number of issues that structure and maintain the position of migrants as outsiders within the occupational spaces of the factory, and then explore the wider affective impacts of these processes.

#### *Agencies and zero hours contracts*

After EU enlargement in 2004, large numbers of migrants were recruited by agencies to work in food and meat factories across Wales, with some factories using recruitment agencies to source staff directly from Poland. Agencies are still recruiting in some places and in Llanelli they use zero hour contracts to provide migrants to local factories on a day-by-day basis. This situation creates a strong sense of insecurity that enhances the position of migrants as outsiders (Lever and Milbourne 2014). One of our migrant respondents explained how this situation operates, suggesting that migrants rarely know what work they will have on a day-to-day basis:

*“They would say we want 50 today, 40 tomorrow, 70 the next day and the agency will have to supply them, that’s why these people will never know from day to day whether they’re working or not. They have to be on standby with their mobile phones. They don’t dare to switch it off, even on their day off because they don’t know when the agency may call.”*

The use of such contracts for temporary *and* for permanent employees with no fixed working hours has now moved away from its initial use by agencies to become a more central aspect of employment practice (Watt 2014). In many places migrants are employed on what are commonly referred to as unlimited or open-ended contracts – another name for zero hours arrangements. This practice creates particular forms of working conditions. When factories are working at full capacity, prior to Christmas for example, migrants are required to work shifts of 12 hours for weeks at a time or risk losing their jobs. At other times, when orders are scarce, they are sent home with no pay and no knowledge of when they will work again. As one Polish worker in Merthyr commented:

*“If the factories have got a lot of orders they ask us to work 7 days a week without any days off and we just have to go to work... But when the factory didn’t have enough orders we need to stay at home even 7 days a week.”*

A similar situation was evident in Llanelli. While half of those surveyed were still employed by an agency, some migrants employed directly by factories noted that they had to work more than 50-hour weeks and 12-hour shifts at short notice during the busy summer barbeque season.

In the rural towns of Llanybydder and Lampeter, all the migrant workers surveyed were based in the same meat-processing sector in Llanybydder, which in early 2013 had a Polish workforce of 308 out of 577 employees. All worked directly for an employer and most described themselves as having permanent contracts. As in Merthyr, the number of hours they worked varied greatly, from 20 to 60 or more hours a week.

The move away from agency work towards ‘permanent’ employment was described by one interviewee as a ‘positive trend’, both for migrant workers and employers. However, the use of these super-flexible arrangements allows companies to legally end migrant employment at the time of their choosing, thus giving them great flexibility at the expense of employment security. Some local stakeholders saw the increase in direct employment as a response to the specific qualities of Polish workers:

*“I have personal knowledge of their workforce; they would positively employ Polish people. The agency workers are now their permanent workers. They are the best workers and there is no doubt about that.”*



It was claimed that Polish workers were valued for a strong work ethic, yet this self-promoted disposition (Nowicka 2010) often operates as a form of entrapment, normalizing a culture of long working hours and intensive working conditions (Cook et al 2011; Lever and Milbourne 2014).

### *Divide and rule*

The complexities of factory life come into sharp focus if we examine the interaction of migrant workers from different countries in the town of Merthyr Tydfil. Until recently, the Portuguese were the established migrant worker community in Merthyr's factories, accounting for 10 per cent of workers at the major meat-processing factory in 2005. By 2008, the factory's workforce of 1016 included 448 workers from Poland and 121 from Portugal (MTCBC, 2008; Tannock 2013). Tensions between the two groups were evident within our interviews and survey responses, with these largely linked to factory-based practices of segregation by nationality on production lines being used to maintain competitive cycles. As a local stakeholder commented:

*'So you'll have three lines of Polish workers and a Polish supervisor, two lines of Portuguese workers with a Portuguese supervisor, so there's no need to communicate with each other.'*

These segregated working practices appear to be based on a policy of divide and rule, whereby any gains each group could potentially obtain collectively are undermined by enforced intra-group competition. This compartmentalized existence (de Swaan 2001) in the occupational spaces of the factory creates many problems for migrant workers; it also acts to structure and maintain their position as outsiders in very particular ways (Lever and Milbourne 2014).

