A NEW DIMENSION TO THE MULTICULTURAL DEBATE: DECISION MAKING AND SETTLEMENT OF POLISH MIGRANTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the recent influx of Polish migration into the Netherlands, as it seeks to analyze the lived experiences of migrants in the post-enlargement era. By doing so, it will provide a more in-depth understanding of decision making processes and settlement strategies as employed by recent migrants. The analysis is based on 13 interviews with Polish migrants who have been residing in the Netherlands for at least five years. From the analysis it follows that the migrant's personal interests, preferences and current evaluation of future opportunities are of crucial importance with regards to settlement. In addition, local language, the polish community and the migrant's social position appear to play an important role regarding settlement in the Dutch context. Lastly, it is concluded migrants are constantly reconsidering and adapting their current decisions and future plans, where the myth of return and the quest for normalcy are indispensable in terms of decision making.

Keywords: Intra-EU migration, Polish migration, settlement strategy, decision making.

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Introduction

Since the admission of Poland to the European Union, the number of Polish migrants in the Netherlands has increased rapidly. As of 2007, the influx of Polish migrants is significantly bigger than the four traditional immigrant groups. After the admission of thirteen new member states in less than ten years, a great deal has been written on intra-EU migration; in terms of the development of migrant flows from East to West, the economic character as well as its presumed temporariness. This is also true for the Netherlands, where Polish migrants received quite a lot attention, both in the scholarly and public debate.

Yet, with more than a decade of 'new' Polish migration to the Netherlands, it is now time to move away from the 'why and how' aspect of the initiation of migration, and shift focus towards the long term effects and strategies regarding the migration trajectory. Regardless of the question whether these migrants will stay in the Netherlands permanently, it is important to consider the decision making process regarding prolonged settlement, as well to analyze settlement strategies and obstacles as encountered in the Netherland. Additionally, focusing on experiences after arrival, will contribute towards a more in-depth understanding of the migration process as a whole.

Accordingly, the background of this research project is based on the emergence of intra-EU migration, focusing on migration from Poland specifically. Migration from Poland has been highly debated, both for its impact on the host countries as for the consequences regarding Poland self. In any case, it cannot be denied that Poland is among the member states with the highest number of citizens living elsewhere in the EU. At the same time, the Netherlands has welcomed temporary guest workers in the previous century, after which some migrants returned , and others decided to settle in the Netherlands. In this vein, it is worthwhile to analyze this new migrant group in the Netherlands, moving away from the

institutional approach, and placing the lived experiences of Polish migrants residing in the Netherlands at the focus of the research. By doing so, the research project aims to offer better understandings of whether and how this new immigrant group is participating in Dutch society, identifying the most important signifiers of and obstacles to settlement and participation.

In order to do so, I seek to answer the following research question:

Why do recent Polish migrants decide to remain in the Netherlands; what strategies do they apply, and which obstacles do they possibly encounter?

When mentioning the decision to 'remain' (or: stay), this does not refer to permanent residence per definition, but this can be understood in various ways. In this thesis, the decision to stay denotes the expressed intention to stay longer; which can range from five more years to intended permanent settlement. Thus, this thesis focuses not so much on the decision to migrate, but rather the case of prolonged residence, and how or why this occurred.

The thesis is built up of three main parts: theory, context and analysis. The first chapter discusses theories of international migration, starting from a very general approach towards specific theories applicable to this research project. In the following chapter, theories regarding the emergence of intra-EU migration are being considered: ranging from the impact of open borders, a new conceptualization of migration towards the actual mobility and settlement within the EU. The third chapter focuses on integration and settlement within the EU: first, decision making and the migrant's quest for normalcy are being discussed, then possible obstacles to settlement and integration are being discussed.

In the second part, the research will be contextualized, discussing Poland as a sending society, and the Netherlands as a host country. Chapter four will focus on migration from Poland, the history and the current factors which are indispensable to the current outmigration. Chapter five expands on the immigration history of the Netherlands, and

discusses demographics regarding the current influx, followed by an account of country-specific strategies towards the new migration flows.

The third part is dedicated to my empirical research. First, the methodology will be discussed: research method, data collection and respondents. This is followed by an analysis of the most important themes: settlement decisions, language, polish community, and the social position. By bringing theory and empirical data together, this will result in a more developed understanding of migrant settlement in the Netherlands, both in terms of obstacles and facilitating factors.

The relevance of the project is highlighted by bringing two fields together, the relative novelty of EU-migration, combined with settlement in a border free context. In this vein, the thesis seeks to provide insights in how Polish immigrants settle in the Netherlands, how they relate to Dutch society and how this will influence their socio-economic position in the long-term. At the same time, it will contribute to a better understanding of the process of intra-EU migration as a whole.

1. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

To gain a better understanding of intra-EU migrant flows, and Polish-Dutch migration, first the general theories of international migration will be considered. This will be followed by a more detailed account of labor migration, continuing migration flows and migration and social capital.

1.1 General overview of international migration

Before going into detail about specific accounts regarding European migration and labor migration, I will briefly discuss the most influential theories within the field of international migration. First, neoclassical economics asserts that migration is solely triggered by wage differences and employment rates within different countries. Migration is approached from a micro-perspective, where variation in human capital, individual characteristics, social conditions offer different opportunities for individuals in the same destination (Todaro 1969; Borjas 1989; Massey Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino & Taylor, 1993). New economics of migration holds that migrants do not act on behalf of individual interests, but that they are influenced by the interests of a larger collectivity, such as a family or household (Stark, 1991). While former theories generally approach migration from the rational theory perspective, world system theory links migration to capitalism and its impact on the global market, and classify migration flows as a reflection of the economic and political dynamics found across the world (Wallerstein 1974; Massey et al., 1993).

1.2 Labor migration

Taking into consideration the demand for labor, the dual market theory postulates that migration is predominantly triggered by permanent labor demands, which are inherent to western, industrialized societies (Piore, 1979). Thus, this theory moves away from individual interests, and seeks to explain the pull factors (Lee, 1966) for migrants as a collective group.

In this vein, Massey et al. (1993) identify the following pull factors in terms of labor migration: structural inflation, economic dualism (i.e. the high/low skilled job distinction) and lastly variability in motivation among workers (native/migrant). Thus, Western employees are looking for low-skilled worker who will accept low(er) wages and unstable working conditions, which is commonly embodied by the labor migrant (Massey et al., 1993). Furthermore, even as this type of labor import is often labeled temporary, it is crucial to acknowledge that this demand for labor is an enduring character of western society (low-skilled, temporary workers are crucial characteristic of modern, developed society): "There is nothing as permanent as a temporary migrant" (Hugo, 2013, p. 3).

Castles (2006) discussed different approaches towards labor migrant in Europe, and found that those vary over time. In the early 2000s, governments slowly started to acknowledge that the import of labor is inherent to their economies, and that migrant workers would be crucial for the national workforce. The increased support for labor migration is two-fold, both economic and demographic interests play a role here. Furthermore, he points out that through technological advancement in terms of transport and communication, migrants are more likely to undertake a temporary move, even subsequently, in the form of circular migration.

In sum, Castles (2006) draws a rather pessimistic image in terms of long-term consequences of labor migration both the sending and receiving societies. The labor migrants (undocumented or legal) themselves face risk of exploitation and denial of basic human rights, as well as discrimination and social exclusion. The host country won't be able to control (unplanned) settlement of labor migrants, and this – combined with previously mentioned levels of exclusion and discrimination – will enhance polarization and social conflict. Regarding the sending country, Castles postulates that the benefits of possible remittances will be overshadowed by political and social tensions, due to power and

demographic imbalances. In this thesis, the migrant (both labor and non-labor) will be the main focus of attention.

1.3 Continuation of migration flows

Next to the factors that initiate international migration, it is crucial to consider the conditions that ensure the perpetuation of this movement – which might develop into independent triggers for migration. Hence, through the pre-existence of a migration flow, migration can become self-perpetuating, (Massey et al., 1993). One explanation for this is the development of migrant networks, which are generally described as the connections between the sending and the destination country, through migrant's friendship or kinship for example. Those interpersonal ties will which facilitate the exchange of necessary resources such as information, money, influence and aid, and in this way networks function to decrease the costs and risks of the migration journey, and increases the gains for the sending society (Poros, 2011; Massey et al. 1993). Massey et al. (1993) describe it as "a form of social capital […] to gain access to foreign employment" (p.448). Poros (2011) adds that migrant networks can function to provide access to housing, education and health care as well, and in this vein she postulates that migrant networks (or: social ties) instrumental perpetuate migration.

The institutional theory emphasizes the impact of private institutions and voluntary organizations, which arise due to high demand for services regarding the facilitation of migration. Massey et al. (1993) refer mostly to the development of an underground market, but in case of intra-European migrants, it is more relevant to consider the impact of recruitment agencies (Jones, 2014). Lastly, the cumulative causation theory holds that each migration journey will change the social context in such way that it will increase the probability of a subsequent move. So far, scholars have found evidence for six socio-economic factors: distribution of income, distribution of land, organization of agriculture, culture of migration, regional distribution and social labeling (Massey et al., 1993).

1.4 Social Capital & Migration

Bourdieu (1983) identifies and discusses different notions of cultural and social capital. He understands capital as ‘accumulated labor’, which provides the agents of capital with ‘social energy’. Depending on the field where it is accumulated, Bourdieu (1983) distinguishes between economic, cultural and social capital. Economic capital comes in forms of money and property rights, cultural capital is embodied by educational qualifications and social capital refers to non-tangible yet essential social connections and obligations. It is crucial to acknowledge – next to the focus on economic capital – the importance and usefulness of cultural and social capital. Those should not be understood as three separate concepts, instead Bourdieu (1983) emphasizes how different types of capital influence and amplify their output. Additionally, he points out that cultural capital appears in different states; embodied, objectified and institutionalized.

With regards to social capital, the keyword is ‘collectivity’, referring to the network of connections the individual can rely on. However, those networks are not given, but the result of ongoing investments in social relationships, established through individual and collective effort. It will lead to the recognition of the mutual obligations or solidarity within the network, as well as establishing the boundaries of the network (Bourdieu, 1983). This account is crucial for understanding the notion of social and cultural capital in the context of migration, as well as its importance as a 'tool' for migration, settlement and integration. In my thesis, I will build upon these concepts for understanding migration and settlement in its current context.

Along the same lines, Putnam (2000) signposts and describes the decline of social capital and civic engagement within American society, using the example of declining number of teams in bowling competitions. Putnam asserts that social capital is crucial for both society and individuals, as it has a positive effect on productivity while also maintaining norms of reciprocity. In sum, he states that the presence of social capital is inherent for well-

functioning social institutions and the quality of public life.

Putnam (2000) defines social capital as follows: “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 19). Thus, not only the actual connections are important, but the concepts of mutual trust and reciprocity that follow from those connections is what makes social capital valuable. Reciprocity contributes to a more efficient society while mutual trust is deemed crucial for facilitating social life; taken altogether social networks can induce action for mutual benefit. However, social capital can exist in various form, and its positive impact should not be taken for granted. One should be cautious for possible negative results – sectarianism, ethnocentrism, corruption – and aim for maximizing the positive output – mutual support, cooperation, trust, effectiveness – of social capital.

Additionally, Putnam emphasizes the importance of differentiating between ‘bridging’ and ‘bonding’ dimension of social capital. Bridging networks are rather inclusive, connecting across social classes and other cleavages which makes them useful for exchange of information and widening one’s identity (and reciprocity). Bonding networks tend to be more exclusive and homogeneous, where the connections facilitate feelings of solidarity, loyalty and reciprocity. However the difference between the different types of social networks is crucial, this doesn’t mean that this categorization is mutually exclusive. Indeed, one can be involved in bonding and bridging networks simultaneously (Putnam, 2000; Putnam, 1995). When linking this concept to migration studies, migrant scholars emphasize the crucial importance of cultural capital with regards to inclusion and social integration. In general, Portes (1998) identified three main purposes of social capital: providing social control, parental and kin support and benefits through extra familiar networks. Yet, as most previous accounts on social capital emphasized its beneficial functions, Portes introduces a new approach which incorporates the negative outcomes of social capital as well, and emphasizes

the following four consequences: restricted individual freedom, excessive group pressure, diminishing norms and exclusion of outsiders. The restricted individual freedom and perceived group pressure when belonging to a tight network are partially explained by the strong emphasis on conformity. In this thesis, it is expected that next to the beneficial outcomes of social capital, the negative consequences will affect migrants as well. Additionally, it is underlined that next to its different functions, social capital will serve differently to different people. Belonging to a similar network can be beneficial for one, and suffocating for the other: "sociability cuts both ways" (Portes, 1998, p. 18).

In addition, social capital is regarded indispensable for understanding migrant's individual interactions (Schneider & Crul, 2012). However, Erel (2010) criticizes the mainstream 'rucksack approach', where it is generally assumed that the capital that migrants bring along is a static concept, which will either fit or not within the new environment. Erel on the other hand points out that migrants do have agency in terms of mobilizing, enacting and validating capital. He illustrates this by referring to mechanism that migrants introduce in order to make their capital fit in and worthy (e.g . invest time and energy to learn to local language). Additionally, he emphasizes that migrant groups as such do not provide homogeneous forms of cultural capital. Instead the individual characteristics and personal preferences are considered of indispensable importance for predicting the value of the migrant's cultural capital.

This is endorsed by Noble (2013), who employs Bourdieu's notions of 'field' and 'habitus' in order to analyze the transformation and adaption of the immigrant's 'embodied capacities'. Furthermore, Eve (2012) argues that social networks are not solely formed through identity, cultural similarity or exclusion. Instead, the impact of the act of migration and the agency of the migrant itself are being emphasized. By embarking on relocating, the migrant's social network is inevitably reorganized, and different connections might gain

different importance. Thus in order to understand the actual nature and meaning of a migrant's capital, one should take into consideration personal, individual and contextual characteristics as well.

2. THE RISE OF EUROPEAN LIQUID MIGRATION AFTER ENLARGEMENT

This section focuses on intra-EU migration specifically. The novelty and change will be discussed, as well as new concepts which arose as the result of new migrant flows. Lastly, EU-mobility will be linked to settlement.

2.1 Free movement within the EU

After the 2004 enlargement, one can signal a huge increase in EU-mobility, especially from the so-called East to the West. However, when taken into consideration the economic differences, the actual mobility figure is lower than one would expect (Engbersen, Okólski, Black, & Panţîru, 2010). Hadler (2006) sought to explain why individual mobility within member states is still relatively low, despite the open borders within the European Union. He investigated push and pull factors with regards to the intention to migrate, and found that those play a more significant role within a country than between countries. Yet, the explanatory level on macro-level analysis is rather low, which is why Hadler (2006) stresses the importance of individual characteristics. More research on the impact of individual characteristics should be done in order to be able to predict migration movements. Additionally, he points out that mobility within the EU has remained rather low, regardless of income differences across member states. Thus, in order to explain and predict migration flows, one should move beyond economic macro-level theory, and incorporate various perspectives.

