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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Modern Languages

Narratives of Economic Migration.

The case of young, well-qualified Poles and Spaniards in the UK.

by

Dan Jendrissek

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2014

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

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NARRATIVES OF ECONOMIC MIGRATION.

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This thesis investigates the dynamics, motivations and external factors influencing the migration trajectories of 22 young, well-qualified Polish and Spanish migrants in the South of England. The study is among the first ones researching the current movement of people from Spain to the UK in the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2007/08, and comparing it to post-EU-accession migration from Eastern Europe.

The methodology involves semi-structured, autobiographical interviews focusing on participants' migration experiences, with a particular focus on their professional ambitions in the UK labour market.

The findings of the study demonstrate how both groups interpret emigration as an act of establishing a certain form of normality, be it social, economic or individual. Overall, however, the narratives reveal differences that run along the lines of nationality. In the Polish narratives in particular, a strong focus on the immediate present becomes evident. The present life in the UK, no matter how challenging, is almost always compared to a past in Poland that is retrospectively defined as 'abnormal'. Participants create a discourse of escape that is then used to make sense of an often 'not ideal' present in which participants, despite being university educated, spend prolonged periods of time in low-level jobs.

The Spanish narratives, on the other hand, tend to be highly politicised and participants display a strong sense of individualisation and political anger. Most narratives are characterised by an 'ideology of progress'. Spain is referred to as a space of personal and professional stagnation, while time spent in the UK is seen as a conscious investment in human capital such as English skills. The aim of this investment is the establishment of a certain socio-economic status in the future, and menial jobs in the UK are acceptable as long as participants work towards that goal.

In summary, the thesis analyses how both groups react to social and economic changes in times of a global economic crisis, and describes how participants tend to meet unknown circumstances with a known set of behavioural dispositions.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Dan Jendrissek, declare that this thesis entitled

Narratives of Economic Migration.

The Case of Young, Well-Qualified Poles and Spaniards in the UK.

and the work presented in the thesis are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:

Date:.....

Abbreviations

A8	so-called ‘Accession 8’ countries (states that became EU members in 2004: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia; see also EU8)
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
DA	Discourse Analysis
DWP	Department for Work & Pensions
EU8	EU8 countries (same as A8)
EU15	EU15 countries (member countries in the European Union prior to EU enlargement in 2004: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom)
INJUVE	<i>Instituto de la Juventud</i> (Spanish Youth Institute)
IPS	International Passenger Survey
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LTIM	Long-term International Migration
NINo	National Insurance Number
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PCM	Polish Catholic Mission
PERE	<i>Padrón de Españoles Residentes en el Extranjero</i> (Register of Spaniards Resident Abroad)
RIE	<i>Real Instituto Elcano</i> (Elcano Royal Institute)
WRS	Worker Registration Scheme

Chapter 1: Introduction

But always I was thinking to go back to Spain I was thinking 'And what then?' I knew before then that the crisis was getting worse. I know a lot of friends who after university they spent one year thinking 'Okay re-one year trying to find a job, if not, we will do a Master's.' And they still in the same after two years. No, I didn't think really about it. It was never a possibility, honestly no possibility.

(Miguel, 24, Fine Arts graduate from Spain)

I came here in 2006. I started from, as usual, you know, factory work. [...] And again it was supposed just for a first few months, and I stayed there, I think almost two years. I got DEPRESSED [chuckles], 'cause it was 12 hour shifts, you know, doing exactly the same, every hour, every day, you know. (Pawel, 35, former English teacher from Poland)

Miguel¹ moved to Southampton at the age of 21. A student of Fine Arts in Spain he decided to spend his Erasmus year in England. That year, however, coincided with a severe worsening of the economic crisis in Spain, and as job opportunities in Spain were gradually disappearing and youth unemployment was rising, Miguel decided to stay in the UK. He started working as a waiter, earning minimum wage, barely managing to make ends meet, and in one of the most memorable parts of the interview he talks about strategies on how to live on £50 a month after paying all bills. Returning to Spain, however, was never an option. In his account, the crisis transformed the country into a space where personal and professional progression is impossible for the time being.

Pawel was in his late 20s when he migrated from Poland to England. In Poland he had worked for several years as an English teacher in a school, a job, he says, that covered the cost of living, but did not allow for any 'luxuries' like holidays abroad. Fed up with the constant 'struggle', a word he keeps reiterating whenever he talks about life in Poland, he moved to Southampton and immediately started working in a local factory, doing menial, monotonous work for nearly two years.

¹ Pseudonyms have been used throughout the study to ensure participants' anonymity, and utterances revealing details about participants (e.g. street names, names of friends) have been anonymised throughout the text.

Pawel and Miguel are representative of a significant number of participants in this study: young, degree-level educated, yet employed in precarious and/or low-level jobs in the UK economy. However, as much as Pawel and Miguel may have in common in terms of education and employment, there are also striking differences. The above excerpts, for example, represent two related, yet very different discourses that become prevalent time and again throughout the interview corpus of this study: on the one hand a discourse of progress in which Spain is a space of personal and professional stagnation, and in which the only option to 'get ahead' in life is the accumulation of human capital abroad; on the other hand, a discourse of escape in which the narrator gets away from the 'struggle' of daily life in Poland and accepts doing menial work as it is still better than life in Poland. Put simply, the aim of this study is to understand why participants like Pawel and Miguel leave their country of origin, what they set out to do in the UK and what particular circumstances shape their respective migration projects. The overarching research questions this thesis sets out to investigate, and which I am going to discuss in greater detail later (section 3.7), are:

1. What are the underlying dynamics, motivations and external factors influencing individual migration trajectories, especially with regards to people's professional ambitions in the host country?
2. In what way do national factors affect inner-European, transnational migration projects of individuals?

Because quantitative methods cannot provide an adequate, in-depth analysis of personal experience, the study uses a qualitative research design of semi-structured narrative interviews (n=22) with young, well-qualified Spaniards and Poles living in Southampton and on the Isle of Wight. In this study, all Polish participants are 'post-accession migrants' – they moved to the UK after Poland became a member of the European Union in 2004. Spanish interviewees, on the other hand, could be called 'post-crisis migrants', meaning that all of them relocated to England after the onset of the global financial crisis of 2007/2008 (for a detailed description of the study's sample and a discussion of the sampling criteria see section 4.2).

In order to answer the above research questions, three areas are of particular interest to this study: first, the level of qualification people bring to the UK and their subsequent position in the UK labour market. Labour Force Survey (LFS)

data indicates that Polish and Spanish migrants have a higher level of education than the native UK population (see section 2.5), yet, Polish migrants in particular tend to work primarily in menial jobs in hospitality and construction or the service sector. Only few studies (Trevena 2011, 2013) have paid explicit attention to the situation of well-qualified, young migrants who are fluent in English but spend extended periods of time in low level jobs in the UK labour market. This study contributes to an understanding of this phenomenon by investigating the dynamics regulating this mismatch and asking how far individuals have the possibility to influence the situation.

The study's second major area of investigation is related to the aforementioned job-skill mismatch, but explores the interaction of structure and agency in participants' narratives more generally. Some youth researchers claim that global economic changes and altered life courses are giving young people greater power to re-conceptualise adulthood and to make life decisions than previous generations (Dwyer & Wyn 2001; Arnett 2004, 2006), while others argue that today biographies are entirely self-produced (Beck 1986, Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002). Taking this research corpus as a starting point and applying it to the context of migration, this study asks: What level of freedom to create and shape an individual migration trajectory do interviewees present, and how far do factors like gender or social class become prevalent in their accounts?

Thirdly, the role of time and temporalities for the individual migration project will be investigated. As Griffiths, Rogers and Anderson (2013) point out, migration has so far primarily been understood as a spatial process in which people get from A to B, but limited attention has been paid to the temporal dimensions of migration. For example, to what degree are life-cycles influenced by the decision to migrate? With regards to young, well-qualified people, is there evidence that the act of emigration can be interpreted as an act of actively delaying adulthood? What role does time perception play and how does a perceived temporariness of the migration project influence participants' behaviour, for example, do low-level jobs become more 'bearable' if perceived as 'only temporary'?

This study investigates two very different, recent migration streams to the UK: Polish and Spanish. As will be outlined throughout this thesis, Polish post-2004 migration has had and continues to have a major impact on public

debate on immigration in the UK. For example, Labour leader Ed Miliband repeatedly claimed that his party mishandled immigration from Eastern Europe: in 2012 he declared that “one of the areas where we had got things wrong and needed to change was immigration”; while there was “nothing wrong with anyone employing Polish builders”, there was a problem with “local talent” being “locked out of opportunity”.² Mr Miliband has reiterated his position since: in a party political broadcast in 2013 he announced a crack-down on “low-skill migration” and called for “the maximum transitional controls for new countries coming in from Eastern Europe”.³

Prime Minister David Cameron, too, emphasises the role of post-2004 migration from Eastern Europe for current immigration policies by arguing that “when new countries join the European Union it is important to put in place transitional controls and it’s wrong that this didn’t happen with Poland and the other countries that joined the EU in 2004.” (Cameron 2013)

Without wanting to analyse Labour and Conservative positions on immigration further, what the above examples demonstrate is the on-going importance of especially Polish immigration to the UK, not only in political discourse, but also as the basis of current immigration policy. In other words: the study is dealing with a ‘real life’ topic and is a timely contribution to the on-going debate on immigration to the UK.

Polish migration to the UK started to become a large-scale movement after the country’s EU accession in 2004, largely due to Poland’s high (youth-) unemployment at the time. Migrant numbers peaked in 2007 and have been declining ever since. Not only is the impact of this East-West migration still shaping the current political debate in the UK, it has also attracted a lot of academic attention, reflected in hundreds of books, articles, working papers and theses on post-accession migration from Poland to the UK, covering almost every angle of this social phenomenon.⁴

² The speech was given at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) on 22 June 2012. A full transcript is available here: <http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/event/2012/06/events-speech-emiliband-120622.pdf> [accessed 29 May 2013]

³ The broadcast has been made available online on 5 March 2013 and can be found here: <http://youtu.be/vDELSPXMwIY> [accessed 29 May 2013]

⁴ See the publication list of the Polish Migration Website, University of Bath: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/polis/networks/polish-migration/publications/> [accessed 12 December 2013]

Recent Spanish migration, on the other hand, has so far attracted hardly any attention from scholars or politicians in the UK, which could be explained by the fact that this particular South–North migration is only just becoming a large–scale movement. At the time of writing, Spain is one of the countries most severely affected by the global economic crisis; both current unemployment and youth unemployment rates in Spain are higher than in Poland at the time of EU–accession, contributing to a steady increase in emigration rates. This study is among the first ones in the field of migration research to investigate the case of recent Spanish migrants in the UK and compare this particular South–North migration stream to post–accession migration from Eastern Europe.

Two research sites have been chosen: the City of Southampton and the Isle of Wight. The choice of Southampton was motivated mainly by two reasons. Firstly, there is a relatively large number of Polish born citizens living in Southampton (see section 2.4), as well as a growing Spanish community.⁵ Secondly, although there is a large number of migrants living in the city, Southampton cannot be characterised as having a particular metropolitan culture or urban atmosphere that makes cities like London so attractive for young, international migrants (Conradson & Latham 2005a&b, Datta 2011, 2012). In fact, none of the participants in this study expressed any deeper attachment to the city, and references were almost always negative.

Of course, even though the Isle of Wight is easily accessible from Southampton – the ferry across the Solent takes only 20 minutes – the island is a very different research site: especially the Southern part offers a ‘picture postcard image’ of England, making it a popular tourist destination in the summer. However, none of the participants actively chose the island as a migration destination, and moving to the island had been a coincidence for all interviewees. As I will discuss further in section 4.2, the locality in itself is highly insignificant for participants, and therefore the decision has been made to include participants living and working on the Isle of Wight.

⁵ This increase has not yet been captured statistically, however, almost all of the Spanish participants confirmed that more and more Spaniards are coming to Southampton. Also, informants working in the health sector were talking about the recruitment efforts of Southampton’s hospitals that are targeting medical staff from Spain. Although these reports can at the moment not be backed up with empirical evidence, it is expected that this increase in Spanish migrants will become evident in statistical surveys in the near future.

The dynamics of the individual migration projects in places like Southampton or the Isle of Wight are different from cities like London, for the locality in itself is unimportant and the relevance of the locality becomes evident only in aspects like professional opportunities or social networks.

As pointed out above, Polish migration to the UK has attracted (and is still attracting) political as well as academic attention. Comparing this particular migration stream to the recent inflow of Spanish migrants offers the unique opportunity to gain new insights into a) labour migration in contemporary Europe in times of a global economic crisis, b) the significance of the UK as a migration destination in this context and c) the overall dynamics shaping individual trajectories of economic South–North/East–West migration.

Chapter 2 will contextualise the Polish and the Spanish migration stream statistically. The chapter briefly outlines the imbalance in academic attention to Polish and Spanish migration, and then analyse the available statistical data. Among the discussed and applied data sources are, among others, the 2001 and 2011 UK Census, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the International Passenger Survey (IPS). Strengths and weaknesses of these and other sources will be discussed and key information concerning Polish and Spanish migrants in the UK will be presented. The chapter demonstrates that Polish large-scale migration to the UK started after the country's EU accession. In-migration doubled in 2004 within a few months and peaked in December 2007 at around 110,000 monthly 'arrivals'. Since then, in-migration from Poland to the UK has been declining, and recent research shows that while degree-level educated Poles tend to settle in the UK, those with a lower level of education tend to re-migrate to Poland (Anacka & Fihel 2012). Spanish migration, on the other hand, has increased only recently, with a steep rise in National Insurance Number (NINo) applications in the tax year 2011/12 and a further increase in 2012/13. In addition, the economic situation in both countries over the last decade will be taken into consideration in order to contextualise both migration streams further and to explain differences in onset and peak of both in-flows.

As for the educational profile, Spanish as well as Polish migrants are on average highly qualified. More than 30 % of Polish born citizens in the UK are

degree level educated, and LFS (Labour Force Survey) data indicates that numbers for Spanish migrants are even higher⁶. Although being predominantly degree level educated, at least for Poles the primary employment sectors are manufacturing and construction, sectors that offer rather labour intensive, menial jobs, and that do not necessarily reflect people's qualifications.

Chapter 3 will present the conceptual framework underlying this study. As all of the participants are young, the concept of *delayed adulthood* will be discussed. Due to non-linear and non-standard life courses traditional markers of adulthood are becoming increasingly inadequate to describe the transition from youth to adulthood. While some scholars claim that the uncertainty of the life-course offers more freedom and agency to young people, others argue that social categories such as class, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation are still determining the life course of individuals. One aim of this study is therefore to investigate how structure and agency in participants' narratives interact in the context of voluntary, economic migration, and how this relates to the overall life-cycle of young adults.

Furthermore, the role of time and temporalities in individual migration projects will be explored. As will be shown, especially a perceived temporariness of migration supports the development of a certain lifestyle in which migration can, for some, be a 'time-out' from the prescriptive sequentiality of the life course. A model of human agency will be introduced that takes different temporal orientations into account. Investigating the Polish case further, the chapter will also review work discussing the influence of the country's communist past and *collective memory* on migrants' present. This conceptual groundwork leads towards the development of the study's research questions covering the areas of interest described above. The research questions (cf. p. 10) will be discussed in greater detail at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 4 will deliver a detailed description of the data collection process and the analytical approaches taken. The study uses a 'blended' approach, combining three methods for the analysis of narrative, autobiographical interviews: positioning theory, thematic analysis and discourse analysis. Positioning theory is concerned with how actors in a (life) story are positioned

⁶ However, numbers for Spanish born citizens in the UK should be considered carefully, as Spaniards seem to be vastly underrepresented in the LFS (see section 2.5).

towards each other, and how the narrator positions him-/herself in relation to these actors and towards the researcher. An analysis of these different positions taken and assigned in the narrative makes aspects of identity work visible and is applied as a first step towards understanding the individual stories.

Thematic analysis, on the other hand, is more concerned with the content of the entire narrative. As will be shown, generating codes and themes is particularly useful to investigate the occurrence of certain themes across the interview corpus. 'Knowledge' will be used as an example to demonstrate the different connotations and functions the theme can have in individual narratives: while one Polish participant interprets knowledge of English and of institutional structures in the UK mainly as a means to escape abuse and discrimination and to enable others to 'fight back', another Polish participant utilises the theme to differentiate herself from co-nationals. To her, her knowledge of English language and society is a reflection of her middle-class background, and this is what makes her different from the majority of Polish migrants in the UK who have a negative connotation throughout her narrative (see section 4.6.4).

Finally, discourse analysis is applied to explore how individual narratives are designed. As will be demonstrated, the application of particular linguistic means is very closely influenced by the narrators' ideological understanding of these means. In this context, discourse analysis is used to unveil the meaning of structures that 'hide' below the surface of the individual text.

Through a combination of these methods the analysis moves from individual narratives to the study's data corpus and on to discourses and power relations prevalent in wider society and circulated in the media and public debate.

Chapter 5 will explore the three most prevalent themes that emerge in the narrative corpus: 'Normality', '(Un)Preparedness' and 'Habituation'.

For all participants the main objective of their migration project is the (re-) establishment of a certain form of perceived 'normality'. This objective results from an experience of absence; something that is inaccessible in the home country is expected to become available in the destination country. I differentiate between three different levels of normality: economic, societal and personal.

As for economic normality, I outline the monetary underpinnings of the individual migration projects. All participants want to achieve or re-establish socio-economic progress, but Spanish and Polish participants express this form of normality very differently. I will demonstrate what role consumption, participation in a Western consumer society and investment in human capital play in this context.

On a societal level, both groups tend to narrate their respective home countries as 'not normal'. Scale and nature of this narrated 'abnormality', however, differ largely in Spanish and Polish narratives. While the former demonstrate a strong political anger, the latter give evidence of how the (non) fulfilment of certain roles are sanctioned in the home community. These forms of social pressure may be reframed in a migration context, but do not lose their impact on individuals.

On a personal level, many participants narrate the act of emigration as an act of escaping the boredom of everyday work life and a step towards coming back to a 'true self'. Also, the end of a long-term relationship is often interpreted as a moment of change, finally giving participants the freedom to fulfil long-term goals like travelling and experiencing life abroad.

These different levels of normality are often interlinked and highly complex, and I will demonstrate how economic aspirations are only one factor motivating participants to migrate to the UK.

'(Un)Preparedness' will explore the different migration strategies participants apply. In some cases, the move abroad is approached with detailed and careful preparation – one participant, for example, reports designing an Excel spreadsheet, calculating different factors for different cities in the South of England like the availability of jobs, the presence of co-nationals and even the British weather. On the other hand, there is the 'popping-down-the-road' approach: most Polish participants decide to 'give it a try' and arrive in the UK rather unprepared and without a predetermined objective.

Both strategies are heavily influenced by different temporal orientations, and these, I argue, eventually shape very different migration trajectories. A focus on the immediate present, on 'giving it a try' and 'having a good time', becomes more problematic the longer the migration project lasts, while

temporal orientations towards the future seem to lead to migration strategies that limit experiences of ‘drifting’ and ‘time-out’.

Finally, ‘Habituation’ will offer a detailed analysis of two of the participants’ life courses and migration trajectories: Tomás from Spain and Danuta from Poland. Using Bourdieu’s (1986, 1990) concept of *habitus* it will be shown how migration trajectories can be heavily influenced by the time prior to emigration, to a degree that life in the receiving country resembles a mirror image of the life participants intended to leave behind. This *habitus* existed prior to emigration, it is the ‘baggage’ migrants bring to their country of residence, and it is in this context that ‘habitual underemployment’ becomes visible.

Chapter 6 will then summarise the findings of this project and connect them to the research questions governing this study, as well as apply these results to the conceptual framework discussed in chapter 3. Furthermore, fields for further research will be outlined, for example, the influence of participants’ UK experience on their overall life course. More longitudinal data is needed to explore whether young, well-qualified migrants can achieve a ‘return on investment’ to the experience and qualifications gained in the UK. Finally, potential policy implications will be discussed.

In summary, this project compares two migration streams: one very well researched, which in terms of scale is past its peak and is currently in decline (Polish), the other one under-researched, with a steep incline in in-migration to the UK taking place since 2012 (Spanish). The in-depth analysis of participants’ narratives will show that the dynamics influencing individual migration trajectories are highly complex and do not work according to mere economic ‘push’ and ‘pull factors’. It will become evident that the ‘baggage’ people bring from their respective home countries, their expectations and perceptions, are as influential for individual migration projects as the opportunities they encounter in the country of residence.

Chapter 2: Contextualisation

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to contextualise current migration flows from Poland and Spain to the UK. The chapter is not to be understood as an extended literature review; as will be explained below, there is an abundance of scholarly research on the migration from Eastern and Central Europe to the UK, but hardly any research investigates the current movement of young Spaniards to England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Due to this imbalance, the chapter will contextualise both migration streams statistically, that is, offer a description and interpretation of the quantitative aspects of both migration movements.

At the time of writing, the Polish Migration Website of the University of Bath, one of the most extensive publication records available, lists more than 50 individual academics working in the field and more than 300 publications and unpublished papers dealing with the migration of Poles⁷. Especially since Poland's EU accession in 2004, it has become "fashionable to talk about Polish migrants" in an academic context (Garapich 2008: 124). This is hardly surprising given the increase in migration and the on-going prevalence of the subject in public discourse in the UK.

It is therefore rather surprising that Spanish migration to the UK in the aftermath of the global economic crisis of 2007/2008 seems to have been largely ignored in scholarly research. As this chapter demonstrates, existing literature on the issue almost exclusively focuses on Spain's economy and financial sectors, while the majority of Spanish research tends to explore past migration movements rather than current ones. Currently, Spanish migration to the UK has not reached the scale of post-accession inflow from Poland; however, the recent rise in in-migration from Spain is certainly worth investigating.

⁷ <http://www.bath.ac.uk/polis/networks/polish-migration/publications/> (accessed 21 March 2013)

To start with (section 2.2) I will briefly outline previous research; as will be shown there is an imbalance in the amount of literature available for Polish and Spanish migration to the UK. I will then present a brief overview of the data sources available and describe their contributions and limitations (section 2.3). Using some of these data sources I will then analyse increases and decreases in migration from both countries, as well as explain the changing push and pull factors influencing both migration streams (section 2.4). An investigation of the demographic profile and the educational attainment of Polish and Spanish migrants resident in the UK will demonstrate that both groups on average have a higher educational level than the native population, yet, especially Poles tend to be employed primarily in low-level sectors of the UK economy (section 2.5) and experience a form of underemployment, that is, “the situation where individuals have qualifications such as education and skills that exceed job requirements” (Erdogan & Bauer 2009). As I am going to demonstrate, this phenomenon is particularly evident for Polish citizens working in the UK; problems with the available data sources make it difficult to analyse the labour market performance of Spanish migrants. A concluding section (2.6) will summarize this chapter’s key findings.

A note on terminology: by now it is common practice to refer to those countries that became members of the European Union in 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) as ‘EU8’ countries, and the wording of many recent publications and data sources does reflect this. However, especially in the years after 2004 the term ‘A8’ countries has been used to emphasize the recent ‘accession’ of these eight countries. This study will generally use the term ‘EU8’ countries, but will also refer to the ‘Accession 8’ where this term is used in the discussed original publications and data sets.

2.2 Previous research

As mentioned earlier, the amount of research on Polish post-accession migration to the UK has grown to a point where this particular migration stream can almost be considered ‘over-researched’. Areas of investigation are manifold. Burrell (2011) identifies four key themes in current research on

Eastern European migration to the UK: migration motivations, work, social networks and local settlement. However, due to the interconnectedness of these themes it is difficult to group the existing literature into one category. Section 5.1 demonstrates how much these themes can be interlinked when, for example, loose friends (social networks) help to find accommodation (local settlement) and work. There is, however, a common thread to the majority of the existing scholarly literature: all of the studies are dealing with a recent migration stream that is primarily economically motivated. I will demonstrate this by outlining findings of studies with a broader focus, such as investigations on the impact of East–West migration on particular regions, before exploring studies with a more specific focus, such as investigations into certain employment sectors.

In recent years migrants are beginning to settle in different regions from where they historically settled. Especially post-accession migrants have moved to a larger number of different areas of the UK than have any previous groups of migrants (Pollard et al. 2008: 28). In particular, Scotland and the North East of England have seen a proportionally higher influx of foreign-born people since 2008 (Reid & Miller 2011). One emphasis in scholarly literature is therefore the geographical dispersion of Poles throughout the UK, and their impact on receiving regions.

De Lima & Wright (2009) explore the growing numbers of EU8 nationals in the Grampian region of Scotland. In accordance with the trend for the whole of Scotland, in 2002/2003 only 20 people from EU8 countries applied for a National Insurance Number (NINo). This number rose steeply to 3010 in 2005/2006, with Poles being the largest group in rural Grampian. In Scotland 69% of EU8 nationals are employed in mainly low-skilled jobs in hospitality, agriculture and food processing, and more than 80% earn less than £6 per hour (Jentsch et al. 2007: 36), although more than half of the participants in Jentsch et al.'s study had degrees or diploma level qualification, but were undertaking semi-skilled or unskilled work.

Researching another aspect of Polish post-accession migration to Scotland, McGhee, Heath & Trevena (2013) focus on the housing situation in Glasgow. Although primarily living in low-demand housing in areas of social deprivation, the participants in their study were willing to compromise: social housing in Glasgow was still perceived as being superior to living in cramped, extended-

family households in Poland. Based on the same research project, the authors demonstrate how participants contrast life in Poland, narrated as a place where they could barely make ends meet, to the affordability of life in the UK. Although half of the participants were well educated and had had better standards of employment in Poland than in the UK, their accounts of life in the UK are shaped by a “ ‘revision of normality’ through the everyday practices of shopping, living, earning” (McGhee et al. 2012: 724). Even though participants are working below their professional qualifications, the majority is in favour of life in the UK as it is perceived as ‘more normal’ than life in Poland.

Similar to (rural) Scotland Eastern European migrants in the North East of England are primarily employed in the low-paid, low-skilled sector. As Stenning & Dawley (2009) demonstrate, 30 % of registered EU8 workers work as ‘process operatives’ (i.e. factory workers), and the next most important categories are cleaners, domestic staff, kitchen and catering assistants. Local and regional employers “appear to be advocating, implicitly if not explicitly, the employment of migrant workers to maintain and reinforce the regional low-skills profile, and to delay investment in workforce development and training, enabling and encouraging the region to compete around cost-competitiveness” (Stenning & Dawley 2009: 289).

Similar to Stenning & Dawley’s findings, Cook et al. (2008) argue that the Polish community in Leeds seems to fill a gap in semi-skilled or unskilled sectors of the labour market where employers have difficulties recruiting workers from the local population. Again, the study concludes that a large proportion of EU8 nationals are overqualified for the jobs they are doing, a fact that is repeatedly confirmed by local employers throughout the study who, nonetheless, praise the ‘Polish work ethic’.

The overqualification of Polish migrants is reiterated in studies on the EU8 population in Peterborough and Liverpool (Scullion & Morris 2009a, b). In Peterborough the percentage of Polish migrants holding an undergraduate or postgraduate degree is 17% (2009a: 54), while in Liverpool 37% of the Polish respondents graduated from university (2009b: 61). What is interesting about both reports is the comparison between the previous level of employment in the home country and the current employment situation. While 27% of the respondents from the Liverpool survey were employed in the top three occupational levels in Poland (i.e. managers and senior officials, professional

occupations, associated professional and technical occupations)⁸, this number falls to 11% in Liverpool while at the same time the percentage of Poles working in elementary occupations rises to 58% (2009b: 69–72).⁹

Another study focusing on the North of England has been conducted by Gill (2010) who explored the place-making strategies of recent Polish migrants. Focusing on the Polish Catholic Mission he demonstrates that the church is not dominant in the diasporic community anymore, because the cohort of ‘new’ migrants is nonreligious, an aspect relevant for the research design of this study (see section 4.2).

Moving from the North to the South and narrowing the research focus on a particular employment sector, Ayona Datta’s work (2009a&b, 2011a&b) concentrates mostly on the experiences and practices of Polish construction workers in London. She finds Polish builders in a marginalised position at the lower end of the labour hierarchy. In their (visual) narratives, however, participants construct themselves not as marginalised, but as superior to the English builders due to versatility, sophistication and work ethic.

Investigating another major employment sector of Polish migrants, Janta et al. (2011, 2012) explore the experiences of Polish workers in the tourism sector. Half of the participants in their sample hold a university degree and one in five is studying at a university in Poland and coming to work in the UK during the semester breaks. The authors argue that relationships with multi-national co-workers are understood as contributing to “a sense of cosmopolitan citizenship” (Janta et al. 2011: 1337), and that low-status work is seen as a form of investment that may underpin further upward labour mobility once linguistic, social and cultural capital are developed.

White (2011 a, b) explores different aspects of family migration using the concept of livelihood strategies, that is, people’s perception of how to make a better living in specific places while taking into account what is feasible and appropriate. Her research shows that decisions about return migration are very

⁸ For a detailed description of the Standard Occupational Qualification (SOC) used here see the Office for National Statistics’ website: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/classifications/current-standard-classifications/soc2010/index.html> [accessed 13.12.2013]

⁹ The list of regional studies on A8 migration to particular areas of the UK could easily be continued (e.g. for Leicester: Burrell 2003/2008, for London: Datta 2009a, b, Ryan 2011, for Belfast: Kempny 2010, for Rochdale and Oldham: Hunt et al. 2008).

often made on the basis of comparisons of local livelihoods (e.g. London v Sanok, not England v Poland). Based on her findings, White rejects prognoses about large scale return migration to Poland as most families, especially those with school-age children, would seem to prefer to stay in England rather than disrupt their children's lives by returning to Poland.

Similar to White, Ryan (2011) investigates Polish family migration to London, with a particular focus on how families “may be split, reunited and reshaped through the process of migration” (Ryan 2011: 80). Her participants talk about separations and split families as being a painful aspect of their economic migration project, and most of them were planning family reunifications.

Researching another aspect of family migration, Lopez Rodriguez (2010) focuses on the interaction between schools and Polish families. The author argues that the reproduction of social class does not seem to affect Polish children to the same degree as English families. One of the reasons the study presents is the meritocratic mind-set of Polish migrant mothers, i.e. the conviction that the UK is a ‘land where anybody with talent and the will to work hard can make it’.

As this brief overview¹⁰ has shown, the majority of recent research on Polish migration to the UK investigates a large-scale form of voluntary, economic migration. This particular migration stream is not characterised by upward social mobility; most studies outline how Polish migrants find themselves at the lower end of the UK labour market. As Düvell & Garapich (2011) point out, recent EU8 migrants tend to give in to the requirements of deregulated labour markets and keep the option of return migration open, however, they are “often unable to progress professionally because they get stuck in the secondary labour market” (Düvell & Garapich 2011: 16).

Although a vast amount of research on Polish migration to the UK has been conducted throughout the last decade, a number of research gaps can be identified. As outlined above, many studies mention and describe the phenomenon of highly-qualified, young Poles working in low-level jobs, yet,

¹⁰ For a more extensive literature review on post-accession migration from Poland to the UK, Burrell's work (2009, 2011) is a good starting point, so is the aforementioned (section 2.1) Polish migration website of the University of Bath.

only very few studies have investigated the topic in detail (see, for example, Trevena 2013). On a similar note, although almost all scholars point out that Polish migrants on average are young, no one has explored research on youth-adulthood transitions in the context of voluntary migration – the works of Burrell (2011) (cf. section 3.5) and Roberts (2009) point in that direction but do not offer a qualitative in-depth investigation of the topic. Finally, the role of time and temporalities in the context of migration, remains a field to be explored (Griffiths, Rogers & Anderson 2013). Investigating these areas will therefore be one of the contributions of this study to the field of migration research.

The abundance of scholarly literature on Polish migration stands in stark contrast to research on Spanish migration to the UK. Recent research on Spain has been conducted mainly in the field of economics, focusing on economic modelling and the impact of the global financial crisis on the Spanish economy (Institute for Labour Organization 2011, Boscá et al. 2011).

Bravo-Moreno (2006: 1) points out that there is very little work on Spanish migration to London in particular, “although this has been one of the largest migrations from Southern Europe”. On a similar note, Pozo-Gutiérrez argues that

Spanish migration to Britain [...] has not received much attention. One of the reasons lies in the fact that the UK did not enter into any 'guest workers' programmes or treaties of the kind that Spain subscribed to with other countries. Instead, migration to this country was mainly carried out by individual migrants relying on close social networks or with the intervention of private agents, and therefore is much less documented. (Pozo-Gutiérrez 2005: 16)

The above citation touches upon an important period of Spanish migration. The Franco regime actively supported emigration due to the recession the country experienced for many years. In 1959 Franco created the Spanish Institute of Emigration, which assisted people in leaving the country between 1960 and Franco's death in 1975. Because there had been no 'guest worker' programme between Spain and the UK, Spanish authorities regarded migration to the UK as 'irregular' and 'clandestine'. The scale of Spanish migration to the UK during this period is still unclear, and as a consequence Spanish migration during that period “went almost undetected” by social sciences in the UK (ibid.: 18).

Spanish as well as English research has largely focused on ‘assisted migration’ under the Franco regime: while Babiano (2012) investigates the social history of Spanish emigrants in Europe in general, Orizo (1999) explores the lives of Spanish immigrants in Belgium, and Garcia (2002) focuses on Spanish migration to Australia during the late 1950s and early 1960s (a migration stream that later became known to the wider public as *Operación Canguro*).

Other research has dealt with the lives of Republican exiles under Franco who fled, for example, to Argentina (Schwarzenstein 2001) or Mexico (Faber 2002), while a majority of scholars focuses on emigration to the Americas from the 17th century onwards. Sanchez Alonso (1995) and Vives (1992) explore the Spanish migration to North and South America during the late 19th century, while others take a more regional perspective: Yanez Gallardo (1996) analyses emigration from Catalonia to the Americas in the 19th century, Soldevilla Oria (1998) focuses on Cantabria and Anes Alvarez (1993) on Asturias.

Another research stream investigates the history of the *niños de la guerra*, Spanish children who were evacuated during the Civil War and the Second World War to the UK and Russia and who in some cases did not return to Spain after the war. Devillard et al. (2001), for example, explore the lives of those children sent to Russia, while Pozo– Gutiérrez (2012) collected the life histories of some of the surviving children who, after the bombing of Guernica in the Basque region in 1937, were sent on board the SS Habana from Bilbao to Southampton.

A vast research gap, however, can be identified with regards to current migration streams from Southern Europe to the UK. One exception is the work conducted by Beswick & Pozo–Gutiérrez (2010) who analyse the sociolinguistic and sociocultural practices of Spanish and Portuguese migrants in Bournemouth. However, their participants are not ‘recent’ migrants but have largely come to the South of England in the 1960s and 1970s.

A possible reason for this research gap might be that, as section 2.4 will show, the scale of Spanish migration to the UK is still small compared to post–2004 migration from Eastern Europe. In addition, at the time of writing public debate in the United Kingdom seemed to be preoccupied with a potential inflow of citizens from Romania and Bulgaria, for whom restrictions to participate in the

UK labour market were about to run out in 2014. Spanish migration, it seems, is currently not on the agenda of the government or the social sciences.

While this section has briefly outlined the imbalance between academic research on migration from Poland and Spain to the UK, the following section will explore the available data sources to describe in- and out-migration. As will be shown, all numbers presented in public debates or the media are mere estimates, and most data sets have severe limitations, especially when it comes to data on migration from Spain to the UK.

2.3 Statistical data sources

The aim of this section is to deliver a brief summary of the statistical data on migration to the UK, describing the various data sources and their strength and weaknesses more generally. The following section (2.4) will then present actual data on Polish/EU8 and Spanish migration where available.

An understanding of these data sources, their contributions and limitations, is essential to contextualise this small-scale, qualitative study, but also to understand on-going debates in the UK media about scale and impact of in-migration on the economy and the labour market. Furthermore, the social and economic transformation Europe witnessed over the last decade is often directly reflected by individual narratives; macro- and (narrative) micro-level are inevitably linked (see chapter 4). One of the objectives of this research is therefore to discuss quantitative data to provide context and background for understanding the scale of migration and the drivers influencing it.

Before starting to describe the data sources commonly used in research on migration to the UK, it has to be said that the UK does not keep a detailed record of in- and out-migration by European Citizens, therefore all data presented in this section are estimates. What Pollard et al. (2008) point out for migration from Eastern Europe can be applied to migration from any EU country: “We do not yet know for certain how many Eastern Europeans are in the UK, what they do, how long they are here for and who leaves.” (Pollard et al. 2008: 7)

The most commonly used dataset in research on migration from Eastern Europe has been the **Worker Registration Scheme (WRS)**, which closed on 30 April 2011 (see screenshot Figure 2). The Scheme was introduced by the Labour government as a last-minute clause “in order to calm public worries in the run up to May 2004” (Pollard et al. 2008: 13), that is, the month in which the so-called ‘Accession 8’ (A8) countries – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia – became members of the EU and gained the right to exercise labour mobility within the EU. One striking characteristic of the WRS data is that the majority (66%) of applicants between May 2004 and March 2009 were Polish (Figure 1). Given the latest UK Census results it can be assumed that Poles are still the largest group of former A8 citizens in the UK (section 2.4).

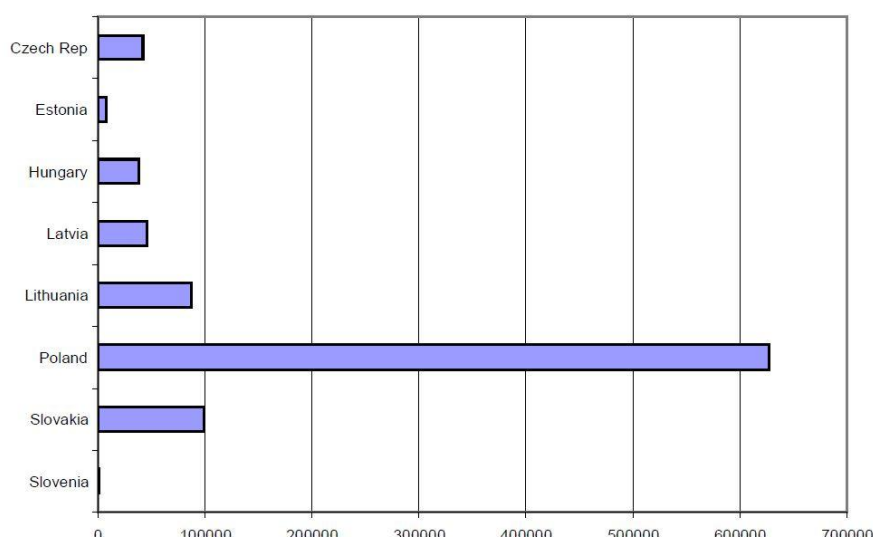


Figure 1: Nationality of approved applicants for the Worker Registration Scheme, May 2004 – March 2009 (Home Office 2009)

Since Spain was one of the ‘founding countries’ of the European Union¹¹, the WRS (Worker Registration Scheme) never applied to Spanish citizens, and WRS data on Spaniards working in the UK does not exist. EU8 nationals, on the other hand, were allowed to take up work in the UK as long as they registered with the WRS and paid the registration fee of initially £50, later £90. Only after being employed for 12 consecutive months with not more than 30 days’ break

¹¹ Spain has been a member of the European Community since 1986 and was therefore one of twelve countries signing the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which established the European Union in its current form.

were workers allowed to apply for a residence permit, claim social security benefits and did not need to register anymore if they changed employers. Currie (2007) argues that this legislation pushed migrants into low-skilled jobs in labour-intensive sectors, because once entering the UK there was only a 30-day period within which a migrant could search for employment before being classified as being unlawfully resident. Especially those migrants who did not make work arrangements before entering the UK could see themselves in a position where they took on the first job available. Because workers had to re-register every time they changed jobs, many migrants became reluctant to change occupation and risk breaking the twelve-month employment continuity regulation (Currie 2007: 92).