As migrant workers struggle to hold onto their place in the hierarchy of factory labour, Polish and Portuguese workers in Merthyr often undermine their own position by pushing themselves to physical and mental excess. A similar process is evident in rural Wales, where stakeholders suggested that factory owners have fought hard to keep trade unions out of the workplace. As in Merthyr, Polish and Portuguese workers have been pitted against each other to reduce costs and keep control of the workforce. One aspect of the temporal process by which Portuguese workers became established across the region was union membership, yet this proved to be their undoing. As their power in the workplace increased, the response of the factory owners was to replace them with non-unionised Polish workers.

Language and communication problems are common in many factories and some migrants noted being verbally abused by both migrant and local co-workers. Not surprisingly, as they struggle to maintain their employment prospects under difficult economic conditions, tensions often rise *within* migrant worker populations. Established/ outsider relations can be particularly complex in and around meat-processing factories between local and migrant workers, between different migrant

groups and within particular migrant groups. A Portuguese migrant discussed the latter in relation to new workers from Portugal coming into contact with established Portuguese workers in Merthyr, suggesting that: *'Portuguese people, instead of helping and making it easier for the new ones, they feel like we are trying to steal their jobs so they just make everything more difficult.'*

### *Contradictory discourses*

The realities of contemporary factory life mean that many migrant workers are as economically marginalized as many other low-income workers in Wales, yet these similarities are largely obscured by a number of contradictory discourses. *Inside* the occupational spaces of the factory, migrants are often viewed as 'good workers' *vis-à-vis* the locally available workforce. The prevailing discourse of migrants as 'good workers' and locals as 'bad workers' in turn enhances the perception *outside* the workplace that migrants are job takers and benefit cheats (Cook et al 2011). Tannock (2013) argues that by promoting and accepting such discourses, coalitions of employers, state agencies and civil society organisations reframe labour market conflict as a matter of local worker deficit and poor labour supply rather than poor job quality. Arguably, this in turn obscures the reality of meat processing work, which is effectively hidden from view by established/ outsider relations that draw a veil over unacceptable employment practices and poor working conditions. This in turn helps to condition what members of society should and should not see, "*since it is a paradox, a scandal, to see what ought not to be there*" (Turner 1999, 237). What most members of society do not observe in this instance is how the regular supply of cheap meat supermarkets demand and consumers expect is heavily reliant on migrant labour (Lever and Milbourne 2014).

As the foregoing discussion demonstrates, social relations in the occupational spaces of meat processing factories reinforce the position of migrants as outsiders in very particular ways. The affective impact of the factory experience is profound and many migrants appear to accept this situation with a sense of resignation (Elias and Scotson 1965; May 2004). Educated migrants work in jobs for which they are greatly over qualified and many do not even look for employment that matches their skills. A small number of migrants find this situation problematic, but for many others having a job is just as important as having a job for which they are qualified. As one of our survey respondents commented: *'[F]or me what is important is just to have a job, doesn't matter what kind of field.'*

As they struggle to maintain their position in the hierarchy of factory labour and overcome established spatial constraints (Bancroft 2001) migrants have little time to mix and socialize with established residents. The Catholic priest in Merthyr stressed this point when asked about Church attendance: *'They work over the weekends, they work anti-social hours, they work at night time, which means they can't come to anything or won't come to anything and they won't mix.'* A Polish worker confirmed the nature of this liminal existence, stating that: *'[I]n the factory we work a lot of hours... so you don't have a lot of time to do much more. If I start at 7 then I finish at*

*12 and then I start at 5 o'clock the next day.*" It is in this context that a small number of migrant workers look to entrepreneurship as a way of escaping factory life. It is to this type of work that we now turn.