Recchi (2008) approves the notion that migration within the EU cannot be explained by economic differences and financial incentives only. He illustrates his claim by analyzing

the effectiveness of various arguments in favor of free movement within the EU (i.e. employment insurance, productivity enhancer, innovation trigger), which taken together are assumed to function as a "EU legitimation tool" (p. 213). Hence, he did not find evidence for those anticipated effects, and points out that other factors – such as limited language skills – might function as an important barrier to mobility, regardless of the reduced costs and removal of border restrictions. In sum, this notion legitimizes the focus on the individual migrant and experience specifically, moving beyond former economic assumptions.

2.1. Conceptualization regarding the 'new' migration

With the defeasance of border restrictions within the EU, a new type of migration developed, which is more accessible and open-ended than before. Galasińska & Kozłowska (2009) assert that in the current context, intra-EU migration is regarded as an extension of one's living environment, rather than a replacement. Hence, the decision to migrate and the actual journey is referred to as straightforward and rather easy to accomplish. Additionally, it is emphasized that not only labor markets, but also education systems, welfare regimes and other (perceived) opportunity in life can pose a condition for migration (Drinkwater & Garapich, 2015).

Consequently, publications on the recent intra-European migration introduce a brand new approach towards migration, which pursues migration as a rather open-ended process, moving away from the former linear understanding where migration entailed a permanent move from A to B (Drinkwater & Garapich, 2015). This notion connects well with Vertovec's (2007) conceptualization of super-diversity, which holds that contemporary international migration is characterized by its "multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified" migrant body (p. 1024).

Along these lines, new concepts were introduced to grasp the meaning and impact of this novelty within migration studies. Engbersen, Snel & de Boom (2010) introduce the

concept of liquid migration in order to describe the new type of migration that arose as a result of the free mobility as provided by the EU citizenship, where migrants migrate to numerous countries to within being restricted by visa or the necessity of long-term planning (Engbersen, 2012; Glorius, Grabowska-Lusinska & Kuvik, 2013). Drinkwater & Garapich (2015) signpost the introduction of 'deliberate indeterminacy' and 'migratory drift', but in this context to most suitable term appears to be 'intentional unpredictability'. This term was coined by Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich (2007), and refers to the repeated event of postponing a decision regarding stay/leave/return amongst Polish migrants. The authors emphasize that the rather unfixed and undefined nature of the migration trajectory (in terms of goals and specific time frame) poses a challenge for migration scholars to predict and analyze migration outcomes.

Another helpful concept in terms of intra-EU migration is the 'myth of return' as coined by White (2011). She describes this as the ongoing process of postponing the decision of settling down or returning, where return to Poland is understood as a permanent move. Under these circumstances, migrants can find themselves living abroad for a period as long as five years without concrete plans of returning soon, but still refer to the option of return as a viable future possibility. In sum, the recent intra-EU migration can be best described as being open-ended, liquid, undetermined and therefore unpredictable.

2.3 Mobility and settlement in the EU

In terms of mobility, Drinkwater & Garapich (2015) point out that especially young(er) migrants are willing to move to another member state. In this case, mobility is generally regarded as a convenient strategy to find a job which matches their skills and experience, combined with the perceived responsibility to embrace the opportunities of a mobile EU-citizen (Botterill, 2011). This emphasis on a job matching with one's skills is not so much evident the context of Polish migrants in the Netherlands, where the majority is

working in low-skilled, temporary jobs. However, the perceived opportunity is expected to encourage migration intentions among younger migrants. This opportunity-structure is endorsed by Collet (2013), who underlines one of the main arguments for supporting free movement: providing all EU citizens with access to equal opportunities in terms of jobs, education and innovation.

Garapich (2008) analyzes the position of Polish migrants in the United Kingdom, and found social, generational and cultural differences among different groups of migrants. Those differences are partly explained by various mobility patterns and diasporas. Following these lines, he identifies two different types of Polish migrants residing in the United Kingdom: transnational Poles and the established Poles. Strikingly, he found that the different Polish groups are competing for recognition rather than working together. This in-group competition is also signposted by Grzymala-Kozlowska (2005), who points out that ethnic cooperation through tight networks can slowly develop into fanatic in-group competition.

Hence, Garapich (2008) emphasizes the heterogeneity amongst Polish migrants, and stresses that the community dynamics are crucial for understanding integration motivation and strategies. Additionally, he points out that internal power structures can have a crucial influence on the migrant's participation and experiences, thus it is important that those are analyzed as well. In this vein, I decided to place the migrant's experience at the focus of this research project.

Linking this to settlement strategies, Engbersen et al. (2013) present a typology of East-West labor migration based on attachment to country of origin and country of destination. The data was obtained through a survey among migrants from Poland, Bulgaria and Romania residing in the Netherlands. After analyzing both the levels of attachment to the host society and the levels of attachment to the country of origin in terms of socio-cultural, socio-economic and demographic factors, four distinct patterns have been identified: Circular

migrants (weak/strong); Bi-nationals (strong/strong); Footlose migrants (weak/weak); and Settlers (strong/weak). Following these patterns, the authors emphasize 1) the importance of integration with regards to intra-EU migration, and 2) that successful integration can be perfectly combined with a transnational lifestyle.

3. UNDERSTANDINGS OF SETTLEMENT WITHIN THE EU-CONTEXT

The final theory section focuses on settlement of EU migrants specifically, ranging from quest for normalcy to obstacles to settlement. This section will be more focused on the Polish migrant body within the EU than mobile citizens in general.

3.1 Settlement & Quest for normalcy

In the general debate regarding settlement and integration of migrants, one finds a strong emphasis on third-country nationals. In the case of migrants from EU member states, it is often assumed that settling will be a smooth process, thanks to a shared EU identity as well as access to relatively generous rights. However, as Collet (2013) rightfully points out, "nationality makes little difference to the process of adapting to new languages, institutions and social norms" (p.2). In addition, the personal well-being of migrants themselves has been mostly neglected, as more attention was directed to financial gains and economic incentives, rather than the social impacts of free movement within the EU.

Gilmartin & Migge (2013) assert that intra-EU migrants experience obstacles to integration just like other immigrants. Furthermore, they emphasize that for understanding 'lived experiences of integration', one should not overlook the motivations for migration, as they shape the integration evaluations as well as the decision to stay or not. In this vein, Collet (2013) postulates that EU migrants do have specific needs in terms of settlement; referring to obstacles to language acquisition and public service provision, combined with higher risk of social exclusion and marginalization. These obstacles are experienced by Polish migrants in

the Netherlands as well, I will expand on this in section 3.2.

In terms of settlement of EU migrants, Drinkwater & Garapich (2015) seek to understand the deeper decision making process during and after migration, and introduce a new typology of migrant strategies, including migrant's life trajectories and perceptions. They move beyond general understandings of migrant's considerations, and present some nuanced insights with special focus on Polish migrants in the UK. They identify three types in terms of intention of settlement: The planners, the undecided and the changers, where economic gains and the role of expectations are crucial in terms of long term planning. Furthermore, the evidence presented shows that settlement intentions and strategies are influenced by the moment of entry, remittance and lastly the migrant's evaluation of their job. In addition, the economic gains of remaining in the UK are well-articulated, but the authors point out that the less explicitly mentioned non-material concerns play a crucial role as well. In sum, Drinkwater & Garapich (2015) emphasize the multi-layered character of migration strategies amongst Polish migrants, and indicate that motivations for staying should be understood as clusters of economic and non-economic concerns, rather than based on mono-casual conditions.

Speaking of migrant settlement, Galasińska & Kozłowska (2009) underline the importance of the migrant's quest for normalcy, which appears to play a more important role than before in terms of justification of undertaking migration. The concept normalcy – following Goffman's conceptualization as opposite of absurd abnormality – first appeared in research on post-communist societies (Kennedy, 1994), where it referred to the expressed wish 'to be who you are', after the collapse of communism. In the current understanding, where it is linked to the experiences of Polish post-2004 migrants residing in Western Europe, the longing for normalcy can be best understood as the desire to live 'a normal life', and refers to the factors which make daily life easier than before. Normalcy is discussed in terms

of ‘good work’, which is defined by factors such as access to employment (i.e. connections, corruption, bribery vs. normalcy), level of income (i.e. to earn enough to live ‘normally’), and evaluation of job (i.e. job security, contentment, being respected).

In this vein, the concept of normalcy helps to identifies which values are important in one’s life, as an individual; as well as which values are crucial in relation to their migration journey, and the decision to remain or return (Galasińska & Kozłowska, 2009). Additionally, the quest for normalcy can also be applied to future opportunities (e.g. education/employment for second generation) instead of being referred to as an everyday reality. In this context, normalcy refers to a desired future, a state to be obtained in later phase. Rodriguez (2010) emphasizes the importance of classlessness, meritocratic values and management of immigrant label in order to reach this forecasted future. Taking both perspectives into consideration, Drinkwater & Garapich (2015) define normalcy as “a multi-faced understanding of life in the destination country through a combination of normative ideas about how life should look like after taking the risks involved with moving”(p. 6).

Accordingly, normalcy refers to the factors that make life in the host country better than the previous conditions. As normalcy is defined in relation to another, abnormal situation, it should be understood that in terms of migration, normalcy is constructed based on previous experiences in the country of origin. This comparative approach is described as the double reference system, where the current state is always compared to the former (Crespi, 2014) . Thus, Polish migrants construct normalcy by comparing the current situation, conditions and opportunities to the situation in Poland.

In order to obtain a deeper understanding of the processes surrounding a migrant’s decision to stay, it is crucial to consider reasons for return (or: not stay) as well. These might relate to economic motivations (i.e. higher purchasing power and lower cost of living) as well as better career perspective thanks to accumulated experience and skills abroad (Dustman &

Weiss, 2007). And, aside of the decision to settle or remigrate, there is a third option which is described as 'the option value of migration' (Burda, 1995). In short, this refers to the open-ended character of the migration journey, where depending on the (long term) conditions and opportunities in the destination region the migrant will decide to settle or not (Burda et al., 1998). This is vastly prevalent amongst Polish migrants, as there are no political restrictions in terms of visa requirements, which provides them the freedom to postpone any decision regarding long term residence.

In conclusion, I will follow Drinkwater & Garapich's (2015) current understanding of migration strategies amongst recent Polish migrants, which asserts that "migration strategies […] should be viewed as a process of adaptation to changing individual and structural conditions, both in sending and host countries" (p. 17).

Interestingly, Collett (2013) asserts that European migrants are less likely to settle permanently in the host society, compared to third country nationals. However, in case of the Netherlands a growing number of Polish migrants demonstrate positive attitudes toward settlement - at least long term (Gijsberts & Lubbers, 2015; Vogels, Gijsberts & den Draak, 2014; Korf, 2009). This trend can be partially explained by the relatively young age of Polish migrants in the Netherlands , as the migrant's age and family situation are found to play a role in terms of prolonged settlement. On the one hand, Drinkwater & Garapich (2015) postulate that due to the migrant's (young) age at the time of migration, it follows that a huge proportion will build relationships and start a family in the host country. This will substantiate one's connection with the country of residence, and increases the chances of permanent settlement. And, at the same time, research has shown that migrant families (with children, either born in host or sending country) are significantly less mobile than individual migrants (White, 2011; Ryan et al., 2009).

3.2 Possible obstacles to settlement and integration

By focusing on European migrants currently residing in Ireland, Gilmartin & Migge (2013) seek to explore the experiences and efforts undertaken by migrants to become part of Irish society. In order to analyze integration experiences as narrated by immigrants, they introduce a framework in which economic, cultural and social factors account for the European immigrant's integration. They acknowledge that it is methodologically challenging to measure 'becoming part of society', yet they identified the most common obstacles to integration: legal status, linguistic competence, recognition of qualifications, limits to political participation, and lastly restricted access to employment, housing and other social services. Gilmartin & Migge claim that integration of EU-migrants is often overlooked for the simple reason that EU migrants share their EU identity with the host society, and therefore are already 'at home' within the EU borders. This account is well-illustrated by the European Common Basic Principles of Integration, which addresses third-country nationals specifically. Glimartin & Migge (2013) rightfully point out that there is little research available on how the concept of a shared European identity is beneficial for the EU-migrant. However, by neglecting integration experiences of intra-EU migrants, one risks overlooking the importance of integration with regards to maintaining social cohesion across the EU (Gilmartin & Migge, 2013).

3.2.1 Language

Language acquisition is an important topic in terms of settlement and integration of migrants. The first hypothesis to be discussed is based on the cost-benefits-analysis, which assumes that investment of time/effort in language proficiency (as well as education) will result in economic benefit. Along these lines, it is postulated that migration motives are crucial in predicting language proficiency among migrants; whereby economic migrants are expected to be the most motivated and engaged to learn the language (Chiswick & Miller,

2007).

However, van Tubergen & Kalmijn (2009) reject this line of argument, as they found that expected duration of stay appeared to have a much stronger effect on motivation to learn the language. Especially for newly arrived migrants, the expected duration functions as an important predictor for motivation to learn the language. In this vein, it is expected that planned long term stay will be followed by a sound knowledge of the local language. Related to this, Driessen (2004) showed that longer residency in the Netherlands (i.e. more exposure to Dutch language) will further the migrant's proficiency in Dutch. In terms of labor, Driessen (2004) also found that recently arrived migrants are more likely to find employment when they speak Dutch; and that migrants who have a job appear to learn Dutch much faster than migrants who are unemployed. Additionally, speaking the local language is generally linked to integration in different fields as well.

However, it is critical not to take this assumption for granted, as Gijsberts & Lubbers (2014) found evidence that cultural integration should not be paired with economic integration; as integration in those fields take place in a different pace. Additionally, many migrants work in jobs which are almost exclusively done by migrants, which means the main language during working hours is often English, or even Polish.

In terms of social contacts, Gijsberts & Lubbers (2014) state that basic knowledge of Dutch is an important requirement to engage with the Dutch population. In this vein, they postulate that having Dutch contacts will improve the migrant's knowledge of Dutch. In terms of theory, this phenomenon is explained by the 'language exposure thesis' (Driessen, 2004) or the 'isolation thesis' (van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2005). Following this line of argument, the authors postulate that the presence of migrants with a similar nationality in the living environment will impede language proficiency of Dutch. Lastly, Gijsberts & Lubbers (2014) found that having a Dutch partner has a significant positive effect on the migrant's level of

Dutch. Lastly, Gijsberts & Lubbers (2014) identify motivation and effort as important predictors of language proficiency over time, where motivation can be expressed through self-study, attending a language school or consuming Dutch media for example, both before and after migration.