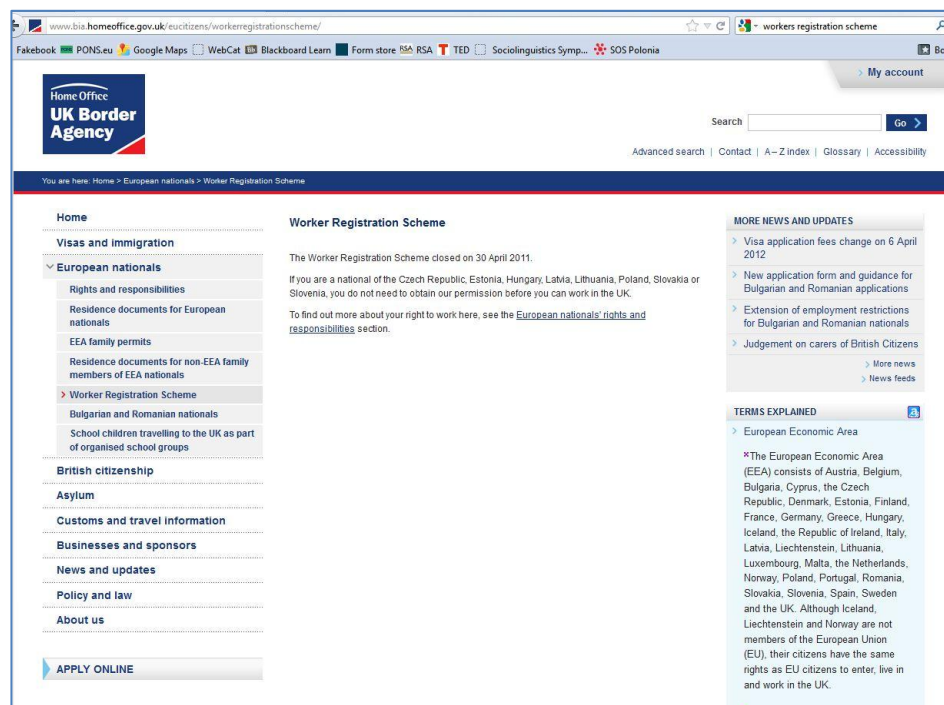


Figure 2: The Worker Registration Scheme closed on 30 April 2011 (screenshot, May 2012)

The WRS recorded data on the year of registration, nationality, date of birth, gender, occupation, industry, initial wage and location of the employer as well as intentions regarding length of stay and relatives living in the UK. Despite this abundance of data the WRS has some severe limitations; for example, self-employed workers and au pairs were not required to register with the scheme. Given the fact that most of the workers in the construction sector are self-employed and that a large number of EU8 nationals are known to be working in

this sector (Anderson et al. 2006: 105), it can be stated that the WRS numbers do not necessarily reflect the actual in-migration from EU8 countries to the UK. In addition to that, the scheme depends on voluntary registrations. Due to the very low level of prosecution of companies employing EU8 migrants who were not registered with the WRS and because of the registration fee that in most cases had to be paid by the migrant workers, it can be assumed that an unknown (but significant) number of migrants has been working in the UK without registering with the WRS. Furthermore, the WRS collects data on inflow exclusively as migrants have to register once they take up employment, but do not need to de-register once they leave the country. Therefore, “WRS data does not provide any information on outflow or on migrant stocks.” (Trevena 2009: 10) In summary, the WRS could either have over- or underestimated the number of EU8 workers in the UK and it is important to keep in mind that all WRS data is an estimate at best.

Another tool often used to gain data on migrant workers in the UK is the allocation of **National Insurance Numbers (NINo)**. NINOs are generally issued to non-UK nationals working, planning to work or claiming benefits. During the application process data on the date of arrival in the UK is collected in addition to age, gender, nationality. The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) regularly publishes reports based on this data. Again, there are several limitations to NINo data. This source (like the WRS) does not capture out-migration or length of stay; a NINo is issued once and is valid indefinitely, therefore the data cannot be utilised to make statements about the current number of overseas workers in the country at a given point in time.¹²

An additional, though in research less often used dataset is the **International Passenger Survey (IPS)** collected by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which is also used as the primary source for the generation of **Long-Term International Migration (LTIM)** data (see section 2.4). Information from about 250,000 passengers entering or leaving the UK is collected annually by surveying passengers at UK ports. It is “an excellent source of information on aggregate flows in and out of the UK” (Pollard et al. 2008: 8) and is the only source measuring emigration. However, there are limitations, mainly because the IPS (International Passenger Survey) defines a migrant as someone who

¹² For more information on NINo allocations see the DWP website:
http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/index.php?page=nino_allocation_arc [21.03.2013]

intends (!) to stay in the UK for at least a year and thus does not cover actual length of stay or intended short-term migration. The sample of the IPS is very small (0.2 % of all travellers), so the data on 'migrants' (given the above definition as someone who intends to stay longer than a year) is even smaller. As a result data is subject to a relatively high sampling variation (Clark & Drinkwater 2008: 501).

In addition, LTIM data (based on the IPS) presents numbers on migration only on aggregate levels of EU15 and EU8 countries, not country specific. Therefore, as Poles are the majority of EU8 migrants, LTIM data can be used as an indicator for Polish migration to the UK (although by no means accurate), but as EU15 countries include Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, this more aggregate level cannot be used to draw conclusions on the number of Spanish citizens coming to the UK. The IPS does present data on the number of visits to the UK by country, but these numbers capture tourism rather than migration and stand in stark contrast to actual migration data as indicated, for example, by National Insurance Numbers (see section 2.4).

Another commonly used dataset to be discussed in this section is the **Labour Force Survey (LFS)**, carried out quarterly by the ONS (Office for National Statistics) in either face-to-face or phone interviews. The survey looks at the employment circumstances of the UK population and was not generally designed to collect data on migration to the UK. Nonetheless, it does include questions on country of birth and nationality. Approximately 41,000 UK households, representing about 0.16 % of the UK population, are included in the sample and each household is surveyed in five successive quarters (ONS 2011b: 9). As I am going to demonstrate in the following section, the sample is too small to gain data on a particular group of migrants. To make any analysis statistically robust and reliable it is therefore common practice to generate a larger database by combining data of several quarters in order to increase the sample size.¹³ While the LFS is an important tool to gather data on the migrant population in the UK, there are also shortcomings, e.g. the fact that especially recent migrants are likely to refuse to answer the survey due to language

¹³ For a more detailed discussion of statistical ways of working with and analysing the LFS see for example Pollard et al. (2008: 9f).

limitations or an ‘unofficial’ resident status. Furthermore, although data on particular countries of birth is available in the LFS microdata, significant numbers are presented only on the aggregate level of EU15 and EUA8. These aggregate levels do to some extent allow for conclusions on the level of qualification and the labour market performance of Polish born people in the UK, but cannot be used for a valid analysis of the employment situation of native Spaniards (see section 2.5).

Finally, one of the most complete and reliable data sets on the population of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is the **Census**, carried out every ten years, with the latest census being held on 27 March 2011. In England and Wales, 25 million household questionnaires were sent out or delivered by field staff, and participants could choose between submitting their answers online or in paper form. There is a legal obligation to complete and return the questionnaire, and a fine of up to £1000 has been introduced for citizens refusing to take part in the census. The response rate for the 2011 Census was 94 %, with response rates ranging from 82 % to 98 % by local authority (ONS 2012c). While the census offers the largest data set of all sources discussed so far, there is a time-delay in the analysis and subsequent publication of the data. For example, the fourth and last release of 2011 census data for England and Wales took place between August and October 2013. The proposed content covered aspects such as ‘country of birth by age and sex’ and ‘sex and age by ethnic group’. It is important to keep in mind that census data may, by the time of its publication, already be outdated; what the data describes is the state of affairs on a Sunday in March 2011 and data may already have changed significantly two years later. On a similar note, it is important to keep in mind that when comparing the 2011 to the 2001 census, data does cover a decade, but does not describe what happened during that decade. For example, according to the 2001 census 56,679 Poles were resident in England. Ten years later this number increased almost tenfold to 561,098 (ONS 2001, 2012a). Stating the obvious, this increase cannot be understood as a linear process, and the data does not give information about peaks, plateaus or changes within this decade.

The above mentioned data sources – or a combination of them – are most commonly used for generating statistics on in- and out-migration to and from the UK as well as on demographic characteristics of certain groups of

migrants.¹⁴ While this section has given a general introduction to the different data sources available, the following section will explore the scale of and differences between recent Polish and Spanish migration to the UK. As will be demonstrated, although far more Poles than Spaniards are living in the UK, the inflow of Spanish citizens is currently intensifying in a way similar to Polish migration after 2004.

2.4 The scale of migration

The aim of this section is to outline the scale of recent Polish and Spanish migration to the UK. Where Census data is presented the numbers will focus on England and Wales, as these are the two main destinations for migrants from Poland and Spain.¹⁵ Other data sources like National Insurance Number applications, on the other hand, give information for the UK as a whole.

As explained previously (section 2.3), the UK does not keep a detailed record of in-migration from EU countries, therefore all data presented here should be understood as only an estimate.

In 2011 the total population of Poland was 38.5 million, with 71.5 % being in the age group 15–64. In terms of residents, Spain is the bigger country, with a total population of 46.2 million and a working age population¹⁶ of 67.8 %. The UK, in comparison, had 62.7 million residents in 2011, of which 65.8 % belonged to the age group 15 to 64 (World Bank 2013).

The 2001 and 2011 census data, shown in Table 1, reveal the difference in scale between Polish and Spanish migration to England and Wales.

¹⁴ Other sources do exist – see e.g. the list discussed by the Migration Observatory (University of Oxford): <http://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/data-and-resources/data-sources-and-limitations> [26.04.2012]

¹⁵ The 2011 census counts 55,000 Polish and 5000 Spanish born people living in Scotland (National Records of Scotland 2013) and around 20,000 Polish and 700 Spanish born people in Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency 2013), however, the vast majority of Poles and Spaniards live in England and Wales.

¹⁶ The World Bank defines this age group as people who could potentially be economically active. Most often the term is used to refer to all individuals aged 16 to 64 (men) and 16 to 59 (women).

	2001		2011	
	England & Wales	Southampton	England & Wales	Southampton
Poland	58,107	271	579,121 ¹⁷	8391
Spain	51,563	318	79,184	392

Table 1: Census data for country of birth (ONS 2001, 2012a)

As Table 1 clearly indicates, in 2001 there were almost as many Spanish migrants living in England and Wales as there were Polish, with a similar ratio for Southampton. Ten years later, however, there were 7 times more Polish residents in England and Wales than Spanish, with Poles now being the largest ‘foreign’ community in Southampton. Some of the factors influencing these numbers are explained below.

When Poland and nine other countries became members of the EU in 2004, only the UK, Ireland and Sweden decided not to impose any restrictions apart from the aforementioned WRS (section 2.2), but to open up their labour markets entirely. The number of 58,000 Poles living in England and Wales in 2001 might have been an underestimation due to undocumented immigration (Eade et al. 2006). After EU accession in 2004 in-migration of A8 nationals rose steeply. In 2004 the numbers doubled within a few months and in-migration from A8 countries peaked in December 2007 at just over 100,000.¹⁸

¹⁷ Estimates of the Polish Central Statistical Office (2012) are similar. Based on the latest Polish census they estimate the number of Polish migrants staying in the UK for more than 12 months to have been 625,000 in 2011.

¹⁸ Meaning that in December 2007 an estimated 100,000 people said that they were planning to stay in the UK longer than a year; LTIM data does not account for migrant stock in any way.

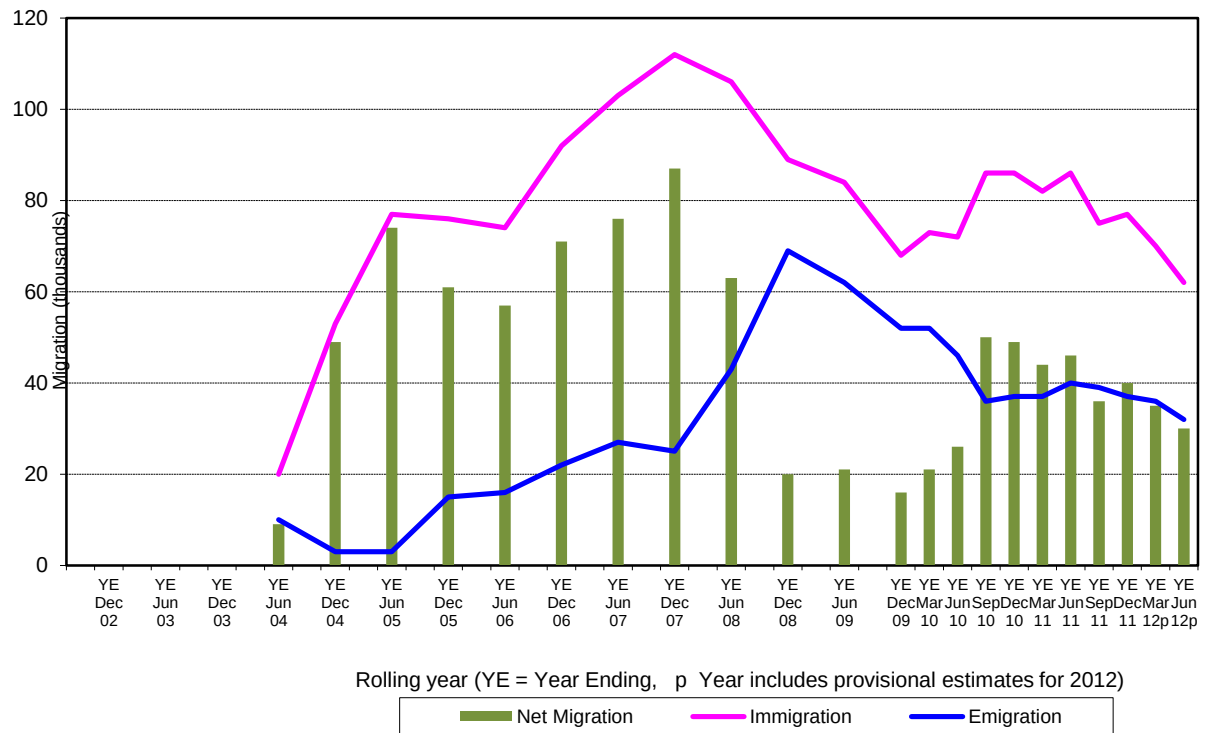


Table 2: Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates by EU8 citizenship December 2002 – June 2012 (ONS 2013)

While the Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) data (Table 2) clearly indicates a rise in in-migration from EU8 countries to the UK, the methodology used by the ONS is problematic, because the International Passenger Survey is used as a prime source (see section 2.2), wherein ‘Long-Term Migration’ is defined as a migratory movement in which someone intends to change his/her country of residence for at least a year. Everyone surveyed who did not have the initial intention to stay longer than a year is not captured in the LTIM data, which could again lead to a vast underestimation of in-migration. However, the rise in migrants from A8 countries immediately after 2004 also becomes evident in NINo applications. While in 2003/2004 only 28,700 NINos were allocated to A8 nationals, there were almost four times as many allocations (119,200) after EU enlargement in 2004/05 (Clark & Drinkwater 2008). It has to be mentioned that not all NINo/WRS applications necessarily represented in-migration; the steep increase in WRS applications immediately after EU accession can be explained partly by migrant workers already in the country taking the opportunity to be employed ‘legally’ and register with the WRS (Anderson et al. 2006). However, this change in legal status does not account for the increase in A8 migration to the UK entirely.

In summary, it can be stated that the UK saw a steep rise in in-migration from Poland after the country's EU accession in 2004, a movement that reached its peak by the end of 2007.

For Spanish migrants, on the other hand, no restrictions to live and work in the UK had existed since 1992, yet, until now, this migration stream never turned into a large-scale movement. The argument that decisions to migrate can be explained largely by economic reasons in the sending countries has recently been contested. White (2011a), for example, argues that economic reasons are just one among many factors influencing the migration decision.

[...] non-economic motives underlie migration decisions, at every stage. All migrants, not just families, live within societies where decisions are made not only as a result of rational cost-benefit calculations, but also in accordance with local norms. Moreover, people have multiple motivations and being a labour migrant does not prevent a person from wanting to travel and see the world. (White 2011a: 236)

This research partially agrees with the above position; for the individual, motivations to migrate are manifold and cannot be reduced to a single factor. However, it cannot be denied that economic push and pull factors are shaping migration movements, especially in cases where migrants do not face any labour-market restrictions in the receiving country. As King (2012: 148) points out, "much migration remains at base an economic phenomenon, driven by economic motives and forces, linked to economic systems, and with powerful economic effects". The very different economic situations in Poland and Spain in the years leading up to the global economic crisis of 2007/08 can therefore help explain why one migration stream became 'large scale', while the other one remained rather minor in comparison.

One of the main factors influencing Polish migration to the UK at the time of accession has clearly been the high unemployment rate in Poland, indicated in Figure 3.

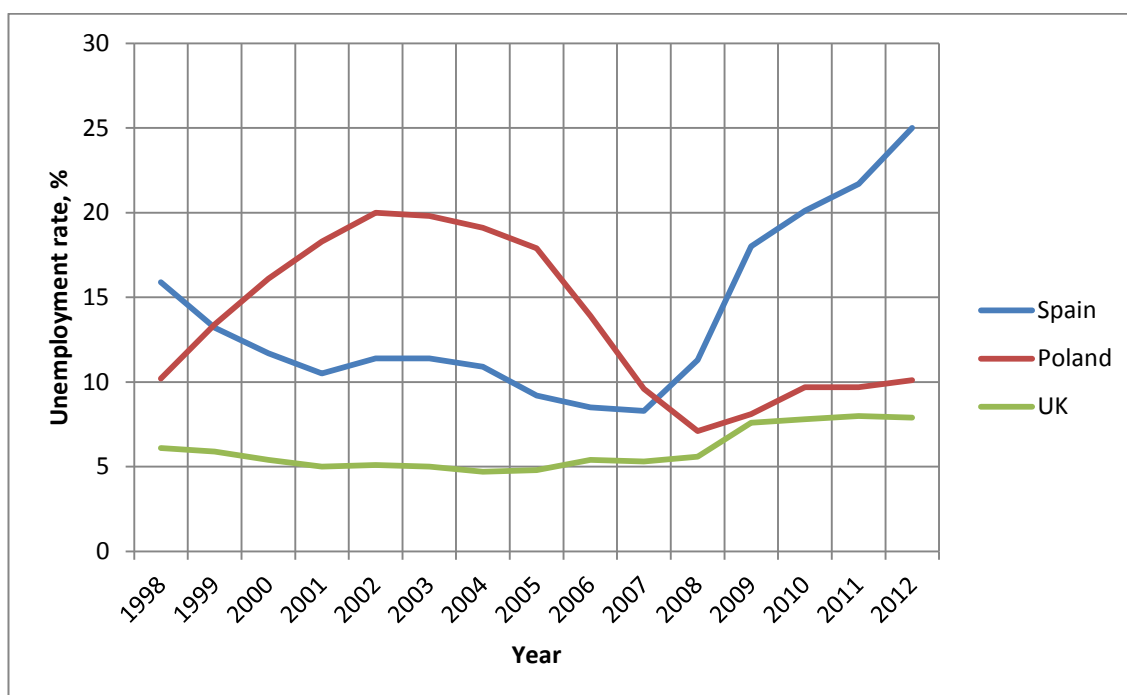


Figure 3: Unemployment rate, annual average, not seasonally adjusted
(Eurostat 2012, une_rt_a)

Unemployment in Poland peaked in 2002 at about 20% and was still at 19% in 2004. At the same time unemployment in the UK was below 5% (IMF 2012). A youth unemployment rate of 40% in Poland has made employment in the UK, even in low-skilled jobs, an attractive option for young Poles (Pollard 2008: 43). In addition to that, standard of living (measured in GDP per capita) in Poland was among the lowest of all A8 accession states in 2004 (ibid.). However, not all of the people who came to the UK in the years after EU accession can be labelled ‘economic migrants’. For many of them other factors like learning a foreign language, experiencing living abroad, etc. were even stronger pull factors than a nearly full employment economy (Anderson et al. 2006). Nevertheless, the high (youth) unemployment rate in Poland at the time of EU accession was one of the most influential push factors for subsequent large-scale migration from Poland to the UK.

In contrast to that, at the time of Poland’s EU accession Spain was still experiencing an economic ‘boom’. In the ten years to 2006, real GDP in Spain grew at 3.7 % per annum – more than twice as fast as in EU-15 states. The construction sector had been the driving force behind this; it outpaced all other economic sectors and contributed to what some would call the Spanish

‘housing bubble’ (International Labour Organization 2011: 13). This economic boom had made Spain a migration destination for many years: in 2008, at the very onset of the crisis, there were still 690,000 migrants coming to Spain, the majority of them from Romania and Morocco (OECD 2012a: 273). As an immediate reaction to the economic crash, the Spanish government introduced a voluntary return programme for migrants: non-EU immigrants who lost their job in Spain could get their entire unemployment benefit in two sums, one upon departure and one upon arrival in the country of origin. Once returnees handed over documents like residence permits or social security card to the Spanish embassy in their home country, they got paid the remaining sum and were prohibited to return to Spain for the following three years (Plewa 2009). Only a few non-EU migrants made use of Spain’s voluntary return programme, and some scholars argue that this was due to even poorer prospects in migrants’ home countries.

They prefer to sit out the crisis in the destination country, even if this may mean considerable hardship. The only migrants likely to go may well be those that the destination country would prefer to retain: those with skills and prospects elsewhere, and with a secure legal status that would allow them to come back again once job markets improve. (Castles 2010: 10)

Since 2008 migration inflows have steadily decreased; in 2010 the net inflow declined to 95,000. Since April 2011 new immigration regulations are in effect that now give specific relevance to migrants’ ‘integration effort’, and in July 2011 transitional measures for Romanian citizens have been reintroduced to prevent Romanian workers’ access to the Spanish labour market (OECD 2012a: 272). Despite these measures the “unemployment rate has remained stubbornly high” (International Labour Organization 2011: 24).¹⁹ This is particularly true for youth unemployment: in the last quarter of 2012 55% of all 16 to 24-year-olds in Spain were without a job (Eurostat 2012)²⁰.

¹⁹ It can therefore be stated that the immigration restrictions introduced by the Spanish government had no effect on unemployment rates, or in other words: migrants seem to have no effect on employment rates (the ‘taking-our-jobs’ debate). For an extensive literature review on that topic in a UK context see for example a paper published by the Bank of England (Blanchflower et al. 2007). The authors come to the conclusion that there is little or no evidence that immigrants have had major impact on native labour market outcomes such as wages and unemployment. Eldring & Schulten (2012) come to a similar conclusion, stating that at the macroeconomic level “there have been no or only minor negative effects” of migration on wages (ibid.: 253).

²⁰ Economists have argued that these numbers exaggerate the problem, since numbers on unemployment include economically inactive people, like young people in education. However,

Given these numbers, how many young people are leaving Spain due to the economic crisis? The answer to this question is complex and seems to depend not only on the statistical data sources analysed but also on researchers' political points of view. In March 2014, the Spanish National Statistics Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2014) announced that the Spanish population resident abroad had again increased in the previous year and now exceeded two million people. Countries with the highest increase of Spanish nationals were Argentina, Cuba, Ecuador, the US and France. According to the Register of Spaniards Resident Abroad (Spanish: *Padrón de Españoles Residentes en el Extranjero*, PERE), there were around 82,000 Spanish nationals resident in the UK at 1 January 2014, overall a moderate increase compared to other

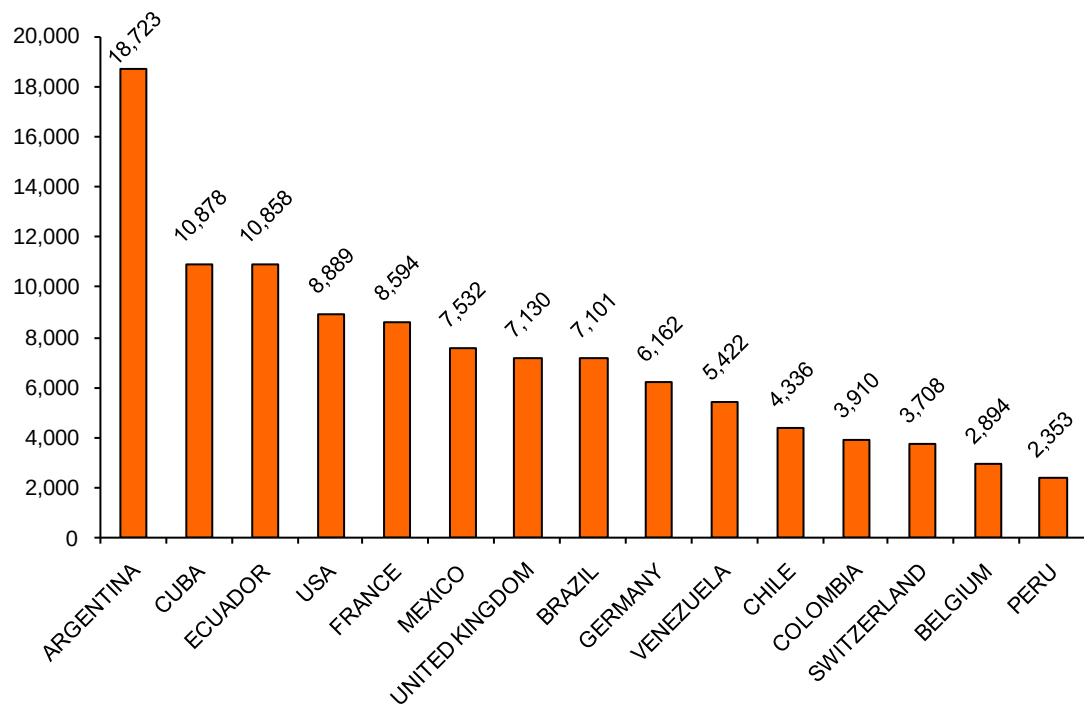


Figure 4: Spanish nationality population resident abroad increase during 2013 by country (INE 2014)

countries. (see Figure 4).

In addition to that, the overall population of Spain decreased by almost 120,000 in the first half of 2013. Less people immigrated to Spain and more

even when looking at the unemployment ratio instead of rate, Spain still has the highest in Europe (Eurostat 2012).

people left the country, leading to a migratory balance of around -25,000 in the first six months of 2013, and of those leaving around 26,000, that is, “two out of every three Spaniards that emigrated” were born in Spain (INE 2013: 11).

Pressure groups like the Spanish *Juventud Sin Futuro* (Youth without Future)²¹ are criticising a forced mass exodus of young, highly-qualified Spaniards and claim that official numbers of young Spaniards living abroad are higher than the official number of around 300,000 in 2012: “Se estima que cada semana emigran varios miles de jóvenes.”²²

According to analysts at the Elcano Royal Institute (*Real Instituto Elcano*, RIE), a think-tank financed mainly by Spanish and multinational cooperations²³, this is simply an “alarm stirred up by the media” and “those voices consider this emigration to be, in itself, yet another of the evils that are afflicting Spanish society” (RIE 2013: 1). According to the RIE only a few of the 2 million Spaniards living abroad had emigrated recently. The two main arguments made are:

- a) Statistics representing Spanish emigrants living abroad include previous cohorts of migrants, for example those leaving Spain in the 1960s
- b) ‘false migrants’ are included in the data, for example Latin Americans who obtained Spanish nationality and returned to their home countries when the crisis hit Spain. The RIE argues that statistics may “record them as being Spaniards living abroad but, in most cases, they cannot be considered emigrants since they live in their country of origin.” (ibid.: 2)

The authors investigate the time between January 2009 and January 2013 (i.e. the ‘years of the crisis’) and come to the conclusion that the number of Spanish born Spaniards living abroad only rose by around 40,000 people since the onset of the recession, representing less than 0.1% of Spain’s population. Furthermore, “Spaniards born in Spain who left the country after 2009 only

²¹ For a further investigation of these pressure groups and the media discourse around the current emigration of young Spaniards see section 3.6.

²² “It is estimated that several thousand young people emigrate every week.”

(<http://www.nonosvamosnosechan.net/p/exilio-laboral.html>, accessed 23.05.2014)

²³ 85% of the institute’s budget are made up of donations from globally operating companies like Airbus, IBM, Telefonica or Acerinox; all of these cooperations are represented on the institute’s Board of Trustees, together with members of Spain’s political class.

(http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/web/rielcano_en/about-elcano/faq/, checked 24.05.2014)

account for 2% of the total number of Spanish citizens living abroad” (ibid.: 6). The authors conclude that

the inordinate amount of attention the phenomenon is attracting in Spain can only be explained by the fact that it is being looked at from a decidedly local perspective, which is determined to see each job-seeking departure from Spain as something dramatic. Perhaps it would be necessary to change the perspective and ask why it is that a great many more people do not take the step of seeking better working or living conditions abroad. (Real Instituto Elcano 2013: 7)

In a nutshell, the argument made is that those warning of a mass exodus of young Spaniards are wrong and that it is not Spaniards born in Spain leaving the country due to the recession, but mainly migrants with Spanish nationality returning home.

As Spain has been a destination country of international labour migration until the onset of the crisis, this argument seems reasonable as, indeed, many Latin American migrants acquired Spanish nationality during the years of Spain’s economic ‘boom’ and later returned to their countries of origin. The number of only 40,000 Spanish born emigrants since 2009, however, seems to contradict other data sources. Germany, for example, has seen an increase of 22% in migration from Spain between 2012 and 2013, meaning that in 2013 alone around 36,000 non-German people moved from Spain to Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt 2014). Of course, one could argue that these numbers only reflect migration from Spain, not migration of people born in Spain. Nonetheless, even if only half of these arrivals were people born in Spain, this would raise questions about the numbers presented by the RIE.

Furthermore, a recent study of the Spanish Youth Institute (*Instituto de la Juventud*, INJUVE 2014), a public body belonging to the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, presents numbers on the emigration of young Spanish emigrants to other EU countries that are very different from the data presented by the RIE. In the INJUVE report, the authors combine Spanish emigration data and data sources of various other European countries to calculate estimates to answer the question how many young (age 15–29) Spaniards have emigrated in the context of the crisis, that is, between 2009 and 2013. According to the authors around 105,000 Spaniards left for the UK, while 22,000 emigrated to Germany. Therefore, these two countries captured 85% of Spanish emigrants in this period (Table 5).

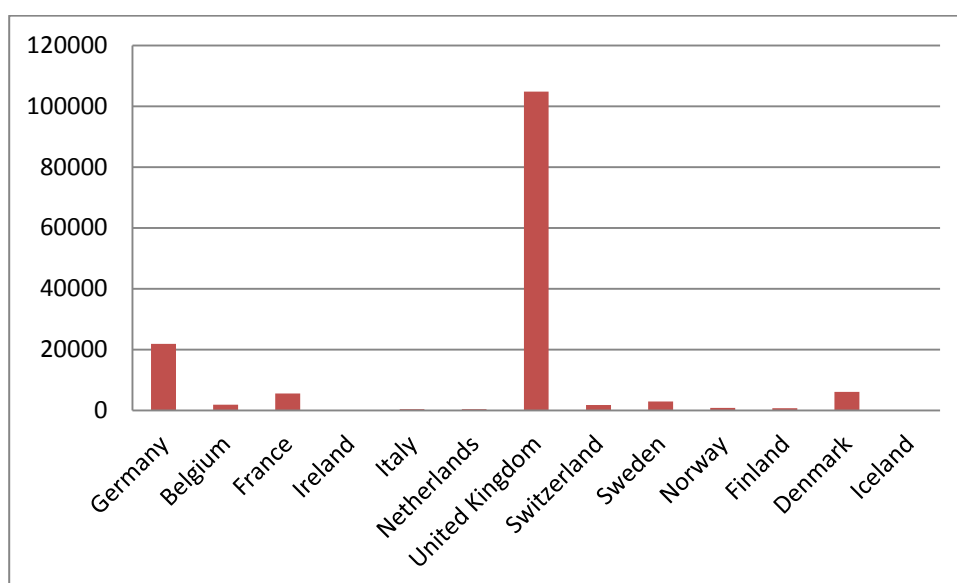


Figure 5: Young Spaniards who have emigrated to Europe during 2009–2013 (estimates). (INJUVE 2014: 80)

These numbers are substantially higher than the data presented by the RIE or the PERE, but yet another study (González Ferrer 2013) estimates the outflow of people from Spain since 2008 to be 700,000, equivalent to 1.5% of Spain's population. Furthermore, the author concludes that the return rate of Spanish people has fallen: while in 2008 for every 10 people leaving for Germany 11 returned, in 2012 this number has fallen to only 4.

Considering these numbers, it is surprising that the 2011 Census for England and Wales does not indicate a larger increase in Spanish in-migration. However, as discussed in section 2.2, census data cannot necessarily be used to trace certain migration trends and can, with regards to migration statistics, only be compared to the previous census. Furthermore, the latest census only describes a Sunday in March 2011; at the time of writing unemployment in Spain is continuously rising, making it very likely that the number of Spanish citizens resident in the UK has further increased since the 2011 Census. Although the allocation of National Insurance Numbers (NINOs) cannot be used to investigate the number of migrants resident in the UK, it is a useful source to point out recent trends. As for the NINO registrations up to March 2013, Table 3 presents changes to the previous tax year for the Top 20 countries.

Rank	Country	Total (thousands)	% Difference to 2011/12
1	Poland	91.36	15%
2	Spain	45.53	50%
3	Italy	32.80	35%
4	India	31.25	-34%
5	Rep of Lithuania	27.32	-18%
6	Hungary	24.67	36%
7	Portugal	24.55	43%
8	France	21.23	-2%
9	Romania	17.82	-22%
10	Pakistan	16.16	-58%
11	Rep of Ireland	15.54	-2%
12	Rep of Latvia	13.60	-27%
13	China Peoples Rep	12.01	-19%
14	Australia	11.78	-17%
15	Slovak Rep	11.48	16%
16	Germany	10.95	-7%
17	Nigeria	10.51	-24%
18	Bulgaria	10.40	-17%
19	USA	9.03	-10%
20	Greece	8.68	44%

Table 3: NINo registrations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK, top 20 countries for 2012/13 (DWP 2013)

For the majority of countries, NINo registrations have fallen compared to the tax year 2011/12. Although Poland is still the largest group, the most marked increase can be seen for Spain, Portugal and Greece, with 50%, 43% and 44% more NINo allocations than in the previous tax year. Of course the data does not allow for assumptions about migrant stock or duration of stay, but what can be observed is a general trend: while the unemployment rate in Spain, especially for those under 25, continues to rise, the UK witnesses an increase in Spaniards registering to work. It is therefore very likely that the number of Spanish citizens resident in the UK, as presented in the 2011 Census, is by now much higher than 80,000, and can be expected to rise further.

In stark contrast to NINo applications, IPS data indicates a decline in UK visits from Spanish residents. The average annual growth of visits between 2008 and 2012 has fallen by 3.4 %, and the number of visits between 2011 and 2012 has fallen by 120,000. In contrast, Polish visits to the UK increased from 2011 to 2012 by 165,000 (ONS 2012d). As overall Polish migration to the UK has been declining since 2007 and NINo applications indicate a rise in in-migration from Spain, both examples show that IPS data on the UK visits of overseas residents are in no way related to migrant in-flow as indicated in Census or NINo application data.

In summary, this section has shown that Polish migration to the UK increased after the country's EU accession in 2004, peaked in 2007 and decreased until today. As for Polish migrants, there are clear indications that although a large number seems to settle permanently in the UK, others tend to re-migrate to Poland or transmigrate to another destination country (Anacka & Fihel 2012). An incentive for returnees might be an improvement of the Polish labour market; while at the time of EU accession the unemployment rate had been almost 20%, by the end of 2012 the Polish unemployment rate was at 10.6%, 0.1% lower than the EU average (Eurostat 2012).

Spain, on the other hand, had been a receiving rather than a sending country up to the economic crisis of 2007/08. While the Polish unemployment rate peaked at the time of EU accession at around 20%, the Spanish unemployment rate today is even higher: 26.7% in November 2013²⁴. Although the decision to leave one's country of origin is influenced by more than just labour market statistics, a high unemployment rate is an economic push factor influencing migration decisions. However, while the 2011 Census counted only around 80,000 Spanish citizens in England and Wales (as opposed to more than half a million Poles), recent NINo data indicates that Spanish in-migration is increasing and numbers today are likely to be higher than in the 2011 Census. Furthermore, an analysis of Spanish data sources has shown that the issue of emigration during the crisis is highly complex and interpretations of the scale of the outflow of people seems to depend on analysts political affiliation; we have seen how estimates of 'crisis migration' range between 40.000 (Real

²⁴ See Eurostat figures for 2013: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une_rt_m&lang=en [accessed 13.12.2013]

Instituto Elcano 2013) and 700,000 (González Ferrer 2013). How far this evolving migration stream will reach a scale similar to Polish post-accession migration in the UK has yet to be seen.

While this section described migration from Poland and Spain at a more aggregate level, the following section will explore the sociodemographic profile of these migrants. Again, there is an abundance of data available for Polish migrants, while little is known about the profile of Spanish citizens living and working in the UK.

2.5 Educational attainment and labour market performance

This section focuses on three aspects in particular: age, educational attainment and labour market performance of recent migrants from Poland and Spain. As Polish migrants were obliged to register with the WRS in the years after EU accession (section 2.3), more data is available on them than on recent Spanish citizens working in the UK. Apart from the availability of detailed data, another reason to investigate the case of Polish migrants in the UK labour market is its potential relevance for other migrant groups.

In general it can be said that EU8 migrants are young. Although numbers may have shifted slightly, of those who registered on the WRS between May 2004 and March 2009 the majority (81%) were aged 18 – 34. This trend was still salient in the first quarter (Q1) of 2009, when 78% belonged to this age group. The overall male to female ratio between 2004 and 2009 was 56:44; in Q1 2009 the ratio was 50:50 (Home Office 2009). So while in the years following accession more men registered to work than women, the recent trend seems to indicate a gender equilibrium that stands in contrast to prevalent stereotypes of Polish migrants (e.g. all-male Polish builders, see Datta 2009). In addition to that, LFS data from 2007 indicates that 58% of A8 and A2 nationals were either married, cohabiting or in a civil partnership (Pollard et al. 2008: 25). Only a minority (8%) of WRS registered workers who applied between 2004 and 2009 had dependants living with them (Home Office 2009). Although the number of couples living with children seems to be very low, Polish is now the most spoken first language among non-English-speaking newly-arrived migrant

school children across England (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008, cited in Pollard et al. 2008: 27). These findings are in accordance with 2011 Census data: the language figures show that 546,000 people in the UK identify Polish as their main language (equivalent to 1% of the population), making it the second main language spoken in England and Wales after English, and ranking before Panjabi, Urdu and Bengali. (ONS 2013)

The Labour Force Survey shows that EU8 migrants have a higher employment rate than UK born citizens. In the last quarter of 2012, 79.4 % of EU8 migrants aged 16 to 64 were in employment, while this was only true for 72.5 % of those born in the UK (ONS 2013b). With regards to educational attainment, LFS data for 2012 indicates that around one in four UK born citizens is degree level educated (Table 4).