### Contemporary established/ outsider relations beyond the workplace

The insecurity of factory life creates a constant state of uncertainty for migrants *outside* the workplace. It is usually difficult for migrants working in the meat-processing sector to move up the occupational hierarchy and so entrepreneurship has come to be viewed as a particularly attractive option (Knight et al 2014). Migrants do not simply arrive in a new country with their labour; the symbolic and material practices that they engage in can have significant impacts in host countries (Nowicka 2010). It is our argument that entrepreneurship amongst migrant workers is having an impact on the affective experiences of established populations and reshaping established/ outsider relations across society and space.

### *Migrant entrepreneurship in rural Wales*

The entrepreneurial activities of new EU migrants are evident across all our cases studies to a lesser or greater extent. A number of rural towns in Wales now have a *Polski Sklep* or shops that stock Polish food. In Llanybydder in Carmarthenshire, for example, the most prominent migrant-run business is the local Polish delicatessen. Established with money from family members in Poland, the shop was opened in 2007 by a migrant who had been working at the local meat-processing factory. This entrepreneur had never been in the retail business previously and initially saw the new venture as a way earning more money: *"I was working for someone else as well, not only in the [meat processing plant]... I wanted more money."* Language was a crucial factor in this migrant's 'trajectory' (Nowicka 2013; Knight et al 2014) and learning English soon after arriving in Wales allowed her to study for a degree and then move into business. This entrepreneur has since opened a second Polish food shop in Aberystwyth, but she continues working part-time in the meat-processing factory because of the economic stability it provides. A lack of similar migrant businesses in Llanybydder meant that the first shop initially attracted Polish and other A8 migrant workers from across Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion. However, the shop has been part of a number of visible changes in the town that are linked to the growing Polish population, including an increased range of Polish products in the local supermarket. While it appears that fewer local people use the shop in Llanybydder than in Aberystwyth, the entrepreneur has become a prominent figure in the town because of the important community space the shop provides for the Polish community.

Research in Llanelli revealed a thriving Polish community (see also Thompson et al 2010). As well as contributions to the local economy as employees and consumers, Poles have been running their own businesses in the town for several years. At the time of our study, survey respondents noted two well used Polish food shops/ cafés and numerous other migrant businesses. The recession had a big impact on Llanelli

and local stakeholders suggested that Polish migrants have made a significant contribution to the town's economic sustainability during recent years. Discussing the presence of Poles in the local market, one stakeholder drew attention to the wider affective impact of these developments:

*'I would have thought that if what's happened to our town centre had happened without Polish people here, it would be bloody worse... I went out there Thursday in the markets and I heard mainly Polish being spoken.'*

These market spaces in Llanelli are also significant for the Polish community across a wider area, providing a focal point for interaction with Poles living across rural parts of Carmarthenshire.

### *Migrant entrepreneurship in the south Wales valleys*

Across all our case studies, the impact of migrant entrepreneurship was most evident in Merthyr Tydfil in the Valleys. The underlying tension and competition between Poles and Portuguese migrants was again evident, with intra-group rivalry driving entrepreneurial activity. Local stakeholders suggested that the rapid expansion of migrant entrepreneurship in the town was the logical outcome of an increased demand for products by migrant workers from their home countries. However, the motivations and trajectories of migrant entrepreneurs tended to be more diverse. Language was once again a key factor here, with the development of English language skills providing the foundation on which to move into business. Most migrants were also motivated by the low quality of their previous work in local meat-processing factories. As one ex-factory worker stated:

*"It's a crap job, everyone knows it. No one wants to... do it so they need to bring someone from outside to do the job, so that's what we come to do... We haven't come to steal jobs from anyone, we just come to do jobs that no one else wants to do, and the thing is for us it's not the job that we want to do as well."*

In order to go into business, most migrant entrepreneurs had worked long hours in two or three jobs, sometimes for seven days a week over many months in order to save the money required to go into business. In the absence of local support and funding, some had also sought investment from family members in their home countries.

After EU expansion in 2004, the rapid growth in the migrant population provided Merthyr's nascent migrant entrepreneurs with many opportunities. Initially most focused on the 'ethnic economy' (Knight 2014) and targeted local Portuguese and Polish communities. More recently, migrant businesses have started to attract a new clientele from amongst the local population through niche markets that attract new customers (Kloosterman and Rath 2003). Throughout this period, a wide range of Polish and Portuguese businesses have emerged in and around the centre of Merthyr.