Taking into consideration the Dutch context specifically, Gijsberts & Lubbers (2014) address the impact of knowing a second language, when acquiring a new language. They formulate a hypothesis which states that recent migrants barely have the opportunity to learn and speak Dutch, as the majority of the Dutch population will approach them in English. In this vein, it is anticipated that when migrants master a language which is widely spoken in the Netherland (i.e. English or German), there will be less incentives to obtain Dutch skills. However, in their research project they did not find any evidence for this negative effect of speaking English on Dutch language skills.

3.2.2 Cultural differences

As mentioned before, based on the notion of a shared European culture and identity it is generally presumed that European migrants will settle rather easily, (Collett, 2013). Yet, this does not imply that there are no differences in values and customs between within the European Union at all. Instead, one will find various attitudinal differences within different member states (Röder & Lubbers, 2015; Gerhards, 2010). In terms of Polish migrants in the Netherlands, Lubbers & Gijsberts (2015) found that this group tends to be more conservative in comparison with the Dutch population. Additionally, van Tubbergen (2013) emphasizes the importance of religion (differences) in terms of acculturation, where migrant networks appear to play a crucial role regarding the continuity of religious practices. In this sense, the author points out that a well-established migrant community can function as an obstacle to adaption of Dutch (rather secular) values.

3.2.3 Exclusion

Gijsberts & Lubbers (2013) found an exceptional high number of experienced discrimination among recently arrived polish migrants**.** In their consecutive study, published in 2015, they detect that this trend is continuing among recently arrived migrants in the Netherlands, but for Polish migrants specifically. In terms of perceived discrimination regarding members of their ethnic group, this number has risen from 39% to 49% for Polish respondents. In addition, an increasing part of the migrants report on negative experiences (such as being treated unpleasantly by official organizations or in public spaces) and personal encounters of discrimination. In the 2015 study, 25% of the Polish migrants indicate they have recently experienced discrimination. In sum, especially younger, lower educated Polish migrants who regularly interact with native Dutch people report an evident increase of Polish migrants in the Netherlands.

In this vein, McGinnity en Gijsberts (2015) formulate the hypothesis that more exposure to the host country will be followed by a higher number of perceived discrimination. Interestingly, they found that not only the degree of discrimination but also the relative increase in perceived discrimination is among the highest in the Netherlands, which is partially explained by the generally negative attitude towards immigration groups and the impact of national discourse fueled by right-wing parties in the Netherlands.

4. CURRENT POLISH INTRA-EUROPEAN MIGRATION

This chapters seeks to provide an overview of the context in which the current migration flow is taking place. In order to understand the triggers for migration, first the situation in the sending country will be considered. Then, I will discuss the actual migration flow from Poland to the Netherlands, in terms of figures, trends and demographics.

4.1 Migration from Poland

After Poland's admission to the EU, Polish migrants have been topic of heated debate in numerous Western European countries (Grabowska-Lusinska, 2010). However, the fact that these migrant flows only received attention recently does not mean that those did not exist before 2004. On the contrary, Poland has a rather long history of seeing its population moving abroad. This is endorsed by Anacka & Okólski (2011), who describe Poland of being a "net migration loser" (p. 141). However, they do emphasize that the current outflow is unique in Polish history; as it is estimated that between 1 May 2004 and 31 December 2006 over a million people emigrated from Poland, be it temporary or permanent. More recent figures provided by Poland's Central Statistical Office indicate that trend has continued over the years, even though the intensity has decreased. At the end of 2013 Poland has a registered population of 38 496 000, which is about 37000 less than the year before. Due to the continuing high level of emigration the future fertility rate is affected as well, which on the long term leads to an even bigger loss of population (Central Statistical Office, 2014).

Wallace & Stola (2001) point out that already since the mid-nineteenth century Poland is characterized by mass emigration. Restrained economic growth and technological advancements combined with discrimination and political oppression were important triggers for outmigration. During the transition period after 1989, Poland showed significant higher levels of emigration compared to other Eastern European countries. Furthermore, they indicate that the Polish migration flow in the Post-Communist era has been transformed from

long-term and permanent migration into temporarily, circular movements.

In the early 1990s Germany, USA and Canada were the most important destinations, but this has shifted towards destinations like the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Norway. Interestingly, next to countries which opened their borders for new EU member states as early as 2004 (i.e. Sweden, Ireland and the United Kingdom), the countries with restricted access (such as Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands) turned out to be popular destinations as well (Luthra, Platt & Salamońska, 2014).

4.2 Push & Pull factors in the Polish context

The following part aims to identify the push and pull factors as present in contemporary Poland, in order to answer the 'why' aspect of the current migration flows. The most obvious and visible push factor concerns Poland's economic situation, as it suffered severely from economic crisis. Even though in 2013 the Polish economy was gradually recovering, the unemployment rate continued to be unexceptionally high. Poland has a high potential of human resources, which are not fully expended in the current national labor market. As a result, in December 2013 the registered unemployment equaled 13.4% (Central Statistical Office, 2014), which is considerably high compared to the Dutch unemployment figure for example. Next to the economic situation there is another defining aspect of the Polish labor market: more than one fourth of Polish employees work on temporary contracts, which is the highest number across the European Union. Thus short-term contracts combined with discouraging employment perspectives are identified as the primary push factor in Poland (Central Statistical Office, 2011).

However, with regards to the unemployment rate, White (2014) is clear to point out that this number does not provide a complete picture, as regional unemployment rates differ significantly across Poland. White (2013) identifies numerous push factors, emphasizing the impact of one's perception of the state of affairs. Rather than relying on the actual situation,

possible migrants focus on their personal evaluation of the local economy and their household situation. Next to that, their financial, social and human capital (i.e. age, sex and education) play a crucial role in the potential decision to move abroad. As discussed in the previous chapter, the pre-existence of a migration networks is found to trigger possible migration, as it will become less risky and more affordable. Yet, White (2013) concludes that pull factors – which will be discussed in the subsequent section – play a more significant role than the existence of migrant networks, especially for the poorer and more marginalized. This view is endorsed by Anacka & Okólski (2011) who claim that the liberalization of labor markets in Western Europe has overruled the former significance of social networks.

In her later research, White (2014) identified numerous socio-economic push factors which relate to daily life in contemporary Poland. Most of these factors are associated with post-Communist countries and their transition. The first factor refers to the political climate, which is characterized by widespread mistrust of the Polish government. In relation to this, White found that respondents reported low social trust among Polish society, especially in comparison with the (Western European) host country. In addition, geographical inequalities play an important role in determining the migrant's push and pull factors. Some regions are developing better than others, which is illustrated very well by the unemployment rates from 2012: on a national level it equaled 13.5%, whereas regional unemployment figures ranged from 4.1% in Poznan to 23.7% in Grajewo. And as mentioned before, the migrant's perception of the opportunities in its close proximity plays a crucial role in terms of migration. The last factor relates to prospects on the job market, where not only job insecurity but also working conditions and quality of work can 'push' migrants across the border, looking for better opportunities (White, 2014).

Korf (2009) reports that in 2007 in Poland the wages increased with 11%, and internal consumption rose by 20%. These developments hint at economic recovery in Poland from

2004 onwards. Interestingly enough, the Harmonized Unemployment Rate (HUR) as defined by the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OEDC) show an opposite trend for the Netherlands. Thus, while unemployment in Poland is significantly decreasing from 2004 onwards, the Netherlands show an opposite trend, with HUR steadily rising from 2009 onwards (OECD, 2015).

When discussing the possible pull factors in the context of intra-EU migration, it is often assumed that a growing unemployment rate in the host society combined with an improving economic situation in the sending country would automatically lead to a decline of migration and/or re-migration. However, White (2014) points out that this assumption is highly simplified, and overlooks numerous important nuances in terms of push and pull factors. First of all, the migrant's economic motivations are not based on the country's GDP but rather on the (significantly) higher wages and possibly unemployment benefits. Secondly, due to regional differences the national economic prosperity might not have a direct influence on the migrant's household situation. It is emphasized that migrants base their decisions on micro and not macro-economic factors. This premise is crucial for understanding migrant flows in the cross border context. Contrary to popular belief, the number of Poles migrating to the Netherlands is still rising, even though the unemployment figure decreased significantly in Poland. This points at a more complex understanding of Polish migration to other member states, acknowledging that migrants pursue non-economic interests as well, which might play a more decisive role than economic ones. Lastly, it should be emphasized that economic and non-economic motives cannot be separated, the decision to migrate is rather a combination of economic, social and psychological factors (White, 2014).

Also Luthra, Platt & Salamońska (2014) emphasize that migration decisions are not solely motivated by economic incentives, but are rather based on personal preferences as well

as on long-past established relationships with other regions or countries. In addition, they point at the new context where migration is taking place, characterized by low transfer and communication costs combined with unrestricted mobility across Europe and significant wage differences. All these circumstances taken together are believed to create the circumstances for migration, which forms obviously an important pull factor all across Western Europe (Luthra et al., 2014).

In sum, it can be concluded that Polish migration has played an important role in the intra-European debate on migration and unrestricted border crossings. Even though popular press and the public debate might use populist, dramatic images to refer to and illustrate the impact of Polish migration, it cannot be denied that the number of Polish migration in the post-accession era has been significant.

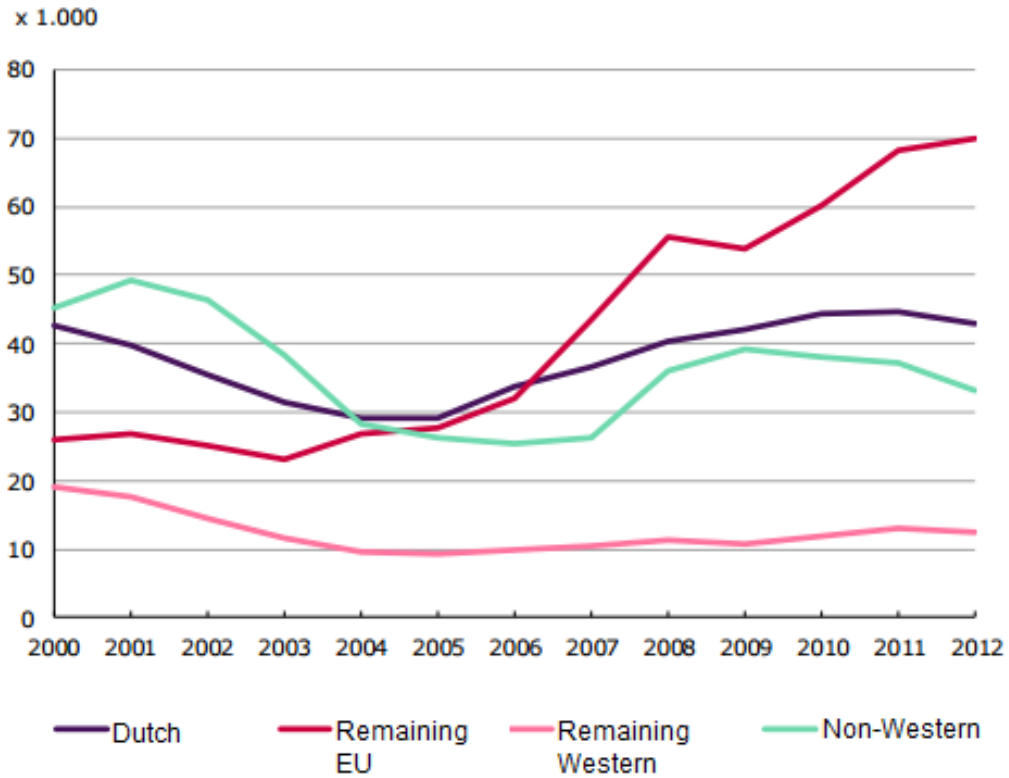

Figure 1: Immigration to the Netherlands 2000-2012, based on nationality (in absolute numbers)
Source: Jennissen & Nikolaas (2014)

4.3 Migration to the Netherlands

As shown in figure 1, the biggest influx of migration to the Netherlands concerns intra-EU migration, of which Polish migrants show the biggest increase. Since the admission of Poland to the European Union, the number of Polish migrants in the Netherlands has increased rapidly, see figure 2.

The fastest growing and declining numbers of immigrants in the Netherlands by country of origin with differences in %, 2000-2013

	2000	2013	Difference (%)
Fastest growing			**(+)**
1. Poland	1,871	20,532	997.4
2. Bulgaria	297	4,431	1391.9
3. India	782	4,635	492.7
4. Spain	1,290	4,558	253.3
5. Germany	5,150	8,094	57.2
6. China	2,632	5,150	95.7
7. Italy	1,422	3,855	171.1
8. Hungary	488	2,646	442.2
9. Greece	674	2,687	298.7
10. Romania	657	2,664	305.5
Fastest declining			**(-)**
1. Netherlands Antilles	10,167	3,443	-66.1
2. Afghanistan	4,610	1,259	-72.7
3. Yugoslavia (former)	4,780	1,648	-65.5
4. Iraq	4,445	1,803	-59.4
5. Soviet Union	5,195	2,774	-46.6
6. Morocco	4,482	2,326	-48.1
7. Surinam	3,601	1,724	-52.1
8. Turkey	5,393	3,809	-29.4
9. Sudan	1,497	241	-83.9
10. Angola	1,248	134	-89.3

Figure 2: The fastest growing and declining numbers of immigrants in the Netherlands, 2000-2013
Source: Klaver, Odé, Telli & Witkamp (2014)

Most of the recently arrived Polish migrants are working in temporary or season-related jobs within agriculture, construction, factories and cleaning. An important issue relating to this type of migration is the question whether it concerns circular migration, or whether it will change into permanent migration, with family reunification as a result; akin to previous guest workers from Turkey and Morocco (Snel, Faber & Engbersen, 2013).

As described by Korf (2009), Polish migrants are working all across the Netherlands in various sectors. Dutch employees are generally quite eager to hire Polish migrants, because they supply low-skilled labor which is hard to find among the Dutch labor force, amongst others through the process of earlier mentioned social labeling (Massey et al., 1993) and the employment conditions offered (Danson & Jetsch, 2009). In this vein, many Polish migrants find themselves working in jobs with unsociable, irregular shifts, which pose a challenge on maintaining a healthy work-life balance, restrain them from establishing new social contacts.