Highest qualification (detailed grouping)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Degree or equivalent	22.9	23.1	23.7	23.9
Higher education	9.3	9.4	9.4	9.5
GCE A Level or equiv	22.5	22.3	22.4	22.3
GCSE grades A-C or equiv	22.3	22.3	22.1	22.1
Other qualifications	10.1	10.1	10.1	9.9
No qualification	12.1	11.9	11.5	11.4
D/K	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9
Total	100	100	100	100
N=	71871	71472	69758	69016

Table 4: Qualification of UK born citizens (column percentage), Labour Force Survey Q1-Q4, 2012 (ONS 2013c-f)

LFS numbers on the educational credentials of Polish born citizens vary according to the question asked. If asked for highest qualification, numbers on degree level education are very similar to UK born (around 24% for Q1-Q4 2012), except for the high percentage of 'other qualifications', which can be explained with country specific differences – vocational degrees gained outside academia are far more common in Poland than they are in the UK. However, if asked for the 'type of qualification gained outside of the UK' the number of Polish born LFS participants with 'degree level qualification, or higher' rises to around 37%, while another 20% claimed to hold 'other work related or professional qualification' in the four consecutive quarters of 2012 (Table 5). These numbers therefore indicate a higher level of qualification for Polish born people than for LFS participants born in the UK.

Type of qualification gained outside of UK	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Degree level qualification, or higher	37.6	37.5	36.7	36.5
Higher qualification below degree level	11.8	14.7	15.2	13.2
A-level/Vocational A-level or equivalent	11.8	9.9	11.2	9.8
AS-level/Vocational AS-level or equivalent	1.6	1.4	1.2	1.3
International Baccalaureate	0.9	0.7	0.2	0.3
O-levels or equivalent	1.6	1.4	2.4	2.3
GCSE/Vocational GCSE or equivalent	3.7	2.7	2.2	2.1
Other work-related or professional qualification	19.3	20.5	19.8	21.8
School Leavers Certificate	3.5	2.9	3.2	3.4
Don't know	8.1	8.4	7.8	9.3
Total	100	100	100	100
N=	431	443	409	386

Table 5: Qualification of Polish born citizens gained outside of UK (column percentage), Labour Force Survey Q1–Q4, 2012 (ONS 2013c–f)

Fihel & Kaczmarczyk (2009), combining data from the Polish Labour Force Survey and the British Workers Registration Scheme (WRS), investigate whether the massive outflow of highly qualified young people from Poland could constitute a problem for the Polish economy. Due to the changes in the education system the rates for higher education participation in Poland are similar to ‘Western’ countries, so that almost 50% of the 19–24 year old age group enrol for a course at a university; in 2012 almost 40 % of 30 to 34 year-olds had successfully completed university, a rise from 20 % in 2004 (Eurostat 2013). Therefore, emigration after 2004 can be interpreted as a ‘brain overflow’ rather than a ‘brain drain’. While it is estimated that at least every fifth Polish post-accession migrant in the UK has a tertiary education²⁵, the majority of young Polish migrants is concentrated in the ‘classical’ migrant sectors of construction, agriculture, cleaning and hotels, taking rather unskilled jobs. Although the WRS data has limitations (see section 2.2), there

²⁵ Other surveys estimate the number of young Polish migrants in the UK with a postgraduate degree to be nearly 30%. (Fihel & Kaczmarczyk 2009: 43)

appears to be a clear mismatch between qualification and labour market performance.

If we consider [...] that approximately 25-30 % of Polish migrants in the UK hold a university degree, it has to be concluded that all the anticipated positive effects of migration, such as opportunities to improve qualifications or for professional development, are out of reach for the majority of educated migrants. Instead there appears to be a developing phenomenon of 'brain wasting' or deskilling, something which was typical of the migration of the 1980s. (Fihel & Kaczmarczyk 2009: 44)

The phenomenon of de-skilling is indeed something that is associated with earlier migration regimes from Eastern and Central Europe and has previously been described as 'brain waste' (Morokvasic & de Tinguy 1993), 'occupational skidding' (Morawska & Spohn 1997) or 'brain abuse' (Bauder 2003). The findings of this study are in accordance with previous research; the majority of Polish participants were holding a university degree while reporting a mismatch between qualification and occupation in the UK.

The job-skill-mismatch becomes prevalent in almost every study on Polish post-accession migration to the UK. Anderson et al. (2006) concentrate on migrants who are working in one of four sectors of employment – agriculture, construction, hospitality and the au pair sector. Interviewing and surveying more than 600 migrants and over 500 employers, one of the key findings of the study is that many of the migrant respondents working in low-wage, low-status jobs are in fact highly qualified, a fact particularly true for those migrants working in the hospitality sector, where 42% of the interviewees had a university degree and three quarters of the respondents described their English proficiency as fluent or at least adequate. These highly qualified migrants are aware that their jobs

did not reflect their potential or their qualifications. However, many of them consciously, if reluctantly, made trade-offs. Sometimes these were economic trade-offs (jobs may pay little in the UK, but are relatively well paid in comparison with countries of origin), but this was not the only form. Speaking English, living abroad, gaining different kinds of experience were other reasons that interviewees gave for choosing to work in the UK. (Anderson et al. 2006: 113)

Similar findings are presented by Drinkwater et al. (2006). Using data from the Labour Force Survey the study examines not only the kind of job EU8 migrants are doing, but also the amount of time spent in full time education. It becomes evident that especially Polish migrants spent more time in full time education than other EU8 migrants before coming to the UK and that Poles have the

highest employment rate, but that employment is found mainly in semi-routine and routine occupations, which is true for three quarters of Poles. The authors clearly state that Poles “have lower rates of return to their human capital than other recent migrants” (Drinkwater et al. 2006: 18) and raise the question whether they will be stuck in these jobs for a long period of time or successively progress in the UK labour market.

Clark & Drinkwater (2008) come to a similar conclusion, stating that EU8 migrants in general and Poles in particular have a higher level of education than people born in the UK. While previous research on the UK labour market has suggested that migrants from Africa and Asia experience wage discrimination, the study shows that EU8 migrants have the lowest rate of return of education of all migrant groups, which raises questions about whether “human capital is likely to be more portable if obtained from some parts of the world than others”. (ibid.: 512)

This is partly reflected by the main sectors in which Polish born migrants are employed in the UK: ‘manufacturing’ as well as ‘distribution, hotels & restaurants’ accounted for around half of the jobs Poles were doing in 2012 (Table 6).

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
SIC07 to SIC92 main job sector rev. Dec 2009				
A-B: Agriculture & fishing	2.1	1.9	2.2	1.5
C,E: Energy & water	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.2
D: Manufacturing	23.8	26	25.9	25.1
F: Construction	9.3	8.5	7.9	8.3
G-H: Distribution, hotels & restaurants	26.3	25.5	24.7	25.7
I: Transport & communication	9.6	7.7	9	8.9
J-K: Banking, finance & insurance etc	13.1	14.2	13.1	15.3
L-N: Public admin, educ & health	11.7	12.4	13	11.5
O-Q: Other services	3.4	3.5	4	3.5
Total	100	100	100	100
N=	613	627	579	541

Table 6: Main job sectors of Polish born citizens (column percentage), Labour Force Survey Q1–Q4, 2012 (ONS 2013c–f)

So why do highly educated migrants from Eastern Europe go for low-skilled jobs in the UK? Trevena (2010) analyses this question in detail. She acknowledges that for university graduates from EU8 countries there can be problems on the macro level, e.g. problem of diploma recognition²⁶, a shortage of workers in low-skilled sectors while competing with British university leavers for graduate jobs. On the meso level one of the problems can be network recruitment – Polish friends working in the low-skilled sector help to find jobs in the same sector. In addition to that, the older generation of educated migrants see working below one's level of qualification as “part and parcel of the migration experience” (Trevena 2010: 8), an aspect that is also mentioned by Galasinska (2009) as part of the ‘Polish grand narrative’ and will be discussed further in chapters 3 and 4. According to Trevena problems on the macro- and meso-level can explain the initial underemployment of Polish migrants coming to the UK, however, “it is the micro level factors that are most important in determining the length of time the graduates spend working in such positions.” (2010: 15) Micro level problems can be the lack of individual capital (no language skills, or lack of demand for certain degrees in, say, Polish Studies) and most of all the timeframe of migration and its perception. In her typology of Polish university graduates in the UK, it is the ‘drifters’ that are most likely to do menial work for many years, i.e. young people who have no career plans, whose objective is not to save up money to invest in the home country, who want to experience living abroad and who perceive their position as temporary, regardless of how long they have been living abroad.

In general, it can be stated that post-accession migrants from Poland living and working in the UK are young and well-qualified, but tend to work primarily in low-level jobs. While no data is available for the labour market performance of recent Spanish migrants, it can be hypothesized that their level of education is similar to, if not higher than that of young, well-qualified Poles in the UK. The share of the Spanish population aged 30–34 who have successfully completed tertiary education was 40% in 2012, compared to 39% in Poland (Eurostat 2013). Taking graduates under the age of 30 into consideration, it can be assumed that almost 50% of Spaniards aged 24–34 have a university

²⁶ Professional bodies that regulate professions in EU member states are allowed to exercise a degree of control over the process of recognition of migrants' qualifications and skills. According to Currie (2007) these professional bodies tend to devalue foreign qualifications, adopt a protectionist stance and exercise “professional gate-keeping”. (96)

degree. These numbers are, of course, only valid for Spain and do not indicate how many of recent Spanish migrants have completed tertiary education, or whether they experience a form of ‘underemployment’ in the UK labour market as well. With regards to this study, which is in no way representative of larger cohorts, it can be said that all of the Spanish participants have a university degree, and that half of them is working in jobs that match their qualification; where this is not the case, participants actively decided to make a ‘trade-off’, for example, working as an au pair for a limited amount of time in order to improve English skills. As for Polish participants, 8 out of 12 participants are tertiary educated, but only 3 are doing work related to their academic degrees (for a detailed overview of participants see section 4.2).

As for Spanish born citizens working in the UK, LFS data is still rather vague. LFS microdata can be filtered for categories such as ‘country of birth’ and ‘main job sector’, but the sample size is very small, leading to a high variance. Therefore, the following data has to be considered carefully.

Looking at the microdata, one striking characteristic is that more than half of Spanish born citizens in the UK are degree level educated (Table 7).

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Highest qualification (detailed grouping)				
Degree or equivalent	65.4	65.1	57.8	57.1
Higher education	7.4	5.8	7.2	9.1
GCE A Level or equiv	9.9	9.3	9.6	11.7
GCSE grades A-C or equiv	4.9	8.1	9.6	9.1
Other qualifications	8.6	9.3	10.8	10.4
No qualification	3.7	2.3	4.8	2.6
D/K	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100
N=	81	86	83	77

Table 7: Qualification of Spanish born citizens, (column percentage), Labour Force Survey Q1-Q4, 2012 (ONS 2013c-f)

As mentioned before, these assumptions are problematic due to the number of cases and the resulting high variance. The number of Polish cases is significantly higher than the number of Spanish cases, which makes a comparison of both cohorts difficult.

In the quarterly LFSs in 2012, Poles account for around 0.9% of all cases; Spaniards represent only a fraction of that (roughly 0.1%). It has to be seen how qualification levels adjust once the sample size increases; for now, it can only be stated that more than 50% of those Spanish born citizens represented in the LFS in 2012 are degree level educated.

Investigating the main job sectors in which Spanish born migrants are employed in the UK, the LFS shows differences between Poles and Spaniards. While most Polish born workers were working in the ‘manufacturing’ and ‘distribution, hotels and restaurants’ sectors (Table 6), the main employment sectors for Spaniards were ‘public administration, education and health’ as well as ‘banking, finance & insurance’ and ‘distribution, hotels & restaurant’, with only a small number working in manufacturing (Table 8).

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
SIC07 to SIC92 main job sector rev. Dec 2009				
A-B: Agriculture & fishing	0	0	0	0
C,E: Energy & water	0	0	0	0
D: Manufacturing	5.2	4.7	5.4	7.8
F: Construction	1.7	1.6	1.8	2
G-H: Distribution, hotels & restaurants	17.2	15.6	21.4	17.6
I: Transport & communication	8.6	9.4	10.7	7.8
J-K: Banking, finance & insurance etc	20.7	23.4	21.4	19.6
L-N: Public admin, educ & health	39.7	40.6	32.1	33.3
O-Q: Other services	6.9	4.7	7.1	11.8
Total	100	100	100	100
N=	58	64	56	51

Table 8: Main job sectors of Spanish born citizens (column percentage), Labour Force Survey Q1–Q4, 2012 (ONS 2013c–f)

For the sector ‘banking, finance & insurance’ it is especially subsection K: ‘real estate, renting & business activities’ that accounts for employment rates

between 15 and 19 %. Exploring the main job sectors further and analysing the main job sections reveals that especially ‘hotels & restaurants’, ‘health & social work’ and ‘education’ are the areas in which Spanish born citizens are employed in the UK. Again, the number of cases makes these assumptions almost insignificant; the available LFS microdata is certainly not representative for all or even the majority of Spanish born people in the UK.

This section has shown that Polish migrants in the UK, although primarily young and well-qualified, find employment mainly in labour intensive sectors such as manufacturing and hospitality that do not necessarily reflect their level of qualification. Young Spanish migrants coming to the UK are likely to have a similar, if not higher, level of qualification than Polish residents. Only a minority of Spaniards seem to be working in manufacturing or construction; instead, main employment sectors are health and social work, as well as education and hotels & restaurants. However, data on Spanish born citizens are, due to their underrepresentation in the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, at the moment not significant enough to come to a valid conclusion about their overall level of education or labour market performance in the UK. Further research using bigger sample sizes is needed to explore these issues further.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter started out by describing the imbalance in the amount of academic research on Polish and Spanish migration to the UK. While there is an abundance of scholarly literature on post-2004 migration from Poland, research on emigration from Spain has so far focused mainly on Republican exiles under the Franco regime, and on the movement of Spaniards to the Americas from the 17th century onwards. A research gap could be identified with regards to recent Spanish migration movements after the onset of the recession.

A review of the statistical data has demonstrated that Polish migration to the UK increased after the country’s EU accession in 2004. Polish inflow peaked in 2007 and has decreased since. According to the 2011 census there are more than half a million Poles resident in England and Wales, as opposed to around 80,000 Spaniards. The review identified the different economic situations in

both countries as one of the main factors shaping the difference in scale; while the economic situation in Poland at the time of EU accession was characterised by high unemployment and low GDP per capita, the Spanish economy was experiencing growth above EU average up to 2007/08. Taking National Insurance Number registrations into consideration, this study demonstrates that Spanish migration to the UK has only recently intensified, and that the 2011 census results may already be ‘outdated’.

Finally, it has been shown that Polish post-accession migrants are primarily young and well-educated, but tend to work in low-level jobs in the UK. With respect to educational attainment it is likely that Spanish migrants coming to the UK are even more highly qualified, but a lack of data does not allow for conclusions on their labour market performance.

In summary, the chapter has contextualised both migration streams using mainly statistical data. While this quantitative approach is necessary to contextualise the area of research of this study and its contributions to the field, there is, of course, more to individual migration projects than can be expressed by numbers. The following chapter is therefore going to outline the conceptual framework of this study and show how both statistical context and theoretical frame have influenced the development of the research questions this study investigates.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter offered a description of migration from Poland and Spain to the UK by focusing on macro-economic factors ('push and pull factors') and the socio-demographic characteristics of Polish and Spanish migrants in the UK (educational profile, position in the UK labour market). In brief, quantitative research and data have been critically discussed in order to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of these two particular migration flows.

During the pilot phase of this research, however, it became clear that a framework beyond 'the national' is needed in order to describe current migration flows of young, well-qualified people within the EU. Although the participants were holding a certain nationality, at the time of the interviews they were also young (roughly in the age group 25 to 35), hardly anyone had started a family or formed an independent household with a partner or a spouse, almost no one was employed in a permanent, stable job and, in the Polish sample in particular, almost no one had an occupation that reflected his/her qualification. One could say that, from a traditional point of view, they had not yet made the full transition into adulthood.

The following conceptual framework will therefore take concepts into account that go beyond the national. To start with, the complex of a changing life course and transitions to adulthood will be taken into account. After that, the importance of the perception of time in a migration context will be outlined (section 3.3), before a model of agency is applied that takes different temporal orientations into account (3.4). Coming back to 'national' characteristics, the influence of a *collective memory* of Poland's communist past on present-day actions of individuals will be taken into account and concepts like *post-socialism* will be critically discussed (3.5). This theoretical framework forms the foundation of the research questions governing this study (3.6).

In conclusion, the chapter's aim is to demonstrate that the interplay of migrants' perceived (collective) past, present and (anticipated) future is key for

the analysis of current European migration patterns – time is indeed ‘of the essence’ to understand how migrants shape their present.

3.2 Agency and changing life courses

In the years after 1989, the year of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe led to a change in individual life courses. Until then the state had been structuring youth, adolescence and early adulthood through regulation and organisation of leisure time.²⁷ From age 9 children could join the Pioneers, and from age 16 they could become members of the Komsomol, the youth division of the communist party. Housing was controlled by the state and priority was given to married couples, encouraging comparably early marriages. Furthermore, different educational tracks or training programmes were negotiated with the authorities at the end of full-time education, leading to particular kinds of employment where people used to remain throughout their working lives (Roberts 2009: 7). With the collapse of communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe, this (more or less) pre-structured life course became obsolete.

Although the transition of the early 1990s from one political system to another is something germane to the experience of Eastern Europeans, life courses did change dramatically in Western Europe, North America and Australia, too. Dwyer & Wyn (2001), in their longitudinal Australian study of young people born in the early 1970s²⁸, give the example of Mark, one of their participants who left school in Year Nine²⁹ and who after dropping out of full-time education struggled to find a job and eventually got into trouble with the law.

Mark is a good example of a young man who would have had little trouble finding a job for himself on quitting school early – if only he had been born ten or so years

²⁷ This is, of course, a generalisation that does not take differences between countries into detailed account. Furthermore, it is true that not all children were forced to join the pioneers, not all adolescents joined the Komsomol, not all adults had to be members of the communist party and some organisations, especially religious ones, were – although often largely infiltrated by government agents – niches in which those opposed to the communist regimes could find an intellectual and social shelter. Nonetheless, one of the main characteristics of communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe was that the regulation and organisation of young people's leisure time through the state was the norm.

²⁸ The project is known as the ‘Life Patterns Project’, an ongoing longitudinal mixed-methods project following two cohorts of school leavers in Australia, one born around 1973 and one born around 1989. For a detailed description see http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ycr/life_patterns/ [accessed 05.01.2014]

²⁹ In Australia, most children in Year Nine are aged between 14 and 15.

earlier. Then, if anything, he would have in effect been part of the ‘mainstream’ – one of the many young people in Western societies who in the past had been able to establish themselves without completing their schooling or going on further to post-school studies. (Dwyer & Wyn 2001: 37)

Without inadequately generalising the particular historic and economic circumstances of different countries, it can be said that over the last few decades many ‘Western’ countries as well as Eastern Europe and Russia have witnessed a change in life courses, leading scholars in social sciences to develop, critique or defend the *delayed adulthood* thesis.³⁰ As will be shown, the debate about the idea of a currently prolonged transition into adulthood is closely linked to a wider dispute in social sciences: the relation of individual agency to social structure. Two research streams can be identified here: on the one hand youth-researchers who claim that in present times, however economically and socially difficult, young adults are very much designing their life courses and re-negotiating concepts of adulthood. On the other hand, many scholars point to the relevance of social class for the conceptualisation of adulthood. Both streams (as well as the academic ‘middle-ground’ in-between those two) will be discussed in greater detail in this section.

Any discussion of the relevance of social class has to include Beck’s (1986) and Beck & Beck-Gernsheim’s (2002) concept of *individualization*.³¹ At the core of this concept is the observation that in times of the *second modernity*³² the individual is removed from traditional commitments and support relationships (e.g. nuclear family, social class, the village community and so on). Whereas in the past a certain life course was to a large extent influenced by given determinations (the farmer’s son inherited the family farm, the blacksmith’s son became a blacksmith himself), nowadays an expanding education system, demand for and expectation of mobility and competition in the labour market, extension of employment insecurity across the socio-economic spectrum,

³⁰ Also known as the concept of *emergent* or *deferred adulthood*, among other names.

³¹ The concept of individualisation is closely related to, or better yet, part of Beck’s concept of a *Risk Society*, i.e. the description of contemporary Western societies as characterised by the equal distribution of (mainly ecological and high-tech) risk that “breaks up the pattern of class and national society.” (Beck 1986: 23) It was mainly the warning about ecological risks as a global threat that contributed to the success of *Risk Society* and its reception beyond the social sciences – the catastrophic Chernobyl disaster happened only weeks after the first publication of the book.

³² Beck uses the term to describe the transformation of Western formerly industrial societies into information and risk societies.

among others, have led to people being forced to construct their own biographies from the options available.

Individualization [...] means that each person's biography is removed from given determinations and placed in his or her own hands, open and dependent on decisions. The proportion of life opportunities which are fundamentally closed to decision-making is decreasing and the proportion of the biography which is open and must be constructed personally is increasing. Individualizations of life situations and processes thus means that biographies become *self-reflexive*; socially prescribed biography is transformed into biography that is self-produced and continues to be produced. Decisions on education, profession, job, place of residence, spouse, number of children and so forth, [...] no longer can be, they must be made. (Beck 1986: 135)

Social class, he argues further, is dead and has become a “zombie category” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 203). Class differences have not been annulled, but have receded into the background. One's class position no longer determines one's personal outlook, relations, family positions, social and political ideas (Beck 1986: 131).

Many researchers have criticised and challenged Beck's idea of a nearly class-less society (Marshall 1997, Goldthorpe 2002, Skeggs 2004, Brannen & Nilsen 2005). Atkinson (2007) points out the many contradictions and incoherences in Beck's writings in a detailed way: Beck claims that there are no class lines anymore, then again he argues that risk can sometimes be distributed along class lines – to name just one of the contradictions. In addition, Beck's position has to be questioned in the light of statistical data demonstrating the influence of class on all aspects of social life, especially on educational achievement. The latest OECD educational report (2012) has demonstrated once more that parents' education influences access to tertiary education to a high extent, and that “the impact of socioeconomic background on student performance at age 15 [...] explains 37% of the between-country variance in the intake of students to higher education from low educational backgrounds [...]” (OECD 2012: 102). As these data indicate, social class is far from being a ‘zombie category’, and the debate about the influence of this category is ongoing and very much alive.

Global economic changes are said to have altered the ‘traditional’ life course. While the Fordist Era was characterised by a high demand for relatively unqualified school-leavers, the overall labour demand has changed significantly since the 1980s, now calling for a higher level of qualification, leading to more time spent in full-time education and a later entry into the labour market (Furlong & Cartmel 2007: 139). Additional changes often

mentioned in this context are: higher unemployment rates than in the 1950s/1960s, effects of globalisation on local economies, the rise of information and communication technology (ICT) and the development of 'knowledge economies', leading to 'new times' often called *post-modern, late-modern, high modernity or liquid modernity* (Roberts 2009: 72).

Traditional quantitative research on the transition from youth to adulthood has used markers to investigate the sequencing of the life course and the transition to adulthood. Some of the most frequently used markers are: completion of full time education, entry into the labour market, leaving the parental home, formation of an independent household, entry into cohabitation/marriage and parenthood (Skelton 2002: 101). In recent times a greater variability in the sequencing of these markers can be observed. The school-work-marriage sequence has become less prevalent since the 1920s, as has the "marriage-coitus sequence" (Shanahan 2000: 671). Shanahan rightly questions the utilisation of these transition markers. Firstly, he argues, it is impossible to decide which marker is the most appropriate to mark adulthood (e.g. childbirth or leaving school). Secondly, many transitions today are reversible – young people tend to move away for Higher Education and move back in with their parents after graduation. Thirdly, some people describe themselves as adults without having passed the 'classical' transition markers. However, in general Shanahan accepts the concept of transition into adulthood and calls for viewing this transition as a series of events that need to be viewed together (Shanahan 2000: 684).

Arnett (2004, 2006) agrees that transition markers are sequenced differently from previous generations. Over the last 50 years in Northern Europe people tend to get married later, premarital sex is the norm, participation in Higher Education is becoming more widespread, birth rates are falling and the first child is born later. All of this leads the author to the conclusion that we are witnessing the emergence of a new stage of the life course which he calls 'emerging adulthood'. According to Arnett this stage is characterised by five features. It is

- the age of identity exploration (when people 'try out' various possible futures)
 - the age of instability (educational paths, jobs and partners change frequently)
 - the age of feeling in-between (no longer adolescent, but not fully adult yet)
 - the self-focused age (with more freedom and less social control than before or after)
 - the age of possibilities (when young people are highly optimistic about life prospects)
- (Arnett 2006: 114)

The choice of work, Arnett argues, is nowadays primarily identity based and a job is not only expected to 'pay the bills', but to be a means to personal fulfilment and enjoyment; phenomena like frequent job changes and part-time work are therefore closely related to the stage of emerging adulthood. Overall, he sees this new stage of the life course as a time of enjoyment as the emerging adults "pursue the pleasures of living in an affluent consumerist society while having few responsibilities to or restrictions by others." (ibid.: 114) Analysing the demographic patterns across Europe, Arnett argues further that features such as later education, later marriage and later and fewer children are similar across Western Europe and can be found in Eastern Europe as well. What Arnett does not take into account, however, are the very different economic situations across Europe. Structural features like youth unemployment rates are hardly mentioned in his research; it is assumed that most young people have the financial means to participate in an "affluent consumerist society". Furthermore, migration movements across Europe are not considered at all.

Although sharply criticising the *delayed adulthood* thesis Skelton's position (2002) is very close to Arnett's (2004, 2006) in emphasizing the level of agency young people have nowadays. Youth, she argues, is often regarded as a phase, as something young people have to pass through, emerging at the end as something better. Understood this way, transition is always orientated towards the future; agency and present time are denied. Skelton claims that her participants do not understand their youth as a process of development or 'becoming', rather she claims them to be agentic and developing new ways in socially and economically difficult times: "They are living their present and making the most of the time they have." (Skelton 2002: 105) In addition, Skelton criticises a research focus on youth transitions that excludes variables such as sexual identity and thereby excluding the transition of gays and

lesbians.³³ She claims that many researchers tend to label people who do not follow a certain trajectory as having performed a ‘failed transition’. The concept of a ‘normal transition’ is seen as something heterosexual, whereas gay/lesbian transitions to adulthood are often described as ‘deviant’ (ibid.: 111). Skelton proposes to re-conceptualise transition to adulthood as a process rather than a stage to pass through, a transition that happens at different times for different groups of people. This, she argues, “allows the space to recognize that there are as many different transitional processes as there are different groups of young people” (ibid.: 113). Skelton rightly states that a lot of research operates with a normative image of adulthood based on the experiences of previous generations and thereby assumes a concept of adulthood that is unchanged and unchallenged.

Dwyer and Wyn (2001) regard the invention of new stages of the life-course (such as emergent adulthood, cf. Arnett 2004) as futile, because markers for youth and adulthood are not appropriate anymore. However, they, too, stress the level of young people’s agency in re-interpreting the concept of adulthood. Concluding from their own research, sampling 2500 students in 17 Australian schools, they develop a typology that captures the life-perspectives being adopted by young people:

- vocational focus (gaining a qualification in order to make a certain career choice)
 - occupational focus (work has priority over other life-choices)
 - contextual focus (emphasis on the ‘life-context’, i.e. family, community, religious or political involvement)
 - altered patterns (making definite changes in career and life-options)
 - mixed patterns (an equal emphasis on a range of activities and goals)
- (Dwyer & Wyn 2001: 177)

What the authors detect is a changing attitude towards work. In their opinion the shift towards a more contingent and flexible workforce has led to a more contingent or flexible attitude towards young people’s own definition of work and career.

It is obvious that for many in this generation personal fulfilment is not being defined solely in ‘career’ terms. In the past ‘who people are’ may have been defined by what they do (or don’t do) in their jobs, but certainly for our participants it is clear that occupational destiny is not all there is to life. (Dwyer & Wyn 2001: 189)

³³ Skelton (2002) only discusses the exclusion of gays and lesbians, but her argument can be said to include the entire lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

This re-orientation of young people's life priorities is partly caused by an awareness that adulthood is an uncharted territory and that current life courses are different from previous generations. Additionally, more and more young people are aware that the one-to-one link between qualifications and career attainment does not exist. One reaction to this assessment might be the pursuit of alternative routes of personal or 'private' interests (ibid.: 198).

These findings are supported by further analysis of the Australian Life Patterns project. Because current work conditions are often precarious and unemployment is possible all the time, most young people tend to focus on a certain lifestyle to achieve a balance in life. This change in attitudes can be interpreted as a response to the systemic uncertainty of current life courses. (Wyn & Woodman 2006: 509)

In conclusion, this research stream claims that although economic circumstances have become more difficult and non-linear transitions into work-life have become the norm, young people seem to possess more agentic qualities than previous generations, particularly because of macro-economic changes that allow them to re-conceptualise adulthood. In this context Blatterer (2007) shows how the prevalent conception of adulthood in present research is a result of the time span between the end of World War II and the oil crises of the early 1970s, a period that saw a high degree of standardisation of life-courses produced by stable economic conditions and a comparably stable and secure labour market. During this timespan the attainment of markers such as family formation, work and independent living led to the recognition of adult status. These conditions are disappearing and contemporary adulthood is being redefined, due to a "normalization of uncertainty" (Blatterer 2007: 4.4). Looking at his own research he claims that the context of normative uncertainty is not necessarily perceived as something bad by young people, but rather as bearing potential for more freedom. Nonetheless, this optimism can in itself be interpreted as a coping strategy in difficult times (ibid.: 5.2). In summary, Blatterer shows that the normative basis for adulthood is no longer clear and that a new understanding has not yet emerged.

So although triggered by normative uncertainty of the life course (structure), the studies discussed above foreground how young people are able to re-negotiate concepts of youth and adulthood (agency) and may experience a

non-linear life course as offering more freedom. What is missing from these studies is the influence of class and other social categories on individual agency, something that is taken into account by another research stream that emphasizes the importance of social structure for individual life(style) choices.

Roberts (2009) argues that in previous centuries in Britain young people boarded a metaphorical public transport vehicle: all children from a particular neighbourhood attended the same school, then went to work in a local industry (coalmine, steel mill, etc.), later on married locally and settled down in the neighbourhood. Today circumstances have changed; educational careers are individualised, people experience accelerated cultural flows via the internet and jobs do not tend to last throughout one's life anymore.

However, the procedure nowadays is not metaphorically to purchase tickets to board particular public transport vehicles (those reserved for the privileged) but to set up individuals in their own private vehicles, with differently powered engines, in which they then embark on personal journeys towards then into and through adult life. (Roberts 2009: 77)

Roberts interprets underemployment, i.e. the mismatch between qualifications gained and occupation held, as a global phenomenon, with the decades after World War II being an exceptional interlude. He argues that the 30 years following the Second World War were "exceptional, not normal" and that Eastern European countries as well as the West are now experiencing "21st century normality" (ibid.: 32). The experience of this normality is very much dependent on categories like family background, educational attainments, gender, ethnicity. According to Roberts these dependences have not lessened in strength, a point also made by Furlong & Cartmel (2007). Their research suggests that young people do not choose non-standard employment in order to be able to maintain a leisure focused life-style, but that transitions from school to work are still very much governed by social class. Although the authors acknowledge that there has been a general change in school to work transitions, leading to an increased risk of marginalization, risk is still distributed in accordance to social divisions. Therefore,

it is still possible to predict labour market outcomes fairly accurately on the basis of social class (via educational performance) and gender. Indeed, while the breakdown of collective transitions created the illusion of individuality, we have argued that these changes had little effect on processes of social reproduction. (Furlong & Cartmel 2007: 140)

The authors suggest that the ability to make a ‘successful’ transition to adulthood is still conditioned by ‘traditional’ inequalities such as class and gender, and while some young adults may experience the extension and desequencing of transition from youth to adulthood as a good thing, giving them space and time to experiment and develop, others might feel frustration over the lack of resources that would allow them to establish independent lives (ibid.: 70).

After discussing both the literature emphasising independent agency and structural restrictions to it, a third group of research proved to be particularly useful for this project – scholars that occupy the middle-ground between the two.

Heath and Cleaver (2003) research the changing patterns of household formation amongst people in their 20s. While their sample consists largely of rather affluent British young professionals living in shared accommodation in the South of England, there are some surprising similarities to the lives of young, well-qualified migrants in the UK. The authors describe the emergence of what they call a “new and distinct phase in the life course”, characterised by economic and residential freedom and the absence of responsibilities traditionally associated with concepts of adulthood, i.e. marriage and parenthood. The young people in their study “are increasingly choosing to sideline some of the more traditional markers of adulthood, in some cases indefinitely” (Heath & Cleaver 2003: 184). The ‘post-adolescents’, to use the authors’ terminology, do have traditional domestic aspirations, but are deferring the act of ‘settling down’ for the time being. This deferral is interpreted as a re-negotiation of the concept of adulthood and a way of finding alternative responses to this life stage. The authors do, however, admit that social class is still an important factor influencing young people’s biographies, for those with limited financial resources who do not choose to continue into Higher Education are likely to follow ‘accelerated transitions’ into early partnership formations and parenthood (ibid.: 182). In summary, what is noteworthy about this project is the degree of agency the participants in the study demonstrate by re-defining adulthood and the inadequacy of traditional transition markers such as the formation of an independent household to determine someone’s entry into adulthood.

Du Bois-Reymond (2003), following a group of young Dutch people for over a decade, points to the fact that while in previous research transition markers were often assigned to either adolescence or adulthood, temporary youth often adopt tasks simultaneously: studying while working and having a child, returning to education after having had a full-time job for years (du Bois-Reymond 2003: 130). Similar to Heath & Cleaver (2003), her study points to the relevance of social class for the conceptualisation of adulthood. For girls from lower social classes, for example, adulthood is closely related to parenthood, so if female participants did not describe themselves as adults, this could be explained by the fact that they had not started a family yet. In contrast to that, boys from the higher social classes tended to define adulthood primarily as a time for individual growth and development, not for family foundation. Despite the insecurities of modern labour markets participants, middle-class girls in particular, are optimistic about their future and appear to “see opportunities to occupy a favourable position in the labour market, which they tend to associate with gaining autonomy” (du Bois-Reymond 2003: 140).

Finally, Holdsworth and Morgan (2005) operate with the concept of liminality to describe current youth transitions to adulthood. Transition in their study is understood as a process over a period of time with different stages inbetween A (youth) and B (adulthood). The authors claim that this sense of liminality does not necessarily need to be perceived as unpleasant, but may sometimes be associated with “freedom from constraints or strong structured normative expectations” (Holdsworth & Morgan 2005: 22). At the same time the fact that variables such as local/national labour markets, education, gender, class, ethnicity and cultural differences do have an influence on individual life-courses is being acknowledged, leading to the conclusion that perhaps “the task [...] is less one of providing some overall reconciliation between agency and structure than to explore how these interact in particular contexts and in relation to particular topics.” (ibid.: 37) This idea proved to be particularly ‘fruitful’ for the present research project, leading to a research interest in the interaction of agency and structure in narratives of young, well-qualified European migrants (cf. section 3.6).

In this section, two major streams of current youth research were identified. While one group argues that a non-linear and uncertain life course has created

more freedom for young people to design their lives away from expectations experienced by previous generations, another group argues that life courses are still very much governed by factors such as social class, level of education, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and macro-economic factors on a local and global level. None of the discussed studies, however, takes the context of (voluntary³⁴, inner-European) migration of young people into account, and it is in this context that this project contributes to the existing literature by adding 'migration' to the equation. As will be shown in Chapter 5, exploring the interaction of structure and agency in participants' narratives produces valuable insights into the dynamics influencing individual migration projects of young, well-qualified Europeans.

While this section investigated the roles of structure and agency in current youth research, the aim of the following sections is to show how agency, in particular in a migration context, is connected to conceptualisations of time. Both concepts, the idea of a *delayed adulthood*, as well as questions of time perception and temporalities³⁵, are often explored in isolation; combining both fields and applying them to the context of migration is one of the contributions of this project.

3.3 Time(s) and migration

Similar to the concept of *delayed adulthood* discussed in the previous section, research on time and temporalities does only rarely take the context of migration into account, while on the other hand migration studies hardly ever investigate the role of time and temporalities. Of course, immigration policy, law and control are organised in a temporal manner, and this is discussed especially in policy research: visas are valid for a limited amount of time,

³⁴ Referring to the voluntariness of current inner-European migration does not mean that migrants themselves interpret the act of migration as something they do voluntarily. Many people, especially from Poland, claim that they were forced to migrate due to an economic situation in their homecountry that endangered their livelihood strategy (White 2011a). While this argumentation is acknowledged, describing inner-EU migration as voluntary simply means that people were not forced out of their homecountries by political persecution or danger of starvation.

³⁵ In accordance with the majority of research (cf. the literature review undertaken by Griffiths, Rogers & Anderson 2013), *time* is used to denote the collective level while *temporalities* describes the level of the individual.

temporal restrictions may regulate access to labour markets, benefits, or citizenship, and migrants may take certain action to extend or renew visas. However, the majority of research understands migration “as a spatial *process* meaning that time is implicit” (Griffiths, Rogers & Anderson 2013: 2). In other words: time is said to be merely connecting two (or more) dots, two (or more) geographical locations, two (or more) immigration statuses or separate migration stages, and limited attention is paid to the individual temporalities of migration (ibid.). On a similar note, King et al. (2004), in their review of the role of time in migration and integration studies, explicitly “stress the practical and theoretical importance of time in the study of migration” (King et al. 2004: 4) and argue that “the measurement and deeper ontological meaning of time in human mobility has been curiously overlooked” (ibid.: 9). This section will address at least some of these shortcomings.

As outlined in the previous section, Holdsworth & Morgan (2005) use the concept of liminality to describe youth transitions into adulthood, whereby liminality can be broadly defined as a stage of disorientation of being ‘in-between’. Cwerner (2001), in his research on Brazilian migrants in London, operates with the same idea when analysing what he calls “the liminal times of migration”. Migrants’ emotions and mental states connected to this aspect of time are indecision, confusion, incompleteness and underachievement, a result of being ‘in-between’ two temporal categories: “The future is uncertain; the present seems to be leading nowhere; and the past cannot be relied upon as a guide for action.” (Cwerner 2001: 27) The perceived temporary nature of the migration experience can make it easier to evade long-term commitments like jobs and relationships. In addition, the concept of liminality can also apply to return-migrants who after returning to the sending country, feel that they ‘don’t belong there anymore’.

The ambivalence of liminality can lead to another temporal category Cwerner calls “nomadic times”. While the liminal stage dissipates, a field of “conscious temporal experimentation” is being opened up, putting migrants in the position to problematise dominant temporal conditions and to consciously disable the sequential nature of careers and life paths. In this sense, the decision to migrate is very often used to initialise a break within the life course (education, jobs, careers). Often the initial plan is to return to the old life, but people tend to

fall under the grip or magic of the immigrant experience [...]. Immigration can then become a way of life, never settling, never contemplating the definitive return. Indeed, even a return to the homeland will sometimes be perceived as another leg in a nomadic journey that must never end. (Cwerner 2001: 29-30)

Nomadic times are therefore understood as times of adventure and uncertainty, a 'time-out' celebrated as a lifestyle with the global society as a stage and economic and legal constraints strategically used to experiment with life-paths and self-development (ibid.: 30).