These include but are not limited to a migrant-run pub, a restaurant, numerous shops and delicatessen stores, a hairdressing salon, an off-license, a coffee shop, and a Polish radio station; there are also an increasing number of migrant-organised cultural events in the town. Competition for the Polish pound is particularly strong and some Polish shop owners noted the strong rivalry with other migrant businesses as well as with the major supermarkets; regular changes to their product range are required to meet the needs of their customers and remain in business.<sup>iv</sup>

The willingness of members of the established community to buy new products from migrant shops has been a significant factor in the expansion of migrant entrepreneurship. As one migrant commented:

*‘That’s why I like it, the locals are interested in what we sell and the national foods. Most of them try different things on holidays so they are not scared of trying something new.’*

The emergence of these new community spaces has in turn had a significant impact on the experiences of the established population and it is now widely acknowledged that migrants have made a strong contribution to the cultural life of Merthyr. In the words of a local stakeholder:

*‘They... have little café areas in the back of the shop where they’ve got their own little community as well, and they are really friendly towards whoever goes in there.’*

These broader cultural impacts, generated through the consumption of food were mentioned by a number of stakeholder interviewees. One commented that *‘I don’t know how to explain it, it’s influenced the local culture so people are able to taste new foods, they’re able to have new dining experiences’*. Another claimed that the arrival of Polish food shops and eating establishments had broadened people’s cultural mind sets:

*“It’s more multicultural if you like which for somewhere like Merthyr Tydfil is quite unusual because the Valleys’ mind-set is the norm you know so I think people are excited to see changes you know in the foods they can taste and the dining experiences they can have.”*

All of this chimes with Anderson’s (2012) account of the ways in different cultural groups come together briefly within specific urban venues – eateries, markets and shopping malls, for instance – without conflict or disagreement to perform, reinforce and negotiate individual and group identities. In these community spaces, he notes, when individuals from diverse groups are *‘civil and friendly, they may simply coexist. On occasion, however, they may interact, learning something surprising about others they had not known before’* (2012, 70).

Walking around Merthyr's retail centre, one is immediately struck by the boundaries between the 'old' and the 'new' town. The former is defined by the contradictory migration discourses that revolve around local factories, the latter by a dynamic entrepreneurial culture initiated by disaffected migrant workers. One thing is certain: Merthyr is very much a transitional zone, as the following quotation from a migrant factory worker turned entrepreneur illustrates:

*“Merthyr is changing because we make a change... Merthyr was so used to their own customs, you know whatever was happening it was always the same. No one comes with new inputs or new ideas because they were afraid – not afraid of the people... afraid that it... [wouldn't]...work.”*

## **Conclusion**

The work of Elias (2000) highlights the multiple social processes that coexist within particular points in time and space. In this paper we have focussed on a limited number of processes in the two major trajectories of social change identified by Elias – those maintaining the social order and those challenging and reshaping it. It is clear from the research materials that we have presented that migrant workers can be positioned as outsiders in one context and established in another (Loyal 2011); that is, they can be disadvantaged labour migrants and successful European citizens simultaneously (Ciupijus 2011).

Within the occupational spaces of meat-processing factories, spatial constraints impact on the migrant worker experience and reinforce their position as outsiders in particular ways. In places across Wales, migrants are locked into employment practices that are not only socially and spatially segregated, but reinforce their marginalized economic positions and the uneven power relations between themselves, factory owners and managers, and some groups within the established population. Their presence also remains hidden within broader discursive constructions of the UK food system that tend to place more emphasis on the welfare of animals than of the workers involved in their killing and the processing of their meat. It is in these spaces that migrants gain their first experience of life in Wales and the wider affective discourses that position them as outsiders (Lever and Milbourne 2014).