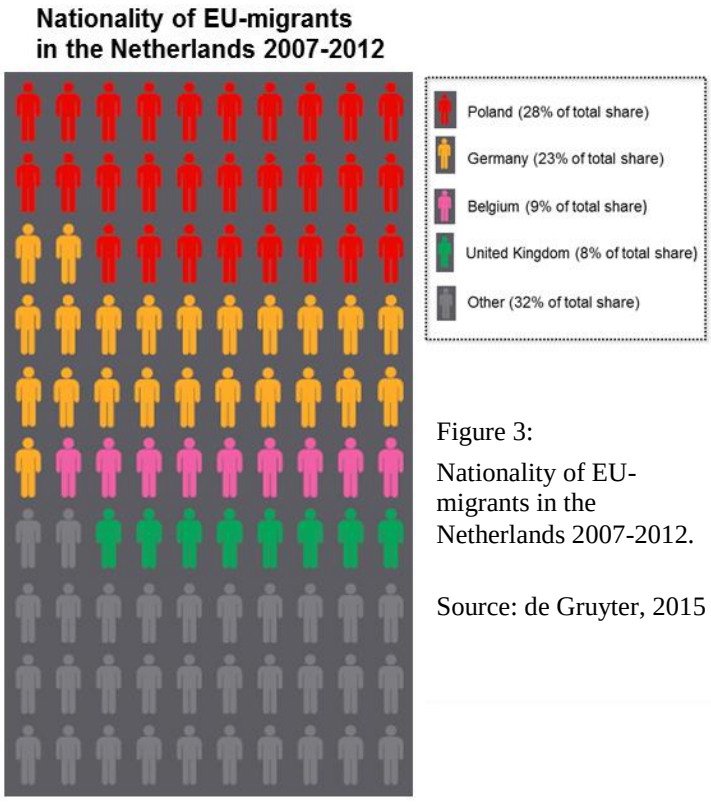

Figure 3:
Nationality of EU-migrants in the Netherlands 2007-2012.

Source: de Gruyter, 2015

When Poland entered the European Union in 2004, the Netherlands implemented labor restrictions for migrants coming from the CEE region. In May 2007 the previously required working permits were finally omitted, the Netherlands being one of the last of the so-called 'third phase' countries; who did not open up their labor market in 2004 immediately. However, it is important to realize that at that time, there vast amount of Polish migrants were already working in the Netherlands. From the late 1990s, the Netherlands was the second popular migration destination for migrants coming from Opele and Silesia, two provinces in the South-West of Poland. Since those regions formerly belonged to the Prussian empire, many residents hold double citizenship (i.e. Polish and German), through which they could circumvent the work permit requirements in the Netherland. Additionally, due to the pressing labor shortages in horticulture, agriculture and construction, many positions here were filled by irregular Polish migrants as well (Engbersen, Snel & de Boom, 2010). As explained by Pijpers & van de Velde (2007), it is estimated that in 2004, between 34000 and 53000 Polish migrants were working in the Netherlands, mostly in seasonal jobs, both regular and irregular In 2002, the government sought to regulate the influx of irregular migrants by introducing Seasonal Work Project, which approved the employment of seasonal workers in agriculture

and horticulture, as well as allowing self-employed Polish migrants to build up their company in the Netherlands. At the same time, employment agencies started to actively recruit Polish migrants, especially those with German citizenship. Those employment agencies functioned as intermediaries between employers and employees, not only responsible for recruitment but also taking care of the housing and transport of the migrants. In this vein, employment agencies are identified as important nodes within the migration network between Poland and the Netherlands (Pijpers & van der Velde, 2007).

As shown in Figure 2 and 3, the influx of Polish migrants increased rapidly after 2004, and they currently make up the biggest group within EU-migrants. For 2014, the CBS has calculated that there were at least 24.000 incoming Polish migrants, which has now exceeded the number of returning Dutch migrants (CBS, 2015). Following Klaver, Odé, Telli & Witkamp (2014), the Polish migrants migrating to the Netherlands in 2013 – a total of 20532 according to Statistics Netherlands – are relatively young. The mean age is 28.4 years, and 82.8 % is unmarried. Furthermore, the male/female divide is rather balanced, with slightly more men (52.2%) than female (47,8%) arriving from Poland. This is generally in line with the average of the 10 biggest incoming groups, which are also relatively young, and 49% is female.

On an additional note, numerous scholars (such as Anacka & Okólski, 2011; Engbersen, Snel & de Boom, 2010) acknowledge that research on the actual gains and losses of the post-accession migration is very limited, due to misleading statistics, overlapping definitions and unregistered movement within the European Union. For example, in the Netherlands migration statistics are based on the municipal personal records database (GBA), where newcomers (who expect to stay at least four month) have to register themselves. However, as not all migrants appear to register at arrival (van der Heijden, Cruyff & van Gils,

2013), it is important to keep in mind that the figures presented in this table might not fully reflect the actual situation. As emphasized before, the incentives and expectations regarding migration are not fixed and established, but rather fluid and depending on the interplay of numerous factors (Drinkwater & Garapich, 2015; White, 2014;). Thus, the character of migration is complex to establish based on statistical data only.

Next to demographic characteristics, various scholars[1] claim that a specific 'migrant personality' can be identified amongst those who decide to leave their country. A study by Polek, Van Oudenhoven & Ten Berge (2011) compared the secure dismissing styles from Polish immigrants in the Netherlands to those of Poles in their home country. Most importantly, Polek et al. (2011) found that emigrants appear to be more secure and dismissing than Polish nationals. Furthermore it is asserted that differences in attachment styles between migrants and non-migrants exist prior to emigration, and will last over time. Overall, Polek et al. (2011) confirm the existence of a specific migrant personality, which is believed to be beneficial for emigrants. This so-called pioneering personality will help migrants to face the challenges related to emigration, and successful integration will be stimulated through naturally present attachment styles.

In addition to personality, one can also distinguish between different types of migrants with regards to their economic behavior: those who fail to improve their financial situation by spending money on a short-term planning are referred to as 'hole-patchers', whereas the proficient migrants are described as 'perfect storks' (White, 2013).

[1] For example Boneva & Frieze (2001) found that emigrants have higher achievement and motivation and are more work-oriented combined with a lower affiliation motivation and family centrality.

5. THE NETHERLANDS AS A MIGRANT RECEIVING SOCIETY

In the following chapter, I shift the focus from Poland as sending society to the Netherlands as a host society. First, the history of immigration in the Netherlands is considered, followed by an account regarding Dutch immigration policy. Lastly, I will discuss some peculiarities regarding EU migration to the Netherlands, such as the declaration of participation and the current legislation regarding flex workers.

5.1 The transition: From country of emigration to a migrant-receiving society

After the Second World War, the Netherlands was generally recognized as a country of emigration. Many young people decided to settle themselves abroad, starting a new life overseas. However, at the same time plenty of hands were needed in order to rebuild the country. Thus in the 1960s, both employers and the government decided to recruit cheap labor abroad: first from Southern European countries such as Spain and Italy, later mostly from Turkey and Morocco. At that time, one assumed that this immigration was temporarily, and thus immigration and integration politics and/or policies were non-existent (Blok, 2004; van der Brug, Fennema, van Heerden & de Lange, 2009).

From the 1970s onwards, the first policies concerning migration were still based on the assumption that those labor migrants would return after a few years. Thus, policy was focusing on two themes: stimulating remigration and adjustment to the Dutch society. Integration was not considered relevant, but one was rather concerned with retaining the immigrant's own identity. This supposition formed the basis for any political stance from the 1970s onwards, and thus little attention was paid to Dutch language and culture, the position in the labor market and other rights and duties of the immigrant (Blok, 2004; van der Brug et al., 2009).

Controversially, over the course of the years more and more guest workers received a permanent working permit, and strived to be reunited with their family. And as more women

and children migrated to the Netherlands, the cultural differences between 'allochtones[2]' and 'autochtones' became more visible. As a result, migration and also integration turned into an important topic of discussion during the 1980s. Retaining and preserving the immigrants' culture and identity was still deemed crucial, but at the same time zero action was taken in order to improve the disadvantaged position of the (non-Western) immigrant (Blok, 2004).

In the 1990s the attention shifted from minority policy towards integration policy. The tone of the public debate hardens, when the problems related to immigration become more evident. The problems encountered include cultural identity problems and a marginalized position for immigrants, as well as the so-called cultural insecurity faced by the autochtone majority, which might lead to discrimination and xenophobia (Blok, 2004). Simultaneously, the country became more divided on how to deal with the growing immigration, and how to build a multi-ethnic or multicultural society. In the late 1990s, the Netherlands is the first country to introduce 'civic integration' in response to the enormous influx of immigrants. Based on the principle of 'self-sustaining integration' with a rather harsh outlook, this policy of civic integration turned out to inspire several other European countries (Joppke, 2012).

The integration debate is given a new impulse with the publication of 'the multicultural disaster' by Scheffer (2000). In this essay he states that the Dutch multicultural society has failed, and that this will turn into a threat to internal peace if no action will be taken. Scheffer receives acclamation for his ideas from Frits Bolkestein, Pim Fortuyn, Theo van Gogh and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, all of them imposing figures within politics. The latter three are very explicit about their reservations towards the multicultural society, and openly expressed their resentment towards the so-called Muslim immigration. When both Fortuyn (in 2002) and van Gogh (in 2004) are murdered – both deeds are inherently related to their convictions – the integration policy is put even more under pressure (Rath, 2009).

[2] Specific term in the Dutch discourse on migration to denote 'foreigners'. In general, it refers to someone living in the Netherlands, with at least one parent born abroad.

The problems concerning immigration and integration all relate to the marginalized position of the immigrant. In response to the publication by Scheffer, the government entrusted the commission Blok to do research on the immigration and integration policies in the Netherlands over the past thirty years. Research took place between 2002 and 2004, and commission Blok concluded that the civic integration in the Netherlands did not fail as a whole, but signposted several points for improvement. After thirty year of immigration, the immigration surplus, the influx of unschooled labor migrant and the unequal ethnic division across the country were identified as the important problems (Blok et al., 2004).

5.2 Dutch policy regarding migration

In the 1990s the attention shifted from minority policy towards integration policy. The tone of the public debate hardened, when the problems related to immigration became more evident. The advisory committee for governmental policy claims that the minority policy of the last decade was unsuccessful, which is endorsed by Scheffer in his essay 'the multicultural tragedy' (Obdeijn & Schrover, 2008). Scheffer (2000) claims that the Dutch multicultural society has failed, and it is expected to turn into a threat to internal peace if no action will be taken. Hence, by the commencement of the recent (European) immigration influx, Dutch society was rather reluctant towards the idea of (more) immigration (Rath, 2009). This is well-illustrated by the fact that the Netherlands implemented special restrictions for labor migrants from new EU-members such as Poland.

The most recent governmental publication on integration and immigration stems from 2011, and focuses on creating a shared cultural base, for both allochtones and autochtones. In the practical sense this means that the government introduced a heavier burden on Dutch 'newcomers', such as required citizenship tests which test the knowledge of the language and culture, and possibly renouncing one's former citizenship (Donner, 2011; Joppke, 2012). Next

to that, the government expects from immigrants that they work, integrate and respect the rules and values of Dutch society.

When looking at the development of integration policy over the years, it is clear that 'integration' was used only recently to describe the required assimilation and participation by immigrants. Considering current policies, integration as understood by the Dutch government refers to the process of acquiring a position within Dutch society, which is followed by active participation and self-reliance. Successful integration is measured through an integration exam, where the assessment criteria – language proficiency, knowledge of society and practical skills – are determined by the national government[3] (van der Vliet, Ooijevaar & van der Bie, 2012; Tweede Kamer, 2004).

In 2013 it was added that first and foremost the migrants themselves are responsible for successful integration and fulfilling the required integration obligations. In practical sense this means that migrants are expected to finance their own civic integration program. If the financial means for this are lacking, the government will provide a social loan. Those amendments are justified by emphasizing and acknowledging the migrant's strength and autonomy with regards to the process of integration. Taken altogether the current policy has moved away from the non-committal approach which diminished the agency of immigrants, and introduced a legal obligation to integration where responsibility and duties of the immigrant (both new comers and long-term stayers) are emphasized. All institutions involved acknowledge that integration is a multigenerational process, where education, employment and social participation are considered crucial for a successful integration development. (Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2012; European Website on Integration, 2014; Donner,

[3] Next to the different terminology used and various shifts in policy, it is interesting to note that the ministry dealing with integration and immigration has been changed numerous times over the past decades. The first ministry specifically dealing with integration was set up in 2002 under the name Alien Affairs and Integration, followed by numerous other ministries focusing on immigration. In 2012 the ministry was abolished, currently immigration and asylum affairs are handled by the ministry of Security and Justice, and Integration is the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. See: http://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhronvvx/regering

2011).

The current immigration policy in the Netherlands is characterized by its general approach, rather than ethnic-specific policies as wielded in the past. Although in public and political debate ethnic labeling is still prevailing, the government has initiated to move beyond this categorization. Furthermore the policy focus shifted from integration towards participation, which means that the government expects involvement and dedication from every member of society (Verbeek, 2013; Ham & vd Meer, 2012). These two key points are illustrated by the phrase "focus on future, rather than on origin" (Donner, 2011, p. 7), which emphasizes that a person's background should not withhold one from participating in Dutch society.

The fact that labor immigrants are now recognized as enduring part of Dutch society has undoubtedly influenced the current immigration policy. There is increased collaboration and consultation between different levels of government, from municipalities to the national government. The state has introduced several committees which are responsible for issues relating to labor immigration, ranging from registration and accommodation to integration and remigration. Engbersen (2012) emphasizes the importance of established flows of information (both in the host and sending country), well-organized registration of immigrants and lastly an adequate legal framework to prevent exploitation and other issues.

In general, it can be stated that the Netherlands developed immigration policy which is more balanced than before, recognizing the interest of the immigrant as well as acknowledging its responsibility towards Dutch society. However, with the new influx of Polish immigrants (possibly in the future of other EU-member states), the government should continue be cautious to acknowledge the different interests of different actors.

5.3 Declaration of Participation

The most recent insight in terms of integration and participation of newcomers in the Netherlands is well-reflected by the introduction of a so-called 'declaration of participation[4]'. In short, this declaration should familiarize newcomers the Netherlands with their rights and duties, as well as introduce them to the fundamental values[5] within Dutch society. Those values are formulated as follows: Freedom (freedom of speech, freedom of religion and lifestyle, and freedom of choice and independency), Equivalency (in terms of gender, sexual orientation and religious affiliation specifically) and Solidarity. The duty towards Dutch society is summarized in the keyword 'Participation', which refers to a citizen's contribution to society by paid employment, attending school, or doing voluntary work. By signing the declaration the newcomer proclaims that (s)he understands and accepts the fundamental values of Dutch society, and promises to disseminate them accordingly. Additionally, the undersigned promises to actively participate in and contribute to society, and expects to receive help from fellow citizens and government when unable to do so (Rijksoverheid, 2013).