While Cwerner does not take social categories into account, his notion of time perception (liminal times) and especially the intentional open-endedness of migration (nomadic times), a movement that is focused neither on returning 'home' nor on 'staying for good', are useful concepts. As will be shown in chapter 5, time is one of the most salient themes in the narratives of migration presented in this study. Cwerner concludes his paper hypothesizing that those migrants living the 'nomadic times' preview temporal possibilities that could be opened by a global free movement of people "in which biographies become almost totally dissociated from the narratives and histories of nation-states." (ibid.) Given that today's movement of most EU citizens to the UK is happening largely without legal restrictions offers a unique opportunity to research and evaluate this argument (see section 3.5 and 3.6).

Temporal categories and perception can be highly influential for certain migration strategies. Eade, Drinkwater et al. (2007) demonstrate this in their typology of Polish migration: circular migrants and seasonal workers saving money to improve their economic situation in Poland usually stay between 2 and 6 months in the UK and can be classified as 'storks', whereas 'hamsters' regard migration as a one-off act to make enough money to invest in Poland (e.g. in building a house or starting a company) and see migration as a source of social mobility back home. 'Stayers' have been in the UK for a while and intend to stay for good. They very often have strong social mobility ambitions and are focused on the UK instead of Poland. However, the largest group in their research (42%) consists of what Eade, Drinkwater et al. call 'searchers': young, individualistic and ambitious migrants who are keeping options open and whose main characteristic is 'intentional unpredictability'. Their plans for the future are not quite clear; they might pursue a career in the UK, they might return to Poland or they might migrate somewhere else. It is especially this group that understands migration as a rite of passage into adult life.

Remarkably, respondents construct their class position in terms of their “perceived life chances and plans”. They understand class in terms of opportunities lying ahead rather than the occupational position held at present (Eade, Drinkwater et al. 2007: 10–12). Therefore, a marked characteristic of the majority of participants in the study is characterised by a primary orientation towards the *present* and an ‘intentional unpredictability’ that fades out the *future* for the time being.

A similar result can be found in Trevena’s (2013) typology of highly educated Polish migrants (cf. section 2.3). Trevena’s category of ‘drifters’ shares common features with the aforementioned ‘searchers’. Drifters

chose to perceive their position as temporary, regardless of how long they have been living abroad. Typically, they have no clear plans for the future, and do not know what kind of career (if any) they would like to pursue. They thus tend to live day by day, making use of the benefits of living abroad, and not pondering their occupational position. (Trevena 2013: 183)

According to Adam (1990) waiting for deferred gratification and doing something now for a reward later is an integral part of growing up and becoming socialised (cf. Schatzki 2010 in the following section). However, deferred gratification entails “a certain trust, knowledge, and expectancy of the future; in other words, the future has first to attain reality status.” (Adam 1990: 124) Furthermore, any investment done for future profit requires trust that the future will be shaped in a certain way beneficial to the investment made in the (then) past. Buying stocks, for example, only makes sense if one believes that the company will flourish and share prices will rise in the future. It has to be shown if and how this applies to narratives of current inner-European migration and how ‘future’ as a narrative category occurs.

What can be gained from categories like ‘searchers’ or ‘drifters’ is the importance of (perceived) time and temporal orientations for the application of certain migration strategies. In this context I am going to apply a model of agency that takes temporal orientation into account. This model will be discussed in detail in the following section.

3.4 Time and agency

Agentic orientations most often vary according to different contexts. A migrant who perceives his time abroad as temporary might not work on starting a long-term career or start to ‘settle down’ in the receiving country. In this case it is mainly a prospective future that influences the present.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) understand human agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement. This process will at the same time be informed by the past, but also oriented toward the future and the present. In the past one might have learned certain patterns of thought and action in regard to certain situations – this is what Emirbayer & Mische call the *habitual aspect* or *iterational element* of agency. Past patterns can be reactivated and incorporated in practical activity. At the same time a social actor may have hopes, fears and desires for the future; he/she has the ability to imaginatively generate future trajectories of action – the *projective element of agency* – while the *practical-evaluative element* denotes the ability to think about alternative action in response to a presently evolving situation. All three dimensions are organised in a “chordal triad” and can be found to varying degrees in any instance of action, but one or another of these elements might dominate, leading to action that is “more (or less) engaged with the past, more (or less) directed toward the future, and more (or less) responsive to the present.” (Emirbayer & Mische 1998: 972) Additionally, the different agentic elements may take place at a low level of conscious reflection; social agents might perform an iterational–habitual action without even being aware of it.

The interplay of habit, imagination, and judgement outlined above should not be understood as a universalistic perspective. The authors clarify that actors in different periods and places understand their relationship to past, present, and future differently and that it is the “changing conceptions of agentic possibility in relation to structural contexts” that influence how people see the possible impact their actions can have. An example for this is given in Adam and Groves’ (2007) discussion on how man’s perception of the future has changed over time. In earlier, pre-medieval times the future belonged to god(s) and was more of a sacred domain, which was one of the reasons why throughout history charging interest was frowned upon, partly because it was a gamble on

a sacred domain.³⁶ Eventually the idea of progress led to a shift in ownership, making the future a social domain.

As such it became no different to space which, unlike the temporal sphere, had always been the domain of human action. Like any other territory which was subject to human design, planning, management and regulation, the future became a realm to be administered. (Adam & Groves 2007: 80)

Even though Emirbayer and Mische (1998) do not make gender, race, ethnicity and class central aspects of their seminal essay, their model of agency acknowledges the influence of these social categories on the agentic orientation of individuals.

The authors subdivide every element into a number of interrelated components. For the sake of simplicity not all of these components will be discussed here. Instead, the practical–evaluative element will be described in more detail, because it closely incorporates iterational–habitual and projective elements. Three dominant tones are identified: *problematization*, *decision*, and *execution*. In addition to these, *characterization* is the basis for actors' relationship to the past, and *deliberation* governs the relationship to the future.

The first component, *problematization*, derives from an actor's awareness that action is required and 'something has to be done'. A current situation is perceived as ambiguous or unresolved, as somehow in the way of the realization of projects. The problematic present reality has then to be characterized and related to principles, schemas, or typifications from past experience. The question 'What shall I do?' can, for example, be answered with a repetition of a habitual activity – because the situation that presents itself is very similar to a schema an actor has learned in the past, an habitual–iterative action is likely to be performed in order to reach a similar outcome. Before performing any action, *deliberation* takes place, a process in which possible actions are weighed, habitual patterns may be adjusted and the required action at hand viewed in light of broader goals and projects. Finally, a *decision* is made, a resolution to act here and now in a particular way. These decisions can, of course, be provisional or opportunistic and can be a matter of

³⁶ Another reason for the ban of interest being that lenders did not produce any physical goods. Until today, Islamic Banks try to structure their businesses in a 'sharia compliant' way, trying to avoid any form of moneylending and 'usury' (called *riba* or arab. الربا).

adjustment or adaptation, including feedbacks from experience. What follows is *execution*, described as a capacity to act rightly and effectively and to decide how best to execute a certain action (Emirbayer & Mische 1998: 997–1000).

Applying a model of human agency that takes different temporal orientations into account offers a potentially deeper understanding of the present migrants create. While time and temporal orientations play a role in social actors' decisions in general, it is especially in a migration context that the answer to the question 'What shall I do?' is heavily influenced by temporal categories.

Actors are always living simultaneously in the past, future, and present, and adjusting the various temporalities of their empirical existence to one another (and to their empirical circumstances) in more or less imaginative or reflective ways. They continuously engage patterns and repertoires from the past, project hypothetical pathways forward in time, and adjust their actions to the exigencies of emerging situations. Moreover, there are times and places when actors are more oriented toward the past, more directive toward the future, or more evaluative of the present. (Emirbayer & Mische 1998: 1012)

The interplay of past, present and future is also the keypoint of Schatzki's (2010) concept of *timespace* of human activity. While objective time is characterised by succession (past events precede present ones which are followed by future moments), past, present and future in human temporality occur all at once. By drawing heavily on Heidegger, Schatzki explains that "a person, when acting, falls into the world stretching out between that toward which she is coming and that from which she is departing. This falling–stretching out is the opening up of the past, present, and future of activity." (Schatzki 2010: 28–29) In other words, every activity is departing from something given or responding to something (the past dimension of activity), with the aim of coming toward something projected (the future dimension of activity), "and the present of activity is activity itself." (37) All these dimensions of human time occur together "at one stroke". (43) Schatzki elaborates further in saying that all human activity is centrally teleological, i.e. oriented towards a goal, a desired outcome. Although some human activities seem irrational, pointless, impulsive and not fitting into wider plans, these actions are bodily activities produced by emotions, and "either are relatively rare or peacefully coexist and even join with teleology in shaping human activity." (153) The role memory plays in this context and how it determines people's actions, will be further elaborated in the following section, in which the theoretical assumptions presented here will be applied to a migration context. Particular

attention will be paid to the influence of countries' collective past on migrants' narrated present.

3.5 Authoritarian past and democratic present (Poland)

While the previous section has outlined the role of time and temporal orientations for individuals' exercise of agency, this section will discuss theories that focus on the influence of a collective past (on the level of nation states) on individuals' actions. Some scholars argue that in the case of Eastern European countries like Poland, the collective experience of communism is still influencing the behaviour of social actors today. Surprisingly, none of this is postulated for the case of Spanish migrants.

Poland's communist past, some scholars claim, has equipped people with certain values, behavioural patterns and dispositions that can – in some cases – still be traced today. In popular terms this makes perfect sense – what has been learned in over 40 years of communist rule cannot be 'unlearned' overnight. For a social scientific analysis this statement is, of course, insufficient.

One of the theories regularly applied in this context is Anthony Giddens' (1984) *structuration theory*, which tries to bring together two distinct ways of thinking about the social world: objectivism and subjectivism. Whereas the former overemphasizes structure, the latter sees the social world as entirely 'man made' without any structural constraints (cf. section 3.2). Giddens' approach focuses on the duality of the two. Analysing the structuration of social systems means studying how these systems are produced and reproduced in interaction (Giddens 1984: 25). Structure describes the social rules and resources influencing situational actions. According to Giddens structure is both *medium* and *outcome*; he calls it the *duality of structure* (ibid.). Put simply, not only are actors rooted in a structural context, but whatever they choose to do (or not to do) always involves their knowledge (*memory traces*, in Giddens' terms) of that structural context, of rules and resources. In other words, the social structures in the agent's head make clear what is a socially legitimate or illegitimate action, how power is distributed and

what potential sanctions an action could have. In other words: “Agents have structures within them” (Stones 2005: 21).

Structuration therefore works as a cyclical system: by acting, an agent equipped with knowledgeability of the social structure surrounding him not only satisfies his/her wants and desires, but also reproduces or changes the structural context. Structure in this sense is not a static concept and “is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling.” (Giddens 1984: 25) Structures, although generally quite stable, can be changed, especially when agents, whose actions can have intended or unintended consequences, start to reproduce a given structure differently. One often quoted example in this context is language. The English language, for example, has a set of rules governing its ‘structure’, i.e. defining how it can be used. Speakers, depending on their level of proficiency, have knowledge of these structures, and by applying them they not only produce a ‘grammatically correct’ sentence, they also contribute to the reproduction of the overall system. Although a (language) system can be stable over a long period of time, agents (speakers) can intentionally or unintentionally reproduce it differently, thereby contributing to structural change.

By now, structuration theory has been criticized extensively.³⁷ Parker (2000) believes that “the moment of ‘structuration’ theory has passed some time ago. It still figures prominently in routine social theoretical talk, but its force is only that of a tired conventional wisdom.” Alternative models of social structure have been put forward, be it the so called ‘strong structuration theory’ (Stones 2005) or ‘dualist alternatives’ (Parker 2000). Nonetheless, it still features prominently in social research, as will be shown below.

Morawska (2001) in her study on westbound income seeking Poles conducted in the late 1990s, conceptualizes migration as a structuration process. She argues that society’s macro-level sets the ‘ground rules’ in defining what is possible and impossible for individuals to achieve. People act within these dynamic limits, but at a level of more proximate social surroundings. By undertaking actions people influence this local level and by affecting the local level, over time, they have the capacity to alter larger-scope structures – an individualised grassroots model of agency. Seen this way, migrants’ activities

³⁷ For an overview see Stones (2005: 45–74).

are neither entirely the product of structures, nor the result of their own volition, but “the dialectics of the *power to* and *power over*” (Morawska 2001: 54).

Morawska argues that under communist rule, Poles adopted a certain set of coping tools in order to organise everyday life. Aspects of this *homo sovieticus* toolkit are disrespect for the laws, politics and institutions, the reliance on and passing of word of mouth information about the ‘shoulds’ and ‘should nots’, personal connections as the basis of economic activities and a ‘beat-the-system/bend-the-law’ attitude. According to the author, westbound income seeking migrants have reactivated this toolkit in the post-communist present. The engagement with the structures of the ‘Western’ receiving societies sustains an iterational orientation and practices of the *homo sovieticus* syndrome prove to be useful resources once again, for example illicit income-earning projects like smuggling or working abroad without having a work permit (Morawska 2001: 55). These practices then contribute to a reproduction of an ‘old’ system under ‘new’ circumstances: international migrants doing illicit work abroad are able to afford middle-class symbols back home.

This visible success sustains migratory flows and presents their strategies as role models, supporting the perception that the ‘new’ capitalist societies do not work that differently from the old regime. The interaction of macro-structures (open borders, the availability of passports and visas, demand for cheap labour in the West, but at the same time – the time of the late 1990s – restricted access to Western labour markets) and a micro-level structure of worldwide support networks (Polish diaspora) helped to mobilise certain resources supportive of income earning projects abroad. These resources, Morawska argues, are “a set of iterational schemas and practices, deeply habituated in citizens of former Soviet-bloc countries, that had informed everyday life under communist rule and have survived its demise” (Morawska 2001: 59). In evaluating the ‘new’ circumstances found in capitalist societies, actors’ agentic orientation was primarily characterised by an habitual-iterational element that led to a reactivation of past actions and thoughts.

The survival of iterational schemas and practices can also be explained using Schatzki’s (2010) concept of *practice memory*. Differentiating practice memory from other sorts of memory (e.g. autobiographical or collective memory, the latter being discussed below) Schatzki states that this form of memory does

not contain ideas, beliefs, or thoughts about the past, but is “a person’s memory of how to do something. It is the continuing presence of an ability acquired in the past [...]” (Schatzki 2010: 219)

Knowing ‘how to do something’, however, does not entail the formation of some sort of identity, unlike *collective memory*, a term coined by Maurice Halbwachs (1992/1950). Although concepts of group memory have existed long before Halbwachs, his theory of memory is unique in the emphasis on the individuals belonging to certain groups; how and what one remembers is determined by one’s interactions with members of a social group such as families, social classes, and religious communities (Russell 2006).

According to Schmidtke (2005) the communist past is part of Poland’s collective memory, establishing a trans-generational sense of belonging, defining communities and a sense of common fate.

Collective memories provide a powerful narrative tool for directing perceptions of present social reality. They denote the repertoire of images and ideas upon which the collectivity relies in defining itself and its relationship to others. A shared perception of the past can serve as an interpreting device on the basis of which current or future events are given meaning. (Schmidtke 2005: 70)

Collective memory therefore influences the practical-evaluative element of agency dealing with the question how to act in a present situation, thereby affecting the activation of patterns of reactions and thoughts of the past, the modification of actions/thoughts and the generation of future trajectories of action. From this point of view, collective memory can play a pivotal role for the temporal orientation of human agency. Furthermore, understanding collective memory primarily as a *narrative* tool implies that these narratives transform when major changes of the socio-political context happen. Schmidtke argues that the collapse of the communist regime and the EU enlargement in 2004 created a need to re-negotiate collective memories and identities. However, this re-negotiation does not happen at once but successively, and investigating how collective memories are altered allows researchers to track social change through individual narratives (for a further discussion of this point see section 4.4).

Regarding the collective memory of a socialist past and its role for present day actions, Burrell (2011) has introduced the idea of a ‘double transition’ that young Poles have to negotiate. While most had still experienced the communist

regime first hand, now this generation became the first to “venture into adulthood in a new regime with new roles, expectations and indeed freedoms” (Burrell 2011: 414). The post-socialist period for many was characterised by negative aspects like parents losing jobs, inflation and a general feeling of uncertainty. Burrell argues that the experience of this uncertainty is an ongoing process, that especially young migrants still narrate “the scars of post-socialist change”, still struggle “psychologically with the new rules of capitalism and the market place” and are still “navigating the hurdles of the post-socialist world.” (ibid.: 418)

Regarding post-socialism, Stenning & Hörschelmann (2008) argue that the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) cannot be studied in the same terms as Western countries; if so, difference between countries “is reduced to relative backwardness and these states are perpetually deemed to be “catching up” in both material and institutional terms.” (Stenning & Hörschelmann 2008: 320)

While Stenning (2005) acknowledges similarities between transitions in CEE countries and processes of neoliberal restructuring in Western countries, she argues that “the particular experience of socialism, its construction on a particular set of nascent capitalist societies and its replacement through a period of rapid and widespread ‘transition’ shape a common condition” different from that experienced in ‘the West’ (Stenning 2005: 114), a point also made by Hörschelmann (2009) in her study of young people’s urban rhythm and sense of place in the East German city of Leipzig post-1989.

However, in many of the above studies the question remains to what degree ‘post-socialism’ can be utilised as an explanatory tool for present day actions of individuals. Of course, the collective experience of a shifting political system, economic decline and a widening wealth gap make CEE countries different from the West, but, as Roberts (2003) puts it: “Yet life goes on! These new conditions may still startle members of older cohorts and some social researchers, but they have rapidly been normalised for young people.” (Roberts 2003: 492)

This study does not set out to contribute to the debate about the on-going usefulness of categories like ‘post-socialism’ and refrains from the rather deterministic assumption that the collective memory of socialism and the

experience of post-socialism has to have an influence on participants' actions, even in the context of EU-migration. If and how these categories become relevant will be investigated (chapter 5) and discussed (chapter 6) later in this study. For now, it can be said that some scholars working on social change in former Eastern European countries argue for an on-going relevance of a collective past for present day reality. From their point of view, the 'post-socialist experience' is still shaping perceptions and actions of young people from Eastern and Central Europe, and these internalised beliefs and practices can still be traced today in the context of intra-European migration.

While this section investigated the (alleged) influence of Poland's collective past and experience of communism on individuals' actions today, the following section will explore the Spanish context more closely, in particular the evolution of recent media discourses, social movements and social phenomena.

3.6 From *Mileuristas* to *Indignados* (Spain)

The previous section has outlined how some scholars argue for an on-going relevance of the category of 'post-communism'. From this point of view, Poland's authoritarian past and the experience of a transition period from a command economy to capitalism is still influencing people's behaviour today.

Scholarly research on Spain's past differs widely from the positions presented above. In the following, I am going to show how the experience of Francoism does not feature prominently in contemporary social scientific research or political debate. Far more important and heavily debated, especially with regard to the situation of young Spaniards, is the country's economic situation since the mid-1990s and recent social phenomena like the 'mileuristas', the 'Ni-Nis' and the '15M/Indignados' movement.

After the death of General Franco in 1975 parties of the right and left agreed not to investigate or prosecute the mass killings of the Spanish Civil War and political repressions of the Franco regime, leading to the *Pacto del Olvido* (Pact of Forgetting) and the subsequent amnesty law enacted in 1977. As Encarnación (2008) points out, Spain is "the most famous case in recent history

of a new democracy dealing with a difficult and painful past by choosing not to deal with it at all” (Encarnación 2008: 436).

Tamarit Sumalla (2011) further investigates the formation of the Association for the Recovery of the Historical Memory (ARMH) and the subsequent passing of the Law of Historical Memory in 2004 which marked the beginning of a collective debate about the past after almost three decades of actively not investigating the country’s collective past.

The transitory experience of young Spaniards from authoritarian regime to capitalist democracy, however, does not feature prominently in social scientific studies. Recent social phenomena and political protest movements are not being linked to an authoritarian past, but to the experience of the economic bonanza since the mid-1990s and the subsequent ‘crash’ in 2007/2008.

As discussed previously (section 2.4), at the time of Poland’s EU accession in 2004 Spain was still experiencing an economic boom. In the decade leading up to 2006 real GDP growth rates outpaced all other EU15 states, making Spain a popular destination country for international labour migration. This economic bonanza is partially reflected by the population’s educational attainment levels: in 2000, 29% of people aged 30–34 had completed tertiary education. In 2008, the year the crisis started, this number had risen to 40%, at that time a level similar to Iceland, the UK and Denmark (Eurostat 2013). Large sections of young people, however, remained socially vulnerable.

Despite being one of the European countries with the highest rates of economic growth, despite the housing boom and high immigration rates experienced since the mid-1990s, this had not translated into improved educational or employment opportunities for young people, their access to housing and emancipation from the family, or delaying the age of marriage and parenthood. This was summarised in a generational stereotype: the so-called *mileurista*. (Soler et al. 2014: 4)

The term ‘*mileurista*’ initially described someone who is highly qualified but does not earn more than 1000 Euro a month. In August 2005, three years before the crisis hit Spain, the then 27-year-old Carolina Alguacil wrote a letter to the editor of the Spanish newspaper *El País*, titled *Yo soy ‘mileurista’* (I am a *mileurista*). In this letter, she criticises Spain’s labour market, especially the use of short term contracts and low wages.

El *mileurista* es aquel joven, de 25 a 34 años, licenciado, bien preparado, que habla idiomas, tiene posgrados, másteres y cursillos. Normalmente

iniciado en la hostelería, ha pasado grandes temporadas en trabajos no remunerados, llamados eufemísticamente becarios, prácticos (claro), *trainings*, etcétera.³⁸ (Alguacil 2005)

Even if people manage to secure a fulltime contract, the writer continues, they will not be earning more than 1000 Euros. El País heavily promoted the term, calling Alguacil's letter a "portrait of a generation" (Pérez-Lanzac 2012). The term subsequently became widely used within Spanish society and a number of publications on the generation of *mileuristas* followed: the popular Spanish novelist Espido Freire, for example, published two books on the *generación de los mil euros* (Freire 2006, 2008).

Although the term originates in the years before the crisis, its meaning changed significantly since the start of the recession. Fernández Romero et al. (2012) investigate origin and development of the term from 2005 to 2011 and conclude that, while *mileuristas* originally described highly qualified young people in badly paid, precarious employment, the meaning widened and now includes all people in economically precarious life situations, pensioners as well as people without a university degree. Furthermore, the economic crisis and the rise in unemployment have made *mileurista* an aspirational status. As Alguacil, the author of the 2005 *Yo soy 'mileurista'* letter to the editor put it in an interview in 2012: "Now most of us can only dream of earning 1,000 Euros."³⁹ A new term has evolved to describe the worsening of the socio-economic situation of young Spaniards: *nimileuristas*, meaning people not even earning a thousand euro. El País, leaning to the political left and strongly opposed to the current conservative Spanish government and its austerity measures, has promoted the term further and launched a series of reports on the *Generación 'nimileurista'* (e.g. Pérez-Lanzac 2012).

More recently, Spanish media and politicians started discussing the scale of so-called *Ni-Nis* ('*ni estudia, ni trabaja*', i.e. young people neither studying nor working). The term originates from a 2005 report of the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (Workers General Union), criticising the mismatch between the qualifications gained in school and the demands of the labour market. The

³⁸ "The mileurista is somebody aged between 25 and 34, with a university degree and who speaks foreign languages, with a post-graduate qualification and training. They normally start out in the hostelry sector, and have spent long periods working unpaid as what are euphemistically called interns."

³⁹ http://elpais.com/elpais/2012/03/12/inenglish/1331575980_208983.html, checked on 29.05.2013.

media picked up on the issue and exaggerated the scale of inactive young people. Very soon the label did not apply to individuals anymore but to the entire youth population, now called the *Generación 'ni-ni'* (Luis Barbería 2009). A private TV channel then launched a TV show under the same title which “featured a series of ill-mannered and vulgar young adults who spent all their time doing nothing” (Soler et al. 2014: 5). Especially the Spanish media discourse contributed to a vast exaggeration of the number of *Ni-Nis*, whereas a review of Labour Force Survey data by the Spanish Youth institute concluded in 2011 that *Ni-Nis* actually represent less than 2% of the Spanish youth population (Navarette 2011).

The most recent social phenomena with regard to the Spanish youth population, however, is the evolution of the so-called *Indignados/15M* movement. The name *Indignados* refers to a pamphlet written by the French human rights activist Stéphane Hessel: ‘Indignez-vous!’ (English title: Time for Outrage!) had been published in 2010 and had become a best-seller within weeks. The author, by encouraging young people to protest against matters of indignation, especially modern forms of finance capitalism, became an inspiration to the Occupy movement; until 2010 the book sold several million copies and has been translated in 30 languages.

The name *15M* is very much synonymous to *Los Indignados* but refers to the date of the occupation of the central Puerta del Sol in Madrid on 15 May 2011. Puig (2012) outlines various factors that contributed to the subsequent mass protests that lasted for months: social media like Facebook and Twitter, the financial crisis and high youth unemployment in Spain, upcoming local and regional elections, on-going protests in Portugal and Greece, the Arab Spring and the existence of previous protest groups like the aforementioned (p. 40) *Juventud sin futuro* group or the *No les votes* and *Democracia Real Ya* movements. As opposed to the *Ni-Nis*, the actions taken by the *Indignados* “gained strong popular support, as some of their claims (such as foreclosure on mortgaged homes, criticism of the banking system, of political corruption and welfare cuts) were shared by large segments of the population.” (Soler et al. 2014: 6)

The 15M protest spread across Spain, with support protests occurring in other major cities across Europe. According to the public broadcaster RTVE, 6–8 million people participated in the protests across Spain.⁴⁰ Since then, the 15M movement set up a network of locally run pressure groups, initiatives and cooperatives across Spain, leading to the formation of the *Podemos* party. *Podemos*, only three months after registration as a political party, got 1.2 million Spanish votes in the European Elections on 25 May 2014 and secured 5 seats in the European Parliament.⁴¹

As this section has shown, Spain's recent history, especially with regard to the situation of young people, has been shaped by political conflict and protest movements against the political establishment. This particular part of the political reality in Spain is highly important for the findings of this study for two reasons: firstly, it places participants' individual decisions to leave Spain in a wider framework of political events on a global scale; the act of emigration can therefore constitute an act of political protest, albeit on an individual level. Secondly, it has to be seen in how far the political discourse presented in this section occurs in participants' narratives and what relevance potential instances of intertextuality might have.

In the following section I will now summarise the conceptual framework discussed in this chapter and will then discuss the study's research question in greater detail.

3.7 Conclusion and research questions

This chapter explored concepts and ideas relevant for research on current migration streams of young, well-qualified people within Europe. In the beginning the concept of *delayed adulthood* was discussed. It was shown that traditional markers of transition into adulthood (entry into labour market, formation of independent household, childbirth) have become inadequate due to non-linear and non-standard life courses. Two research positions can be

⁴⁰ <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20110806/mas-seis-millones-espanoles-han-participado-movimiento-15m/452598.shtml>, checked on 29.05.2014.

⁴¹ <http://www.results-elections2014.eu/en/seats-member-state-absolut.html>, checked on 29.05.2014.

identified: on the one hand those scholars who interpret the present 'normative uncertainty' of the life course as offering more freedom and agency to young people, who claim that young people tend to actively delay the act of 'settling down' and who by doing so re-interpret adulthood and develop a changing attitude towards work, focusing on a more leisure-orientated lifestyle (Dwyer & Wyn 2001, Skelton 2002, Arnett 2004, 2006). On the other hand there are those researchers who see the life course as more or less pre-determined by social structure and social categories such as class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation. According to this research stream the experience of underemployment is part of '21st century normality' and dependent on these social categories (Roberts 2009). Therefore, 'successful' transitions to adulthood are also conditioned by traditional inequalities of class and gender (Dwyer & Wyn 2001). A third group brings both positions together by acknowledging the influence of social structure and categories while at the same time granting young people agentic powers to consciously sideline traditional markers of adulthood (Heath & Cleaver 2003, Holdsworth & Morgan 2005).

In another section the role of time in and for migration movements was discussed, especially aspects of time perception. Cwerner's (2001) category of 'nomadic times' describes migration as a lifestyle in which 'time-out' becomes an open-ended way of life. The influence of time, especially a perceived temporariness of migration, can lead to the development of the lifestyle of 'drifters' or 'searchers' (Eade et al. 2007, Trevena 2013), i.e. young migrants whose main characteristic is the 'intentional unpredictability' of their migration trajectory and who have no clear plans for the future.

Due to 'time' being a central category for the analysis of current narratives of migration, a model of human agency was introduced that takes different temporal orientations into account, incorporating *habitual-iterative*, *practical-evaluative* and *projective* elements. These elements are present in all actions of social actors, however, one of them can be found to be dominating. The predominance of a certain temporal orientation is found to be dependent on different periods and places (Emirbayer & Mische 1998).

Returning from these global concepts to a more Polish context, the influence of the country's communist past on migrants' present was explored. With regard to the time before Poland's EU-accession, some researchers identify the

prolonged existence of a *homo sovieticus* toolkit containing certain habits and attitudes found to be helpful under the communist regime (Morawska 2001). Furthermore, collective memory, understood as a group's 'Grand Narrative' can work as an interpreting device for understanding contexts evolving in the present and the future (Schmidtke 2005).

Investigating the influence of countries' collective past on present day perceptions and actions of social actors, a prevalent position in scholarly research on CEE countries is the on-going relevance of 'post-socialism'. Some scholars argue that it is not a transitory, but a conceptual category and that the experience of socialism and a period of transition is still shaping social actions today.

In contrast to that, research on Spain's past focuses on more recent social phenomena like the 2011 mass protests. The past three decades of 'collective oblivion' about the Civil War and the repressions of the Franco regime do not feature prominently in the contemporary political debate. Far more important are social categories like the '(ni)mileuristas' and protest movements like the *15M/Indignados* movement. It has to be seen what role these social phenomena and the discourses around them play in the narratives of the Spanish participants of this study and how they position themselves in relation to the discourse of protest outlined in the previous section.

The conceptual framework outlined in this chapter has influenced the aim and scope of this project in many ways. According to Cwerner (2001) migrants adopting a 'nomadic times' perspective, i.e. those who see migration as an open-ended way of life, who exercise agentic powers by consciously disabling the sequential nature of the life path, preview how a global free movement of people has the ability to produce personal life stories unrelated to and dissociated from nation-state narratives. The current free movement of people from Spain and Poland to the UK offers an opportunity to examine this hypothesis. A comparison of current life accounts of young, well-qualified Poles and Spaniards, that is migrants with unrestricted access to the UK labour market, can potentially shed light on the following research questions:

1. What are the underlying dynamics, motivations and external factors influencing individual migration trajectories, especially with regards to people's professional ambitions in the host country?

2. In what way do national factors affect inner-European, transnational migration projects of individuals?

To investigate these ‘big’ research questions, carefully chosen case studies will be examined in order to gain a deeper understanding of content and form of participants’ narratives. As for the content, particular areas of interest are:

- How do migrants experience an evolving ‘normative uncertainty’ of the life course?
- How do structure and agency interact in the narratives of young, well-qualified Europeans?

The exploration of the narrative form, on the other hand, will focus on the following aspects:

- How do participants narrate their different temporal agentic orientations?
- Is ‘future’ a salient category in these narratives? If so, is it a mistrust in the future that makes people ‘drift’ or ‘search’? Or if not, what are reasons for the narrative absence of ‘future’?

This study is a small-scale, qualitative project focusing on young, well-qualified Europeans. Due to its nature, its findings are not generalisable and can only offer a limited perspective on inner-European migration. Nevertheless, the research outcomes, although restricted in their applicability to wider contexts, have the potential to produce insights into the dynamics governing individual migration trajectories.

This project thereby contributes to recent studies in the field of migration research. While scholars have acknowledged concepts like superdiversity (Vertovec 2006, 2007) and complexity (Blommaert 2012) for the description of contemporary transnational migration, the majority of research on job-skill mismatch/underemployment presents quantitative survey data (see, for example, Bettin 2012, Tijdens & van Klaveren 2012). This study is among the first ones offering an in-depth analysis of the underlying, less-obvious dynamics influencing individual migration projects in times of a global economic crisis. As will be demonstrated, what people set out to do and achieve in host countries, as well as their motivations to do so, is indeed diverse and complex to a degree that it becomes difficult to capture these

dynamics statistically. It is in this context that the study adds to the field of migration research, as well as to the on-going political discourse on immigration to the UK.

This chapter has outlined the conceptual framework and research questions guiding this project. In the following chapter the applied methodology will be described, especially the context of narrative and discourse analysis.

Chapter 4: Data collection and analytical approaches

4.1 Introduction

Initially, this research project was supposed to be an investigation of post-accession migration from Poland to the UK, a decision influenced by the fact that there is a large number of Poles living in Southampton (see section 4.2) and the availability of a vast amount of scholarly research on the topic. As the project progressed, however, things changed: the initial analysis of pilot interviews revealed themes that did not seem to be rooted in a particular tradition of Polish narratives of migration as explored in previous academic research. Furthermore, most participants emphasised the bad economic situation in Poland at the time of EU accession as their main motivation to leave the country. Both factors seemed to call for a widening of the research focus, as the themes the narratives seemed to reveal could not be identified as very 'Polish' anymore, but were more of a 'universal' character.

As the project progressed, the impact of the global financial crisis of 2007/08 became tangible: 'popular' cities like Edinburgh, London or Manchester saw an increase of young migrants from Greece, Spain and Portugal. This impression was first based on anecdotal evidence only, but as time progressed more empirical evidence like statistics on National Insurance Number applications (see section 2.4) became available. Therefore, the aim of the study changed in that another, less-researched and far more recent migration stream had been added to the analysis.

Choosing Spanish migrants as an 'object of investigation' resulted from various factors: firstly, the Spanish community in Southampton appeared to increase steadily, an impression verified by locals and other Spanish migrants living in the city alike. Secondly, as outlined in chapter 2, the economic situation in Poland and Spain is similar. Although Poland's economy has been less affected by the current recession than Spain's, youth unemployment remains high in both countries, as does the average level of qualification. In

both countries, the young and well-qualified seem increasingly to look for work abroad. Additionally, every participant in one way or another chose Southampton or the Isle of Wight as a destination, which allows for a limitation of the research area to one particular place – the choice of locality will be discussed further in the following section. This study therefore compares autobiographical narratives of young, well-educated migrants from Poland and Spain who lived and worked in or near Southampton at the time of the interviews.

This chapter will be structured as follows: first, I will describe both the Polish and the Spanish sample. I will justify Southampton and the Isle of Wight as research sites and present key socio-demographic data on participants including their duration of stay. I then (section 4.2) move on to a description of how data has been elicited and outline the interview process and the structure of the interviews. In this context, I will also identify certain criteria (validity, reliability) in order to conduct credible interviews. Furthermore, in section 4.4 the structure of narratives will be explored, in particular Brockmeier's (2001) categories of *chronological time*, *narrative time* and *retrospective teleology*. After this theoretical groundwork I describe (in section 4.5) the process of data collection and the difficulties of getting access to 'the field', that is, finding participants. Section 4.6, finally, will form the major part of this chapter, where I will outline the three analytical approaches applied in this study (positioning theory, thematic analysis and discourse analysis), and how I intend to combine these three methods into one 'blended approach'. To make the process of data analysis transparent, but also in order to make the chapter more readable, I will use examples from the interview corpus and explain the process of data analysis in detail. But first, I shall start by outlining the sample criteria.

4.2 Sample description

At the time of the interviews, the majority of participants of this study were based in Southampton. Thereby, this research knowingly contributes to the often criticised "southern-centric and city-centric approaches that have dominated the study of Polish migration to the UK" (Gill 2010: 1164). A majority of migration research is indeed being conducted in London and other

urban settings in the South of England, nevertheless, there are also reasons to select Southampton as the field of research, apart from obvious reasons of practicality – doing research on one’s doorstep is always easier and more affordable.

First, and in comparison to other cities across the UK, there is a rather large number of Polish migrants living in Southampton. In 2011 more than 8000 residents out of a total population of 236,900 were born in Poland (Southampton City Council 2013). There is a well-established infrastructure of nearly 30 Polish shops, buses from and to Poland arriving and leaving on a daily basis, a Polish club, and lately even a Polish Insurance office, situated on the High Street and catering exclusively to the insurance needs of the Polish community. The Polish presence and overall in-migration have led to national attention: in 2013 Channel 4 broadcast a discussion panel on migration policy from the Polish club in Southampton as part of the channel’s ‘Immigration Nation’ series⁴², and in early 2014 BBC’s political editor Nick Robinson visited the city for his documentary ‘The Truth About Immigration’.⁴³

Second, and more importantly, Southampton does not belong to the group of “big, rich *Eurocities* in the Northwest of Europe” (Favell 2008: xi). It is certainly not a centre of finance and business, so strictly speaking, it does neither qualify as a *Global City* (Sassen 2005) nor as a *World City* (Massey 2007), and although the University of Southampton is the biggest employer in town, the city is not one of those places that presumably attract the *Creative Class* (Florida 2005). Some researchers claim that especially for migrants from Eastern Europe London maintains its status as a “cultural symbol of the ‘West’, as a city at the heart of English ‘culture’ which had been largely forbidden during the socialist regime” (Datta 2012: 7). None of this can be said about Southampton. Although a number of participants in this study talk about having had a rather idealised image of the United Kingdom, not a single person talks about Southampton as a particularly attractive place to migrate to, and the way some of the respondents talk about the city and their neighbourhood in particular demonstrates the ambivalent relationship migrants have to ‘their’ place. In the following excerpt, for example, I ask Mariusz, a Polish migrant

⁴² The discussion has been aired on 24 April 2013 and is still available here: <http://www.channel4.com/news/southamptons-immigration-experiment> [accessed 05.01.2014]

⁴³ Original broadcast on 07.01.2014, 9.30pm, BBC2.

who had been living in the city for almost eight years, what his impression of his neighbourhood was.

M: A shithole. [laughs]

D: [laughs] Why?

M: WHY? [laughs] Have a look around! You know!

D: *Yeah, but I mean what do you...is there an example where you would say 'This represents the area for me'?*

M: An example? People on the streets. Shops. Ehm, there is nothing nice on this road really. You can=you can see it. You know, I've seen so many places so I can say, you see what's around and there's nothing, there's nothing over here. No. It used to be a bit better. Plus the recession came to the High Streets as well, and [name of neighbourhood] was a victim of it as well, so...even it was just falling down, the recession helped it, so it's=it's for me it's came to all that. But it's still convenient for me, 'cause I've got my shops over here, close to work and I've kind of used to live over here as well, so...

Mariusz describes his neighbourhood in strong negative terms and his decision to live there as a trade off. It is not the beauty of the place that makes him live there, it is its practicality (shops, close to work, familiar area). Similar remarks about other parts of town and the city as a whole can be found in almost all interviews; in fact none of the interviewees mentions the attractiveness of the city as a pull factor. Defining Southampton as the field of research therefore offers the advantage that other factors influencing the migration trajectory can potentially become more visible as the influence of the locality is not highly significant in itself. The city becomes relevant only in other contexts (e.g. social networks, personal relationships, education) that go beyond its visible locality characteristics.

Some of the Spanish participants were living on the Isle of Wight, England's largest island with 138,300 people living on it according to the 2011 Census (ONS 2012a). The island is situated off the coast of Hampshire and easily accessible from Southampton: the foot passenger ferry 'Red Funnel' takes only 20 minutes to make the 10 miles across the Solent.

