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Downward Professional Mobility among Poles Working and Living in Norway

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This article explores the diverse trajectories of downward professional mobility as experienced by skilled Polish migrants living in Norway. On the basis of 30 in-depth qualitative interviews with Poles who have worked below their level of competence after migrating to Norway, I outline (1) how they tend to channel themselves into low-skilled employment at the initial stages of migration as they commonly assume it is inevitable when migrating, and (2) how they interpret and respond to remaining in low-skilled jobs after settling in Norway, often explaining it as a result of racialising and discriminatory practices against them. By bridging concepts of habitus and field with hierarchies of desirability of national migrant groups, I propose a notion of a 'transnational field of national hierarchies'. I argue that the downward professional mobility is both an individual and collective social practice guided by what I call 'the national component of the habitus' and embedded in the transnational field, where different national identities are hierarchically positioned.

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