The Dutch government explicitly mentions that the declaration and its associated measures are directed at all migrants; coming from the EU as well as the rest of the world. Taking into consideration the free movement of laborers, it is considered crucial for EU-migrants to affiliate with the Dutch society. In this vein, Minister Asscher (Social Affairs and Employment) emphasizes that the task of informing newcomers is regarded a crucial responsibility of the Dutch national government: well-informed newcomers will be less vulnerable to instances of exploitation and abuse (Asscher, 2013).

The declaration of participation is just one component of a new approach "that aims to

[4] Original language: Particiaptieverklaring
[5] A video explaining and illustrating those values can be found here: http://www.gemeenteloket.minszw.nl/binaries/content/documents/gemeenteloket/documenten/dossiers/werk-en-inkomen/inburgering/nieuwsberichten/filmpje-kernwaarden/filmpje-kernwaarden/gemeenteloket%3Aattachments/gemeenteloket%3Afile

facilitate the integration of migrants[6]". Other initiative within this renewed approach include information sessions, languages courses, information leaflets about housing, employment, education and healthcare and lastly the appointment of specialized coaches that will help newcomers to find their way in Dutch society and ease the process of settlement (Asscher, 2013).

The pilot project, which introduces the declaration of participation as well as other information services has been initiated in January 2014[7]. The national government has approached municipalities all over the Netherlands where (relatively) high numbers of migrant are residing, according to the GBA. In total, over 15 municipalities are participating, ranging from urban cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam and 's-Hertogenbosch to more agriculture oriented regions such as Westland, Peel en Maas and Horst aan de Maas.

In relation to this pilot, a Polish migrant interest group has developed a so-called: "25 differences booklet. This is an initiative by the local government in North Limburg, in order to inform its Polish and Dutch residents about each other. The booklet consists of 25 illustrations which point out differences in day-to-day situations between Poland and the Netherlands. The explanation is both in Polish and in Dutch language.

[6] "De verklaring is onderdeel van een breder pakket aan maatregelen om integratie van migranten te laten slagen" http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/nieuws/2013/12/19/gemeenten-aan-de-slag-met-participatieverklaring-voor-nieuwkomers-in-nederland.html

[7] Indirectly related to the opening of labor market for Romanian and Bulgarian workers on 1 January 2014, which is mentioned in the governmental statement as an example of the necessity to protect labor migrants

6. METHODS

As this thesis is built on the importance of investigating and analyzing the viewpoint and experiences of migrants, the data collected through interviews form a crucial component of the research project. By involving the lived experiences of Polish migrants, the collected data will contribute to developing valuable insights in terms of the existing gap between EU-mobility in theory and on the grounds, as well as settlement strategies and obstacles.

6.1 Research methods

Regarding research methods, I decided to take a qualitative approach, because it allows for a more fluid, open research structure, which is crucial to obtain an in-depth understanding of the research topic. In order to collect the necessary data I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with members of the migrant community, and face-to-face expert interviews with regional policy makers. Following Seidman (2006), interviewing is the most suitable research method for the research topic I seek to explore; not finding specific answers but understanding the respondent's experiences, and how this impacts them.

6.1.1 Main themes

In the interviews with the migrant respondents, I asked them to evaluate on their migration trajectory so far. These interviews were focused at getting a better understanding of the obstacles experienced during residence in the Netherlands, successful settlement strategies, the decision making process and possible suggestions for facilitating the continuing intra-EU migration in the near future. I started every interview with a narrative question, and depending on what the respondents brought up we discussed various themes related to their migration journey and their experiences residing in the Netherlands.

Thus, the first question for every interview with migrants was formulated as follows:

"Can you tell me how you ended up here, in the Netherlands as well as in [current location]?"

Then we would discuss topics such as their migration background, current living and working situation, social networks, language skills and the process of learning Dutch, interethnic contact and relation with Dutch society, social life & leisure time, the Polish community in the Netherlands, and lastly future plans and expectations.

6.1.2 Expert Interviews

The first two expert interviews I conducted were focused at the perceived obstacles and problems regarding European migration from an institutional perspective, and how local governments deal with these issues. I was especially interested in what stance those governmental bodies took towards EU-migrants residing within their region: how did they protect them from abuses and exploitation, and what they did do to assist them to finding their place in society – be it temporary or permanent. These interviews had a more structured character, where we discussed the development of the inflow of EU-migrants and Polish migrants specifically during the past decade, the issues that arose over the years, the requests and needs from the migrant community, the government's current approach, and its expectations for the future. The third expert is an employer in the agricultural sectors, who almost exclusively hires Polish migrants.

6.2 Data collection & analysis

The data collection took place during the first two weeks of April, when I traveled to the Netherlands to conduct field research. All interviews except for one were conducted face-to-face, taking place at a location of the respondent's choice: their home, the workplace or at the community building of a migrant organization. The interviews generally lasted between 40-75 minutes, with two exceptions which lasted around 90 minutes. The language used was English and Dutch, depending on the respondent's preference. Most interviews were conducted on a one-to-one base, except for the interview with M1, M2, and F3 which took place in a group, and I interviewed F6 & M5 as a couple (see the table on the next page).

All interviews except for one were taped, which provided me the opportunity to completely focus on the conversation and the questions I wanted to ask. After each interview I wrote a little summary, on the profile of the respondent, the most interesting or striking remarks as well as some possible connections to earlier and later interviews, as suggested by Taylor & Bodgan, (1998).

Additionally, at the end of every interview I distributed a mini survey, where I asked for the respondent's year of birth, region of origin, current location, year of arrival in the Netherlands, reason for migration, current occupation, future plan and family situation. Most of the results are displayed in figure 6.

After the research trip, all interviews were transcribed in the language of recording. This was has the great advantage that you become very familiar with the Afterwards, the data was organized and labeled per theme, which helped me to select the most important issues and experiences, and link them to each other.

6.3 Respondents

As shown in figure 5 and 6, in total sixteen people were interviewed for this project: thirteen migrants, two policy advisors and one employer. Before my trip to the Netherland, the expert interviews and one migrant interview were already planned. In the meantime I approached Polish acquaintances and fellow villagers, local companies employing high numbers of labor migrants and the regional Polish cultural-educational association. Furthermore I tried to contact migrants through their children at the local school, as migrant children attending local schools in an important indicator for long term settlement (Vogels, Gijsberts & den Draak, 2014). Unfortunately, this method did not prove to be successful, which can partially be explained by timing. I planned to conduct the interviews one week before and one week after Easter, which is an important holiday for many Poles. Thus, various migrants I approached could not participate in an interview as they were leaving to

Poland to celebrate with family, whereas others indicated to have family coming to visit. Another impediment which I encountered during sampling is the fact that I am not part of the migrant community, I was approaching them with no pre-existing connection. Yet, as soon as I conducted a few interviews, and respondents introduced me to others, snowball sampling method helped me to approach more interviewees. Hence, the geographical dispersion of the respondents combined with the fact that I employed various channels to approach respondents reassures me that I am not conducting research in an isolated network.

In general, I was looking for Polish migrants who have been residing in the Netherlands for a longer period of time, as this would enable them to look back on their experiences in the past years. At first I planned to include only those who entered the Netherlands after 2007, as this was the time that the Netherlands opened up the labor market for the European labor migrants. But soon I realized that it is rather conflicting to use this year as a cutoff point, as a considerate group of Polish migrants were already residing in the Netherlands before that (see chapter 4). Instead, I decided to broaden my scope to the impact of Fifth EU-enlargement, to include those migrants who entered the Netherlands for the first time from the early 2000s onwards. Still, it is important to keep in mind that people are free to move within the Schengen zone, thus it does not mean that they have been residing in the Netherlands permanently from that moment onwards.

Secondly, it was my intention to speak to people who decide to settle permanently in the Netherlands. However, after researching current intra-EU migration, I realized that this indicator is rather complicated to control for, due to the current EU-context of free movement of people and the absence of labor market restrictions. Therefore I shifted my attention to people who have been residing in the Netherlands for a long time, regardless of their future intentions in terms of return or settlement.

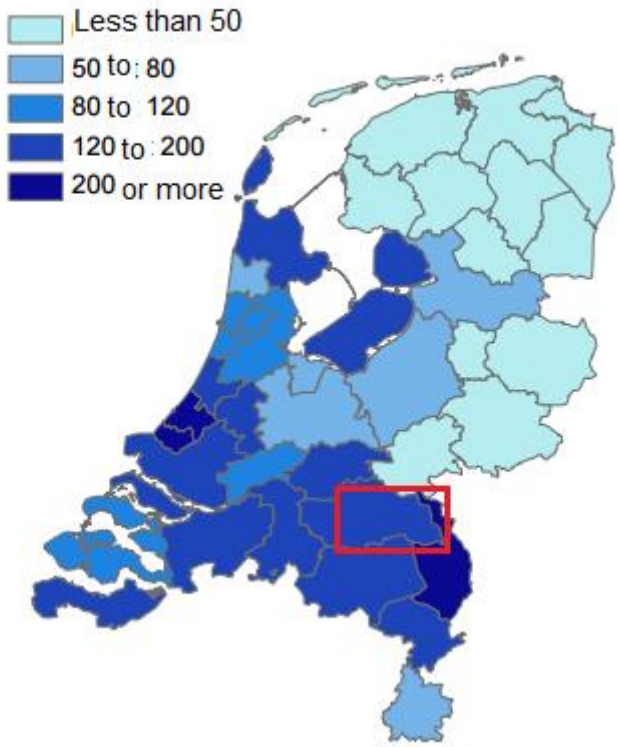

Figure 4: Density ration of Polish migrants in the Netherlands 2014 (ratio referring to relative number compared to Dutch population; where 100 indicates that regional division is equal to national share) Source: CBS, 2014

Due to applying the snowball sampling method as well as for logistic reasons, all the respondents in the sample are currently residing in North-East Brabant, as illustrated in figure 4. In addition, the map displays the geographical dispersion of Polish migrants in the Netherlands, which is calculated by the percentage of Polish migrants residing in the Netherlands compared to the relative regional population. As is clearly shown on figure , the region of my focus is hosting a considerable share of Polish migrants.

Following Ryan et al. (2009), the diverse sample – in terms of age, gender, relationship status and migration motivation – will provide me with valuable insights into the numerous factors at play in different situations, during various stages in life. As the thesis aims to bring in the 'human aspect' (i.e. looking beyond one's labor profile and economic contributions or costs to society), I think it rather advantageous to include all different types of perspectives, rather than excluding migrant experiences in advance because they do not fit the envisioned typology. Therefore I decided to move beyond the usual focus on the Polish

CODE	Function	REGION
E1	Policy advisor Gemeente Oss	East Brabant
E2	Policy advisor Gemeente Peel en Maas (Panningen)	South Limburg
E3	Employer Polish labor migrants	East Brabant

Figure 5: Expert respondents

temporary labor migrant as such, and instead incorporate the experiences of migrants with varying migrant motivation and future plans.

CODE*	YEAR OF BIRTH	ARRIVAL IN NL	MIGRATION MOTIVATION	CURRENT OCCUPATION	FUTURE PLANS	FAMILY SITUATION	LANGUAGE USED
F1	1984	2008	Dutch partner	Office job	Stay	Single	English
F2	1986	2008	Employment	Agriculture	Stay	Single	English
M1	1987	2007	Employment	Recruitment agency	Stay	Dutch partner + children	Dutch
M2	1983	2006	Employment	Self-employed	Stay	Polish partner + children	Dutch
F3	1994	2009	Family (parents decided for her)	Recruitment agency	Stay	Polish partner	Dutch
M3	1986	2007	Employment	Agriculture	Stay	Polish partner	English
M4	1995	2005	Family (parents decided for him)	Student	Stay	Single	Dutch
F4	1977	2002	Adventure	Looking for a job	Stay	Polish partner + children	Dutch
F5	1977	2003	Adventure	-	Stay	Dutch partner, children	Dutch
F6	1980	2008	Employment	Looking for a job	Stay	Polish partner, children	English
M5	1982	2011	Employment	Farmer	Stay	Polish partner, children	Dutch
M6	1987	2010	Employment	Bakery	?? [stay]	Polish partner	English
F7**	1979	2007	Dutch partner	Recruitment agency	Stay	Single	Dutch

Figure 6: Migrant respondents

** 'F'= Female, 'M' = Male*
***Interviewed over skype*

As one can see in Figure 6, the sample is rather equally divided in terms of gender, age and numbers of years in the Netherlands. When looking at the current inflow of Polish migrants, it turns out that rather younger migrants (aged 18-35) move to the Netherlands, with more or less equal numbers of men and women, which is also reflected in my sample.
Furthermore, I will provide some more information on the background of F4 and M4, who both play a crucial role within the local migrant community. F4 is the founder and director of the local Polish association. The association was founded five years ago, with the goal of sharing Polish traditions, offering Polish language and culture class for children and lastly function as a bridge between Polish and Dutch people living in Oss. I interviewed F4 about

her experiences being a migrant in the Netherlands, but we also discussed the role and development of the migrant organization, as well as the Polish community in Oss.

M4 is an employer of a shop with Polish delicatessen, attracting many Polish residing within the region. The shop forms an important hub in the migrant network, as for many newly arrived migrants it functions as the first point of contact for information or help. As a result, the shop developed an extensive network of different contacts which they refer new migrants to. The contribution of this information channel is substantial, taking into consideration that during a week day the shop welcomes around 100 customers, and even more on Saturday. Furthermore M4 is involved in organizing low-priced leisure activities for (temporary) migrants, to bring them together, stimulate sports and offer a positive alternative for just sitting at home. Thus, next to being a migrant themselves, both M4 and F4 play a crucial role within the informal migrant network in the region, which means that to a certain extent they fulfill an 'expert' role as well.

Lastly, I want to point out that all respondents working for a recruitment agency are hired by an agency that employs high numbers of Polish workers. This means that on a day-to-day basis they encounter many Polish migrants, both newly arriving and long-stayers. The insights and experiences from this occupation have also been reflected on during the interviews.

Regarding the expert interviews, I chose to interview policy advisors working in two different regions. To involve the perspectives of the municipality of Oss in my research was only logical, as most of the migrants I interviewed are living or working in this region. Furthermore I approached the municipality of Peel en Maas because they are participating in a

pilot program of the national government[8], and I found out that they take a rather active role assisting EU-migrants that are residing in the area.

Lastly, I spoke to an entrepreneur with a company producing fruits and vegetables, who employs 60 to 150 Polish migrants during the year. He provided valuable information, given the fact that in terms of labor, he exclusively employs Polish workers, which all reside at his farm.

In the following chapter I will analyze the results. For this, I will mostly rely on the input by the migrant respondents, as displayed in table 6. Therefore, when I refer to respondents or interviewees, this does not include E1, E2, E3,unless other specified.