The Isle of Wight is, of course, different from Southampton in many respects. First and foremost, it is a popular tourist destination due to its natural beauty and calm atmosphere, especially in the south of the island. One could therefore expect that these characteristics influenced migration decisions, but

for the participants of this study this was not the case, as none of them actively chose the island as a destination. In one case, a participant's cousin had been living on the island and had offered a place to stay for a while. In another case, a participant decided to work as an au pair to improve her English, but what influenced her decision to choose her host family was not their place of living, but the fact that the family seemed friendly during an initial conversation on Skype. Two participants managed to find work in an architects' office on the island, but, again, the fact that they ended up living on the island was more a coincidence than the result of a conscious effort – after sending out hundreds of applications across the UK, both got an offer from a company based on the island. In this particular case, the natural beauty of the place was acknowledged by both participants during the interview, however, as life on the island can be very monotonous and isolated, especially during the winter in the southern part of the island, where both lived, both interviewees repeatedly emphasised how bored they were, and that they could not wait for their contract to finish in order to leave the island.

In contrast to islands like Malta or Lampedusa, the Isle of Wight is far from being a liminal space of (irregular) migration routes, and due to its geographical and population size as well as its connectedness to the mainland the island cannot be said to “function as a privileged laboratory for migration studies” (King 2009: 76), at least not more or less privileged than Southampton.

Therefore, while Southampton and the Isle of Wight are indeed two very different research sites, the inclusion of participants from the island can be justified due to the insignificance of the place for the interviewees. No one made references to the attractiveness of the place as a migration destination, and the move to the island happened coincidentally in all cases. In that respect, participants based in Southampton are very similar to those living away from the mainland, and a decision has been made to widen the research site 10 miles to the South and include participants living on the island.

The study applies a purposeful sampling technique (Bryman 2012). Participants were chosen for a specific reason, i.e. they met particular criteria of interest for the research project: they are young, well-qualified ‘economic migrants’ who moved to the UK after Poland's EU accession in 2004. ‘Economic migration’ is defined here as the act of migrating from one country to another with the

initial aim of working and/or monetary improvement. This does not mean that other aspects accompanying the migration project cannot be of equal importance, e.g. personal freedom, lifestyle choices, etc., or that for economic migrants financial gains are pivotal (c.f. section 2.4). Using the term just implies that in the initial phase of the migration project, work and income had priority over or were at least equally important to other aspects. For that reason, people coming to the UK with the sole purpose of studying for a degree are excluded from the sample, because academic migration and study abroad programmes have dynamics different to those of 'economic' migration.

I define 'young' as being in the age group 25–39, while the term 'well-qualified' is used to distinguish from 'highly-skilled' migrants who in scholarly research are almost exclusively defined as people with tertiary education. All of the participants have been to university at some point in their lives, however, not all of them finished their studies. University dropouts were included in the study as well, due to a research interest in life courses in which migration can form an alternative to Higher Education.

Participants were recruited through personal contacts, through a local charity working with migrants from Eastern Europe and snowballing, however, getting access proved to be difficult (see section 4.4). The Polish Catholic Mission (PCM) as a site of participant recruitment was excluded due to its changing status within the Polish community. Only 10% of Polish migrants in the UK attend Polish Catholic church services, and the Polish Church attracts more low-skilled Poles with rather poor English language skills (Gill 2010). The aforementioned charity is a project of the Portsmouth Roman Catholic Diocese and partly funded by Southampton City Council. The affiliation with the Catholic church, however, is not reflected in the charity's work. 'Drop in' advice sessions are mostly held at the Polish Club or various Community Centres across town, as well as in a day centre for homeless people. The charity employs a full-time project manager and two part-time Polish speaking staff.

As many contacts were established through this local charity, one could argue that this sampling technique inevitably leads to a sampling error in that it only manages to recruit a particular type of migrant and thereby overrepresenting a certain group of Polish migrants. While this access method might indeed be problematic, it has to be said that almost all of the Polish migrants in Southampton, even Polish exchange students, have at some point had contact

to the charity. In addition to that, the majority of the participants was only very loosely affiliated to the charity; they might follow the charity's twitter feed but may otherwise not be involved in its activities at all. Table 9 gives an overview of the Polish participants' key data – pseudonyms are used throughout this thesis in order to guarantee participants' anonymity.

Name	Age	Migrated from	Living in	Arrival	Family	Current Occupation in UK	Former Occupation in Poland	Education ⁴⁴
Iwo	27	Poland	Southampton	December 2006	divorced	security guard	student, part time work at post office	university dropout
Mariusz	28	Poland	Southampton	2005	married, one daughter	lorry driver	student, supervisor in sports shop	university dropout
Aniela	29	Poland	Southampton	January 2007	in a relationship	call centre agent	student	MA International Relations and Economics
Pietrek	31	Poland	Southampton	May 2006	in a relationship	glassblower	student	university dropout
Krzysztof	26	Poland	Southampton	March 2006	in a relationship	student (university)	student (school)	<i>egzamin maturalny</i> (A-level equivalent)
Gabriela	30	Poland	York	October 2004	married	PhD student, academic	student	PhD (UK)
Mateusz	31	Poland	Southampton	October 2007	single	sales assistant (part time)	student, teacher trainer	MA Pedagogy and Adult Education
Danuta	38	Poland	Southampton	March 2007	single	dental nurse	legal secretary, court clerk	MA Sociology
Janina	28	Poland	Southampton	July 2007	single	teaching assistant	student	BA English Philology
Malina	26	Poland	Southampton	September 2005	single	document control specialist	student (school)	BA Business & Finance (UK)
Pawel	35	Poland	Southampton	October 2006	divorced, in a relationship	social worker	English teacher	Diploma in ESL (Poland), BA Illustration (UK)
Anastazja	35	Poland	Southampton	July 2005	in a relationship	interpreter & translator	English teacher	MA Translation Studies (UK), BA ESOL (Poland)

Table 9: Key data on Polish participants

⁴⁴ Unless stated otherwise the highest qualification has been gained in Poland.

One clear limitation of the sample is that all interviews were conducted in English. At the time of data collection the researcher spoke neither Polish nor Spanish, and funding did not allow employing a community researcher or translator, which might have been one of the reasons why finding participants turned out to be difficult, especially with regard to the Polish sample. Interviewing participants in their 'weaker' language does clearly influence what is being said and is likely to restrict participants' ability and willingness to elaborate. Pavlenko (2007: 172) criticises conducting research involving multilingual speakers in a single language, because what a person chooses to talk about and the way a speaker does so varies greatly with the language of telling. Linguistic resources that might have been applied in one language, including their semantic and affective connotations, might be missing in another language.

One of the Polish participants in this study, Iwo, had at the time of the interview been living in the UK for more than 5 years. Upon arrival he only spoke a few words of English, and throughout his time in the UK he had worked in low-level jobs in which he had little or no exposure to spoken English. His social network and his many girlfriends were Polish, and there was never a need to invest time and money in formal language education. His English was far from fluent, and the matter was further complicated by the participant's stammer. Consequently, the interview did not go as 'smoothly' as others. Turns were rather short, sentences were characterised by several restarts and self-interruptions, and overall Iwo did not seem comfortable talking about his experiences in English so that at times the interview resembles a very quick Question and Answer session. The set of linguistic resources available to Iwo was clearly reduced, and he kept using a very restricted set of linguistic elements. Walking away from the interview the researcher mentally ticked a box, assuming that he would not be able to 'use' this interview and that it would not lead to any relevant findings. However, during the data analysis it became clear that this had been one of the most interesting and indeed 'rich' stories in the entire sample. So while the research was indeed limited by the researcher's lack of language proficiency, this did not necessarily lead to the elicitation of an 'inferior' narrative. As Blommaert & Jie (2010) state, in narratives from people who have difficulties telling a story in a particular language, the same elements may occur over and over again.

But this does not mean that such stories are 'simple', neither does it mean that narrators fail to bring about significant degrees of narrative structure in their stories. Even though the language may be simple and plain, and despite massive amounts of 'errors' in the language, stories can be narratively complex and well executed. (Blommaert & Jie 2010: 75–76)

In addition, (foreign) language issues seemed to influence participants' migration trajectories only partially, and cases of underemployment and people 'being stuck' in low-level jobs could hardly ever be explained by language proficiency. In general, most participants were highly proficient in English at the time of the interview, and even in retrospect the majority only reported initial problems understanding spoken, colloquial English at the beginning of their stay in the UK. Therefore, the decision to conduct interviews in English could be justified.

The Spanish sample, in comparison to the Polish participants in this study, is characterised by an overall shorter period of stay in the UK. The longest duration of stay was three years, and some of the participants had only moved to England recently. Therefore, the research design could easily be criticised for trying to compare entirely different migration trajectories in terms of duration. Indeed, both groups represent a different stage of the individual migration trajectory, and it is assumed that duration of stay in a foreign country has a vast influence on people's negotiation of culture, work and everyday life. Therefore, the narrative of a person who has been living in the UK for seven years will most likely be different from someone's story who has arrived more recently. However, as different as both may be, the narratives nonetheless allow an insight into the dynamics influencing the migration project at a particular point in time, and demonstrate the interplay of different factors that have an impact on migration trajectories. It is assumed that these factors and dynamics may change over time, but that does not necessarily lead to the two cohorts being incomparable. For example, in terms of labour market performance it is perfectly possible to investigate why one person who has only recently arrived in the UK can make use of his/her educational qualifications, while another one experiences underemployment even after spending years in the country. Table 10 gives an overview of the Spanish sample of this study.

Name	Age	Migrated from	Living in	Arrival	Family	Current Occupation in UK	Former Occupation in Spain	Education
Eloísa	30	Spain	Isle of Wight	November 2012	single	English student	primary school teacher	MA Speech Therapy
Sarita	29	Spain	Isle of Wight	September 2012	single	Au Pair	trader, public servant	Law degree (MA equiv.) ⁴⁵
Tomás	31	Hungary ⁴⁶	Southampton	March 2012	single	freelance travel writer	content manager	MA Software Engineering
Leocadio	29	Spain	Southampton	January 2012	single	physio-therapist	physio-therapist	MA Physio-therapy
Miguel	24	Spain	Southampton	September 2010	single	waiter	student	MA Fine Arts
Garaile	27	Spain	Isle of Wight	February 2012	in a relationship	architect (intern)	student	Diploma in Architecture (MA equiv.)
Malena	26	Spain	Isle of Wight	May 2012	in a relationship	architect (intern)	student	Diploma in Architecture (MA equiv.)
Simón	31	Spain	Southampton	May 2012	single	sous chef	sales executive	MA Marketing
Pablo	28	Spain	Southampton	August 2012	in a relationship	chef	mining engineer	MA Geological Engineering
Cristina	25	Spain	London (prev. Soton)	June 2012	single	intern in building company	cashier	Civil Engineering (BA equiv.)

Table 10: Key data on Spanish participants

As outlined in Table 10, all of the Spanish participants migrated to the UK only recently. To some extent, this is a direct result of the financial crisis of 2008/09 and the high youth-unemployment rate in Spain (see chapter 2). However, while the crisis forms the background of the individual narratives, all of the participants had been in employment or full-time education before they left Spain. No one went through long phases of unemployment, and some interviewees, such as Leocadio and Tomás were not only not affected by the crisis, they also admitted that they had been rather 'well off' in Spain. Most Spanish participants are single, but this is likely to be due to the relatively short amount of time they had spent in one particular place at the time of the interview.

⁴⁵ Spain has not yet implemented the system of Bachelor's and Master's degrees on a large scale. Degrees that take five years have therefore been categorised as 'MA equivalent', while degrees taking three to four years will be referred to as 'BA equivalent'.

⁴⁶ Tomás is a Spanish participant who had been living in Hungary before coming to the UK – see section 5.3 for a detailed description of his migration trajectory.

In conclusion, the sample consists of young, well-qualified migrants in the UK. Polish participants came to the UK after Poland's EU accession in 2004, while the Spanish sample migrated more recently, with the majority settling in the UK between 2010 and 2012. The average age of the Polish group ($n=12$) is 30.3 (median age 29.5), and participants have been living in the UK for a period between 5 and 8 years.

The Spanish sample's ($n=10$) average age is 28 (median age 28.5) and the duration of stay lies between 5 months and 3 years. While the duration of stay differs hugely from the Polish sample, age and level of education allow for a comparison of the narratives, always keeping in mind that this small-scale, qualitative study is in no way representative for any larger migration movements. Both samples and the ways of access to participants will be further discussed below (section 4.4), while the following section will outline the way in which data was generated through autobiographical interviews.

4.3 Autobiographical interviewing

This section will outline how data was elicited and describe the interview process in detail in order to make the process of data collection transparent. As there are many different concepts and names for different forms of interviews, I start by outlining the applied terminology.

The interviews focus on the migration experience of the participants. The interview setting the researcher created was not characterised by a complete openness; interviews did not start with a question like 'Please tell me about your entire life up to this very moment.' Instead, the interviews were guided in a way that the narratives would focus on the migration experience, normally starting in the past, giving an account of the participant's life prior to the decision to emigrate, continuing with a recollection of the early years in the UK and the participants' present life situation, and ending with a projection of a possible future where interviewees talked about their aspirations and plans. Although the interviews covered a large part of participants' lives, they are not life story interviews in a strict sense, for they are not a "fairly complete narrating of one's entire experience of life as a whole" (Atkinson 2004: 567). Therefore, where the term will be used in this thesis, the reader should keep in

mind that in most cases large parts of the participants' lives (e.g. childhood and youth) have been excluded.

On a similar note, the interviews do not qualify as ethnographic interviews. The interviews allowed the researcher to locate the individual biographies in broader cultural domains and to link aspects of personal narratives to the research questions of this study, but, as some scholars argue, "in order to be worthy of the additional title of *ethnographic*, interviews must be conducted within the context of the broader sorts of participant observer studies [...]." (Forsey 2008: 59) The research includes limited engagement in the field setting: The researcher became involved in a video project depicting the everyday life of the Polish community in Southampton, which led to contacts to a number of participants. As for the Spanish sample, the researcher attended bars and parties where Spaniards 'hung out'. However, none of this qualifies as ethnographic research in a stricter sense; the researcher did not spend months or years in the field, did not form lasting friendships with participants, and although data has been analysed thoroughly (section 4.6), the analysis does not result in a 'traditional' *thick description* (Geertz 1973), understood as a purely cultural interpretation of a phenomenon. In other words: the research process did involve some ethnographic work, but strictly speaking this study does not qualify as an ethnography.

To avoid terminological ambivalence, the elicited stories in this study will be defined as semi-structured, autobiographical narratives focusing on particular parts of participants' lives. A narrative can be defined as the process of

meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time. (Chase 2011: 421)

The narrative event, that is the event of the interview, is therefore characterised by an ordering activity starting in the past and leading up to the present moment.

The interviews in this study can be described as semi-structured. There was a list of issues and questions to be covered, but this list was not fixed and the order of questions open to change, however, efforts have been made to keep to the aforementioned time frame, that is, starting in the past, moving on to the present and ending with the narration of a potential future, plans and

ambitions. Keeping to this time frame resulted from an interest in the role time and time perception play in the context of voluntary migration, and made the subsequent data analysis easier.

In some cases additional questions were asked, “including some which were not anticipated at the start of the interview” (Gray 2004: 216). One of the participants, for example, very briefly mentioned a divorce. Although this part of the interview started out by discussing issues of housing and accommodation, the interviewer immediately abandoned this stream and tried to get the interviewee to elaborate on his failed marriage (which in the end turned out to be far more interesting and rich than housing issues). This example also shows that interviewers have to be able to listen actively and ‘think on their feet’; they have to be aware of the intellectual and social dynamics of the situation and make on-the-spot decisions about content and sequence of the interview to generate relevant data (Mason 2002: 67).

The above is also a good example of the co-construction of research interviews. As Burck mentions, in an interview “researchers inevitably pursue certain areas and close down others” (Burck 2007: 161), something that does, of course, influence what is being said in the interview and how it is said. As Talmy (2011) in an analysis of his interviews at a Hawai’i high school outlines, ‘themes’ in interviews are always occasioned in interaction and co-constructed with the interviewer. Briggs (2007) goes even further in arguing that the idea that interviews are “producing discourse that seems to transform inner voices into public discourse by constructing particular types of subjectivity and inducing subjects to reveal their inner voices (attitudes, beliefs, experiences, etc.)” is nothing but an illusionary ideology (Briggs 2007: 554).

Later (section 5.2.2), I will discuss Janina’s account of ‘doing well’ in the UK, and I will outline the ambivalent production format of this utterance – how far it is her ‘inner voice’ expressing this opinion or the voices of significant others is highly ambivalent. That being said, Briggs also reminds us how “differential power relations structure qualitative, open-ended interviews and conceal the effects of these inequalities, thereby preserving naturalistic ideologies of interviewing.” (Briggs 2007: 561) Of course, assuming that the social position of the researcher did not influence the interviews would be highly naïve: as a white, German male from a working class background, working on a PhD on

migration to the UK, speaking reasonably good English (but no Polish or Spanish), the researcher's social standing is different from most interviewees. In some cases, being a migrant myself led to participants being more open about their perception of UK culture and 'the English'. For example, Garaile's statement that English people "are not very clean, they are not organised" is something he might not have said had I been, by nationality, a representative of the host country. On the other hand, some participants might have considered being a PhD student as having a comparably high social status and positioned themselves accordingly, modifying their accounts in a way that it presents themselves as being successful social actors, or creating a discourse of justification for their social position – below (section 4.6.1) I will discuss Mateusz's 'proxy narratives' that oscillate between justification and accusation for his experience of 'being stuck' in a low-level job, something that is closely connected to the status of the researcher. All of this, including the interactional character of the research interview, has to be kept in mind during data analysis.

Apart from the researcher co-constructing participants' accounts, another difficult characteristic of a semi-structured, narrative interview approach is to strike a balance between 'thinking on one's feet', an informal interview style and sequential flexibility on the one hand and the aim to conduct credible interviews on the other. As the interviews in this study are qualitative in nature, the question is how far criteria for quantitative research like reliability and validity can be applied. Bryman (2012: 278) summarizes this 'criteria debate' in the Social Sciences, saying that most qualitative researchers nowadays operate around a midpoint: they agree that a social reality exists that can be captured through qualitative methods, but they also acknowledge that their findings are only one possible representation, not a definite version of social reality. However, to ensure that findings can be trusted criteria for evaluating research apply to qualitative as well as to quantitative designs.

External validity, to start with, is related to generalizations and the question of how far research findings can be applied to a certain population in general. The degree of generalizability is, of course, very limited in small-scale qualitative studies, and this project does not set out to produce results that are valid for, say, all or the majority of young, well-qualified migrants in the UK. Nonetheless, the sample should be selected in a way that allows us to look at a

subject from as many angles as possible while at the same time achieving a degree of similarity between participants. Therefore, the sample includes participants from diverse backgrounds with different migration trajectories and occupations – academics have been included as well as bouncers, nurses as well as call centre agents. To allow some degree of comparability, the research area has been limited to Southampton and the Isle of Wight (for reasons discussed in section 4.2), all of the participants belong to a similar age group, have a similar level of education, and have migrated to the UK within the last 10 years. In other words, trying to ensure external validity is an act of balancing two extremes: restricting a particular sample on the one hand, while allowing maximum diversity within these restrictions on the other.

In addition to that, *internal validity* in a qualitative design aims at ensuring that what the researcher observes matches the ideas developed from this observation. In other words: does what the researcher makes of an interview do justice to what participants were saying? Is an issue being observed from the participants' perspective or have certain utterances been over- or underinterpreted? These issues will be further discussed in section 4.6 where a detailed description of the data analysis is given.

As the interviews are not standardised and do not follow a set protocol, *reliability* might be low, for it cannot be guaranteed that the research instrument (the interview) consistently measures what it set out to measure (the research questions) (Gray 2004: 219–220). Due to its semi-structured nature, topics may occur in one interview that are absent from another one, and although operating in a past–present–future frame (see section 4.3) the order of topics the researcher wanted to explore has often been altered and adjusted to the narrative flow the participants created, thereby potentially influencing responses. However, as only one interviewer (the researcher) conducted the interviews and made a conscious effort to conduct all interviews in a similar way, touch upon the same issues and, if possible, use similar questions, *interviewer bias* has been kept to a minimum. Naturally the relationship between researcher and participant varied from interview to interview, and some interviewees talked openly about topics others would avoid.

In addition to *validity* and *reliability* Gray (2004: 221) mentions other quality indicators for qualitative interviews. His concept of *consistency* is similar to

internal validity; it should demonstrate how exactly the research has been conducted and how the data has been analysed – this chapter, especially section 4.6, should provide evidence of that. *Accuracy*, too, is similar to internal validity, but emphasizes the need for a fair representation of what participants have said. Gray suggests “checking with interviewees that they have not been misinterpreted” (ibid.). This method of participant validation could not be applied in this study; in some cases participants were not living in Southampton anymore once the data analysis of an interview had been finished. Nonetheless, where interview sequences were misleading or certain utterances regarding attitudes or opinions were ambivalent, the researcher used probing questions to get the participant to elaborate or clarify his or her point of view in order to avoid misinterpretation during data analysis.

It is acknowledged that quality criteria in a small-scale, qualitative study are different from those in a quantitative research design. Furthermore, results will hardly ever be generalizable, and researcher bias in a semi-structured, narrative interview is hard to eliminate. However, in order to establish credible results and avoid an ‘anything goes’ stance, these criteria have to be taken into account, and this chapter should make the process and the design of the research as transparent as possible. But even if criteria are acknowledged and implemented in the research design, the question remains as to how far the interview data are a recount of real events and how far what has been reported in an autobiographical interview can be treated as real events that happened at some point in the past. The following section will explore this rather complex issue further.

4.4 Narrative structure and the ‘real world’

Findings resulting from a small, non-representative study employing a semi-structured, autobiographical interview approach, can easily be criticised for not being accounts of *what really happened*, but a mere fictional story that the interviewee tells. Participants might be more concerned with how they want to position themselves today and in relation to the interviewer (see previous section), than with giving a truthful account of past events. For example, in one case a male participant (in a quite self-satisfied manner) talked about his

past relationships since coming to the UK and came up with the impressive number of six girlfriends in five years. Although the interviewer can investigate the matter further, e.g. through asking for more details (names, how they met, etc.), there is no way of telling if this information about the participants' love life is true, or if it is just how he wants to be seen, how he positions himself.

As an autobiographical interview in the social sciences is not a polygraph test, the possibility exists that participants lie; the six girlfriends might never have existed, or the number might be higher or lower. However, it can be assumed that "people have neither the time nor the energy, neither the cognitive skill nor the sufficient wherewithal, to be making up a new life story every split second" (Block 2006: 69–70). In addition, it might be possible that participants agree to take part in a qualitative study with a known objective in order to intentionally invent past events that have never happened, but this pathological behaviour is highly unlikely. Thinking about the way past events are narrated, however, leads to questions concerning the structure of autobiographical narratives. In discourse analysis it is widely accepted that these narratives are never a pure collection of facts but "systems of beliefs" (Pavlenko 2007: 169) that should be analysed considering the context in which they were produced. In other words: for an analysis of the elicited narrative the actual number of girlfriends does not matter. What is of importance is that the narrator produces them inside the narrative.

In the context of intra-narrative dynamics, Brockmeier (2001) differentiates between chronological time and narrative time. Chronological time is similar to the way events are organised in a Curriculum Vitae, a detailed, truthful, linear account of a life's events (what Brockmeier calls *fabula*). Chronological time, however, does not play a significant role in autobiographical narration. In these narratives events are narratively composed (what he calls *sjuzet*). This narrative composition, a creative act, is defined in terms of narrative time, that is "the peculiar time that is created in the act of narrating" (Brockmeier 2001: 271), meaning that the autobiographical narrative tends to ignore the chronological story. Important events of one's life can be selected freely and linearized in a way that ignores the real temporal sequence of events. Therefore, someone might start an autobiographical narrative by talking about a partner she followed to another country and how the relationship subsequently ended, only

to go back in time and talk about the divorce of her parents and other childhood experiences.

If someone tells his or her life story, this story typically starts in the past and leads to the present, although, as outlined above, not necessarily in a chronological way. The present is the moment of narration, and once the narrated event ‘catches up’ with the narrative event, both events merge. Some scholars claim that this ‘narrative merger’ is a

seductively persuasive fusion that seems to suggest either a remarkable coincidence or an inevitable outcome; the components of the story are assembled in such a way that they appear, with hindsight, to have been leading towards the present conclusion all along. (Stevenson & Carl 2010: 133)

This narrative structure, this ordering of events in which the present is a necessity emerging from the past, is what Brockmeier calls *retrospective teleology* (Brockmeier 2001: 251–252). He argues that as a consequence of this teleological construction ‘chance’ disappears from autobiographical narratives.

"Lived time" appears to be a sort of direct and linear linkage between two well-defined moments in time. In this manner, the uncertainty and arbitrariness of life seems to be absorbed, and the plurality of options, realized and not, which is so characteristic of human agency, is inevitably reduced to a simple chain of events. Often, therefore, this teleological construction of linear time endows the autobiographical account with a deterministic tenor. (Brockmeier 2001: 253)

This is only partly true for the way some of the participants in this study organise their narratives. As will be outlined in the micro-analysis of Danuta’s migration trajectory (section 5.4), there is a narrative self that links different sequences of the narrated life, but her life story is characterised by the absence of a *telos*. Instead, narrative and migration trajectory quite literally ‘get stuck’ and do not come to a clear conclusion.

Let us assume that narratives are not insular texts, but “interwoven with [...] socio-cultural, political-historical and spatio-temporal contexts” (Galasinska 2010: 941). Every individual narrative, therefore, reflects to a certain degree historical, political and social issues on a broader scale. In their research on the role of language in Central Europe, Stevenson & Carl (2010) argue that their participants’ life stories are highly personalised in terms of constitution and composition – no two life stories are the same. However, they are also closely linked to each other in that they have common denominators, and they are also connected to wider narratives of social change, and “it is through the

interdiscursive relationships and internal narrative management that the stories acquire or generate their meaning” (Stevenson & Carl 2010: 158). It can therefore be stated that, although the findings of this study are in no way representative, an analysis of the way young, well-qualified migrants narrate their migration experience can be a valuable tool to investigate the social reality of current inner-European migration streams to the UK. While this section outlined the general rationale for using autobiographical interviews as an investigative tool, the following section will describe the applied interview method in greater detail.

4.5 Data collection, interview settings and access

In this section I will describe how data was collected, how participants were recruited, and the difficulties accompanying gaining ‘access to the field’. As the project started out as an investigation of Polish migration (see 4.1), I will start with an outline of the process of recruiting Polish participants.

At the beginning of the research project I was convinced that gaining access to the field, i.e. the Polish community in Southampton, would be relatively easy. The people I was looking for were young and well-educated. I was not trying to get access to an outlaw motorbike gang (Wolf 1991), nor did I try to get accepted into a rather isolated religious group (Shaffir 1991). The ‘way into the field’ began by contacting two Polish housemates of a friend, and I was convinced that snowballing would take me from these two initial interviews to a vast number of other participants in no time, even though I had myself just arrived in the city, was not connected to the Polish community at all and did not speak a word of Polish. Needless to say I was wrong. The two initial interviews were interesting pilot studies, but did not lead to any other contacts, although the social network of both participants consisted largely of fellow Polish countrymen and –women.

As a next step I contacted the Polish Society at the university. Although I wanted to avoid interviewing participants who migrated for academic reasons only, I thought that the society might be interested in my research and would be willing to support me in finding participants. The enthusiasm of the society’s members, however, was very limited, to say the least. Attending

events like the 'Polish Cultural Awareness Day' (a two hour long performance of traditional Polish folklore dances followed by a rather demanding, surrealist play by Slawomir Mrozek) did not lead to opportunities to meet people, although every effort had been made hanging around at the bar before and after the event. Flyers (Appendix 1) advertising the research project and calling for participants were designed and distributed to almost every Polish shop in town; most shop owners were personally informed about the purpose of the research and were asked for support. None of this led to any response. Consulting with a Polish PhD-student working on a similar topic was rather disappointing: although being Polish and volunteering in a local Catholic school with a high intake of Polish students, she could only manage to conduct around 10 interviews with Polish parents in two years. Another Polish researcher pointed to the fact that Polish migration to the UK was simply overresearched and that as a non-Polish speaker without means to pay participants for interviews (discussed below), it would be hard to get access.

Contacting a local charity supporting migrants from Eastern Europe proved to be a step forward, although the process of recruiting participants remained problematic throughout the project. After meeting the main project manager of the charity and telling him about the purpose of my research, he advertised the project and the call for participants in the charity's monthly newsletter as well as on the charity's Facebook page. Around 1000 people are subscribed to the email-newsletter and the newsfeed on Facebook, and according to the project manager, at least half of them are Poles living in Southampton. Although a vast number of potential participants could be reached through these e-recruitment channels, the respondent rate remained zero.

Getting involved in a video project funded by the charity and contacting people directly who posted statements about their life in the UK on the charity's Facebook page finally resulted in recruiting a number of participants, however, snowballing did not work. In some cases potential gatekeepers whom I had interviewed were excited about the research and promised to contact friends who would fit the sample criteria. More than once, however, this resulted in the gatekeeper contacting me a few weeks later, telling me that they had spoken to a number of friends, but that they were simply not interested or did not see the point. In other words:

For a variety of reasons [...] they [the participants] do not share our excitement about our work. As they see it, they stand little to gain, if anything, from our research findings and may even lose. A related reason for their reluctance is their impression that our work will add little to their own lives. Although we may not be perceived as a direct threat, we are seen as a nuisance because we occupy their time by asking thorny questions. As such, the ultimate purpose and net gain of our activities seem unclear. (Shaffir 1991: 209)

Even today I can only speculate about the reasons for the very low response rate. Some Polish academics working in Social Sciences told me stories about ‘Poles being suspicious’, in their eyes a result of former communist rule. One researcher reported that a call for participants on *sotland.pl*, a local website for the Polish community in Southampton, subsequently triggered an endless discussion in the website’s forum; users of the website were worried about who was behind the research, and some speculated that through the call for participants the police was trying to find illegal immigrants.

I would not subscribe to Poles being ‘suspicious in general’, at least not when it comes to young, well-qualified people. From what potential gatekeepers told me, the reluctance to participate in the study was just a result of not being interested and having more important things to do. One could speculate about potential participants seeing themselves marginalised by research ‘on Polish migration’, but even in cases where I changed the wording and explained I was doing research on European migration to the UK, the majority of people could not have cared less, and maybe getting access to an outlaw motorbike gang would actually have been easier.

I am still undecided whether paying participants for interviews would have made a difference. Using monetary incentives to increase the respondent rate is common practice in quantitative survey studies. In contrast, there is an ongoing debate about paying participants in qualitative studies. While some researchers argue that monetary incentives are sending wrong signals and might even influence the data, others argue that “the dangers of making payments to respondents can be outweighed by the gains, both by reducing bias and by compensating for power differentials between the researcher and the researched” (Thompson 1996). Especially in migration studies it seems to become more and more common to pay informants. In her research on Polish family migration Anne White paid £20 per interview (White 2011: 237), so did McGhee et al. (2012), and Galasińska and Kozłowska used snowballing in combination with monetary incentives in order to generate a higher response

rate (Galasińska & Kozłowska 2009). Due to a lack of funding and initial hesitation to offer some sort of monetary incentive, however, this study did not use any form of payment for interviews, although participants were invited for coffee or tea as the majority of the interviews took place in local cafés and pubs in the city centre.

Another obstacle in the way of getting access to Polish participants might also have been the problematic political discourse on immigration from Eastern Europe to the UK, briefly mentioned in the introduction to this study. To give yet another example, Labour's shadow immigration minister Chris Bryant has lately criticised UK retailer Next for using a recruitment agency that hired exclusively Polish workers for a warehouse in West Yorkshire. Mr Bryant said it was not illegal for agencies to target foreign workers, however, "when agencies bring such a large number of workers of a specific nationality at a time when there are one million young unemployed in Britain it is right to ask why that is happening."⁴⁷ While at first glance it may seem that there is nothing wrong with asking these questions, utterances like this are in fact highly problematic. Discursive chains like the one above may seem to 'make sense' to a wider audience, but the connectedness of youth unemployment and immigration presented here is actually far from self-evident. On the contrary, many economists agree that there is hardly any impact of immigration on native wage or employment levels (Blanchflower, Saleheen, Shadforth 2007; Eldring & Schulten 2012), while other analysts argue that there is no valid correlation between youth unemployment and immigration (Cavanagh 2012)⁴⁸.

Singling out Polish migrants and 'problematizing' their participation in the UK labour market contributes further to a political climate in which being a Polish citizen can be perceived as challenging, and some of the problems with getting access to participants, especially as a non-Polish researcher, might in fact have been related to the current political and media discourse on immigration from Eastern Europe.

⁴⁷ A full transcript of the speech from 12 August 2013 can be found here: http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/project_update/2013/08/events-speech-bryant-130812.pdf (accessed 13.08.2013).

⁴⁸ Cavanagh's piece is a reaction to a study published by the right-wing think tank MigrationWatch that, too, tried to create a link between youth unemployment and immigration from Eastern Europe to the UK; the fact that a Labour politician shares common ground with MigrationWatch demonstrates how Labour's position on immigration is drifting further to the political right.

Access to Spanish participants, on the other hand, turned out to be comparably easy. Two routes of recruitment had been followed: personal contacts led to Spanish migrants who were living on the Isle of Wight. The friendship to a Spanish gatekeeper living on the island helped, so did the occasional engagement in the local 'nightlife'. Even where meeting Spanish participants on the island did not immediately result in their participation in the study, contacts could be followed up via email or social networks, and references to a certain party or an evening at a local bar made it easier to 'break the ice' later on. As for the Spanish participants in Southampton, a bar in town could be identified early on in the research process where a group of people with an interest in travelling and backpacking met socially once a week. The group consisted of young people from across Europe, with the majority being Spanish. I attended these meetings for a couple of weeks, and when being asked I openly admitted to working on a research project on migration from Poland and Spain to the UK. However, only after about a month did I actively start to recruit people for interviews. In summary, finding Spanish participants proved to be easier than recruiting Polish interviewees. Possible explanations might be that 'going out' and consuming alcohol with interviewees in combination with friendship to a Spanish gatekeeper who could 'vouch' for me helped to gain participants' trust. In addition, when asking people if they wanted to participate in the study I always emphasized that the overall background of the study was the current financial crisis and the economic situation in Spain. Participants' frequent Facebook posts about the economic situation in Spain made clear that this was a topic that was highly relevant for most of them, even though not all of them had been affected by it. An example of one of these posts is given below.



Figure 6: Participant's Facebook post on unemployment rate in Spain

In summary, personal contact over an extended period of time proved to be relevant, something that could not be established with regard to the Polish community.

As for the interview setting, choosing a central, easy to reach public place offered many advantages. In almost all cases I did not know the participants very well, and especially where initial recruitment had happened through Facebook, as was the case for some of the Polish participants, choosing a rather neutral meeting point seemed more appropriate than meeting at the interviewee's house or inviting the participant over to the researcher's (shared) house. Almost all informants were living in shared accommodation with limited space where their often small rooms would have been the only private place to conduct the interview. A public place like a café therefore offered more privacy than informants' houses.

At the beginning of every interview participants were given a consent form (Appendix 2) that briefly summarised the purpose of the research, offered

them anonymity and confidentiality and informed them of the possibility to withdraw from the study at any time during or after the interview – luckily no participant made use of that option. One consent form was signed by the interviewer and the interviewee and remained with the researcher, the other form was for the participant to keep. Interviews were between 40 minutes and 2.5 hours long, leading to a total of 23 hours and 27 minutes of interview material. None of the interviews ‘went wrong’, although in one case questions about plans for the future led to the participant ending the interview politely as this was a very sore topic (section 5.4). Another interview touched the topic of a potential divorce: the wife had gone back to Poland while the husband, whom I interviewed, stayed in the UK.⁴⁹ The interviewee was not willing to discuss the matter further, saying simply “This is the question we will skip”, but carried on with the interview. The interviews were generally characterised by a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

In summary, finding Polish participants turned out to be more difficult than expected, whereas personal contacts and the ability to frequent certain meeting places made it comparably easy to get access to Spanish interviewees. Snowballing techniques did not work in the Polish case, and general interest in the project was low, whereas snowballing did work to some extent for the Spanish sample, and in general interest in the research was higher.

However different both samples are, the interviews in general are characterised by very rich data. In the following sections I will outline the techniques applied for data analysis.

4.6 Data Analysis

In this section I discuss what happened after the interviews had been conducted, that is, how the texts have been processed and interpreted using a ‘blended approach’ of positioning theory, thematic analysis and discourse analysis. The objective of this section is to make the act of data analysis and interpretation as transparent as possible. Two ideas are of importance in this

⁴⁹ At the time of writing they are both living and working in Poland, watching their four year old daughter grow up and enjoying a “free nanny”, the grandmother.

context: on the one hand, in current interview research (and PhD theses in particular), one often encounters a “negative correlation between number of pages on methodological paradigms and number of pages contributing with substantial new knowledge in a field” (Kvale 2009: 297). While in a lot of published research the section on research methodology is indeed more detailed than a description of the research findings, there is also the other extreme, where the way data is being interpreted is hardly discussed at all. According to O'Reilly ethnographic analysis comes close to a grounded theory (see section 4.6.2), but there is no fixed set of rules.

I am often asked 'how do you analyse your data?' and I don't know how to answer. There is no statistical procedure, no progression from univariate to bivariate to multivariate analyses, but there is something shared by ethnographers, an implicit understanding of how data are analysed; or of how to get from writing down to writing up. (O'Reilly 2005: 178)

To describe the process of data analysis in these vague terms does not help to make research findings credible, and a ‘you just know how to analyse’ approach contributes to the divide between quantitative and qualitative methods. Therefore, the following sections will outline the analytical procedure. Three major theories of data analysis have been combined: ‘positioning theory’, ‘thematic analysis’, and elements of ‘discourse analysis’.

4.6.1 Positioning Theory

This form of data analysis is mainly concerned with how the narrator designs his/her story, how s/he introduces certain figures, and how s/he positions the narrated self in relation to other people in the story. The positioning approach has its origin in the field of discursive psychology and is closely linked to the research of Wendy Hollway and Rom Harré (Hollway 1984, Harré & van Langenhove 1999). Hollway's research (1984), for example, investigates how gender identities are produced and reproduced. She identifies three prevalent discourses (the *male sexual drive discourse*, the *have/hold discourse*, and the *permissive discourse*) and explores how her male and female participants position themselves and their present and previous partners in heterosexual relationships either as objects or as subjects within one of these discourses. Gender differences, she argues, are reproduced through “two people whose historical positioning, and the investment and powers this has inserted into

subjectivity, complement each other.” (Hollway 1984: 259) Social change in the wider society, however, has the ability to produce contradictions in the ways these two people position themselves and each other and lead to the interruption of the circle of reproduction of gender roles.

For the analysis of individual narratives this approach has been further developed by Stanton Wortham (2000, 2001) and Michael Bamberg (1997, 1999). According to Bamberg (1999) the process of positioning takes place at three different levels: within the narrated event, characters are positioned vis-à-vis one another, vis-à-vis the audience and vis-à-vis themselves, the latter meaning ways in which the narrator makes claims that he or she holds to be true beyond the interview situation. Bamberg (1997: 341–342) claims that focusing on these three levels grants greater centrality to the narrator’s engagement in the construction process of the story, and that this applies to narratives that position the self as one of the central actors as well as to stories about other (third) persons, fictional and non-fictional.