Migrant experiences do not remain static in time and space. As migrants spend more time in their host country, so the relations with established groups begin to change. As we have seen, outside the confines of the factory space, some migrants have started to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Harris et al 2014) and symbolic practices that allow them to change the aesthetic and affective experiences not only of themselves but of elements of the established population. The focus on performativity and the competitive element of power in the *'strategic projection of symbolically constituted identity'* (van Krieken 2012, 16) is an important and largely overlooked aspect of Elias's (2000; 2005) account of intergroup relations. It is clearly relevant in this context as a means of understanding the changing balance of power

between incoming migrant and established groups. We can see such complex relational processes at play in community spaces such as shop, café, restaurant and market, where power relations between migrants and established groups are changing to bring about more stable and differentiated patterns of civilized conduct. It is in these spaces that social distinction is maintained through internal group bonding and established forms of etiquette and where, at the same time, migrant culture has a wider affective impact. As Elias (2000, 322) argues, complex societies are always characterised by ambivalent social relations within which individual action and intentions are both '*adjusted to and contrary to each other*', and it is this latent ambivalence that he claims molds civilized conduct and drives forward the civilizing process (Lever 2011). The great strength of figurational sociology, we suggest, is that it allows us to understand both the relational interweaving of these complex human processes and something of their structure (Goudsblom 1977, 149).

In rural places, the critical mass needed to bring about widespread change is largely absent and entrepreneurship is often limited to isolated migrant businesses, such as Polish food shops. Nevertheless, it is clear that migrants are starting to redefine the composition of place in rural Wales, largely by showcasing aspects of their culture through the consumption of food and by introducing new senses of cultural diversity into places lacking histories of multi-culturalism. Indeed, findings from our research reinforce those from others in destabilising the distinction between the socio-cultural diversity of the city and the mono-cultural nature of rural living, and further developing the notion of global cultures within rural places (see Woods 2007; de Lima 2011). The same can be said of the post-industrial towns the south Wales valleys, which were described by some of our research participants as tightly bounded cultural spaces. In the town of Merthyr Tydfil at least, it is clear that the increasing visibility of migrant food and culture is beginning to change the aesthetic and affective experiences (Nowicka 2010) of local populations and significantly reshape outsider/established relations between and within host and migrant communities.

The increased number of coordinated positions within the migrant figuration across Wales has implications for broader processes of socio-spatial change. In many places, Welsh culture is now interspersed with elements of Polish and other European cultures as well as English on a regular basis, with Polish now the third most spoken language. As this group of migrants becomes more established in Wales and larger numbers free themselves from the economic, social and spatial constraints of factory life, other migrant groups will no doubt emerge to fill this void and perpetuate the working practices associated with the conventional food production system. However, while we recognize that political integration has become a highly contested process at the European level, it is clear that, in some places at least, cultural integration continues to move forward apace (Delmotte 2012), creating new forms of cultural identity and cohesion in the micro spaces of the shop, café restaurant and local market.

Clearly, the kinds of established/ outsider relations explored in this paper will always be in a state of flux; they will also be place-dependent, reflecting the different socio-cultural, political and economic structures bound up with different places. As such, there remains a need to develop more sophisticated understandings of the shifting positions of migrant workers across both time and space. For us, this will involve revisiting our case studies to explore shifting relations in these places from the perspectives of migrant workers' changing positions in the labour market and their impacts on place. Other researchers may wish to explore some of the ideas about established/ outsider relations developed in this paper within the context of other migrant groups and other places.