[8] More information on this pilot is provided in context chapter on page 40

7 "WHY NOT?[9]" DECISION MAKING PROCESS AND SETTLEMENT

This section seeks to map out the sample in terms of migration motivation, decision making and settlement, in order to identify factors which contribute to the decision in order to stay in the Netherlands. First, the variety of migration motivations will be discussed, which contribute to deeper understandings of the actual settlement process. Then, I will outline different aspects and strategies regarding decision making. In sum, this sections seeks to illustrate the importance of both structural and personal factors in terms of decision making, both for migration and settlement.

7.1 Migration motives

When discussing the motivation for migration and the migrant's plans for the future, nearly all respondents indicate that their migratory trajectory has changed enormously over time. Not only terms of goals, but especially in terms of expected outcome. In line with previously discussed theory, many respondents point out that they approached the act of migration as a rather open-ended process, taking advantage of the option value of migration by not making long term decisions. Instead, they enjoy the freedom of mobility as provided by the EU, and base their decision to stay (or not) on the current conditions, influenced by both personal and contextual differences. This is well-illustrated by respondents who decide to prolong their stay in the Netherlands, even though the initial incentive to migrate is no longer overriding: after break-up with their Dutch partner (F1, F7); or labor migrants who decide to stay in the Netherlands during unemployment (F4, F6) for example.

In addition, in terms of decision making and evaluation of settlement strategies, the double reference system was prevalent in every interview. Irrespective of the topics discussed, migrants would always refer back to the situation in Poland, in order to justify and explain their decision to migrate, as well as to stay in the Netherlands. A clear example is provided by

[9] This is a quote by F2, answering the question why she migrated to the Netherlands

respondents with children, who indicate that the prospective for their children in terms of education and employment are significantly better than in Poland, which accounts partially for the decision to stay in the Netherlands (M2, F5, F6, M5). Thus, the respondents residing in the Netherlands are constantly referring back to Poland; how things are, how things were and how things should be. Hence, this comparative approach is not only applicable to the country of origin, but to the host society as well. One interviewee indicates that she returned to Poland after spending a year in the Netherlands, because she missed her family and friends. Yet, back in Poland she realizes that she misses Dutch culture even more:

> So I returned to Poland, and soon I found a new job at the municipality. But then after a few weeks... to my surprise, I realized that I was missing the Netherlands! The mentality, the culture, the way of organization, just so many things. […] So after two months in Poland I knew for sure I wanted to move back to the Netherlands (F7).

In addition, since migration and settlement decision are based on a collection of different factors and interest, it follows that current roles and expectations are shifting as well: nearly all respondents have moved from intended short-term residence to long-term stay; some migrants have grown from low-skilled, temporary work into high-skilled jobs (M1, F3, F7), and lastly there is the group of self-identified *temporary* labor migrants who are in practice long-term residents; and who can envision their future in Poland, the Netherlands, or a possible third country (F2, M3, M6). In this vein, it is important to realize that motivation for migration and arguments for settlement are two separate processes, where overlapping interests could play a role, but not necessarily do so.

Furthermore it is important to expand on the presumed economic character of migration from Poland. Exactly in line with the popular discourse on Polish migration to the Netherlands, some of the respondents were very straightforward about their financial incentives. This is clearly shown in table 1, where seven out of thirteen respondents indicate that they migrated for economic reasons. However, following Drinkwater & Garapich's

(2015) understanding of migration strategies, it is important to look into the – more implicit – non-economic incentives which together account for the migrant's decision making process.

As such, it appears that among the ' economic migrants' other interests such as job security, work ethic, social security arrangements or contact with colleagues play a role as well. Thus even though economic interests might be vividly presented in the foreground, choice regarding migration and settlement should never be understood as isolated decisions.

7.2 The importance of timing

Next to the multi-faced character of decision-making, I want to point out an additional factor: timing. When asked to reflect on the decision to migrate to the Netherlands, or to prolong their stay, numerous respondents answered that it was also matter of 'coincidence' or 'chance'. As such, regardless of the diverse character of the sample, I identified three trends among the respondents.

First of all, almost none of the respondents consciously selected the Netherlands as their migration destination. The majority of the respondents were either offered a job, decided to join family or were directed to the Netherlands via their social network. Some of the interviewees indicate that they were eager to live anywhere in Europe; Germany, England, Ireland, Belgium, Switzerland, Norway etc., as long as it was not Poland. Others were more focused on finding a job, regardless of its location:

> Because I just graduated from university and I had to find a job, I thought in Poland or in Holland, it doesn't really matter. (F1).

And it was the network, combined with some luck that drew them towards the Netherlands. Secondly, it was evident that none of the respondents made any decision in terms of long-term planning. When asked about their decision to migrate to the Netherlands, many interviewees indicate that they decided within '5 minutes or ' a day'. F1 describes her decision making process as *"a little bit of a crazy decision, I didn't really think about the future and I was*

madly in love". F2 indicates that she was predominantly focused on the potential gains of migration, not so much the location or duration of her stay:

> My friend just asked me if I wanted to go to a second country to get some extra money, better money. And so I think, OK why not? […] I didn't think that I would go to Holland, but I said yes, and then it [the destination] turned out to be Holland, ok it's Holland! We pack and we go. I didn't read anything. Nothing. (F2)

Also the planned duration of stay appears to be a very open-ended construct: respondents referred to it using vague terminology such as 'a few months', or 'when I earned some extra money'. As such, none of the respondents indicated a well-defined timeframe – which they actually kept:

> Only God knows [how long I'm gonna stay here]! From the beginning I thought I was only gonna stay for six months! And now I'm here for almost 5 years. And after those five years, I still don't know for how long I will be here. Maybe 5 more years? (M6).

And lastly, none of the respondents developed any specific expectations in terms of their stay in the Netherlands. On the contrary, many interviewees indicate that at departure they barely knew exactly what the employment or place of residence entailed. For this, they completely relied on their network of friends, family and acquaintances, and fully trusted their recommendations and experiences. This strategy – relying on via-via networks rather than following official, formal routes – continues to play an important role during the migrant's stay in the Netherlands. This partially accounts for the difficulties experienced by scholars and policy makers to map out the current situation and specific needs of the Polish (or: EU) migrant.

7.3 The settlement process

This section seeks to illustrate that decisions regarding settlement (where, how, for how long) are a little less simplified than how they are often presented. First of all, having children turned out to be the only definite trigger for migrants to make an actual decision in terms of returning or staying permanently. Other than that, I noticed that 'the myth of return'

was still very much prevalent among the migrants, not always explicitly or very much in the foreground, but for many respondents the idea of return to Poland was still very much present in their narrative. Some indicate that they are happy with their current life, but they also indicate that they hope they'll find a better job in Poland at some point, as they do not see their 'long-term future' in the Netherlands. I will expand on this phenomenon further on in the chapter.

Second of all, as migrants do not only represent 'labor force' or 'quest for financial security', many of the respondents' decision to migrate and/or extend their stay in the Netherlands was based on coincidence, or simply motivated by the cogent phrase 'why not?!'. I think this insight is crucial for a better understanding of the decision making process to further contextualize and interpret obstacles encountered during migration and settlement. Lastly, I think it is important to highlight that many of the respondents – even though they have been residing in the Netherlands for 5+ years – have postponed and still are postponing to take a decision in terms of permanent settlement. This is an important distinctive characteristic of migration taking place within the European Union, as EU-membership provides citizens the freedom to reside and work in other member states without any further restrictions in terms of visa requirements etc.

Overall, it is generally assumed that economic incentives are the overarching motivation in terms of outmigration and resettlement. However, I intend to counter this rather simplistic assumption which takes for granted that it is the economic gains that are overriding other (socio-cultural) struggles related to migration. In the interviews, money and financial security were an important topic, especially when reflecting on the decision to migrate; the reason to *come* to the Netherlands. But based on the responses and explanations by the interviewees, economic incentives might be a trigger for migration, but this is not a prevalent reason to *stay* in the Netherlands specifically (might be able to earn more in Norway for

example, or getting a better English-speaking job in the UK). Other compelling factors which influence at least temporal stay in the Netherland include, for example, the country's work ethic; Dutch moral and culture, future opportunities (also for the second generation). Speaking about the future, all respondents agreed that the current influx of Polish migrants will persist. Additionally, there are more signs that people decide to settle in the Netherlands, rather than pursuing a circular lifestyle, which was more common before. All interviewees expect that over the coming five years at least an equal amount (or more), mostly young people will migrate to the Netherlands. As M4 puts it*: "If life in Poland were good, no one would be here".*

In sum, it appears that due to the undefined character of the migration journey, it is challenging to present a clear-cut and long-term typology of Polish migrants residing in the Netherlands. From the interviews it became evident once more that the migrant's interests, preferences and evaluation of future opportunities play a crucial role in decision making and settlement strategies. Lastly, I want to emphasize that migrants are constantly reconsidering and adapting their current decisions and future plans, where their lifestyle is determined by various individual and structural aspects; both in the Netherlands and in Poland.

8. THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE FOR RECENTLY ARRIVED MIGRANTS

Due to the open-ended structure of data collection, the time spent on talking about language-related issues implies that the Dutch language is an important theme among Polish migrants. Many interviewees elaborated on the importance and benefits of speaking Dutch, and others expanded on the difficulties they faced during the process of learning Dutch. In this chapter I will first point out the advantages of speaking Dutch as given by the respondents, then I will describe and analyze the language proficiency within the sample, after which I will elaborate on motivations and strategies to learn the language. Lastly, this chapter seeks to provide insight and explanation on why a substantive part of the sample does not speak Dutch, even after residing here for 5+ years, and what this implies for the future.

8.1 Importance of speaking Dutch

First of all, eight out of thirteen respondents speak Dutch very well. The remaining four interviews were conducted in English, but this does not mean that those respondents did not speak Dutch at all, but simply not on level to have an in-depth conversation. Thus even though not all managed to learn Dutch (yet), there is an overriding consensus regarding the importance and benefits of learning it. This observation is generally in line with the former literature, where Polish appear to be eager to learn the local language[10].

When asked about the language, all respondents directly point out the advantages it (potentially) brings to be fluent in Dutch. An important theme related to this is independency and self-sufficiency in the various fields and encounters. From being able to fill out tax return forms and arrange health insurance, to participating in social [local] events and being able to communicate about personal issues with the assigned professionals. In general, speaking Dutch provides a severe freedom and practicality, as one migrant points out:

[10] E.g. Gijsberts & Lubbers (2014); Engbersen (2011)

> When I finally spoke Dutch, this made a huge difference for me. It was a lot easier for to interact and approach others, and to take care of my own business (F3).

This relates to the social aspect of speaking the local language, as various migrants bring up the difficulties encountered in bigger groups, when everyone is speaking Dutch and they cannot participate. Several migrants indicated that limited skills, or insecurity regarding their proficiency withholds them from taking part in social life, such as joining the local sports club, attending events or simply approaching Dutch people:

> Yes, I speak Dutch [pretty good], for example communication with institutions, that is really easy. But when I go to the pub for example, that's completely different! That is really hard for me [to understand] (M5).

Others point at the opportunities in terms of jobs and job security, as for example, M6 indicates that his employer will not offer a long-term contract to people who do not speak at least some basic Dutch – even in low skilled jobs. Also, three of the respondents enjoy a great benefit of speaking Dutch and Polish, as they are employed as mediators for a recruitment agency where their bilingualism is deemed crucial for interacting with Polish labor migrants as well as Dutch hiring companies. At the same time, this language benefit in terms of labor does not hold for other migrants, as they are currently employed in low-skilled jobs which do not require any knowledge of Dutch. If they were to apply for higher skilled jobs with a less flexible working scheme, this would mean competing with native Dutch people. For example, F4 and F6 postulate that currently it is challenging to find a [part-time] job with regular working hours.

Another obstacle that was brought up by nearly all migrants concerns the written communication with institutions. In the first place, it appears problematic to communicate with official organizations and their employees. The language used in correspondence has frequently been satirized. Secondly, many of the respondents indicated that it was especially

problematic to obtain understandable information in terms of eligibility for certain benefits, as well as legal responsibilities when working/residing in the Netherlands. The majority of the respondents solved this by relying on information provided by family, colleagues and acquaintances, and various respondents indicated that their employer generally took care of this.

Even though most interviewees were generally satisfied with the information and help they eventually received, local governments (E1, E2) indicated to be very wary of these kind of 'dependency-construction', which undermines the agency of migrants, facilitates unequal power balances between employer and employees, and possibly puts them in a vulnerable position in terms of exploitation and fraud. In response to this, many respondents applauded the suggestion for official channels to provide information in Polish as well. Following this, M6 expressed frustration with his experience that for issues regarding payment (i.e. tax institution, insurance, municipality) he "*received booklets in four different languages on how to pay tax*", but that there was no information in Polish available regarding unemployment benefits or other allowances.

8.2 Dutch-speaking group of the sample

When considering the migrants who speak Dutch (M1, M2, F3, M4, F4, F5, M6, F7) it becomes evident that all of them were highly motivated to learn the language. They all agreed that this is a crucial component in order to improve your proficiency in Dutch. Their motivation and effort are illustrated by investing a lot of free time, consuming Dutch media, translating and taking a lot of notes, attending language classes, and most importantly: having the courage to start speaking.

Another shared characteristic amongst this group is the fact that they all made the conscious decision to settle in the Netherlands. This is in line with the evidence presented by Tubergen & Kalmijn (2005), where expected duration of stay appears to have a strong effect

on motivation to learn the local language. Many respondents indicate that it was right after they had decided to stay in the Netherlands that they found themselves seriously committed to learn Dutch. This commitment is well-illustrated by the time and money the interviewees invested into the process of language acquisition. Furthermore, F4 and F5 postulate that not having a job provided them with the opportunity to take intensive language courses (5 hours a day, 4 times a week,) which without a doubt contributed extensively to their current Dutch skills. Thus, where other research projects emphasize the positive relationship between employment and language acquisition, in this case being unemployed contributed more to better language skills. But, at the same time F4 and F5 are clear to emphasize that this was a "*luxury position"* and that most of the other migrants simply do not have the means (i.e. time and budget) for this.

The final feature worth pointing out is the fact that all Dutch-speakers in the sample either have children, or were a minor when migrating to the Netherlands. Thus, having children who are growing up in the Netherlands can function as an important trigger to improve one's Dutch skills. All parents indicated they raise their children to be bilingual, where in most cases Polish functions as the main language at home. But, at the same time they are careful to find the right balance between Dutch and Polish. As F6 and M5 explain:

> F6: Our children[11] speak Polish very well, because at home we always use Polish.
> M5: Exactly, this is very important for us. Of course, Dutch is important at the moment, the most important actually. But [proficiency in] Polish is important as well. We will always be Polish, right?