Wortham (2000) identifies five cues that narrators use to position themselves and others (*denoting characters, metapragmatic verbs, quoted speech, evaluative indexicals* and *epistemic modalization*) and argues that an analysis of occurrences of these five types of cues

makes a central contribution to the interactional event being enacted through the storytelling, because in positioning herself with respect to the various voices or social types represented in the narrative the narrator also projects interactional positions for herself and for her audience in the narrating event. (Wortham 2000: 173–174)

So where Hollway (1984) investigates how individuals position themselves in relation to ‘overarching’ discourses in a given society, Bamberg (1997, 1999) and Wortham (2000, 2001) develop this concept further for the analysis of individual narratives.

Finally, Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann (2004) apply all of the above concepts to autobiographical narratives in particular. They argue that especially in autobiographical narratives, the narrator has an abundance of new possibilities to position him-/herself: several different layers of narrated time can be introduced, as well as ‘past selves’, and past events can be restaged, altered or re-framed (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2004: 172). By paying close attention to how the narrator introduces the narrated self s/he makes strategies and aspects of identity work visible to the researcher; by doing so, the narrator re-

negotiates personal and social aspects of the self as narrator as well as the narrated self. The theory assumes that the act of positioning is an ongoing process throughout the act of narration. Even where the narrator's attention is occupied with other interactive goals (e.g. recapitulating an event, using justifications, explaining a problem), the narrator is nonetheless positioning him-/herself (ibid.: 171). It is important to keep in mind that the actors presented in the narrative have not simply acted the way the narrator says they did, but it is the narrator that introduces past utterances and reactions in a certain way by selecting, animating and interpreting them. The way s/he does so is always a construction that is being influenced by present concerns. By positioning actors and the narrated self in a certain way, the narrative can have a certain function: Self-narration, justification, accusation, evidence, ridicule, etc. (ibid.: 175)

The following short excerpt is taken from an interview with Mateusz, a 31-year-old Polish migrant who has been living in the UK for more than 5 years. Mateusz attained an MA degree in Adult Education from a Polish university. After coming to the UK he had been working in outdoor activity centres across England for several years. At the time of the interview he had a part-time job as a sales assistant for a large electronic retailer. In the following excerpt he reports that part of his sales job is to sell services in addition to the actual product customers bought. One of these services is a technical support hotline. Mateusz describes how his line manager assured him of the availability of Polish speaking support workers in order to make Mateusz sell the product to fellow Poles with a low level of English proficiency. However, as Mateusz finds out, the tech support is only available in English – the manager is lying to him.

1 Like in my store they try to convince me to sell to Polish
 2 people 24 hour ehm 24/7 helpline – in English only. Because
 3 they may need it. I say 'They didn't speak English so why
 4 would they need it?' 'No=no, don't! You know, I've contacted
 5 somebody and they said now they have the Polish speakers on
 6 line as well.' Yeah? 'Interesting.' The manager said that.
 7 'Interesting, because I've spoken to the know-how- the guy
 8 and he called his boss and I've got it confirmed from him
 9 that they have it only in English. So please stop lying to
 10 me.' Because they knew I wouldn't do it so they started
 11 lying to me, thinking it may I believe it is the truth I
 12 will sell it better.

In this excerpt (and in many other similar sequences in the interview) Mateusz talks about the commercial culture in his work place. He is the only Polish speaker working in this shop, and through word-of-mouth he gets a lot of Polish customers. Sales personnel is expected to sell extra services like helpline support or insurances in addition to the electrical item. The manager in the dialogue is characterised by not telling the truth; the information that the helpline is available in Polish as well as in English, is a lie. He is introduced as a person who willingly exploits customers' powerlessness.

The narrated self is introduced as an advocate for the marginalised group of Polish customers who do not speak English, and who stands up to his superior and questions the sales policy on behalf of his customers (expressed through reported speech in lines 3–4: I say 'They didn't speak English so why would they need it?'). What is interesting here is that the manager is narrated as someone who is not only willing to profit from customers' inability to speak English, he also knows about the loyalty and honesty of his employee; he has to try to convince Mateusz to sell the helpline option (line 1), knowing that only if he believes that the manager is telling the truth, he will sell it to his customers (line 11–12).

The narrated self, on the other hand, is in a powerful position. Even before the reported dialogue, in anticipation of it, Mateusz investigates the matter and questions authority by working his way up the chain of command (lines 7–9: I've spoken to the know-how- the guy and he called his boss and I've got it confirmed from him that they have it only in English.). For additional emphasis he implicitly calls the manager a liar which, as this is the end of the dialogue and the incident is not mentioned again, lets him walk out of this fight as a winner, and at the same time characterises himself as someone who is brave and does not try to avoid conflicts for a just cause. Through these narrative strategies he positions not only the narrated self in relation to the manager and vice versa, he also positions himself (the narrator) in relation to the researcher. By narrating the event in a very factual way, he gives the event authenticity. He puts himself in the role of a brave expert full of positive character traits who stands up for the weak. The commercial world of sales, on the other hand, is a zone in which weakness in form of linguistic inability is preyed on. At the same time, the

narrator addresses the researcher. By positioning himself the way he does, he indirectly puts the researcher in a position to acknowledge his role as an expert, to condemn the culture of commercial exploitation of the weak and to admire his bravery in questioning authority, thereby making it almost impossible for the researcher to have a different opinion or to question the account. Finally, there is no temporal differentiation to the present self. The narrated situation is ongoing, and the character traits of the self are still valid.

None of this is to say that there is an underlying narcissistic pathology to be found in the above excerpt. An analysis of the different ways in which narrative self and others are positioned simply enables the researcher to point out the complexity of identity work within an autobiographic narrative, which in itself is a result of social experience. Furthermore, the positioning approach can be used to visualise the narrated self in relation to others. An initial attempt to visualise all actors in Mateusz's narrative makes clear how he positions himself narratively in a social world that is characterised by power-relations. (Figure 5)

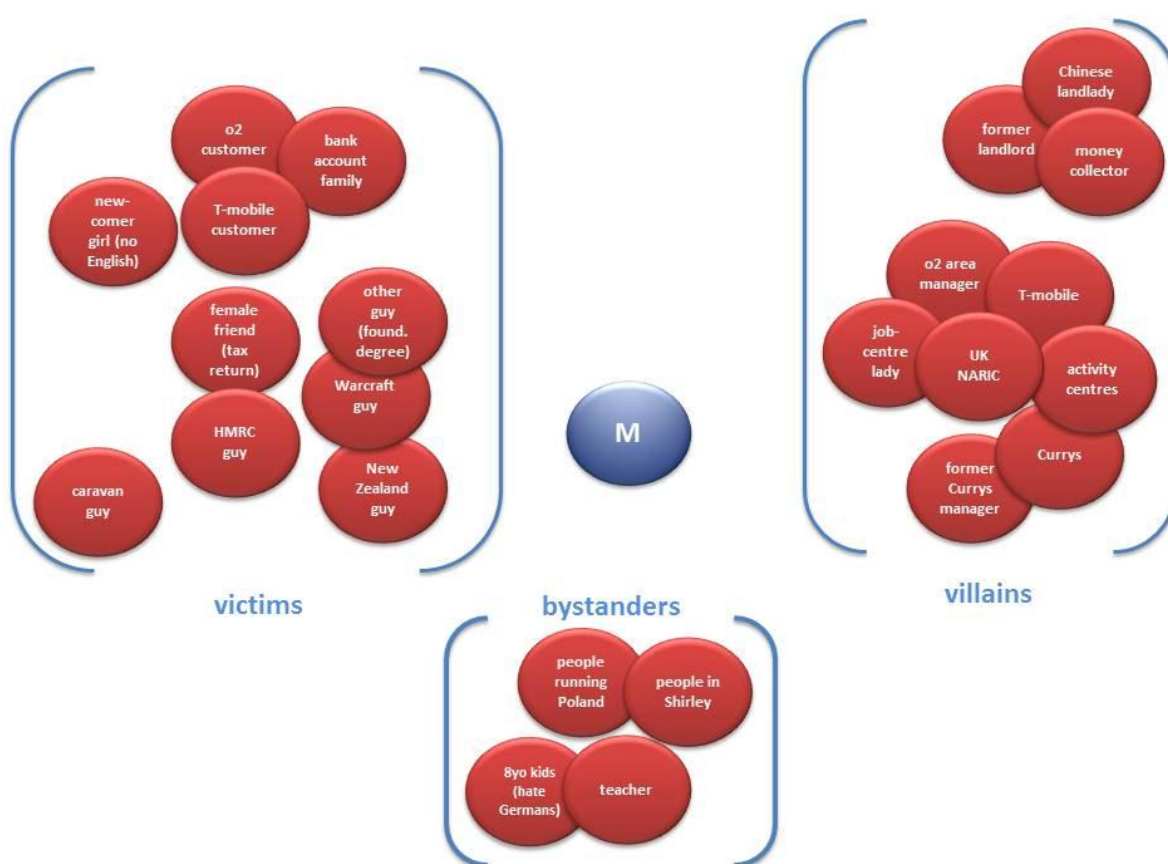


Figure 7: Initial visualisation of actors in Mateusz' self-narration

There is, of course, the danger to essentialise and simplify the narrative and the power relations presented in it. The above categories of ‘victims’, ‘bystanders’ and ‘villains’ should therefore not be understood as identity categories, but as a description of particular processes. Without discussing the outlined power relations further, what this visualisation makes clear is that Mateusz positions himself in a narrative environment where every actor is connotated negatively (symbolised by red colour). On the one hand, there is a group of powerful people: employers, landlords, local authorities and people in the commercial sector. On the other hand, there are powerless victims: people abused by employers, cheated by the commercial sector, not supported by the authorities. A third group is a group of bystanders: racist children in one of the activity centres Mateusz used to work in, people in his Southampton neighbourhood, the Polish government. In the middle of all this is Mateusz, without any closer relationships, but with positive character traits that allow him to alter the power relations by standing in for the victims.

Throughout the interview Mateusz reiterates ‘proxy narratives’ that almost always follow the same structure: a ‘victim’, normally a fellow Pole without communicative ability in English, is being exploited by a ‘villain’, most often representing a company or institution, before the narrative self steps in and alters power relations, most often through ‘knowing English’ and ‘knowing one’s rights’. These proxy narratives are reiterated again and again, until at the very end Mateusz, not the researcher, asks the question “So why am I still at [electrical retailer]?”, a question he does not give an answer to.

Positioning theory contributes to the analysis of Mateusz’s account in two ways: firstly, it allows us to understand power relations and lack of agency. While the narrator is able to alter power relations and help others, he is unable to change his own position. Agency, I would argue, can only be exercised through and within the constantly reiterated proxy narratives that substitute the narrator’s (non-existent) story of emancipation. Secondly, the constant reiteration of said proxy narratives can be interpreted as co-constructed by the interviewer. This becomes particularly clear at the end of the interview, when Mateusz starts criticising the researcher, saying that without “someone inside” the Polish community the research findings would not be valid, and pointing out other ‘flaws’ in the research design. Although not being British, Mateusz identifies the researcher as a representative of the majority society,

and I would argue that the constant reiteration of the aforementioned proxy narratives is a reaction to this perception. Therefore, the interview resembles both a justification of the narrator's social status at the time of the interview and, between the lines, an accusation of the researcher as a representative of the majority society for a life course primarily determined by structural constraints.

While the positioning approach outlined above is a useful tool for the analysis of relations inside the narrative and the narrator's position vis-à-vis the researcher, it is in combination with other interpretative methods that it develops its full potential. One of these methods, thematic analysis, will be outlined in the following section.

4.6.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis, also often referred to as content analysis, has been subject to criticism for some time. Critics claim that this form of analysis is the result of a lack of any theoretical framework and methodological procedures, leading to "a laundry list of observations, factors, or categories, illustrated by quotes from participants, that misses the links between the categories, essentializes particular descriptions and fails to describe the larger picture where they may fit." (Pavlenko 2007: 167) Among the repeatedly mentioned weaknesses is a lack of theoretical premise (where do conceptual categories come from?), an overreliance on repeated instances, an exclusive focus on the text (and not on what is missing from it), and a general lack of attention on how language is being used. (ibid.)

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is "a very poorly 'branded' method", simply because it does not appear as a 'named' analysis in published research reports, although a lot of analysis is in fact thematic (Braun & Clarke 2006: 79–80). For example, what is often described as a form of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Corbin & Strauss 2008)⁵⁰ is in fact very similar to thematic analysis.

⁵⁰ The divide between the two forms of Grounded Theory, the 'original' one developed by Glaser and Strauss and the 'later' form of Strauss and Corbin, will at this point not be discussed any

Two forms of analysis can be identified in thematic analysis: inductive and theoretical. Inductive analysis can be described as a ‘bottom up’ approach, in that themes are very much linked to the data. It is “a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytic preconceptions” (Braun & Clarke 2006: 83). Theoretical analysis, on the other hand, does not set out to create a rich description of the data overall, but aims only at creating a detailed description of certain aspects. The data is coded for specific research questions. In addition, two levels of themes can be differentiated: semantic and latent themes. Whereas semantic themes are identified within surface meanings of data and the interpretation thereof does not go beyond what the participant has said, a latent theme “goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the *underlying* ideas, assumptions and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data.” (ibid.: 84) In total, Braun & Clarke (2006: 87) identify six steps in a thematic analysis:

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down the initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

further. For an in-depth description of the two ‘schools’ of grounded theory see Walker & Myrick (2006).

6.	Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.
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Table 11: Phases of thematic analysis

Two steps will be discussed further here, the step of generating initial codes and the process of searching for themes. After transcribing an interview and going through the text several times, initial codes are produced. Coding is a “systematic way in which to condense extensive data sets into smaller analyzable units through the creation of categories and concepts derived from the data.” (Lockyer 2004: 138) A code can be described as the smallest unit of analysis, a first step to simplify the data and to move towards the development of patterns. Considering the interview extract already discussed in the previous section, the process of finding initial codes could look like this:

Data extract	coded for
Like in my store they try to convince me to sell to Polish people 24 hour ehm 24/7 helpline - in English only. Because they may need it. I say 'They didn't speak English so why would they need it?' 'No=no, don't! You know, I've contacted somebody and they said now they have the Polish speakers on line as well.' Yeah? 'Interesting.' The manager said that. 'Interesting, because I've spoken to the know-how- the guy and he called his boss and I've got it confirmed from him that they have it only in English. So please stop lying to me.' Because they knew I wouldn't do it so they started lying to me, thinking it may I believe it is the truth I will sell it better.	1. expectation to sell helpline support (only available in English) 2. manager lying 3. exposing the lie 4. way of tricking him into mis-selling services

After the transcription process interviews were printed and read several times. The initial coding process was then conducted manually, i.e. interview segments were highlighted in different colours, codes were written down, parts that appeared not to make sense at first were flagged with question marks, etc. In the process of initial coding, codes may have been changed several times, sections that seemed to make sense at first may have become confusing, or might have been reinterpreted altogether. The result of this first analysis is a long list of different codes and colourful, annotated interview

transcripts. The next phase, however, “re-focuses the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes” and sorts “the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes” (Braun & Clarke 2006: 89). The aim of this process is to find a pattern, an overarching theme, that summarizes the different codes. Essentially, at this stage the analysis moves away from the original text to a more abstract level. Themes can be organised in different ways; there might be main themes and sub-themes, which might be visualised in a thematic map.⁵¹ As for the above example, the step from codes to an initial theme could look like this:

codes	initial themes (and sub-themes)
1. advice to sell helpline support (only available in English)	1. commercial sales culture (exploitation of non-native speakers, dishonesty)
2. manager lying	
3. exposing the lie	2. refusal to be part of it (questioning authority, conflict on behalf of ‘the voiceless’)
4. way of tricking him into mis- selling services	

The above is, of course, a simplified example, for initial themes are normally developed from codes *throughout* the data set and are not restricted to a limited sequence of the text. However, the aim is to get from the level of codes, that are quite close to the text, to a more abstract level.

As a next step, the initial themes are revised and refined. This involves a revision of the relations between codes and initial themes and sub-themes (Do the themes really fit the codes? Does the hierarchy of themes and sub-themes make sense?), as well as comparing the themes throughout the data set and investigating “the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set” (Braun & Clarke 2006: 91). The task here is to investigate whether themes work throughout the data set. Imagine the following scenario: at another point in the interview Mateusz talks about another sales job for a telecommunication

⁵¹ See Braun & Clarke (2006) for examples of initial, developed and final thematic maps.

provider. Colleagues and management are friendly and honest, and every effort is made to find the right contract for each customers, especially for non-English speakers. In that case, the initial theme 'commercial sales culture' would still work, but sub-themes would have to be added, for the existing sub-themes 'exploitation' and 'dishonesty' would not be valid throughout the interview; they would either have to be re-coded or additional sub-themes would have to be added.

As a next step the identified themes have to be 'defined and refined', their essence has to be identified, and it has to be determined what aspect of the data each theme entails. (ibid.: 92) It is helpful to look at each theme in relation to the others. Comparing the different themes can potentially lead to broader themes that link sequences that were formerly coded differently. Consider for example the following extract, taken as well from Mariusz' narrative. He is telling the interviewer about a British colleague in one of the outdoor activity centres he used to work for. Due to being black this colleague had been discriminated "for years", Mariusz says.

1 But in his freetime he was playing some online games, all
 2 the time. And he showed me once his games and he said 'See
 3 this character? I played thousand hours with this
 4 character.' Yeah? 'And this one 800, this 2000 hours.' And
 5 he showed me something like 10 characters. I said 'Okay,
 6 so in total you showed me something like 11.000 hours
 7 you've played over few years.' Yeah? This guy: 'Yeah!
 8 Yeah!' Something like that. 'Okay, I know it keeps you,
 9 you know, focused on something else because it is quite,
 10 you know, mentally demanding job what we are doing, but I
 11 don't know if you know, but one year, yes, is 8765 hours.
 12 So you have actually played a year and half without
 13 sleeping, eating, going to toilet, ALL the time. Just
 14 IMAGINE what would happen if you study online, like Open
 15 University or something like that. [...] 'Yeah, you are
 16 right. I used to have a dream to be a teacher.' [...] So I
 17 finally sent him to uni and he is now completing his first
 18 degree in teaching something, yeah? Ehm, primary teaching.

Without going through the steps of initial coding and generating initial themes at this point, this sequence has remarkable similarities to Mateusz' description of the commercial sales culture. In both cases, someone powerless is being exploited and marginalised. In both cases, the powerless person cannot help him-/herself due to limitations, and in both stories the narrated self steps in and supports the 'victim' through knowledge. Knowledge, either in form of

language proficiency or in form of a university degree, is presented as a means to escape abuse and discrimination and to symbolically ‘fight back’. Comparing the two interview excerpts will inevitably lead to a re-definition of the initial themes; instead of ‘commercial sales culture’ and ‘refusal’ the prevalent story behind the data seems to be better captured with themes like ‘discrimination of the powerless’ and ‘resistance through knowledge’, and indeed these themes are occurring time and again throughout the interview.

Finally, as more interview data is being generated throughout the project, writing memos is a helpful process to capture insights that evolve during data analysis. These notes should be analytic and creative, not descriptive. They should not contain raw data, and should explore concepts further. Some researchers even recommend keeping paper and pencil available at all times in order to write memos, because “one never knows when that sudden insight will appear, when the pieces of the puzzle will fall into place” (Corbin 2004: 636).

A memo that has been written during the initial data analysis of this study, for example, contains several ideas regarding an interview with Gabriela, a Polish academic. At some point the memo mentions “massive investment into language and distancing herself from other Poles in the UK (‘I’m not one of them’), revised definition of normality.” Therefore, ‘knowledge’ seems to be a theme occurring in Gabriela’s narrative as well as in Mariusz’, and the next step would be a comparison of the ways in which the theme occurs in both narratives, where the similarities and differences are, and how this relates to the other data.

This section gave a description of the way data in this study was analysed thematically. Claiming that the researcher had been completely objective and unbiased, leading to themes emerging freely in analysis, might be “naïve and misleading” (Pavlenko 2007: 167) due to the researcher’s previous knowledge of research in the field and a specific research interest. However, as this section demonstrates, thematic analysis can be a means to ‘do justice’ to the data despite pre-existing ideas and concepts in the researchers’ head.

The third form of analysis applied in this study, discourse analysis, will be outlined in the following section.

4.6.3 Discourse Analysis

Two methods of data analysis have been presented so far: while the positioning approach explores (power-) relations inside a narrative and investigates how the narrator positions him-/herself in relation to the narrated self, the audience and other people and institutions, thematic analysis broadens the focus further and concentrates on the narrative content beyond the intra-textual world. In other words: the way certain actors are narratively positioned constitutes certain themes. In Mateusz' case we first saw how he positions himself as someone who supports marginalised others discriminated by an overall exploitative system. The thematic analysis revealed the centrality of 'knowledge' in this context, a theme that is also prevalent in other narratives. As a third step, discourse analysis is applied in order to broaden the focus even more and to see how exactly a theme is introduced in different individual narratives, and how these narratives relate not only to each other, but also to discourses within wider society. This last step of analysis is concerned with the relevance of the individual narrative to the larger society and its power relations of which the individual is part.

In what follows I outline the form of discourse analysis (DA) applied in this study. It is, admittedly, a 'cherry-pick' approach resulting from an abundance of scholarship on the (critical) analysis of discourse. As Fairclough (2003: 124) remarks, the application of discourse analysis across academic disciplines has produced "a rather bewildering range of overlapping and contrasting theorizations and analyses of 'discourses'".

Defining 'discourse' is not an easy task. To some researchers, discourse means "actual instances of communication in the medium of language" (Johnstone 2002: 2), and talking about 'discourse analysis' instead of 'language analysis' emphasizes the fact that the analyst is not primarily interested in language as an abstract system of rules, but in *what* is being said and *how*. Other definitions of discourse are wider: Gee (2005: 14) uses the term to describe "ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity." In order to become recognised as the member of a street-gang, Gee explains, it is not enough to simply talk in a certain way, one also has to use certain symbols (such as graffiti), tools (such as guns) and objects (such as street corners) in the right

places at the right time, and all of this is part of a particular discourse. On a similar note, Blommaert (2005: 3) uses the example of a newspaper advertisement that consists of picture(s), texts, and logos. Discourse to him is the total layout, the total set of features, it “comprises all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use.”

I understand narrative, autobiographic interviews as a particular form of discourse. These individual narratives are part of a larger discourse and thereby reflect a societal reality that goes beyond the experience of the individual. I further assume that power relations and structural changes in society become manifest in language and that this ‘wider’ reality can be traced in individual narratives. This understanding of discourse is very similar to positions found in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a form of discourse analysis that emerged in the early 1990s and is linked to names such as Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak. Some scholars stress that critical discourse analysis does not entail one specific methodology or specific theory; definitions of “‘discourse’, ‘critical’, ‘ideology’, ‘power’ and so on are also manifold.” (Wodak & Meyer 2009: 5) I shall therefore discuss further the discourse analytical approach taken in this study.

Fairclough (1995) understands discourse as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis as exploring how texts work within sociocultural practice. Accordingly, analyses should consider all levels of language: phonology, grammar, lexis, structures of argumentation and textual organization in terms of exchange systems (turn taking) (Fairclough 1995: 7). Cameron (2001: 137) identifies two steps of analysis in CDA: finding a regular pattern in a particular text or set of texts (involving lexis, grammar, intertextuality, and so on) and then “proposing an interpretation of the pattern, an account of its meaning and ideological significance.” CDA, in other words, investigates how something is said, why an idea has been expressed in a particular way and not differently, and how far the way something has been said has ideological significance. I strongly agree with Blommaert in saying that “discourse analysis should be a social science that utilises linguistic technique to answer social-scientific questions.” (Blommaert 2005: 237) The approach of this study, to be clear, agrees largely with the methodology applied in critical discourse analysis, but

disregards some of the preliminary assumptions and aims that some CDA scholars tend to adopt. I do not understand discourse analysis as “a resource for people who are struggling against domination and oppression in its linguistic forms” (Fairclough 1995: 1), nor do I want to “specifically focus on abuse of power, in other words, on forms of domination that result in social inequality and injustice” (van Dijk 2008: 1), nor do I understand this analytical approach as a “social movement” (ibid.: 8). The aim of this project is to investigate a particular set of research questions (section 3.6), not to commit myself to an engagement in favour of (supposedly) dominated groups in society. As much as I might share political positions of CDA scholars, I also believe that textual analyses should be as neutral as possible, and that research with an overt political agenda often obfuscates relevant findings.

While this research does not call for more corpus based discourse analysis, it agrees with Stubbs (1997) that CDA often does not seem to take criteria such as explicitness, testability of hypotheses, replicability of methods or reliability of results into account, while Widdowson (1998) explains the influence of CDA with the popularity of its underlying political agenda of empowering the oppressed.

It carries conviction because it espouses just causes, and this is disarming, of course. It conditions the reader into acceptance. If you can persuade people by an appeal to moral conscience, you do not need good arguments. But such persuasion deflects attention from questions of validity. It thus inhibits intellectual enquiry and ultimately undermines its integrity in the interest of expediency. [...] In this respect what is distinctive about Critical Discourse Analysis is that it is resolutely uncritical of its own discursive practices. (Widdowson 1998: 150)

What Widdowson criticizes here is an analyst's overt political stance or ideological influence that shapes his/her interpretation of discourse. As Stubbs (1997) points out, using an agentless passive construction in a text is often interpreted as having an ideological reading in that it conceals human agency. Van Dijk (2000a), for example, demonstrates how in parliamentary debates on immigration “passive sentences may be used to background or hide responsible agency” (99). Furthermore, in an analysis of a newspaper article on immigration in the *Sun*, a British tabloid leaning very much to the political right, van Dijk (2000b: 40) argues that minorities are represented in a passive role, “unless they are agents of negative actions, such as illegal entry, crime, violence or drug abuse.” In this case, their agency will be emphasized.

While this may be true for the debates in question and certain newspaper articles, critics of CDA point to the fact that grammatical categories cannot *a priori* be identified as belonging to a certain ideological standpoint. An agentless passive construction may have an ideological underpinning in an article in the *Sun*, but in other contexts it may be used because the human agent is irrelevant, or obvious to everyone from background knowledge, or simply to make a sentence shorter. Wodak et al. (1999), to name another example, in their analysis of narratives of native Austrians, investigate the use of the pronoun ‘we’ and how it functions as the main linguistic device by which the group of ‘Austrians’ is being constituted by a speaker, in order to delineate ‘Austrians’ from ‘others’, namely Germans and Swiss. This approach has been subject to criticism. Meinhof and Galasiński (2005) argue that discourse analysis of ‘real language’ should be an interpretative, context-sensitive, qualitative reading of texts.

It cannot be applied mechanistically by ticking off occurrences of specific lexical items or grammatical structures as a proof of a specific set or sets of identities. Discourse analysis requires at all times an understanding of the socio-political contexts of the speakers, and a detailed reading of the wider discursive context where micro-phenomena occur. (Meinhof & Galasiński 2005: 16)

In this project, therefore, the occurrence of linguistic categories in a narrative is of interest, but not in a way that boxes are being ‘ticked off’ and ideological meaning is ascribed to particular structures. Widdowson’s (1998) critique of the interpretation of an article in the *Sun* demonstrates one of the possible epistemological weaknesses of CDA. In the newspaper article, it is said that Britain is being ‘swamped by a tide of immigrants so desperate for a job that they will work for a pittance [...] slaving behind bars, cleaning hotel rooms and working in kitchens.’ Van Dijk (2000b: 44) argues that words like ‘desperate’ and ‘slaving’ usually imply empathy, but that here they are used just to explain the motivation of immigrant workers that make them an economic threat. Widdowson (1998: 144) questions this interpretation and argues that one could also read this as textual evidence that the *Sun* “is not so rabidly racist as might at first appear, that these phrases are perhaps unwitting liberal chinks in its rightist armour”.

It is not the aim of this section to discuss the political stance of the *Sun*, but what the above example should have made clear is that readings of a text are always ambiguous, even if they appear in a tabloid with an infamous populist

agenda. Narrative interviews are even more ambiguous; the stories interviewees produce are even less ‘institutional’ and more ‘ordinary’ (Cameron 2001: 123), and they are characterised by spontaneous speech production. Therefore, any interpretation of its contents, standpoints, and political opinions should be done carefully. I will now demonstrate how the three analytical methods outlined in this chapter can be brought together in order to avoid severe over-, under-, and misinterpretation of the texts participants produce.

4.6.4 Combination of analytical methods

I believe that by bringing the three analytical approaches outlined in this chapter together, justice can be done to what interviewees are saying, to avoid over- as well as under-interpretation and to make findings transparent and valid. I will now demonstrate how I plan to combine positioning theory, thematic analysis and discourse analysis. Often, the three approaches are very much interlinked and analytical steps taken can sometimes not be clearly categorized as belonging to one method or another.

The excerpt I will use to demonstrate how research findings can benefit from a combination of the three methods is taken from an interview with Gabriela, a Polish academic. At the time of the interview she had just finished her PhD studies in the UK and was about to start a career in academia. In this excerpt she talks about boarding a low-cost airline carrier going from the UK to Poland. Especially the way she talks about the other Polish passengers reveals an underlying worldview that is of ideological significance.

1 They cannot READ, so sometimes they queue on a thing for
 2 priority and then it's like you have to explain to them
 3 that it's a different queue and stuff. It's just AWFUL.
 4 AWFUL. I ABSOLUTELY hate it. And they are all like- this
 5 women like- There are two types: there are middle-aged
 6 women and they're like usually- or middle-aged or older
 7 women that come, like they're grandmothers and they come
 8 to look after babies and stuff, and then they don't speak
 9 a word and they dress like really not nice, like, you
 10 know, like- You just feel like 'I don't want to be
 11 associated with these people.' And then you have young
 12 girls. Well, let's say my age or younger and then they're
 13 all like full of bling, so they have lots of like earrings
 14 and like skinny jeans and like REALLY not in a good

15 fashion, you know. It's like- they look quite cheap and
 16 again it's something like, well, it's not me, you know.
 17 I'm not like that.

In this excerpt, the narrator positions herself in opposition to two other female groups: middle-aged/older Polish women (line 6) and young girls (11). It is evident that both groups are connotated negatively. The older women “dress like really not nice” (9), and the young girls, “full of bling” (12) and wearing “skinny jeans” (13) are equally “not in a good fashion” (13–14). What is of particular interest here is the fashion component. Fashion and the way a person dresses is a matter of perception. Thereby, another element is being added to the structure of this constellation, which for now I will label ‘wider society’. At first it seems that it is only the narrator who judges the style of the other groups, but by mentioning the act of association (lines 9–10: “I don’t want to be associated with these people”), she implicitly adds another group to the narrative, because someone has to do the association. A simplified scheme of the design of this story could therefore look like this:

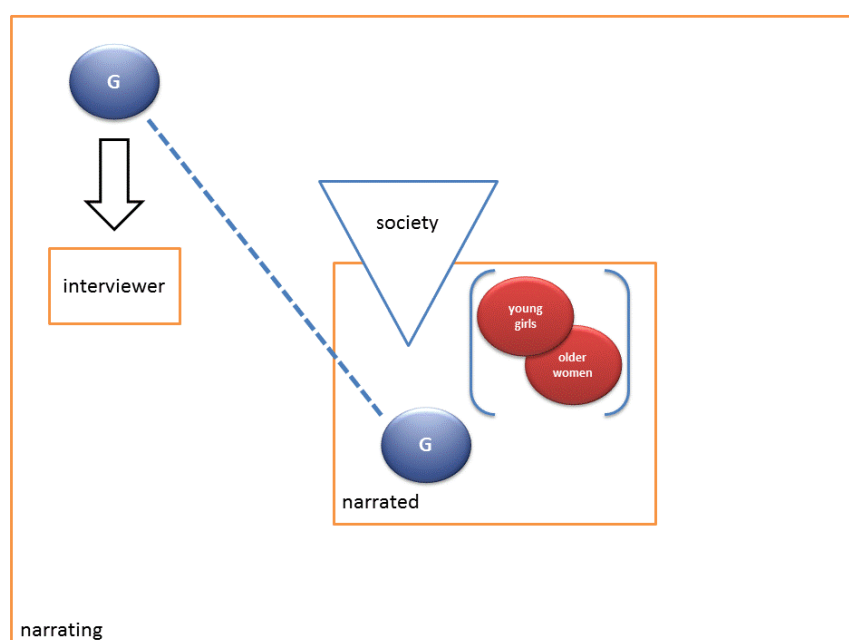


Figure 8: Gabriela's act of delineation

What is central here is the introduction of ‘society’ as another group that exists implicitly both inside the narrative as well as outside. So far, it can be said that Gabriela positions herself inside the narrative in opposition to the two groups of Polish females occurring in this excerpt, thereby implicitly positioning herself in a certain way *vis a vis* wider society, an element present both in the

narrated as well as in the narrating frame. One could further hypothesize that the interviewer is a representative of this very society, which would make the act of narration a retrospective act of delineation.

If we move on to have a closer look at the thematic level, then two themes seem to be prevalent: 'knowledge' and 'perception'. 'Knowledge' is understood as knowledge of English. The two female groups are characterised by being illiterate (1) and unable to speak a word of English (8). 'Perception', on the other hand, has more to do with outward appearance in the eyes of others: the way 'they' dress is 'not nice' (8-9), 'not in a good fashion' and 'cheap' (14). One could also add a third theme evolving here, that of 'delineation'. More than once the narrator makes it clear that she does not want to be perceived as 'one of them' (10, 15, 16). As stated earlier (section 4.7.2), 'knowledge' is also a dominant theme in Mateusz' narrative, but whereas in his story knowledge functions primarily as a device to gain agency and resist discrimination, in Gabriela's narrative 'knowledge' of English functions as a marker of social class. It is a less overt marker than the way someone dresses, but still works to make a class distinction between her and the other groups. At another point in the interview she makes this point more explicit by saying that her parents belong to the Polish middle class, and that it is common practice for middle class parents to invest money in additional English language education for their children. Throughout the entire narrative she links English language proficiency to social class, something that occurs here as well. Both groups are narratively defined by the way they dress and their non-existent knowledge of English. When saying that the young girls look "quite cheap" (14), she uses an adjective that in this context has a clear class-connotation.

As fashion and language are the only factors used to describe these groups, they are closely linked. Therefore, language proficiency (or lack thereof) becomes an indicator of social class as well. This becomes particularly evident when she says that the older women "don't speak a word and they dress like really not nice" (8-9). So while the theme of 'knowledge' occurs in both Mateusz' and Gabriela's narrative, these themes operate very differently. As I will demonstrate, Gabriela's narrative is very much driven by how she wants to position herself in power relations beyond the individual narrative. One of the key utterances in this context is Gabriela's remark 'You just feel

like 'I don't want to be associated with these people.' (9-10) Using the verb 'feel' describes a mental process of (dis)affection, something that is expressed even more strongly in lines 3 and 4, where the situation is described as 'AWFUL' and an even stronger verb, 'hate', is used to express this mental process. At the same time, the impersonal pronoun 'you' objectifies the utterance to a certain degree. 'People' in combination with the demonstrative pronoun 'these' has the effect to widen the distance between narrator and 'them', but what is more important here is the missing agent in the infinitive construction 'to be associated with'. Implicitly, there is an underlying entity who *performs* the association, someone who ascribes the same characteristics to the narrator and the other females because of their shared nationality and gender. Throughout the excerpt this entity, which I have called wider 'society' earlier, implicitly shares the view of the narrator. 'Society' here does not differentiate between the narrator and the other groups, it brushes over these differences and categorises them as 'Polish females' who look 'cheap' and dress in an inadequate way that overly emphasises femininity ('skinny jeans', 'earrings'). The narrator shares this perception of the other groups, but feels that it is necessary to spell out that she is 'not like that'. (15-16)

The narrator defines herself *ex negativo*; she is everything the other women in the excerpt are not: she dresses in a modest way, does not overly emphasise her femininity and speaks English fluently. In addition, the expression 'not in a good fashion' (13-14), which in itself has a rather old-fashioned sound to it, aligns the narrator's perception with the postulated, objectified perception of wider society. The expression presupposes that there is such a thing as 'good' and 'bad' fashion, and that there are objective factors by which one or the other can be identified. Therefore, it should be obvious that there is a difference between the narrator and 'society', yet, it is necessary to emphasise this difference three times ('I don't want to be associated', 'it's not me', 'I'm not like that' - 9-10, 15-16).

One could argue now that this is an instance of intertextuality and that this excerpt might be a reference to the stereotype of Eastern European girls prevalent in 'Western' media and popular culture. Following this argumentation, one could interpret the whole excerpt as a counter narrative

through which the narrator tries to re-negotiate power relations and her marginalised role in society, both as a woman and as an immigrant. However, the rest of the interview does not allow for this kind of interpretation, and one should keep in mind that although no narrative exists in a vacuum, it is the narrator who implicitly creates the entity of 'society' and ascribes a certain way of perception to it. What is missing in the text are references supporting this interpretation of her narrative, utterances pointing at society outside the narrating and narrative event (one could imagine remarks such as '*Most English guys see girls from Poland like this*' or '*On the telly, it's always the hot, blond Polish girl in skinny jeans wearing a lot of bling*').

In the light of the entire interview I would argue that Gabriela's narrative is ideologically significant because she repeatedly tries to transfer a certain socio-economic status across time and space, that is, she makes a narrative effort to incorporate her Polish middle class identity into the here and now of being a Polish woman in the UK, thereby negotiating power relations. More evidence of this interpretation can be found throughout the interview. For example, when talking about the family of her husband she immediately mentions that they belong to the working class, and that the husband's siblings and parents are 'not doing that well in life in general'. Her family on the other hand 'is so much better off', because all of them, including the grandfather, are holding university degrees. Many other similar examples could be cited here.

This section has demonstrated how positioning theory, thematic analysis and discourse analysis can be used to get to the core of a narrative, to outline underlying ideas, assumptions and concepts and in general to 'do justice' to participants' narratives. It became clear that the three approaches to analyse data are, in practice, very much interlinked and that it is difficult to tell, for example, where the positioning approach ends and discourse analysis starts; if we argue that Gabriela positions herself in opposition to other Polish female groups, we can only do this after identifying the 'others' as negatively connotated (which we can only do after first paying attention to lexis, grammar and intertextual relations). There is, again, no fixed 'to do' list or boxes to tick in order to combine analytical tools. This chapter, however, should have demonstrated how combining these approaches can potentially lead to a better understanding of autobiographical narratives.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has called for a combination of three analytical methods for the analysis of narrative, autobiographical interviews: positioning theory, thematic analysis and discourse analysis. It has been demonstrated how applying all three methods widens the focus from text level to the level of discourses and power relations in wider society.

The positioning approach helps to investigate how a narrator positions him-/herself in relation to other people in a story, thereby making aspects of identity work visible. Because the way a narrator designs his/her story, by selecting, animating and interpreting actors within the narrative, is most often influenced by present concerns, this approach offers a first insight into the narrative and the reality in which the act of narration is happening.

Thematic analysis investigates the content of a text by moving from a categorization that is very close to the original text (codes) to a more abstract level (themes). After initial codes are produced the researcher is looking for an overarching theme that summarizes the different codes. As has been demonstrated, one of the benefits of this method is that it allows for a closer analysis of the occurrence of themes across the data corpus. To exemplify this, the chapter has demonstrated how the theme 'knowledge' can in one narrative be about 'resisting exploitation' or 're-gaining agency', while in another narrative 'knowledge' is presented as a class marker, indicating belonging to a certain socio-economic stratum.