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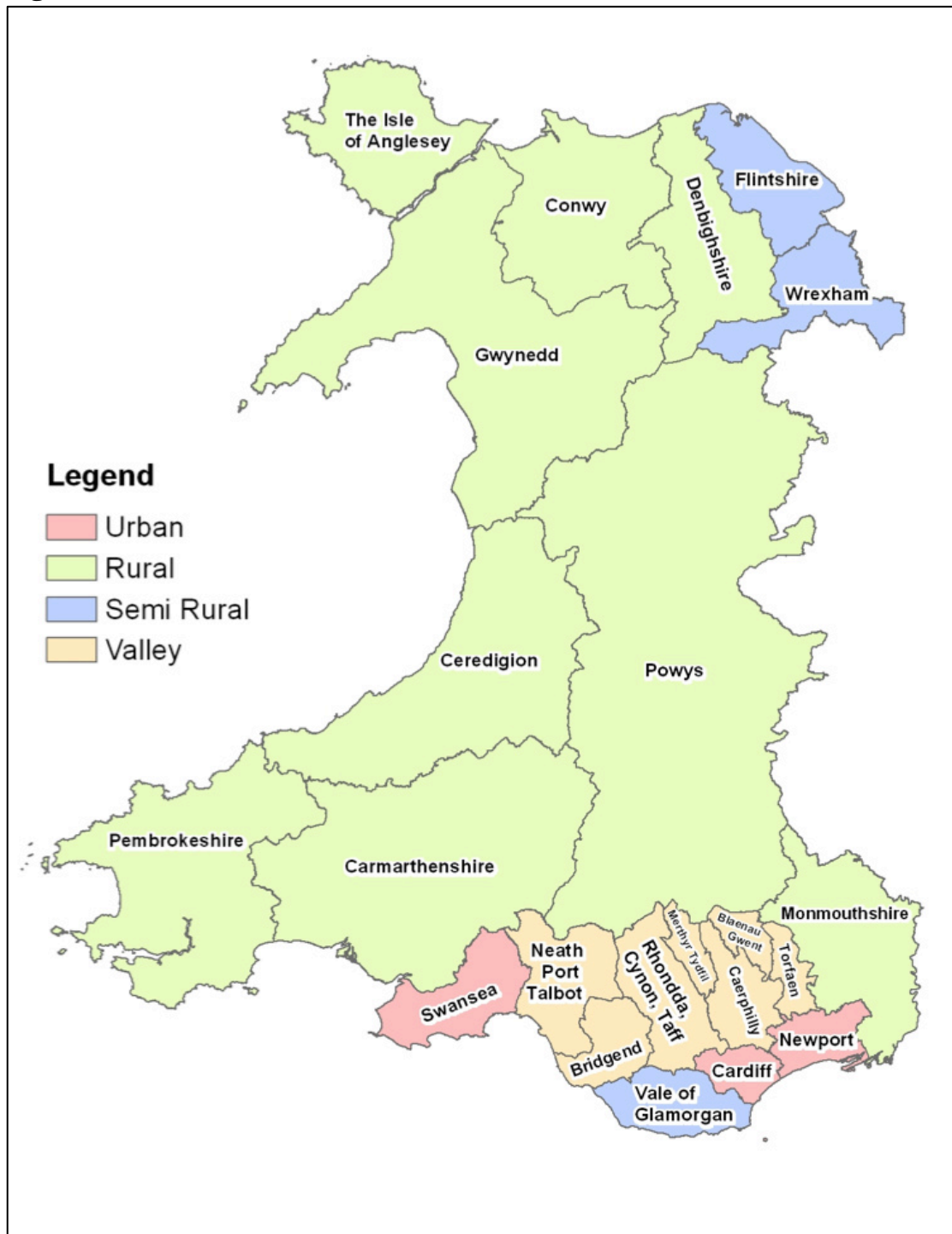


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Figure 1



**Table 1: Cumulative WRS and A8 NINo registrations Wales 2004–2011**

	<b>WRS</b>		<b>NINO</b>	
<b>Rural</b>	10,140	32%	15,970	34%
<b>Semi-rural</b>	8,500	27%	8,440	18%
<b>Valleys</b>	4,080	13%	6,920	15%
<b>Urban</b>	8,690	28%	15,260	33%
<b>Wales</b>	31,410	100%	46,590	100%

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and they do not represent the views of Welsh Government who funded the research on which the paper draws.

<sup>ii</sup> The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia joined the EU in 2004.

<sup>iii</sup> Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007.

<sup>iv</sup> It should be noted that this is a dynamic local business environment and that new migrant businesses open and old ones close regularly.