The importance of bilingualism is endorsed by F4, who indicates that Dutch schools slowly start to acknowledge that bilingualism amongst children can function to enhance the linguistic abilities in both languages. As for F3 and M4, they migrated to the Netherlands as a child, which they see as a big pro in terms of language acquisition, since they were eligible to attend

[11] Who were 7 and 3 years old at time of migration, and are currently (3 years later) nearly native in Dutch; speaking without an accent and scoring above average in terms of spelling and grammar

Dutch high school. This turned learning Dutch into an immediate necessity, both in terms of academic and social interests. Both respondents indicate that they learned Dutch relatively fast, which they partly attribute to their intensive Dutch class and dedicated professors.

8.3 Non- Dutch speaking group of the sample

First, I want to emphasize that for the sake of describing the language proficiency among the respondents, I distinguish between Dutch and non-Dutch speaking groups. However, it is important to realize that this does not mean that those labeled as 'non-Dutch speaking' (i.e. F1, F2, M3, F6) do not speak the language at all. All of them understand some basic Dutch, some of them also practice some Dutch in day-to-day situations (in the shop, in the streets, with colleagues), and the majority have attended language classes in the past. Hence, their abilities in Dutch are rather limited and/or they do not feel comfortable or secure expressing themselves in Dutch. As mentioned before, respondents with limited language abilities nonetheless clearly endorse the importance of speaking Dutch, and are conscious of their disadvantaged position:

> But the big problem for me is still that I don't speak Dutch. This still is problematic. I hope that I will learn this more and I think I need this, slowly more and more (F2).

When looking for shared characteristics among this group, the first striking observation is the fact that none of the respondents see their long-term future in the Netherlands, or that they simply have not taken a decision about long-term settlement at all.

> Once you moved one time, it doesn't matter anymore where you are gonna live. I wouldn't mind, living in a different place: a different city, different village or different country, I really don't mind (F1).

The deficiency of a decision regarding settlement might be closely related to the motivation argument, as well as available time and funds to invest in language acquisition.

Furthermore, when discussing language, all non-Dutch speaking respondents agreed that time is an important issue here. Many indicated that free time is a scarcity for them, thus outside

working hours there is not much time and energy available to be invested in acquiring a new language. Moreover, not only the amount of available time but also the available timeslots appear to be an obstacle to language proficiency. As many respondents are employed – some of them working in different shifts – they do not have the opportunity to attend language classes generally offered during office hours.

Being employed relates to the following observation, which goes against former notions[12] regarding migrants' language acquisition. Since many non-Dutch speaking respondents work at places with predominantly Polish or non-Dutch employees, the main language at work is either Polish or English. This means that in this case, being employed results in less rather than more exposure to Dutch, as postulated in former research[13].

8.4 Proficiency in second language as barrier to acquire third language

Speaking of multilingualism, the interviewees agree that there is no overarching, pressing incentive to master Dutch, as it is relatively easy to go find your way by speaking English. All respondents applaud the level of English among the Dutch population; indicating that almost everyone, young and old alike, speaks at least some basic English. Although this can be very helpful for recently arrived migrants, some respondents indicate that it can function as a barrier to improving their Dutch. In other words, the widespread use of English in the Netherlands frequently functions as *"an easy way out*" (M1), where migrants are tempted to switch to English if they cannot think of the right word in Dutch.

This issue (great English skills being an obstacle to learning the language in the Netherlands) was first addressed by Gijsberts & Lubbers (2014), as this is very specific for the Dutch context. They formulate a hypothesis that recent migrants barely have the

[12] For example the 'language exposure thesis' (Driessen, 2004) or the 'isolation thesis' (van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2005)

[13] However, Dutch-speaking respondents indicated that they received a lot of support from their Dutch speaking colleagues, that they stimulated to try and speak Dutch, really appreciated their effort and were always helping to find the right words

opportunity to learn and speak Dutch, as the majority of the Dutch population will approach them in English. In this vein, it is anticipated that when migrants master a language which is widely spoken in the Netherland (i.e. English or German), there will be less incentives to obtain Dutch skills. This line of argumentation is with no doubt supported by the respondents of this research. Hence, next to the tempered motivation and necessity I would emphasize another dimension which holds back Dutch proficiency amongst English speaking migrants, which I refer to as the limited opportunity structure. This effect is two-fold: firstly, many migrants find themselves working in a Polish or English speaking environment (i.e. non-Dutch), which significantly diminishes the opportunity to practice and/or improve the language. Secondly, several respondents point out that when they try to speak Dutch (not faultlessly and with an accent), others try to be 'helpful' by automatically switching to English:

> When I'm in the shop and I'm trying to speak Dutch, for sure they hear that I'm having a different accent, and then they immediately switch to English (F1).

> And sometimes it's really funny, I try to speak Dutch but they speak English back to me (F2).

In this vein, several respondents indicate that after a while in the Netherlands they started to understand Dutch, but they miss opportunities to practice it. Additionally, if they had been forced to speak more, the process of learning Dutch would have been more manageable and their skills in Dutch would be much better. The respondents who do speak Dutch now, emphasize that it is thanks to their willpower and commitment that they managed to move away to from using English:

> The most important is: 'change your mind'. But, this is hard! The first two years I only used English, no Dutch. Oh really, this [changing to Dutch] was so hard! (M1).

When asked about what the best strategy to learn the language would be, the respondents are rather divided. Some learned Dutch in an ethnically-mixed class with people from China, Somalia, Turkey, Morocco etc, where the main language of instruction was English. Others emphasize that it is crucial to learn Dutch from a Dutch-Polish speaking instructor, so that the rules and background can be explained in the mother tongue. This approach meets resistance by other respondents though, as they postulate that this will only result in discussing issues in Polish, rather than practicing to speak Dutch.

8.5 Lingering language acquisition

In the last part of the chapter, I will go into the limited Dutch skills of some migrants who have been in the Netherlands for at least five years. Based on their own reflections, as well as the experiences of respondents who learned Dutch during their stay, the process of language acquisition comes down to necessity, motivation and time.

First of all, the necessity to learn Dutch is not so prevalent for Polish migrants in the Netherlands, as most of them speak good enough English which helps them to overcome the language barrier. Additionally, many migrants find themselves predominantly in Polish speaking environments, with Polish being the main language at work, at home and during social interaction. This is well-illustrated by E3, for example, who created a mini-society within his company, where he not only employs the migrants, but also provides them with housing (including food and laundry service) and access to healthcare, and takes care of translation where necessary.

Secondly, there is tempered motivation to invest time, effort and money into acquiring Dutch, as the expected benefits are rather limited. Dutch proficiency won't necessary lead to higher income or better working hours for example. Additionally, what is prevalent amongst Polish migrants is the concept of 'temporariness', which refers to the period of time they plan to invest in the Netherlands. However, in practice this temporariness turns out to be an

extendible and undefined period of time, as numerous respondents find themselves in the Netherlands for much longer than expected, without having specific plans to return to Poland shortly. Thus, the lingering idea that they will return at some point withholds them from investing in the Dutch language now.

Along these lines, the time to be invested in language acquisition is often not available, or is preferably spent in a different way. Many of the respondents stress that they have very limited free time, and on those occasions they often do not have the energy to do something. When I asked them to outline the ideal situation in terms of work/life balance: the majority indicates that they would prefer more free time which they would use to get to know their immediate surroundings, explore the Netherlands and improve their Dutch. However, many respondents stress that this is not feasible in the near future. Additionally, some respondents indicate that a chronic lack of time is partially inherent to Polish culture, as the Polish have a habit of always being busy with work, chorus around the house, family etc. (M1, M2, M4). So even if migrants had more free time, this does not per definition mean that they would be less occupied.

Lastly, I will point out that it seems that 'not speaking Dutch' is not a conscious choice, but rather something that happened over time. Most respondents have slowly grown into the habit of speaking English only, which makes it complicated to break this pattern.

In sum, it is clear that language is an important topic for all respondents. Regardless of their level of Dutch, motivation or strategy to learn it, all migrants agree that speaking Dutch is inherently related to self-sufficiency. Not only does it provide one with some level of independency, as one no longer has to rely on translations by others, at the same times it elevates barriers regarding interaction with locals. Interestingly, the disadvantage of speaking English too well is clearly prevalent in the sample, which might impede the migrant's future

developments regarding language proficiency, as the necessity to speak Dutch seems to have an overarching impact on the motivation.

9. THE POLISH COMMUNITY IN THE NETHERLANDS

This chapter discusses specific characteristics of the Polish migrant community, as well as strategies applied while residing in the Netherlands. First, the impact of social networks will be discussed, then I will discuss strategies in terms of access to information, and lastly the impact of the myth of return will be considered.

9.1 The power and implications of Networks

As already mentioned in chapter 7, networks play a crucial role in terms of recruitment and migration flows from Poland. E3 for example indicates that he recruits specifically from one region in Poland, and would not even consider a (Polish) applicant who is not recommended by one of his current employees. Furthermore, suggesting family and friends is very prevalent here, several respondents (F2, M2, M3) indicate that they have various family and friends working in the same company or region:

> I help my boss to find people who can work here, so that is why I can ask them [family/friends] to come here. Now it's so easy because so many people that I know very well, like my cousin, my sister, my brothers and sometimes my parents are working here as well. So then I can feel a bit like at home (F2).

Even though this appears a strong advantage for polish migrants, as it eases the migration process and in this way possibly functions as a trigger for migration, in the long term the network is partially experienced as an obstacle to settlement, and the migrant's quest for normalcy. For example, M4[14] points out that it is great that he knows so many people within the company, but that it also limits him in meeting other people outside the company. In his case, his colleagues are also his friends and his neighbors at the same time. That has many advantages – he even met his Polish wife at work – but it impedes social interaction outside this 'work circle': *"I don't know anyone outside this company".* Additionally,

[14] Educational background: obtained history degree in Poland, since graduation (8 years ago) working in low skilled agricultural job. When reflecting on the future, he expects to stay here at least 5 and maybe 10 more years.

because he got the job through help of friends, and lives so close with many of his colleagues and friends, it is difficult to leave the place and look for opportunities elsewhere. He indicates to be satisfied with the job, "*and I never looked for a different job*", hence at the same time it is evident that for the long term he pictures himself in a high skilled job but he does not have the opportunity to explore this option (also because: "*this job is OK, the pay is good*").

In the same vein, because of the closeness among workers, and many topics are interrelated (for some, housing and health care for example are provided by employer), there is not much room for criticism. F2 endorses this by reflecting on her experiences of being the supervisor of her close friends:

> They don't always like that. So that's difficult, sometimes they can get angry, and that's very hard when you are so close to each other, like friends (F2)

The part above sought to describe how closed and tightly-knit networks can be, and illustrate that – regardless of all benefits – the close involvement of networks is partially functioning as an obstacle as well. Lastly, I think it is important to explicate how next to the slightly suffocating effect *within* networks, there is a drawback *between* networks as well. Several respondents indicate that outside the close network, there is a lot of mistrust and rivalry amongst Polish migrants in the Netherlands. F7 elaborates on this competitiveness:

> Polish people are often working against each other. They are focused on themselves and their individual well-being, and perceive other Poles as rivals. Thus, they are not willing to help a fellow countryman, who they do not know" (F7).

This attitude implies that Polish migrants in the Netherlands are competing amongst each other, if they do not belong to the same network. M4 denotes that Poles have different priorities than helping others, many are here to earn money and thus are only focused at their own well-being.

9.2 Informal information chain

Judging from the strategies discussed by the respondents, the existence of (social?) networks deems to play a crucial role in access to information as well. When asking about

information services and taking care of issues such as tax, pension, social benefits, insurances, allowances, the majority of the interviewees indicated to rely on information provided by their family and friends. Thus, instead of expecting assistance or asking help from governmental institutions and apply the formal channels of information, it is far more common to obtain information via-via, through neighbor's advice based on acquaintances' experiences. Some respondents are very positive about it: *"I think we like inform each other, and that is quite a good network"* (F2), whereas others are more critical. Some of them (M1, M2, M5, F3) even indicate that this approach is very 'Polish':

> It's a common problem amongst Poles. They would rather lean on others than sorting it out themselves (M5).

Some attribute this to the legacy of socialism, which created a general attitude of mistrust towards others, and made Poles rather wary of governmental institutions. Others satirize the passive attitude and reliance of fellow Polish migrants, who take advantage of the situation if possible: "*Give them an inch and they'll take a mile*" (M4, F3, M1). This is endorsed by F4, who indicates that she could have a fulltime job by just helping others with translations, appointments and accountancy.

This type of information provision through informal channels is generally labeled as beneficial, as it makes it relatively easy to obtain information or advise from others. However, if the provided information is incomplete or incorrect, this can have huge consequences which are not easily made undone.

For example, M1 mentions that it is complicated to find out what information is correct, up-to-date and applicable, because every person you ask for advice will give a different answer, which are often contradicting each other. Hence, it is really important that you know one person you can trust, "*you have to be lucky enough to find someone who will explain everything and can advise you*". M5 endorses this, and indicates that he does not rely on

others anymore, but would rather spend "*one night translating the official website*". Additionally, when discussing access to information and assistance, all respondents mention services offered by fellow migrants, which include assistance with annual tax statements, regional registration, national insurance number, application for unemployment benefit and other translations. This can be of great help if the offered services are executed correctly and honest, which is not always the case. This partially explains the sceptics by some migrants (F4, F5, M4, M5) for relying on informal networks, as they mention that there have been many instances of fraud and deceit among the Polish community. They mention for example the exorbitant amounts of money charged for simple services such as registration; incorrectly filling out forms; falsification of applications; and the unlawful appropriation of funds. There has even been mention of one instance where such 'advise person' had to move away, as it turned out that she had scammed a huge group of people in the same region.

This behavior is strongly condemned, as most of those collaborations are generally based on trust and verbal agreements, so it is rather complicated to reclaim the money. And, even more problematic is the fact that much of these scams are frequently connived, as those people who fall victim are not familiar (enough) with their own rights and the Dutch legal system (F5, M4). However, it must be taken into consideration that the examples mentioned before are based on experiences of others, and are no personal accounts of the interviewees. This could possible point towards a variation of the integration paradox, which could be best as the paradox where those who are familiar with formal institutions do not need assistance, and those who are vulnerable for scams cannot be reached. M4 endorses this, and points out that Polish migrants are a difficult target group, as they are mostly directed at themselves, and are not inclined to ask for help outside their social network. E1 and E2 assert this, and point out that due to the unrestricted movement within the EU (thus no national registration of influx

and outflow) it is challenging to map out and reach possibly vulnerable individuals, and reach out to those who need it.