Discourse analysis has been applied to investigate how exactly themes are introduced in individual narratives and how this relates to discourses within the wider society and power relations therein. It has been demonstrated how 'wider' society can be traced in individual narratives by analysing closely what linguistic means narrators apply and what ideological meaning it can have to narratively design a text in a certain way and not another one. In Gabriela's case, the importance of society's perception of her (narrated) self only becomes clear by 'uncovering' the deeper meaning of structures that appear agentless on the surface ('to be associated'). It is, however, not the aim of this chapter to see society and class hiding behind every passive construction. Context always has to be taken into account, and findings have to be verified by a 'triangulation' of interpretative methods.

In conclusion, combining positioning theory, thematic analysis and discourse analysis offers deeper insights into narratives, moving from individual narratives to the corpus of the study's interview data, on to discourses prevalent in wider society. This chapter should have made clear that the analysis of qualitative interview data does not happen in a vacuum, and it should underline the researchers' aim to incorporate criteria like transparency, reliability and validity.

While in this chapter the methodology has been outlined in detail, the following chapter will, due to time and space constraints, not explicitly outline every step of analysis for every sequence of every interview. Nonetheless, hidden parts of narratives will be outlined where appropriate, especially when findings seem ambiguous or unexpected.

Chapter 5: Dynamics influencing individual migration projects – three key themes

5.1 Introduction

As discussed in section 4.1, Polish and Spanish participants are similar with regards to their level of education. Another similarity is the age range: Polish interviewees are 30 years of age on average, while the average Spanish participant is 28. The main difference between the groups is their duration of stay in the UK: the Polish group has been living in the UK between 5 and 8 years, while the Spanish group has only recently moved to the UK, with an average duration of stay of around 12 months. Both groups arrived in the UK at different points in time, Poles primarily between 2006 and 2007, Spaniards mainly in 2012. The potential relevance of these different timeframes will be discussed further in chapter 6, while the following sections demonstrate the differences and similarities in individual narratives.

This chapter will outline the most prominent themes emerging from the data corpus: ‘normality’, ‘(un)preparedness’ and ‘habituation’. ‘Normality’ subsumes migration rationales and the way sending countries are presented narratively. As discussed previously (chapter 2), a negative economic situation in the home country forms the background to both Polish and Spanish migration trajectories, and references to high unemployment and a lack of professional opportunities are made in almost every interview. However, looking at the way the respective sending countries are presented reveals the main rationale behind almost all of the narratives in this study: the (re-) establishment of a certain form of normality. In this context, three different levels of normality become salient: economic, societal and individual.

‘(Un)preparedness’ refers to different strategies participants apply at the beginning of the migration project. As will be shown, two groups can be identified: one group puts a lot of time and effort into preparing the move abroad and is very much focused on professional progression, while another group approaches the act of emigrating with a rather unconcerned attitude and a predominant focus on the immediate present.

Finally, ‘habitation’ focuses on the exemplary life trajectories of Tomás from Spain and Danuta from Poland. Using Bourdieu’s (1986, 1990) concept of *habitus* it will be shown how past experiences can shape present perceptions and actions; in some cases participants’ life in the receiving country turns almost into a mirror image of their life prior to emigration.

In summary, this chapter explores the differences and similarities in Spanish and Polish narratives of migration in order to understand the influence of certain national factors on transnational migration projects of individuals. There is, of course, the danger to simplify matters, and participants’ nationality neither predetermines migration trajectories nor evokes predefined narrative characteristics. This chapter is primarily concerned with the migrational experience of individuals and every effort has been made to establish the relevance of social categories such as ethnicity, gender, etc. through data analysis and not *a priori*. However, as this chapter will show, an analysis of the data corpus reveals differences that for the majority of narratives run along the lines of nationality – Polish stories of migration to the UK are indeed very different from Spanish ones.

That being said, I will begin the narrative analysis by focusing on participants’ motivation to migrate, and how the semantic spaces ‘Poland’ and ‘Spain’ are constructed narratively.

5.2 Normality

This section will demonstrate how all participants react to a situation that is perceived as ‘not normal’, which essentially is an experience of absence. The rationale behind every migration project is that something missing or unavailable in the home country will become accessible in the receiving country. As I will show, this sense of normality is highly complex and can be understood only partly as an economic aspiration. Of course, the economic situations in Poland and Spain play a role in all of the migration trajectories in this study, however, factors encouraging individuals to emigrate are more diverse, and the narratives in this study reveal three different levels of aspired normality: economic, societal and personal.

Before I start to explore these three categories in detail, it has to be mentioned that emigration decisions are always shaped by a simultaneity of factors. Migration can be a reaction to a financial crisis as well as bearing some characteristics of a 'lifestyle choice' (Benson & O'Reilly 2009)⁵². To give an example: Pablo (28, 1 year in the UK) arrived in Southampton in August 2012. He left Spain because his family's business suffered substantial financial losses due to the recession, however, at the same time he emphasises "I was bored in the past". As he was also studying for a degree in Geological Engineering at the time the crisis hit the family's company, he decided to move to Southampton to improve his English and write up his dissertation, while at the same time working as a waiter in a local restaurant. So while the economic crisis was a reason to leave Spain and find work in the UK, this is only part of the story, and similar multifactorial migration motivations are presented throughout the interview corpus. It is therefore never one, single aspect – the economy – that influences participants' decision to migrate, but a multitude of factors (see also the discussion of 'push-pull theories' in section 2.4). Therefore, when exploring the three most prominent layers of aspired 'normality' below, these layers are to be understood as prevalent in an individual narrative, not as the one, singular reason why a participant decided to migrate.

5.2.1 Economic normality

At first glance, the most prominent form of aspired normality for both the Polish as well as the Spanish sample is economic, something very closely related to the economic situation in both countries, in particular the high (youth) unemployment rate (see section 2.4). For example, Aniela (29, 6 years in the UK), who moved from Poland to the UK in 2007 after graduating with an MA in International Relations and Economics, identifies the lack of (adequate) employment opportunities as the main push factor influencing her decision to leave Poland.

⁵² Although using the definition of Benson & O'Reilly, none of the participants can be described as a 'lifestyle migrant', something that will be discussed further in chapter 6.

1 Basically there was no work. I know that if I wanted to
 2 get a job there were no opportunities for a good job. I
 3 would have to start from basics and definitely not in my
 4 range and not- not in Economics. And even the work, ehm,
 5 the job in Economics would be like ... very disgraceful
 6 wage, so I wouldn't- I wouldn't do it. I just- I just came
 7 here because ... because of the money basically. Yeah.

Aniela gives a seemingly straightforward analysis of the past situation in Poland, starting with a rigid, global assessment of the economic situation at the time of her graduation: “there was no work”. In the following lines she elaborates on this; it is not necessarily the absolute lack of employment opportunities, but the lack of adequate ones (2) that are in accordance with her qualification (3–4), and even those jobs matching her qualification are badly paid (5). The last sentence in the excerpt (6–7) serves as a coda to underline her point that financial gain abroad was pivotal for her decision to come to the UK.

Now, at first glance this seems like a realistic recount of the lack of job opportunities after Aniela’s graduation. However, two things are noteworthy here: Aniela graduates in December 2006 and arrives in the UK almost immediately after that, in early January 2007. From her point of view, applying for jobs in Poland would be a waste of time as good jobs are generally not available and starting from basics (3) is not an option. With a job that matches her qualification she would only be able to earn a “very disgraceful wage” (5) – low earnings are presented as something shameful and degrading. The above excerpt outlines Aniela’s attitude towards work: menial work in the UK is preferable to being underpaid in a job that matches her qualification in Poland, because even a low level job in the UK pays more than a post-graduate job in Poland. Furthermore, salary levels are closely connected to concepts of self-esteem and dignity. The narrative self in Aniela’s account is rather passive and a victim to (economic) circumstances, therefore the only option to regain agency and dignity is the act of emigration.

This ‘being forced to migrate discourse’ is also evident in the research undertaken by White (2011a) who explains her participants’ feeling of being forced to emigrate not as a result of the severity of the situation “but rather by the experience of having worked through the options and arrived at the perception that migration was the only livelihood strategy left.” (White 2011a:

63) This perception of livelihood strategies is reflected in Aniela's account in which adequate work is not available and emigration is the only option to earn a wage that is not 'disgraceful'.

Interestingly, after arriving in the UK Aniela starts working as carer for disabled children, a profession not at all connected to her academic qualification. Although she describes the work as very demanding, she continues to work as a carer for one and a half years until she finds a job as a call centre agent, a job she was still doing at the time of the interview.

During the interview Aniela problematises her housing situation. She mentions that she gets along fine with her housemates, but she also talks about the living conditions that she perceives as cramped and restricting: "I just like the freedom and...this is not freedom I'm afraid". However, living on her own is not an option for the time being: "I don't have money right now, so I don't want to spend half of my wage just to- just to live on my own." Although the narrative sets out to be a story of economic success and of leaving behind Poland as a place of no opportunities and disgraceful wages, Aniela's actual professional career in the UK does not lead to a job in accordance with her qualification, nor does her salary allow her to live on her own. In her narrative, however, Aniela chooses not to overtly discuss these issues. Instead, when talking about her future plans, she narrates herself as someone who does not care about a 'conventional' career; she talks about plans to have her own photo studio, a plan she then dismisses immediately by talking about the lack of startup capital.

Pawel (35, 7 years in the UK), to give another example of a narrative in which economic aspects are brought to the fore, came to Southampton in 2006 after having worked as an English teacher in Poland for several years. Upon arrival in the UK he starts working at a local contact lenses factory: "I stayed there, I think almost two years. I got DEPRESSED [chuckles], 'cause it was 12 hour shifts, you know, doing exactly the same, every hour, every day, you know." The monotony of everyday (work) life stretches over the period of two years and is leading to a state of mind Pawel describes as depression, even though he tones down this statement by chuckling. However, considering that throughout the interview he repeatedly mentions depressions in relation to the two years he spent manufacturing

contact lenses, it is likely that the monotonous factory work had a stronger effect on him than he would like to admit. However, the picture he paints of working life in Poland is even gloomier: repeatedly he refers to life in Poland as a “struggle”. Describing his situation he states that after having worked all year long he could not afford to go on holiday abroad: “It was just=so I worked for the whole year and at the end I will have to go back to my mum’s and spend the summer there, you know.” Consumption, here represented through the ability to go on holiday, is seen as a gratification; consuming goods and being able to afford things is not a result of a materialistic attitude, but a representation of ‘normality’. Later in the interview Pawel contrasts the situation in Poland with the situation in the UK – the contrast he creates is representative for the majority of Polish participants’ descriptions of their home country.

1 You have this kind of feeling when you live in Poland,
 2 like, this is reality and, you know, because my mum
 3 struggles and other people, you know, then it’s kind of
 4 normal to- to struggle. I always was a kind of, you know,
 5 ehm I always kind of rebel against it, like the whole idea
 6 that- you only have one life, whether you believe in
 7 reincarnation or not, but THIS life matters now, and it’s
 8 not for, you know, for you to struggle, you know. [...] But
 9 I mean in general this country [the UK] gives you more
 10 opportunities, and life is just easier. If you’re willing
 11 to get up, you know, in the morning and go to work, you at
 12 least have, you know, the clothes you want to have, you
 13 can go abroad and see some places, you can have a car with
 14 ease, pay for it, pay for petrol, and it’s at least the
 15 basic- your basic ehm needs are fulfilled.

Pawel refers to the normativity of privation in Poland, an experience of intergenerational character: because everyone including parents is experiencing financial hardship this experience becomes normative (1–4). The narrator presents himself as a positive figure, a “rebel” (5), that questions this normative discourse of hardship. In contrast to that, life in the UK is depicted as “just easier” (9). This ‘easiness’ is again characterised by consumption: any job will “at least” allow for clothes (11), travel (12), a car (13), things that are summarised as ‘basic needs’ (14). In addition to that, Pawel also refers to a meritocratic ideal in which the UK is a country where ‘hard work pays’: as long as someone is “willing to get up” (10) in the morning, these basic needs can be fulfilled. Although having to endure long hours and monotonous

work, employment in manufacturing in the UK is presented as preferable to the constant 'struggle' in Poland.

When Aniela refers to 'disgraceful wages' in Poland and Pawel talks about the fulfilment of 'basic needs', these utterances echo a wider Polish discourse. For example, Galasińska (2011), in her analysis of posts in the internet forum of the Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, outlines how the perceived 'normality' of work life in Britain becomes a prominent topic: working life in Poland is presented in a negative way, based on connections, corruption and bribery, while working life in the UK is described as friendlier, to some extent idealised, more 'normal'. This juxtaposition becomes a new grand narrative, a "generational memory of migration during the transformation process" (Galasińska 2011: 233).

In this context Rabikowska (2010) differentiates between *normalcy* and *normality*. Normalcy is defined as repetitive acts and rituals which signify belonging to a certain 'home', e.g. preparing a traditional Polish Christmas dinner in the UK or attending Sunday church service held in Polish. Normality on the other hand is understood as an "idealised mode of normality in a general sense of satisfaction, well-being, financial security, or personal success." (Rabikowska 2010: 287) She argues that for Eastern Europeans 'the West' has become a desired embodiment of normality and that the idea of this Western utopia predetermines the desire of normality.

The notion of normality is a salient category in almost all of the interviews with Polish migrants in this study. Gabriela's (30, 9 years in the UK) description of the job market in Poland may serve as a good example.

1 If you're good in the UK you're good and people will
 2 appreciate you for that. In Poland if you're good someone
 3 will- there will always be- well, not ALWAYS, but there
 4 will be someone who doesn't like you or who wants his
 5 cousin to do your job so they will make sure that you get
 6 fired for something. You know what I mean? It's just- it's
 7 just not normal.

Rabikowska (2010) argues that normality has always to be referred to something in order to conceptualise it, a context against which it can be measured. In the above example, the meritocratic ideal of the UK as a country where 'hard work pays' works as a measure for normality, whereas Poland is associated with cronyism and quite literally described as the opposite of

normal. Especially when discussing motivations for migration, normality has a temporal as well as a geographical connotation. It can have a 'double dimension': migration is "instigated by a picture of normality that can be achieved in the future – however vague and incoherent that picture would be among individuals [...]" (Rabikowska 2010: 287)

'Normality' and the perceived 'easiness of life' are also key aspects in the research undertaken by McGhee et al. (2012). They argue that consumption often functions as an embodiment of this normality.

This process can be understood as their articulation of a transition from the indignity of being 'thwarted citizens' [...] in Poland to becoming dignified through becoming active consumers with surplus income (and increased opportunities for buying cheaper products) in the UK. (McGhee et al. 2012: 721)

'Normality through consumption' is something Galasińska & Kozłowska (2009) have identified as a wider post-communist 'yearning for normality'. The authors argue that in this context, 'normality' is very closely connected to modesty and moderation: moving to 'the West' to get rich is not widely accepted in the home country, the migration project can only be about – in Paweł's words – the fulfilment of 'basic needs', or, to refer to White's study of Polish families in the UK: "Being forced to migrate is the opposite of migrating for luxuries ('looking for coconuts', in Polish), a motive which was often denied." (White 2011a: 65) On a similar note, Rausing's (2002) study of a collective farm in Estonia in the early 1990s demonstrates how the consumption of Western goods, although extremely expensive, functions "more to institute the notion of Estonia as a 'normal' Western country, like Finland or Sweden, than to display individual economic and social ambition, which was still regarded with a great deal of ambivalence in the community." (Rausing 2002: 140)

Keeping this interpretation of consumption in mind allows for a better understanding of some of the participants' utterances that, on the surface, seem to be expressions of a hedonistic, materialistic lifestyle. To give another example, Pietrek (31, 7 years in the UK), who came to the UK in May 2006, repeatedly refers to his salary in Poland as the main push factor influencing his decision to migrate to the UK: "I never thought I'm gonna leave Poland really, but then one day I received my payslip of...just awful amount of money and then I said 'I'm not staying'." He later

mentions other factors influencing his decision to leave Poland (see following section), but like Aniela he at first presents financial gains as the main motivator for his decision to leave Poland. After coming to Southampton, Pietrek starts working in a factory, and although he does not enjoy the work very much, he reports that the money he earned made up for the job he had to do.

1 Ehm, no matter- no matter what I do- what I did, well, the
2 money were good. I could afford, you know, EVERYTHING. I was
3 spending lots of money to calling home, ehm...most money I
4 spent it was actually on booze. [laughs] I was drunk every
5 day almost. Yeah. That wasn't very good, but you know, when
6 you can afford everything you will [laughs] you will quite
7 please yourself really.

On the surface, Pietrek's emphasis on alcohol consumption seems to underline a certain lifestyle focused on 'partying' and 'having a good time', but keeping in mind the wider discourse of consumption outlined above, the act of getting drunk has more to do with gratification, being able to participate in an affluent consumer society and an idea of 'normality' than with the urge to spend a night out and party. The connection between the ability to participate in a (Western) consumer society and self-gratification is made in lines 5–6: "when you can afford everything [...] you will quite please yourself", something that stands in stark contrast to the social and economic reality he experienced in Poland.

One could argue that Pietrek's experience is very similar to the experience of young people growing up in the UK, and that 'spending money on booze' and 'getting drunk' are features of transition and expressions of emancipation. However, I would argue that Pietrek's story is not a generic experience of 'growing up'. Native youths might display the same behaviour, but in contrast to Pietrek, they have not left their country of origin. In addition to that, Pietrek creates a direct connection between salary level in Poland, dignity, and his decision to emigrate: he never wanted to leave Poland, but because of the "awful amount of money" he receives for his work, he decides to leave. This catalytic event is then juxtaposed with being able to "afford everything" in the UK, and the possibility for self-gratification, so while in some aspects Pietrek's experience might be similar to the experience of 'coming of age' in general, in other aspects this experience is very different from those of young people growing up in the UK.

We have seen how for some participants the economic crisis in Poland is narrated as the major factor influencing the decision to migrate. Although participants' actual migration trajectories in the UK are often far from being economic and/or professional success stories, the ability to participate in an affluent consumer society, the 'easiness' and 'normality' of life in the UK, are re-occurring motives throughout the interview corpus. This emphasis on consumption can only be understood in reference to participants' previous experience of financial 'struggle'; buying clothes and getting drunk are not so much expressions of materialistic attitudes and a hedonistic lifestyle, but acts of instantaneous gratification and creation of 'normality'.

Regarding previous research, however, Polish participants who emphasised the economic crisis in Poland are referring to a post-2004 crisis and do not make references to communist rule and command economy privation. Although Poland's economic situation at the time of EU accession is still very much a result of economic policies pre-1989, I would like to argue that participants' 'yearning for normality' is not necessarily a wider post-communist phenomenon, as Galasińska & Kozłowska (2009) have argued, but a more general reaction to financial hardship and economic privation.

Although, as I am going to outline in this and the following sections, Polish participants narrate Poland as a highly negative semantic space and do at times refer to 'residuals' of the 'old' system like, for example, a 'communist work ethic' (see Danuta's account of her colleagues in Poland, section 5.4), references to the scarcity of consumer goods in the communist or early post-communist transition period are exceptional. Most participants are too young to have experienced the communist system first-hand, and their memories of the time consist mostly of stories their parents told them. Of course, these stories form part of a 'collective memory' of communist Poland (see section 3.5), but in the interview corpus of this study, these memories become so vague that their significance seems at least questionable.

This is not to say that, for example, certain migrational patterns established in the years of communist rule do not have the potential to influence the behaviour of young migrants today (see section 5.4, especially the example of Janina) or that national characteristics do not shape very different migration trajectories of Poles and Spaniards. But generally labelling Polish participants' actions as 'post-communist' and using the change of the political system as an

analytical lens through which to analyse whatever action Polish migrants undertake in the UK today does not seem adequate, at least not for the interviewees in this study. Their ‘longing for economic normality’, I argue, is influenced by the past experience of financial hardship, and in this experience of economic privation lies one of the similarities of Polish and Spanish participants – although, as I will outline in this section, how they react to that experience is very different.

As mentioned previously (section 2.4), the unemployment rate in Spain in the first two quarters of 2013 rose to over 26%. In autumn 2013, the time of writing, Spain (and Greece) had the highest unemployment rate in the EU27, substantially higher than the Polish unemployment rate at the time of EU accession. Given these similarly disastrous economic circumstances: how do Spanish participants narrate their experience of their country’s economic crisis?

Eloísa (30, 1 year in the UK) came to England in November 2012 after working as a special needs teacher in Spain for five years. For her, the economic crisis affected her gradually.

1 Last year I was working as a teacher, but only a few hours
2 every day, and it’s little. I need more, more job and more
3 money to live, because I- I was living in Madrid with
4 flatmates, and I have to pay all my things. And yeah,
5 until summer I was working, and after the summer I didn’t
6 find [work] after I sent 3000 CVs.

Similar to Pawel’s description of the economic situation in Poland, Eloísa’s account depicts working life in Spain as a ‘struggle’: although working according to her academic qualification she finds herself in precarious (part-time) work where the salary does not cover the cost of living (2–3). Furthermore, her contract does not get extended beyond the summer holidays. Although applying inside and outside her professional field, she cannot find a job and becomes unemployed (5–6). In contrast to Aniela, she talks about having applied for jobs – the number of 3000 written applications (6) emphasises the effort she made to find work as well as the frustration of not having been successful.

Throughout the interview she mentions the changing job requirements in Spain since the beginning of the crisis, especially with regards to foreign language skills: “[...] now, there, in Spain for all jobs ask for your

English. You need a good level of English, and I haven't. [chuckles]" Like Eloísa, almost all Spanish participants reported changing job requirements since the onset of the crisis, especially the growing demand for people with good English skills. Later in the interview, Eloísa agrees that English does play an important role for Spanish businesses, but as her work involves speech therapy with Spanish speaking children in primary schools, she questions the general demand for employees' foreign language skills. Nonetheless, because her cousin who is living on the Isle of Wight invites her to come and stay, Eloísa decides to move to England in order to improve her English, but overall she does not talk about having a 'good time':

1 I didn't want to come. I [would rather] stay with my
2 family, my friends, have my life, the place where I want
3 to stay. This is like a- this is like a obligation?

For Eloísa coming to the UK has not been a purely voluntary decision, but more a result of the crisis in Spain and changing job requirements. Two semantic spaces are created in the above excerpt: Spain is the place of social connections to family and friends (1–2), it is also the place where the narrator is in charge of her life course, where she 'has her life' (2), and it is also the place where she wants to be (2). England is described as an "obligation" (3), a rite of passage she has to go through in order to improve her job opportunities in Spain. Furthermore, by creating these two opposing spaces, the UK is implicitly defined *ex negativo*: it is not the place of family life and friendships, it is not the place where the narrator wants to be, and, most importantly, it is the place where she does not 'have a life'. Accounts of a perceived 'easiness' of life are missing completely from her narrative, and in her case 'normality' is more closely connected to Spain than to the UK.

The centrality of English is a prevalent theme throughout the interview corpus. Almost all participants reported the low quality of English language teaching in Spanish schools. Pablo (28, 1 year in the UK), for example, criticises teachers' low level of proficiency: "Teachers don't know about English. They know 'apple', 'orange', 'pear', [chuckles] something like this." Similar descriptions of English lessons in Spanish schools occur in almost every interview. These descriptions, together with increasing job requirements, help understand the importance of English language skills for the Spanish participants. Although some descriptions of language teaching in Polish state

schools are very similar to Pablo's 'apple-orange-pear' account above (cf. section 4.6.4), the aim of improving English skills does not occur as a dominant aspect in the Polish narratives, and in stark contrast to Spanish participants, hardly anyone mentioned severe language difficulties at the beginning of their residence in the UK.

To give another example of the importance of English language skills : Cristina (25, 1 year in the UK) finished her degree in Civil Engineering in Spain. Unable to find a job or an internship in her professional field she starts working as a cashier in a supermarket but is made redundant after six months.

1 Then it was the moment, the inflection moment when I feel
2 'Okay, to- instead looking for another job as a waitress,
3 as a whatever, I prefer doing abroad, and in the meantime
4 I can learn some English or another language.' And that's
5 why I decide to go to Southampton.

The professional options presented here are dominated by underemployment. Despite holding a degree in Civil Engineering Cristina is only able to find work below her level of qualification, as a cashier in a supermarket. After losing her job the only option is to find another job in the service sector, "as a waitress, as a whatever" (2-3). Although the account starts out presenting the (past) narrative self as a victim to (economic) circumstances, an attempt is made to regain agency through the act of emigration. The narrative self reaches a point of inflection (1) and decides to move abroad; as the only option in Spain is to work in low-level jobs, similar work in the UK service sector has 'added value' due to the possibility of gaining human/cultural capital like English language skills.

Garaile (27, 1 year in the UK), a Spanish architecture graduate doing an internship in an architect's office on the Isle of Wight, together with his girlfriend Malena (26, 1 year in the UK), elaborates on different forms of cultural capital. Similar to Eloísa, he presents the decision to emigrate as an involuntary act, but although perceiving his move to the UK as something he was forced to do because of the economic crisis in his home country, Garaile evaluates his migration project positively.

1 **Garaile:** Really good decision, because we had lucky. With
2 the architect office. No, if we didn't got these work I
3 think is a good decision as well because you improve your

4 English level, and in Spain you're not doing anything
5 important, only spending time with a Master.

6 **Malena:** Spending money.

7 **Garaile:** Spending money, living with your family, and the
8 year- the time pass and you are not improving anything.
9 Then is better came here.

For Garaile, work in the UK, especially in his professional field, has added value due to the potential to improve English skills (3). Like many other Spanish participants he reports that among young people in Spain a common reaction to the economic crisis is to go back to university and gain further (postgraduate) degrees (5). However, gaining further academic qualifications is categorised as “not doing anything important” (4) and “not improving anything” (8). This is opposed to gaining work experience and the improvement of English language skills. What Garaile presents here is a hierarchy of qualifications in which English language skills rank higher than further academic degrees. That being said, he also positions himself (and his girlfriend) in opposition to those people in his age group that did not leave Spain. Although repeatedly stressing that he is not enjoying his time in the UK very much and that he cannot wait to go back to Spain, the underlying narrative dynamics represent an ‘ideology of progress’. In this system of belief, hardship and ‘investment’ are justified by an anticipated gratification in the future.

In this context, the mentioning of passing time and stagnation (8) is noteworthy, something that is also mentioned by, for example, Miguel (24, 3 year in the UK), who came to the UK as an Erasmus student in 2010 and decided to stay due to the economic situation in Spain. His account of post-university life in the UK is characterised by ‘struggle’: having to work several part-time jobs in order to make ends meet, trying to find a flat and not meeting estate agencies’ requirements, living on £50 a month after covering all running costs. Despite all this, returning to Spain was never an option.

1 But always [when] I was thinking to go back to Spain I was
2 thinking ‘And what then?’. I knew before then that the
3 crisis was getting worse. I know a lot of friends who
4 after university they spent one year thinking ‘Okay re-
5 one year trying to find a job, if not, we will do a
6 Master’s.’ And they still in the same after two years. No,
7 I didn’t think really about it. It was never a
8 possibility, honestly no possibility.

Like Garaile, Miguel is positioning himself in opposition to friends who did not leave Spain, and similar to Garaile's account this act of positioning has a temporal underpinning: staying in Spain and working towards a postgraduate degree is associated with stagnation. Here, Miguel positions his past self as being ahead of friends in Spain: he anticipates the worsening of the economic situation (2–3) and, by observing friends' situations, is able to realise that investing further into Higher Education does not lead to professional (and personal) progression (5–6).

We can see that for some participants who foreground the economic crisis in their narratives the act of emigration was not a voluntary choice but a reaction to the recession in Spain. Participants frequently report the changing job requirements since the onset of the crisis, especially with regards to English language skills. As a result, almost all participants interpret their time in the UK as an investment leading to an anticipated gratification in the future. Spain, in participants' accounts, is narratively connected to stagnation: the work opportunities are service sector jobs "as a waitress, as a whatever" (Cristina), and when reports are given of friends who stayed in Spain and gained further degrees, from participants' points of view these friends were "not doing anything important" (Garaile & Malena) and were "still in the same" (Miguel) position even after graduating with a Master's degree. In this particular discourse of progression, the only way to re-establish a state of normality in which personal and professional progress is possible is to go abroad. Participants assume that the human/cultural capital gained in the UK will lead to better employment opportunities in the future, either in Spain or in other countries.

Comments like the above can also be read as instances of intertextuality, as participants' criticism of the economic situation in Spain reiterates common themes found in Spanish media and political debate. El País, for example, launched an entire segment designated to the current economic migration of young people, titled 'Expatriados por la crisis'.⁵³ This online segment is a collection of features and first-person accounts of young expatriates' lives around the world, and all reports in this segment present the act of emigration as an involuntary step. The headline of an image gallery of

⁵³ <http://elpais.com/especiales/2013/expatriados-por-la-crisis/>, checked on 01.06.2014.

Spaniards working in London, for example, is ‘Retratos de una huida’ (Portrait of an escape), and the images as well as the captions present emigrants’ lives in London as a rather unpleasant experience, dominated by low-level work. For example, the picture below⁵⁴ shows Daniel Santana, wearing a cap, and his work colleagues. The text below the image mentions that his colleagues are “four of the eight Spaniards” working at the McDonald’s restaurant where Mr Santana works, emphasizing the number of Spaniards working in this particular restaurant and indicating the large number of Spaniards ‘escaping’ the crisis in general.



Figure 9: Spanish ‘expatriados’ in London (El País, 22.07.2013)

⁵⁴http://elpais.com/elpais/2013/07/18/album/1374149538_106139.html#1374149538_106139_1374150612, checked on 01.06.2014

The image gallery continues with similar examples of well-educated Spaniards working in low-level jobs in London – often the main characters’ university degree is mentioned in the image description and the majority of images show a group of Spaniards rather than individuals, thereby underlining the editor’s point that the first-person accounts presented in the segment are not isolated, singular events but representative of the large-scale ‘brain drain’ caused by the recession.

To give another example, the former Madrid-based journalist Rafael Aníbal set up a blog called pepasypepes.blogspot.com. Similar to the ‘Expatriados’ segment in El País, the journalist collects stories of young people leaving Spain and working abroad, and the blog’s objective again points to the involuntariness of this migration movement: the blog, the author writes, collects “stories of young Spaniards who had to emigrate and leave their country due to the economic crisis”⁵⁵ and tries to show the “terrible consequences of an irresponsible and immoral crisis”⁵⁶.

Most Spanish participants of this study read Spanish newspapers or listened to Spanish radio stations online on a daily basis. Spanish politics and economics were frequently discussed in person and online (p. 112). Therefore, when participants like Miguel (24, 3 years in the UK) talk about their experience of hardship and precarious work in the UK service sector, while at the same time emphasizing that returning to Spain “was never a possibility, honestly no possibility”, then these accounts also echo a wider Spanish media discourse. Participant’s voices are therefore not only personal accounts, but acts of positioning interviewees’ personal narratives in relation to overarching discourses present in the Spanish media.

We have seen how the majority of Spanish as well as Polish participants in one way or another react to an economic crisis in their respective home countries, yet, the underlying dynamics are very different. The discourse of progression evident in most of the Spanish narratives is present in the Polish narratives as well, but with a different focus. As discussed earlier, most Polish participants foreground the ‘normality’ and general ‘easiness’ of life in the UK as opposed

⁵⁵ “Blog que reúne historias de jóvenes españoles que han tenido que emigrar y abandonar su país por la actual situación de crisis económica.”

⁵⁶ “...tratar de mostrar las terribles consecuencias de una crisis económica irresponsable e inmoral...”

to a constant ‘struggle’ in Poland. Therefore, the act of emigration is interpreted as a progression: past selves in Poland are worse off than present selves in the UK with regards to an overall quality of life and the ability to participate, at least to a certain extent, in an affluent consumer society. Consumption, thereby, is not the expression of a hedonistic, materialistic lifestyle, but an instantaneous gratification that functions as an expression of ‘normality’. In addition to that, the semantic space Poland is narrated in such a negative way that it becomes almost a ‘closed’ space, that is, return migration becomes highly unlikely (see, for example, Janina’s case in the following sub-section), and low level jobs in the UK are more readily accepted because narrators are still better off now than past selves in Poland. The past and certain national characteristics seem to influence the migration dynamics of Spanish and Polish participants in very different ways; the following sections will provide further examples.

In contrast to the semantic space Poland, Spanish society is not described as ‘sick’ or deviant from normality, however, with regards to life courses the country is often narrated as a space of stagnation. The move abroad, the acquisition of cultural capital like foreign language skills and work experience in participants’ professional fields is interpreted as a viable investment in order to achieve personal progress and professional development in the future. Compared to the semantic space Poland, however, Spain is a very open space; in fact, all participants described returning to Spain as their long-term goal. So while the economic circumstances in the home country are to a certain degree similar for Spanish and Polish participants, participants’ perceptions and the underlying dynamics of the individual migration projects are very different. So-called push and pull factors are, of course, not restricted to financial situations and job opportunities alone. The following sub-section will outline how participants represent the respective societies in their home countries.

5.2.2 Societal normality

In the previous sub-section I outlined how some participants narrate the economic situation in their respective home country. Especially Polish participants tend to describe Poland as deviant from normality, an evaluation made in contrast to a perceived ‘easiness’ and ‘normality’ of life in the UK that

is often connected to the possibility to participate in a consumer society. This sub-section will focus on participants' description of societies in their home countries apart from economic factors. As will be shown below, interviewees' criticism of Spanish society focuses almost exclusively on politicians and political institutions, whereas Polish society is narrated as forcing individuals to fulfil certain roles and live up to normative expectations, something that constitutes a stark contrast to the easiness with which both the move to the UK and the (hypothetical) possibility of return migration are narrated.

A striking characteristic of Polish post-2004 narratives of migration to the UK is the easiness with which narrators relocate from Poland to the UK. While post-1989 narratives of emigrating from Poland to 'the West' were often characterised by a long and dangerous journey, and the perception that the country of origin has been left for good, post-2004 stories of moving to the UK resemble a 'popping-down-the-road' discourse (Galasińska & Kozłowska 2009). In general, the decision to emigrate is made quickly, no obstacles are in the way and no risk is involved. To give an example, below is Krzysztof's (26, 7 years in the UK) account of his journey to the UK in its entirety.

1 I remember we left [name of city in Poland], my place, at
2 [...] 6am and we arrived to London 3pm next day and we had
3 ehm overnight bus to Glasgow, so basically we were in
4 Glasgow at 6 or 7am. So basically from [name of city in
5 Poland] to Glasgow it took over 48 hours.

What is noteworthy about the journey is its length, nothing else, and the decision to take the bus was purely a monetary one – it was the cheapest option. Analysing these narratives it becomes clear that the reference point of life is indeed fluid, as can be seen in Mariusz's (28, 8 years in the UK) account of the decision making process, who migrated to the UK with his then girlfriend and later wife.

1 Plus we- we could always come back, because nothing was
2 holding us over here. You don't have to borrow money or do
3 anything to stay. We could still live with=with our
4 parents. We were only 21, so it was no problem.

It is the 'nothing-to-lose' attitude that characterises Polish post-2004 narratives of migration. In case the migration project does not work out, you can always return to Poland, a matter of social reality made possible by cheap (air) travel opportunities and open EU-borders. However, as will be shown below, the way in which participants talk about return migration and the

normativity of economic success seems to contradict the easiness with which the act of emigration is narrated.

Janina (28, 6 years in the UK), who came to the UK in 2007 via a recruitment agency hiring workers for the British hospitality sector, started working as a waitress in a hotel in the New Forest and later changed to working as a sales assistant in a coffee shop in Southampton for almost a year. While working there she often overhears anti-Polish remarks by her supervisor and reports a general racist employment policy that keeps non-English staff from being promoted to supervisory positions. At the same time she lives in a part of Southampton that is infamous for the poor quality of housing; in an earlier conversation she mentioned discussions with her landlord about rats in her flat. When asked if during that time she ever thought about moving back to Poland she answers:

- 1 **J:** Yes. At the beginning. But I- because in Poland I was
 2 brought up in a village where everyone knows everyone, so
 3 I knew that if I went back, you know, after such a short
 4 time, they would be talking about me, bad things like 'Oh,
 5 she couldn't make it', and I just didn't want to give them
 6 that thing for gossips? So I just gathered my strength
 7 and...
- 8 **D:** *It must have been quite hard, I imagine.*
- 9 **J:** Yes, I really felt like just going to the airport or
 10 coach station and [laughs] take another transport to
 11 Poland.

The normativity of economic success in Janina's account is transnational in nature. The village community in Poland is exercising pressure beyond the borders of the nation state, thereby influencing Janina's decisions and actions in the UK. Two aspects in her account are crucial here: firstly, returning to Poland after "such a short time" (3), what in Janina's case would have meant less than a year, is said to be perceived by the village community as failure and the fault of the individual (4-5) and secondly, how she is perceived by the village community matters to the narrator. In order to not become classified as 'having failed' in the UK, she chooses to suffer the hardship of living a life dominated by negative aspects such as inferior housing and racist supervisors ("I just gathered my strength", 6), even though she secretly wishes to return to Poland (8-9).

After leaving the coffee shop after almost a year and a further few months as a factory worker Janina starts working as a teaching assistant at a local school, a job she had been doing for four years at the time of the interview. She reports that English students have “got quite a hostile attitude towards” her because of her nationality. In general she is not happy with her job and feels that “it’s time to change something”. Because she is supporting her family in Poland, remitting around 20% of her monthly income, Janina took on an additional job on Saturdays and Sundays where she spends two 12 hour shifts distributing food to patients at a local hospital. Effectively, she never has a day off, but despite all that, she values the opportunity to ‘live actively’ and ‘independent’ in the UK. Again, the perception of the village community back in Poland is of utmost importance to her.

- 1 J: When I go to Poland now, like for holiday, and ... and
 2 lot amount of people who ... who like a few years ago
 3 thought that I was good for nothing. And I just feel proud
 4 of myself, and I- I feel they look at me in a different
 5 way?
- 6 D: *Okay! Just because you left and you made it, you didn't*
 7 *come back?*
- 8 J: Yeah, and I'm doing WELL.

Janina contrasts past and present to demonstrate the shift in the village community's perception of her. While in the past people had a negative image of her (2–3), this image has now changed. Self-image and other people's opinion of the narrator are closely connected: when returning to Poland now, Janina feels proud of herself (3) and – mentioned in the same sentence – senses that the way she is seen by others, the way she is looked at, is different than in the past (4) when she was labelled as being “good for nothing” (3). When the researcher asks her to elaborate on this change of other people's perception of her (5–6) she adds that it is not only the fact that she did not return to Poland, but also the fact that she is “doing WELL” (7) in the UK that contributes to her changing status in the village community.

To reiterate what has been said above: Janina's story is very much governed by ‘struggle’ and hardship. At the time of the interview she works two jobs. In the first job as a support worker in a school, she feels discriminated by ‘native’ English students, while her second job, her weekend job as a caterer in a hospital, is characterised by long hours and pay that is only marginally above

minimum wage. She does not go out and hardly ever has a day off, yet, she refers to herself as ‘doing well’. This ‘doing well’ can be interpreted as a co-construction. In Goffman’s (1981) terms, the production format of this utterance is at least ambivalent. Janina clearly is the animator of the utterance, as she articulates the words, but it is unclear who the author of the text is. In the above excerpt it has to be questioned whether she herself is convinced that she is living a pleasant and (according to her own standards) successful life, or if she is evaluating her current life situation through the words of others, in this case the village community and her family in Poland, or if perceptions of self and by others become ‘blurred’. Her frame of reference, it seems, is the ‘home country society’ rather than society in the receiving country.