9.3 The impact of the Myth of Return

As described by White (2013), one of the characteristics of the new migration within the context of the EU is it open-ended and therefore undefined nature. Related to the postponed decision making process in terms of settlement, many respondents hint at 'a future return to Poland' in their narratives; some more explicitly than others. In this vein, it is striking to note that some interviewees present themselves as being temporary migrants, but over the course of the interview provide various clues that point at long(er) stay in the Netherlands. It is this belief in return – some day in the far future – that partially functions as an obstacle for recent migrants, and might impede them from more active participation in society. This is well-illustrated by F2,who explains her connection with Poland; and her preference to live there:

> At first I thought I don't need it [Dutch] so much because yeah I think I'm not gonna stay. I want to live in Poland, because I like this country, and [to live close to] my family and friends (F2).

However, soon after this she mentioned that she closed her shop in Poland as she expected it would not work out in the future anyways. Instead, she continues to work in the Netherlands:

> First only during the season, and then I stayed the whole winter. Later I worked more, almost one year, and then even more and more and.. I just stayed! But, I still think that, OK, someday I'm gonna come back [to Poland] (F2).

This indicates very well how the decision to continue to work in the Netherlands was not a conscious decision at all, but rather an ongoing process as time is passing. Yet, the idea of returning to Poland someday is still very prevalent in her narrative about the future; e.g. referring to Poland as the place where her [future] children will grow up. The same is true for

M3, who indicates to be building a house in Poland, but at the same time indicates that he would prefer to live in the Netherlands:

> If I had the choice, I would like to live here. I like living here in Holland better. For me it's, yeah, this country is good, looks good, you can have a good life (M3).

A similar effect of postponing a decision is prevalent by other migrants as well, which is evident when discussing how many years they have been residing in the Netherlands. Numerous respondents answered something akin to 'a couple of years', but when they actually started counting the years since arrival, it was always longer than they realized. I think this is very specific for the current migration flows in the context of the European Union, and will continue to influence settlement and lifestyle decisions of both recently arrived as longer residing migrants in the Netherlands. This multifaceted future perspective, combined with 'ongoing temporariness' causes migrants to overlook/disregard investment in their current life and environment.

Regardless of their intention to stay or return, it is important to acknowledge that they spend a considerable part of their life (5-10 yrs) in the Netherlands – and thus one should not put their social life and well-being on hold. In addition, many interviewees refer to 'return' as something that is supposed to happen on a huge scale amongst Polish migrants. However, when asking about or reflect on the success rate of those returns, no one was able to mention specific examples or stories. Thus, there is a widespread idea that a substantial part of Polish migrants in the Netherlands will return, but if and when this will happen is rather unclear. Yet, this myth keeps respondents from striving to self-reliance regarding their current life in the Netherlands, and explore their full potential within the current conditions.

In sum, this section sought to illustrate the power of networks within Polish communities, which can both be beneficial as suffocating for migrants; where migrants are not free or capable to explore options outside their circle. This two-folded effect is also found

for the reliance on informal information channels. For those who have a reliable network and obtain trustworthy information, it is a successful strategy. However, for those who need receive wrongful information and/or need specific assistance, it can have devastating effects. The pitfall of reliance on informal channels is that it is complex to locate the actual problems and resolve it – those in vulnerable positions are often elusory. The last part discussed the myth of return, which appear to be widespread among the Polish community. It is important that this – unwittingly – impacts the migrant's investments in the current lifestyle and decision in his quest for normalcy.

10. "WE TAKE THEM JOBS[15]" SOCIAL POSITION AND PREJUDICE

The final part of the chapter focuses on the social position of Polish migrants in Dutch society, and how this is perceived. First, migrants report on cultural differences between the Netherlands and Poland, and then the topic of stereotypes, prejudice and exclusion will be discussed. Next to reporting on their own experiences, many respondents reflect on the social position of Polish migrants as a whole.

10.1 Cultural differences

In general, the majority of the respondents indicate that it was relatively easy to move here, since there are many shared characteristics, and *"we are all European"* (F1). In this vein, the respondents agreed that they (being Polish) are much closer to Dutch culture than other migrant groups (such as Turks and Moroccans); thus integration is not so much an issue for them. However, when reflecting on their first years in the Netherlands, most respondents mention small, subtle differences in terms of culture and customs that they had to learn about, and are still getting used to. Since the differences are so subtle they are often disregarded, but this does not mean that they do not affect the migrant's experience of settling in the Netherlands.

Those respondents who attended the national integration course[16] as offered by the state, all appreciated the cultural aspect of it, next to the focus on language acquisition.

> We discussed Dutch culture, and I learned some important things about politics and history of the country. It was interesting (F1).

Additionally, others who attended only language classes or no class at all, indicate that they would have appreciated some information about the country and culture at arrival. Especially since many migration journeys commence rather spontaneous and with limited preparation,

[15] Quote by F2

[16] 'inburgeringscursus'. Depending on the year of arrival, some Polish migrants were still entitled to the Dutch integration program for foreigners, where next to language also the importance of Dutch values and traditions are being discussed.

the majority of the respondent indicates that they barely knew anything about the Netherlands at arrival. Hence, they needed some time to get used to a new culture, with different rules, values and communication. A concrete example refers to communication with institutions:

> People told me that UWV[17] had canceled their unemployment benefit, and they had no idea why. Even though they have read the letters saying they need a reply before the 15th of the month, they do not realize that if they answer by the 16th their benefit will be stopped, because Dutch institutions are so precise. Many Poles simply do not understand that this is how things work in the Netherlands, that things are organized this way" (F5).

Along these lines, the majority of the respondents indicate that they would have appreciated some more information about the Netherlands at arrival. A weekly course (following the idea of *inburgerscursus*) is considered too time-consuming and unnecessary, but some (1-3) open-ended information sessions discussing culture and regulations in the Netherlands could prove to be very helpful for newly arrived migrants. The "25 differences booklet[18]" is received with a lot enthusiasm, especially the fact that it is bilingual and refers to daily situation is much appreciated. Even though some interviewees question how many people would actually read it, most of them point out that it could be a nice, welcoming gesture for the municipality to its new residents.

10.2 Social position

Even though the interview questions did not inquire about stereotypes specifically, this theme came up in all interviews. It is apparent that after residing in the Netherlands for some period of time, all respondents are familiar with the existing stereotypes regarding migrants from the CEE region, and Polish migrants specifically. Some respondents indicate that they are not affected by it themselves; for example F1 explains that there are stronger prejudices directed at Polish men than women. Others are more explicit about it by stating "*I heard they*

[17] Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen' translates into Employee Insurance Agency

[18] This is an initiative by the local government in North Limburg, as part of the integration pilot. They developed a booklet with 25 illustrations which point out differences in day-to-day situations between Poland and the Netherlands. The explanation is both in Polish and in Dutch language.

don't like us", and *"Dutch people say we take their jobs"*. Especially the stealing-jobs narrative is very well-spread among the migrants, most of the respondents mentioned it at least briefly. But this is frequently followed by an account how they (migrants) take up jobs that Dutch people are unwilling or even incapable to do.

> Yes, we come here for work, but we don't work for the police or in supermarket or something, the most people work in the field, with their hands (M3).

Along these lines, it is argued that one will always be able to find a job in the Netherlands, as long as you have the right attitude and work ethic. E3 endorses this, and explains that he started hiring Polish people 17 years ago already, since there were no Dutch people available or suitable for this type of work. Currently, he exclusively employs Polish workers from one specific region.

Other prejudices that are mentioned include issues such as alcoholism, aggression, and drunk driving. Following this, it should be noted that the respondents are not only familiar with negative stereotypes regarding Polish migrants, but it is evident that this plays a role in their personal life as well. Some interviewees indicate that they have heard *"Goddamn Poles*" being shouted at them on the street, or their car has been kicked by Dutch youngsters, presumable because it carries a Polish license place. The most obvious example is reported by F2, who was aggressively questioned about her alleged illegal stay in the Netherlands. This person implied that because of her and other Poles, Dutch youngster were unable to find a job. She stood up for herself and pointed out that there are still vacancies at her company, but that not many Dutch are prepared to take up this kind of job. Additionally, she pointed out that by paying tax she contributes her share to Dutch society:

> And then he said: 'Yes yes I don't have anything against Polish people', and he just got more quiet.. But at first, he simply attacked me! Then I think to myself, OK this is not nice. But I'm used to that, already. It happened to me few times before.(F2)

Taken all together, the stereotype is very persisting, and some indicate that it will only worsen over time:

> The biggest problem is that they made up their minds already, and they don't know us, they don't see how we work. They just say: oh it's just not good that they [Polish] work here, because we don't have a job. First thing they do is talk!
>
> […] And if they [Dutch people] react like this now, why would it be better in a couple of years? Because still they are gonna be unemployed right? And, more people from Poland are gonna come. So, still we're gonna take their jobs yeah, and the same idea will persist. This is not just gonna change. It is just: They don't like us! (F2)

Nevertheless, when discussing these topics such as alcoholism and drunk drinking the majority of the respondents immediately indicate that they are rather critical of other Poles residing in the Netherlands. In this vein, they assert that those stereotypes *"are sometimes simply true"*(F7), and emphasize the image of short term economic migrant; *who is either working, sleeping, or drinking* (M4). They are like '*human machines*' (M6), just focused on making money in a short period of time. Other indicate that there is a severe amount of migrants with criminal records, without education, *who used to live on the streets in Poland* (M4), which activates more xenophobic attitudes among Dutch people. M5 and F7 endorse this, where F7 is concerned that more incoming Poles will cause [more] problems:

> To be honest, I am glad that there are no other Polish people living in my neighborhood. This would only cause problems and complaints! (F7)

In general, I found a very critical attitude towards the Polish community in the Netherlands among the respondents. On the one hand they clearly distance themselves from misbehavior of others, but on the other hand they are confronted with it themselves as well. Regarding their social position, they emphasize on the one hand that the idea of Polish migrants stealing jobs is very widespread and persistent, but at the same time they stress that only because Polish migrants take up those low-skilled jobs, many Dutch companies are still located in the Netherlands instead of somewhere abroad.

As discussed in the chapters before, not speaking the local language puts migrants in a more vulnerable position. And even though all respondents agree that you can around easily by speaking English, not speaking Dutch does in some instances lead to deliberate exclusion, as explicated by F7 and M6. M6 has met some people with a rather dismissive attitude:

> They approach it [the language issue] like this: You came here, so you have to speak Dutch. And even if they speak English pretty good, they don't want to speak with you. […] But then I think to myself, we are the guests, so we must remember this, and if we cannot communicate, than it's just like that and leave it. (M6)

This resigning attitude towards instances of exclusion and negativity is very prevalent in the sample. Some indicate that they simply forget easily, and others regard issues such as discrimination and exclusion as 'part of the deal' of being a migrant, being an "*outsider*" (F2). However, those instances do not only take place 'on the streets', but within institutions as well. Some mention situations where respondents have been told unlawfully that they cannot open a bank account, or that one is not eligible for unemployment benefit if you do not speak Dutch fluently. Luckily, in those instances there were friends or employers who could help them to sort it out, but this is not always the case. M4 is advising and assisting many newly arrived migrants, and he notices that there are a lot of miscommunication [tegewerking] happening within official institutions, and that it is sometimes made impossible for non-Dutch speakers to apply for benefits:

> I helped this one guy with his application, but if it wasn't for me, he would have never gotten the money. I don't know if this is happening on purpose, but it does happens regularly, and that's an issue (M4).

It is difficult to decide if these experiences are based on blunt miscommunication and bureaucracy, or if Polish applicants are deliberately treated differently than others. But it is worth mentioning that the majority of the respondents had such an experience, or knew that friends experienced something similar. Yet, it must be said that most respondents are focusing

on the positive encounters with Dutch people, and many speak with warmth about their employers, colleagues, neighbors and acquaintances. And even though there are encounters of prejudice and exclusion, most interviewees indicate that overall they feel very welcome in the Netherlands.

11. Discussion & Conclusion

This thesis sought to analyze the lived experiences of recently arrived Polish migrants in the Netherlands, paying special attention to decision making processes and the quest for normalcy, in order to obtain a more in-depth understanding of successful strategies and possible obstacles to settlement in the Netherlands. By doing so, this research project contributes to a more complex understanding of migrant settlement in the Netherlands, as well as in the bigger EU-context.

In the first part of the thesis, theories regarding migration have been discussed. Starting from a very general approach it was narrowed down to intra-EU migration, to findings on Polish migration in the Netherlands. The most important aspect is the emergence of a new type of migration; taking place within the unrestricted border context, intra-EU migration is more open-ended and multifaceted than ever before.

In the subsequent section, the context of the specific migration flow was outlined; discussing various push factors in Poland, as well as pull factors in the Netherlands. Additionally, the current influx of Polish migration has been described, followed by an account on the Netherlands as a migrant receiving country.

The analytical part is focused on the decision making process regarding prolonged stay, as well as on migrant settlement strategies. The empirical research revolved around the following question: *Why do recent Polish migrants decide to remain in the Netherlands; what strategies do they apply, and which obstacles do they possibly encounter?*

Hence, it should be emphasized that it is not assumed that all Polish migrants will stay; nor do I claim in this thesis that the majority of the Polish migrants are long-term residents. Instead, I sought to analyze the lived experiences of migrants residing in the Netherlands, and in order to be able to reflect on past experiences, I included migrants with long-term residence (i.e. at least 5 years) only.

As follows from the analysis, one can identify four major themes with regards to decision making and settlement. Next to the open-ended character of recent migration (which allows for postponing the decision making process), it should be acknowledged that migrant's personal interests, preferences and current evaluation of future opportunities are of crucial importance with regards to settlement. Additionally, the quest for normalcy among migrants is also emphasized. In relation to this, three themes have been identified which appear to play an important role in the migrant's perspective regarding settlement (be it long term or short term).

First, the importance of language is highlighted, as all migrants acknowledge the benefits and contributions of this skill. Additionally, the role and structure of social networks within the Polish community have been analyzed. Interestingly enough, the evaluation of this phenomenon is two-fold. At first glance, it appears a helpful and powerful tool which assists migrants to find their way in a new country. However, if the system is too tight, it can have negative implications for its members in forms of completion, exclusion and group pressure for example. Lastly, the social position of Polish migrants was mentioned, which has been highly debated, both by the general public as the migrants themselves. Nearly all migrants are familiar with the stereotypes around Polish migrants.

For further research, I would suggest to conduct the interviews in the native language of the respondents. Even though there did not occur any misunderstandings at the time of the interview, little nuances might get lost in translation. Also the fact that the interviewer is Dutch, asking respondents to reflect on their experiences living in the Netherlands, can possibly have colored or limited the input and reflections of the respondents In terms of analysis, it could worthwhile to split the sample, and compare experiences and strategies of respondents arriving in different time spans; before and after 2007 for example.

In sum, it can be concluded that Polish migrants are constantly debating and

evaluating the current situation, even though it might appear that they do not take a decision regarding settlement at all. Yet, postponing the decision suggests implicit decision-making all together. Notwithstanding, regardless of the strategy being applied, it is with certainty that there are many different factors taken into consideration.

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