Therefore, Janina’s account is a strong example, firstly, of how concepts of ‘economic success’ and living a ‘good’ life can be co-constructed across space, and secondly, of how the anticipated perception of the self by society in the home country can influence social actors’ practices. ‘Home society’ in Janina’s account functions as a gatekeeping community; the return to Poland is only possible if economic success has been established abroad. In this case the question occurs how sustainable this model is; Janina might be able to keep up the image of ‘doing well’ during her annual visits and through sending remittances, but at the same time return migration becomes more and more unlikely as the permanent return to Poland would potentially threaten the appearance of ‘doing well’.

The normativity of economic success is not related to gender and can, for example, also be traced in Pietrek’s (31, 7 years in the UK) narrative, who came from Poland to the UK in 2006. Due to Worker Registration Scheme regulations (see section 2.3) he had to find work within a 30-day period.

1 Well, first few days...well...it’s difficult right now to
 2 judge from six years ago. It was scary. I couldn’t find a
 3 work for 18 days. Which for a- that was quite embarrassing
 4 really. I was even starting to think about coming back,
 5 but I couldn’t, because I would be so ashamed that I...
 6 [laughs] So yeah, I had to find a job and eventually I
 7 found a job in a factory.

Pietrek describes the situation of having only 12 days left to find employment as “scary” (2) and “embarrassing” (3), and as in Janina’s case the act of return

migration without having reached a form of economic success is connected to a strong feeling of shame (5) that makes returning to Poland impossible (“I couldn’t”, 4). Again, the normative discourse of economic success becomes tangible in Pietrek’s narrative, and the perception by transnational others becomes a guideline for action in the receiving country.

While the normativity of success is not related to gender, other aspects of the influence of ‘Polish society’ as constructed by participants are. Malina (26, 8 years in the UK), who moved to Southampton after finishing school at the age of 19, refers to the freedom of life in the UK.

1 There is more freedom up here than in Poland, and in
2 Poland everyone will watch me, and my neighbours will look
3 at me whether I go to church or whether I not go to
4 church, how I’m spending the time on Sundays. And here it
5 doesn’t- no one really cares about that, whether I go. No
6 one really watch what I do. In Poland everyone watches.
7 Just not with the church thing, but it’s with everything.
8 In Poland people watch you, whether- what age you get
9 married, whether you got boyfriend or not or whether you
10 get pregnant or not [laughs] and so on and many other
11 things. And whether your boyfriend got a car or hasn’t got
12 [laughs].

Similar to Janina, Malina refers to ‘being watched’, that is, the perception of herself by others. In the above excerpt she demonstrates how gender norms restrict her freedom as a woman. Although she does not give a detailed account of the gender norms she is expected to fulfil in Poland, the above excerpt demonstrates that ‘private’ issues such as age of getting married (8), being in a relationship (9), pregnancy (9) and “many other things” (10) are subject to public debate and ‘gossiping’ in the community.

Normative gender roles in Poland are also emphasised by Danuta (38, 6 years in the UK) who came to the UK in 2007.

1 But you know in Poland, especially in my town, even if you
2 wear, I don’t know, if you’re in your thir- forties and
3 you wear miniskirt, you’ll be- everybody will be bitching
4 behind your back. So you don’t have to be very extravagant
5 to make people talk about you, and it depends, if you are
6 strong it doesn’t really- you don’t really care, but if
7 you’re a little bit like want to belong to community you
8 have to follow some rules.

In this case, gender norms are also closely connected to a normative ‘modesty’ of dress; being of a certain age and wearing a miniskirt is not accepted (2–4) and violating these rule will result in exclusion from the community (7–8).

In all of the above statements Polish participants position themselves in relation to the society in their home country. In all cases the micro-society of participants’ hometown or -village is representative of Polish society on a macro-level, and in all narratives ‘home society’ is a powerful institution which in some cases influences participants’ practices beyond the borders of nation states. Overall, especially the representation of social actors and Polish society contribute to the very negative image Polish participants create of their home country. This image becomes highly influential for participants’ present practices in the UK and functions as an ideological counterweight – the present will always be better than the past, and no matter how bad the circumstances in the UK may be, they will always be more readily accepted as ‘normal’ when compared to the past abnormality and ‘constant struggle’ experienced in Poland.

None of the aforementioned normative discourses on gender roles or economic success occur in the Spanish sample. In contrast to the normativity of economic success prevalent in Polish narratives, Spanish participants often talk about parents urging them to return home; having reached a certain socio-economic status is not important in this context. Some of the accounts of Spanish society, however, are highly politicised. Pablo (28, 1 year in the UK), who used to work as a mining engineer in Spain before coming to the UK in 2012, repeatedly refers to “the fucking government” and states that “it’s crazy country now. It’s totally crazy.” He recalls a discussion with a former housemate in which the housemate criticises Pablo for emigrating and not being politically active in order to contribute to the country’s way out of the crisis. Pablo argues that political protest and support of the unions is not an option, because the unions are only representing their self-interest as an institution.

1 Because the before government paid them like six million
2 per year and now the new government pay only six hundred
3 per year. So I’m going to follow the union? Why? Because
4 it’s not good for them. FUCK them. I’m going to look
5 myself. I’m sorry but, okay, of course I want that Spain

6 grow up, of course. My family, my friends and it's the
 7 country where I'm from, so of course I want that. What can
 8 I do? *pff* [kisses teeth]

Pablo demonstrates how his loss of trust in political institutions has led to a strong sense of individualisation (cf. the discussion of Beck (1986) and Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (2002) in section 3.2). As this account is embedded in the reported discussion with his former housemate the excerpt can be interpreted as a justification for leaving Spain. Although he wants the country to grow economically (5) as it is the country of family and friends (6), the current situation and dysfunctional political institutions force him to leave the country (7). At another point in the interview he formulates this lack of options even more strongly by saying “you can't stay there, because it's impossible”. Nonetheless, when asked about his future plans he clearly states that “In ten years...I would like to come back to Spain. Because I hope the crisis [will be] gone.”

As discussed previously (p. 151), the way Pablo describes the lack of options in Spain and the involuntariness of the decision to emigrate are not only first person accounts, but also instances of intertextuality. Pablo demonstrates this clearly when he says: “Ehm the recent sentence that I read ehm two days ago, something like this, I'm not sure, in Facebook, and they say 'We don't leave- we don't leave Spain. They take us out.'” This refers to a website called ‘No nos vamos, nos echan’⁵⁷, launched by the protest group *Juventud sin Futuro*. Similar to the aforementioned ‘Expatriados’ segment of *El País*, the website collects short, often visual first hand accounts of young Spanish emigrants from around the world, as well as publishing a monthly online magazine called ‘Ex-Press’. Pablo's reference to the *No nos vamos* campaign is interesting for two reasons: firstly, although Pablo demonstrates a strong sense of individualisation throughout the interview, this does not mean he is politically disengaged. His political activism might not result in him joining anti-government demonstrations in his home country, but similar to most Spanish participants, he closely follows the economical and political situation in Spain: “Today I was listening to the

⁵⁷ <http://www.nonosvamosnosechan.net/>, checked on 01.06.2014. The slogan can be translated as ‘We do not leave, they make us leave’. The metadata tag #nonosvamos is used frequently on social networking services such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

[Spanish] news. Every morning I- I put the news, maybe when I'm having a breakfast. More or less like one hour, something like this." Secondly, Pablo's reference to the *No nos vamos* campaign links his expression of political anger to a larger (virtual) protest movement against youth precariousness and austerity measures. The intertextual references Pablo uses politicise his personal narrative. This is not just the story of Pablo, young Spaniard currently working in the kitchen of a small Spanish restaurant in Southampton, it is also an 'eye witness' account of the ramifications of the global financial crisis – told from a Spanish point of view.

Similar to Pablo, Sarita (29, 1 year in the UK), a Spanish au pair working on the Isle of Wight, criticises politicians in her home country and points out that there is "a lot of corruption", which she interprets as related to a lack of 'proper' education.

1 [...] they don't know anything=all of them are- have a law
2 degree, not anything else, and law degree is just, you
3 know, you finish the law degree and you don't know
4 anything about nothing. [laughs]

In Sarita's account, all politicians in Spain have a law degree which is the reason for their incompetence (1-2). As she herself graduated from university with a degree in law, something that she told the researcher prior to the interview, she lends authority to her claim that a degree in law is not an adequate qualification for a career in politics, something that is further emphasised by double negation (3-4). She then connects this inadequacy of academic qualification to 'culture' in general.

1 I think that politicians in Spain doesn't have enough high
2 level- high level culture, and for example our president,
3 our prime minister, doesn't know English. Only know
4 Spanish. That's TERRIBLE for a prime minister. I think
5 that's awful. And lazy. They are lazy. [And I'm not?]

'High level culture' in Sarita's account is something that all politicians in Spain are lacking (1-2), and this form of culture is related to a working knowledge of English. The introduction of the Spanish Prime Minister at the time, Mariano Rajoy, functions as a *pars pro toto* representing the entire political class, and his alleged monolingualism is something described as "TERRIBLE" and "awful" (4) for a prime minister, before she makes another general statement that politicians in Spain are lazy (5). This excerpt is, of course, not just a criticism of Spanish politicians, but an attempt to position the narrator in opposition to

them and in relation to the interviewer. Sarita does hold a law degree, but contrary to the Spanish Prime Minister, she is proficient in English, does have 'high level culture' and is not lazy (5). After 'moving away' from Spanish politicians geographically by leaving the country, she now positions herself with regards to the researcher, delineating herself narratively by drawing a line between herself and the political class in Spain. She thereby demonstrates a sense of individualism similar to Pablo's, and similar to his narrative hers is characterised by a general mistrust in political institutions. In contrast to Polish participants' accounts, this mistrust is solely aimed at politicians and political institutions, not Spanish society as a whole.

Spanish participants in general demonstrate a 'love-hate' relationship to their country of origin. Although the economic crisis and politics are described and criticised in strongly negative terms, the semantic space 'Spain' is overall presented in a positive way. This becomes particularly prevalent in Garaile's and Malena's story, who were working in an architect's office on the Isle of Wight. Both agree that leaving Spain was the only option left in order to avoid long-term unemployment, and throughout the interview both reiterate a sense of longing for their home country. In Garaile's words: "Yeah, this=this-the situation, because I told you I love Spain and if the situation is not- was not like this, I didn't- didn't go outside to live." Or as his girlfriend Malena puts it: "Now we want come back. We need come back. [chuckles]"

Simón (31, 1 year in the UK), to give another example, implicitly reflects upon the overall quality of life in Spain and why the decision to emigrate is not easy.

- 1 I think because Spanish people really don't want to go to
- 2 another countries. Yeah, I think we have a problem with
- 3 that. [laughs] Like, we prefer stay at home with our job,
- 4 I don't know, with the sun all the time, and it's a hard
- 5 decision sometimes.

Although he starts his account with a stance that distances him from other Spaniards (1), Simón switches to the use of an inclusive 'we' in the following sentence (2). Quality of life is represented by employment (3) and sunshine (4), both re-occurring themes throughout the Spanish interview corpus.

In summary, the way Polish and Spanish participants talk about societies in their respective home countries is very different. We have seen how for some

Polish participants the normativity of economic success in the country of immigration and expectations of the community in the home country make the act of return migration almost impossible. The influence of these ‘significant others’ crosses national boundaries and can have an impact on participants’ actions in the UK. Female participants emphasised normative gender roles in Poland through which topics such as pregnancy and partnership become matters of ‘public’ discourse. Furthermore, ‘violating’ certain gender rules, such as the ‘dress code’ outlined by Danuta, can lead to an exclusion from the wider community. In contrast to that, the UK is presented as a space of personal freedom in which, to use Malina’s words again, “no one really cares”. Overall, the way Polish society is narrated creates an argumentative cycle: participants (more often between the lines than openly) acknowledge that their present situation in the UK is not ideal, but at the same time emphasise that life in the UK is still better than their past situation in Poland. At times, the highly negative semantic space Poland appears to justify a ‘not ideal’ present characterised by low level work, long hours and a sense of having no direction in life (see the example of Danuta in section 5.4).

None of these themes can be found in the Spanish corpus. The way Spanish participants talk about their home country is not so much shaped by a restrictive and sanctioning society, but rather by the lack of trust in political institutions and the ramifications of the economic crisis. Although politicians are described in strongly negative terms, in some narratives a sense of longing for the home country becomes prevalent and in comparison to the semantic space ‘Poland’, ‘Spain’ is narratively constructed in a more positive way. While some Polish participants create a discourse of ‘escape’, the majority of Spanish participants tend to create a discourse of ‘adventure’, as I will demonstrate in the following section.

5.2.3 Personal normality

The previous sections have analysed participants’ accounts of migration with a focus on the economic situation in their home countries and the way ‘home societies’ are narrated. We have seen how these factors can be interlinked. In Janina’s case, for example, the bleak economic situation in her hometown

forms the background of her story, but it is the normative discourse of economic success created by the Polish village community that makes return migration nearly impossible as long as the narrator's perception of herself remains interchangeable with the positioning done by others. It also became clear that these issues of societal pressure do not occur in the Spanish narratives. Their accounts of their home country reveal a mistrust in political institutions, but the overall semantic space 'Spain' is positively connotated compared to how Polish participants choose to describe their home country. This section examines another level of normality that is connected to economy and society, but is a yet more personal push factor: the (re-) establishment of personal normality.

Leocadio (29, 1 year in the UK), for example, used to work as a physiotherapist in Spain before coming to Southampton. He does not report having been affected by the crisis, on the contrary, he refers to an income of up to 2000 Euros per month while living at home where he did not have to pay for food or accommodation. However, Leocadio talks about the monotony of daily life and the urge to experience living abroad.

1 I talked to my boss 'I'm leaving, because I-' I felt
 2 really, really well in that job, because it was good. I
 3 mean, I had the same customers for three, almost four
 4 years, and the salary was alright and everything was fine,
 5 but I had to do the same every single day, and I need to
 6 change. And I wanted to learn English, so England was the
 7 best option. I [went on?] 'I'm leaving.' 'Why?' 'Just
 8 because I'm young, and I want to do it, I want to learn
 9 English.' And I bought a one-way plane ticket.

Leocadio's decision to migrate is linked to a wish to initiate a break with his previous life. This previous life is presented as financially stable (4), but so monotonous (4-5) that 'change' becomes a necessity (5-6). The wish to learn English plays an important role (6) in this context, so does the (perceived) youth of the narrator (8), an argument that is used in a reported dialogue with his former boss in order to justify the decision to quit his job. Even though at the time of the interview Leocadio had just started his own physiotherapy business in the UK, he still presents himself as unconcerned and not too worried about the future: "I live in England, but I'm on holiday." Later in the interview Leocadio outlines his marketing strategy and how he tries to recruit customers, and it becomes clear that he invests a lot of time

(and money) into building his business, yet, he narratively creates a self-image of someone who is not following a certain career path, but as someone independent, someone without any liabilities, someone 'on holiday'. He narrates himself as a person who is 'just passing through' and 'never settling', but the question remains how temporary his stay in the UK really is once his business is established and how viable his self-image as a backpacker proves to be. However, the act of presenting a narrative self that is rejecting a life model based on 'having a career' and 'settling down' demonstrates how, at least for the time being, a rather 'traditional' life course is something the narrator wants to opt out of.

Although Leocadio left Spain during the economic crisis and although he is working in the UK, his reasons for emigrating were personal and a reaction to a life perceived as monotonous and governed by a sequential career path. This initiation of a break with the 'previous' life, however, is nothing unique to Spanish participants. Anastazja (35, 8 years in the UK), for example, used to work as an English teacher in Poland for five years before coming to the UK.

1 I got bored. [laughs] With teaching, yeah. No, I thought
 2 five years is just enough, okay? And I needed a change,
 3 and I ehm initially- and I decided to move to a country
 4 where I can use obviously ENGLISH. As a first language.
 5 And I- initially I wanted to go to Australia, but I
 6 decided that was too far. [chuckles] So I decided to move
 7 to UK. And just- I just decided, you know, to start, you
 8 know, something new.

In her account of her home country she chooses not to foreground the economy or a restrictive society, but a very individual reason to leave: boredom (1). Similar to Leocadio she wishes to break out of a sequential life and career path ("I needed a change", 2) and to start "something new" (7). In Anastazja's case the break she initiates is a 'controlled' break. She chooses the UK as a destination country due to her knowledge of the majority language (3-4) and because of its geographical proximity to Poland - Australia would be too far away (5). Later in the interview she mentions that her reason for moving to the UK was not "to save money and then go back to Poland", but "just to have a regular life, but just in a different country." Apart from the income gap between Poland and the UK she does not paint a negative image of her home country. She recalls being "homesick" during her first months in England and emphasises her close relationship to her parents.

A 'regular life' in the UK is therefore not to be understood as opposed to an 'irregular' or 'abnormal' life in Poland, but more as a continuation of the past, a time of stability under different circumstances. In contrast to other Polish participants, Anastazja does not foreground the negativity of life in Poland, but talks about individual motivations such as boredom and the wish for a professional change.

Another common theme in the narratives of coming to the UK is the end of a relationship. While Pietrek (31, 7 years in the UK) chose to foreground financial reasons for the move from Poland to the UK (sub-section 5.2.1), he also mentioned failing exams at university and the break-up with his back-then girlfriend. Sarita (29, 1 year in the UK), who used to work as a Civil Servant in Spain, talks about the end of a long-term relationship triggering her decision to move to England, too.

1 It was just two weeks before I came here. Yeah, because
 2 it- well, my life changed a lot because I was- I have a
 3 boyfriend for five years almost, and we broke up, and I
 4 then I decided [snaps fingers] 'Whatever.' And go away.
 5 [laughs] I always wanted to go outside- abroad to another
 6 country, but, you know, having a relationship is really
 7 hard to be- to go to another country, so when I had the
 8 opportunity I think 'It's the moment. Right now. Do it.'
 9 [chuckles]

The end of the relationship in her account enables Sarita to gain freedom and realise something she had been planning for a long time: the move abroad (5), whereby the end of the relationship is narratively reinterpreted as an opportunity rather than a challenge. The immediacy of the decision is emphasised by a bodily gesture of snapping fingers (4) and an emphasis on a very particular point in time, "Right now." (8) At another point in the interview she talks about having been planning to have children, because her partner wanted her to, something that she in retrospect categorizes as "crazy". The move to the UK for her is a step of re-establishing 'normality' on a very personal level.

1 And now, looking back, it's like 'That wasn't you.' I
 2 wasn't like that. And now I come back to myself, to be
 3 myself, and to do what I really want to do, so I'm happier
 4 now. Definitely. [chuckles]

As demonstrated previously (sub-section 5.2.1), some participants narrate living and working in the UK as an act of establishing ‘retrospective normality’, in which life in the home country was deviant from normality. In the above excerpt, Sarita, too, establishes normality in retrospect (1) and with reference to previous times (1–2), but on a personal instead of societal or economic level; it is only now, in the UK, looking back at her previous self that she finds a way back to her ‘true’ identity (2) and her true ambitions in life (3). Although she does not refer to ‘needing a break’ from her previous job, she does, similarly to Simón, Anastazja and Leocadio, initiate a break from her previous life through the act of moving abroad and taking a ‘time-out’ from a sequential life course.

This section on ‘societal normality’ has demonstrated how a crisis on a very individual level can lead participants to initiate a break from their previous life through the act of emigration. Although the economic situation in the respective home countries is mentioned in most of the narratives, none of the participants discussed in this section has been affected by it. On the contrary, Leocadio refers to having been rather ‘well-off’ in the past. He, as well as Anastazja, uses the act of emigration to initiate a break; both of them report having been bored by the monotony of everyday (work) life in the past. The sense of boredom becomes so strong that change is seen as a necessity; the sentence ‘I needed a change’ occurs in all three narratives discussed above. In all cases change is initiated via a ‘controlled’ break. Anastazja is not seeking an adventure but a “regular life” in another country, and although Leocadio presents the self-image of a backpacker, his level of preparedness before coming to the UK (see the following section) as well as his investment in starting his own business indicate that he, too, prefers a controlled break from his old life in Spain over a radical change. Finally, Sarita’s case demonstrates how ‘retrospective normality’ is established on a personal level and how a break with previous social roles as a ‘partner’ and potential ‘mother’ can initiate a return to a perceived ‘true self’. What all cases have in common is that the initiated break with a previous, sequential life course is accompanied by the act of emigration. Participants chose the move abroad over the initiation of change in their home country, and it seems likely that the break from a previous life is actually easier to establish abroad than in participants’ home environment.

5.2.4 Conclusion

Sub-sections 5.2.1–5.2.3 have shown how the (re-)establishment of a certain form of normality constitutes the rationale for the migration projects of most participants. In almost all cases, people react to an experience of absence, that is, an understanding that something missing in the home country can be (re-)gained in the receiving country, be it employment, freedom, quality of life or a ‘true self’.

Although economic deprivation is mentioned in almost all of the narratives in this study, the assessments of the economic situations in the respective home countries vary in severity; some participants reported the general unavailability of jobs in accordance with one’s academic qualifications (Aniela, Cristina), while others (Pawel) talked about a constant ‘struggle’ due to a mismatch between cost of living and wage levels, and another group reports not having been affected by a negative economic situation at all (Leocadio, Anastazja).

A striking characteristic of Polish narratives is an understanding of consumption and participation in a consumer society as an expression of normality. The UK is narrated as a meritocracy, a place where ‘hard work pays’, something that is very different from the system of cronyism experienced in Poland. In the UK, ‘basic needs’ such as consumer goods or alcohol can be fulfilled as long as someone is willing to work. Becoming consumers and enjoying the ‘easiness of life’ in the UK is therefore seen as an establishment of normality, the opposite of the ‘daily struggle’ in Poland.

‘Consumption’ and a perceived ‘easiness of life’ in the UK are not mentioned by Spanish participants. Often the time in the UK is seen as a step towards an anticipated establishment of normality, however, the intended space for the establishment of this normality is Spain, not the UK. What became salient in Spanish narratives, too, was a discourse of progression in which time in the UK is seen as an investment in human/cultural capital (language skills, etc.) that will lead to gratification in the future. This sense of progress stands in stark contrast to a perceived stagnation in Spain, in which the only remaining option is further investment in Higher Education, something that participants described as a ‘waste of time’.

With regards to societal normality, Polish as well as Spanish participants narrated respective home country societies as 'not normal', however, in both cases criticism is aimed at different levels of society. Spanish participants' accounts are highly politicised and one of their unifying characteristics is a general mistrust of and anger at political institutions, something leading to a strong sense of individualism. Overall, however, Spanish society on the level of participants' social networks (peers, family, etc.) is positively connotated. Polish society, on the other hand, is experienced as restricting participants' actions. Especially female participants talk about the general freedom in the UK as opposed to the pressure to fulfil certain gender roles in Poland, to dress in a certain way, and to attend church services on Sundays. Furthermore, the influence of the home society can be transnational, contributing to a normativity of economic success, making return migration ever more difficult as long as economic success has not been established permanently.

Beyond the economy and societal pressures, many participants foregrounded a very individual 'push factor': the (re-) establishment of personal normality and a sense of coming back to a 'true self'. Some interviewees referred to the monotony of daily work life and migration as a way of escaping the boredom associated with it. Another common theme participants referred to in this context is the end of a relationship, something often described as enabling individuals to finally experience freedom from constraints and to fulfil long-term goals.

To sum up, in all of these cases participants are re-negotiating life courses. In their narratives, two states of being are compared, whereby life in the respective home country is primarily characterised by the absence of certain elements seen as essential, for example, employment, consumption, or personal freedom. This inaccessibility of certain features of life is, albeit in retrospect, described as 'not normal', and it is only through the act of migration that this form of normality can be (re-) established. This section has shown that participants' understanding of 'normality' is highly complex and can only partly be analysed as an economic aspiration.

While this section has tried to shed light on the very different rationales underlying the individual migration projects, the following section will explore how these rationales become actions, that is, what migration strategies participants apply in order to establish 'normality'.

5.3 (Un)Preparedness

While the previous section has shown how participants aim at establishing certain forms of normality, this section investigates the migration strategies participants apply at the beginning of their migration project. It will be shown that these migration strategies are very much influenced by participants' temporal orientations. While one group, largely Polish, arrives in the UK rather unconcerned and focuses more on the present, another group, mostly Spanish, invests a lot of time and preparation in the move abroad. Narratively, the latter group opts for a rather active stance in which the narrator presents him-/herself as the driving force, whereas the former group positions past selves as rather passive and reliant on what I am going to call 'helper figures', to borrow a term from literary analysis (Herman, Jahn & Ryan 2008).

As pointed out previously (p. 149), a typical characteristic of Polish post-2004 narratives of migration is the immediacy and ease with which the decision to emigrate is made. If the migration project does not work out the way it was intended to, there is, at least on the narratives' surface, always the possibility of return migration, something made possible through the availability of cheap air travel and freedom of movement within the EU. However, as Janina's case has shown, while the possibility of return migration may be presented as easy and uncomplicated, a closer analysis reveals that, on the contrary, for some participants return migration is associated with feelings of shame for not being able to reach economic success.

Nonetheless, most Polish participants execute the move abroad quickly and do not spend much time preparing or planning. In some cases, use is made of Polish recruitment agencies specialised in finding staff for the UK care or service sector. Janina (28, 6 years in the UK), who came to the UK in 2007, arranged her move to England through such an agency. She relocated to Hampshire even before graduating from university with a BA in English Philology.

- 1 Yeah, actually I left a bit before graduation. I mean, I
- 2 did fail one of the exams, but because I had everything
- 3 booked to come here, I did come here, and just after two
- 4 months I went back to Poland, re-took the exam and then I
- 5 went there again after another few months, and took my
- 6 defence exam and then I graduated.

Two events are presented here, the forthcoming graduation and the move to the UK, arranged through a Polish agency specialised in recruiting workers for the British hospitality sector. Priority is given to the act of emigration. Instead of delaying the move abroad, Janina decides to relocate to the UK and subsequently travels back to Poland to re-take the failed exam and do her final viva. The narrator's determination to leave Poland is reflected linguistically through an active voice: it is the narrator who "had everything booked to come here" (2-3), not the recruitment agency. Upon arrival in the UK she starts working as a waitress in a hotel in the New Forest, a job that she does not enjoy and after two months changes for a position as a sales assistant in a coffee shop in Southampton.

Of course, Janina's English degree and language skills are the foundation of her migration project and gaining these qualifications could therefore be understood as an act of long-term preparation. However, her decision to migrate is very much open-ended.

1 I didn't have a plan then. I just wanted to come and see
 2 what it's gonna be like and...because I wasn't really- I
 3 didn't really have good prospects in Poland, so I just- I
 4 was looking for- for some opportunities.

Referencing a bad economic situation in the home country is a common theme in almost all narratives in this study. In this case, the semantic space Poland is characterised by a rather restricted future, whereas the UK is presented not necessarily as a 'land of opportunity', but a place where the future seems less confined to the narrator. Because the actual opportunities – and everyday life in the country in general – are unknown to her at that point in time, Janina arrives without an agenda and opts for a 'come-and-see' approach. It is noteworthy that for her the act of emigration is not related to any other person apart from herself. Although she briefly mentions that an acquaintance from university recommended the recruitment agency that organised her first job in the UK, no other person is introduced in this part of the interview and no detail is given about the recruitment process or the act of saying goodbye to friends and family back home.

Similar to Janina's story, Mariusz (28, 8 years in the UK), a university dropout who came to the UK in 2005 together with his girlfriend, opts for a 'come-and-see' approach in which the move abroad is not associated with any risks

due to not having any financial liabilities or other responsibilities back in Poland. He, however, reports that his and his girlfriend's parents cried after having been informed about their decision to move to England.

His narrative is a typical example of network migration and the reliance on what some scholars have called 'weak ties'.⁵⁸ Originally introduced by Granovetter (1973) the term describes individuals' reliance on a loose network of acquaintances. These connections are opposed to the 'strong ties' between close friends and family. In the context of migration, the concept favours 'weak' over 'strong' ties when they bridge social distance; if migrants cannot rely on a close network of co-nationals in the receiving country they are forced to access information outside their social group which, for example, leads to employment outside ethnicised niche markets and thereby promotes upward social mobility.

Gill & Bialski (2011) investigate strong and weak ties in relation to migrants' socio-economic status. Their research indicates that loose networks are far more important for Polish migrants with low socio-economic status than for high status migrants who demonstrate independence from co-ethnic ties. These ties are more essential for migrants of low socio-economic status in order to find jobs and gain information, however, they are also "more likely to be locked into their support networks even if they do not necessarily feel comfortable with them." (Gill & Bialski 2011: 247)

Ryan (2011a), in her research on Polish migrants in London, differentiates between vertical and horizontal weak ties. Horizontal weak ties denote a network of people from a similar or lower socio-economic background, as opposed to vertical weak ties to people on a higher socio-economic level. Ryan argues that "a network made up of people from similar or lower socio-economic groups may further reinforce social marginalisation" (Ryan 2011a: 721). If, for example, a network is dominated by co-nationals who do routine jobs in manufacturing, new arrivals dependent on this network are likely to find employment in the same sector. Below I will briefly discuss the strategies

⁵⁸ Social network theories often take structuring factors like the density and multiplexity of networks into account (Scott & Carrington 2011, Prell 2012, Scott 2012). This research project, however, does not aim to investigate people's social networks, therefore the data regarding participants' interpersonal connections is very limited and does not allow for a detailed analysis of networks.

of finding work applied by Mariusz and Anastazja and demonstrate the influence of horizontal and vertical ties.

The ‘weak ties’ concept has also been contested. Irek (2011) argues that Polish co-nationals in the UK develop “intense and lasting ties of mutual support, even though they were not related at all” (Irek 2011: 16). Irek calls for a revision of the ‘weak ties/strong ties’ dichotomy as both categories are “fuzzy and misleading” (ibid.: 20); someone might not belong to a migrant’s nuclear family, but the ties they form might be ‘strong’ nonetheless. The reliance on informal networks, Irek argues further, is indeed based on mutual trust and therefore indicates ‘strong ties’, and the density of a social network cannot be interpreted as a precursor to any form of social mobility. This study agrees with Irek’s position, and the term ‘weak ties’ or ‘loose friend’ are used simply to describe the initial help of an acquaintance rather than a relative or partner.

As I have demonstrated previously (sub-section 5.2.1), for the majority of participants their social networks are an important way into the UK labour market. Judging by participants’ professional trajectories, starting in a menial job often leads to extended periods of low level work, and in that respect social networks and ‘helpers’ can potentially shape the first few years migrants spend in the UK.

Mariusz, as well as Janina, does not talk about an extended period of preparation or information gathering. Upon arrival, for him the UK is ‘uncharted territory’.

1 A big unknown, really. Didn’t- I knew=I knew that it’s
2 gonna be different to Poland, but I was more shocked when
3 I arrived, ‘cause that was in...I think...I flied for the
4 first time and then we landed in Stansted Airport, when
5 like you’re landing in the middle of the- of the airport,
6 and then you been taken by underground rail to- to- and
7 that was- so that was a bit shocking for me. Yeah. But
8 really unknown. It’s just time by time I was exploring
9 more, and finding out. So...a big unknown really.

Similar to Janina, Mariusz reports confidence in his English skills and his ability to communicate, however, he emphasises his lack of knowledge about the UK by reiterating the noun/adverb “unknown” three times (1, 7, 9). The novelty of the experience is described in strong emotional terms: “shocked” and

“shocking” (2, 7), a perception triggered by flying for the first time in his life (3).

Upon arrival in Southampton, he and his wife rely on a (loose) friend who organised a place to stay for a week. The subsequent process of finding work is shaped by what Ryan (2011a) has called ‘horizontal weak ties’. In Mariusz’ case horizontal weak ties lead to a reliance on acquaintances and recruitment agencies.

1 Mh... well, that friend that I knew, he was... he took us to a
 2 few places where we could possibly get some job. It was
 3 some of the agencies. Basically drive us around the city
 4 to=to show, but it was... I think the first job we caught it
 5 was actually [4 sec] from one of the housemates on the
 6 first flat, completely ehm new person and ahem... I think it
 7 was a girl, can’t... I think her name was Kate. And she was-
 8 she was trying to help and she said ‘Well you just go over
 9 there, to- to an agency, and then I know that they’re
 10 looking for people and...’ So that’s how we started. None of
 11 the places that he showed us were good for us.

Two people occur in this excerpt: the Polish friend who organised a place to stay for a week, and an English acquaintance. Both are positively connoted as they offer support, and both refer to temp agencies in order to find employment. However, the contacts of the Polish friend only lead to inadequate employment opportunities (10), whereas the English acquaintance manages to navigate them in the ‘right’ direction, i.e. an agency that has job vacancies and later on offers them menial work in an industrial bakery.

The strategy of relying on friends and acquaintances for initial support and temp agencies for employment is very common among Polish participants. Pietrek (31, 7 years in the UK), to give another example, came to the UK in 2006 and was living with a Polish friend for the first few weeks. At that point he had never been abroad before and describes travelling to Southampton via London as a “crazy trip” where he was “scared of everything”, terms that (again) indicate the novelty of the abroad experience. He reports having had initial difficulties finding work, but finally managing to secure a job in a local factory through a recruitment agency. Gender does not influence this agency route into employment: Malina, who followed her sister from Poland to the UK in 2005, started working in an industrial bakery as well, followed by a job in a warehouse, followed by work in a contact lenses factory, and all of these jobs were accessed via agencies.

In many aspects, Anastazja (35, 8 years in the UK), who used to work as an English teacher in Poland, is an exception as her narrative is very different from those of other Polish migrants. She arrives in the UK in 2005 and initially relies on 'horizontal ties', staying with a cousin in Luton while working at a local factory. After two weeks, however, her trajectory starts to differ from others.

1 I worked for two weeks in a factory. [...] And in the
 2 meantime I put an advert online for office job, and I had
 3 a phone call from this company based here in Hampshire.
 4 Ehm, went for job interview, and=and=and they hired me. So
 5 I moved to Hampshire. [...] Anyway, I moved down here, and I
 6 worked first as a receptionist in that company. Then they
 7 offered me another position in their branch in Southampton
 8 as admin slash PA to the managing director, and that
 9 seemed, you know, a good move, so I moved down to
 10 Southampton and I was with them for a year, I think.

What is exceptional about Anastazja's narrative is the decision to make use of the internet, to not rely on co-nationals, and to actively advertise her skills in order to find a job, thereby building (using Ryan's terminology) 'vertical ties'. Through taking the initiative (2) she manages to find a job as a receptionist first (6) and later gets promoted to personal assistant. Her professional mobility is accompanied by geographical mobility; she moves from Luton to a small town in Hampshire and later on to Southampton. What makes her narrative so different from other accounts in the Polish corpus is, I would like to argue, a temporal orientation towards the future and a very strong sense of progression. After the branch she was working in as a Personal Assistant in Southampton closed down, Anastazja works as an administrator for a temp agency. Nine months later, she is still working on a temporary contract, and when the agency denies her a permanent contract, she immediately hands in her notice. In retrospect she says:

1 [chuckles] That wasn't an easy decision to make. I was
 2 terrified, but I thought 'No.' No. And I don't need, you
 3 know, a temp job for such a long time. I need to, you
 4 know, move FORward, 'cause that was the reason, to move
 5 forward.

For Anastazja, quitting her job is a rather hard decision to make (1–2), but working on a temporary contract is perceived as stagnation and simply not an option (2–3). It is the sense of progression, the wish to 'move forward', to improve her socio-economic standing, that leads her to quit her job, and when she says that "that was the reason, to move forward" (4), this does not

only refer to the narrated event at hand, but also to Anastazja's migration project as a whole. Anastazja neither creates a discourse of escape, nor does she opt for a 'come-and-see' approach characterised by a high level of unconcernedness. It is her sense of self-reliance (she does not rely on help from others to find initial employment), her overall orientation towards the future and a focus on personal progress that makes her narrative different from those of other Polish participants; in fact, her account bears more similarities to the strong sense of progression displayed by Spanish participants that I will discuss below.

For now, it can be said that the 'typical' route to the UK for the Polish participants of this study is to initially seek support from (more often loose than close) friends and to find employment using recruitment agencies. The move to the UK is approached in a rather unconcerned way. Decisions are made quickly, and after securing initial support upon arrival in the destination country, not much time is spent with preparation.

The level of preparedness of the majority of the Spanish participants stands in stark contrast to that. Use of 'weak ties' is made as well, however, much effort is put into planning and preparing the migration project. Leocadio (29, 1 year in the UK), for example, used to work as a physiotherapist in Spain; he is one of the few Spanish participants who had not been affected by the economic crisis, on the contrary, he talks about having been 'well-off'. However, bored with his daily work routine and eager to improve his English skills and to experience living abroad (see sub-section 5.2.3) he decides to move to the UK. While doing a language exchange with an English couple in his hometown he asks them whether they know someone who could provide initial accommodation, and contact is made to his future landlady in Southampton. His preparation, however, does not stop there.

- 1 **L:** [...] before I came I arranged a meeting with the college
 2 and then an interview, and I had to go to the jobcentre,
 3 so I was thinking about everything I had to do, so the
 4 following morning- I arrived the 5th of January in the
 5 evening, and the following day at 7 something, I was up,
 6 and I went to the centre and I went to the college, I went
 7 to the interview and- so- and I needed to buy different
 8 things and...
- 9 **D:** *And you already had an interview the morning after you*
 10 *got here? Where was it?*

11 L: In Spain I check on gumtree and someone was looking for
 12 a self-employed physio. I contacted him and we had a Skype
 13 interview, but it was quite basic, 'cause he asked me
 14 things and I couldn't understand much, so I couldn't say
 15 anything. So I had an interview that day, and they told me
 16 'It's alright if you want it.' I didn't understand why
 17 because I couldn't understand him so it meant I couldn't
 18 understand my customers. But he said 'Yeah, yeah, it's
 19 alright. It's alright, because of your CV.'

Leocadio accesses information online to prepare his move to the UK. Even before his arrival he arranges a meeting at a local college where he intends to take English courses (1). He also knows about the need to get a National Insurance Number, so he schedules another appointment at the jobcentre (2); both appointments take place the day after his arrival (4-6). The most striking difference to the routes into employment discussed before is his active online search for jobs that match his qualification leading to an initial Skype interview with a potential future employer (11-12), followed by a face-to-face interview the day after his arrival in Southampton (14). Although his communicative abilities in English are limited (12-13), he gets a job offer because of his qualifications and work experience (17-18).

Simón (31, 1 year in the UK) is another participant who has put a lot of thought into his decision to migrate, not necessarily into the decision as such, but in the details of the project. After graduating from university with a Master's degree in Marketing, he spends a couple of years working in Spain as a sales executive. As a result of the crisis he is made redundant and decides to move to the UK with the primary aim to improve his English. His answer to the question why he chose Southampton as a destination reveals the level of preparedness with which he approaches the move abroad.

1 I did a- a very good Excel ehm Excel report. [laughs]
 2 Excel- Excel report. And I put Bristol, Southampton,
 3 Bournemouth, Brighton, ehm Nor- how I say? Nor...in the
 4 West. [...] Norwich! And Exeter. Yeah. Because I didn't want
 5 to come to London, because I don't like the big- the big
 6 cities, and then I just wanted to ehm go to a city without
 7 Spanish, or lot of them. I prefer with the sea. I prefer
 8 with in the South, because the accent. I prefer- I was
 9 searching the- the jobs, how many jobs I can get, you can
 10 choosing by internet or something. How many restaurants,
 11 how many hotels, because I thought [it] was the first- the
 12 ehm the better- the best thing to do to- to come here.
 13 More things, yeah! About the temperature, the weather,

14 about...uff, I can't- about the population. Lot of things
 15 that I compare, and then I thought- AH! And Portsmouth I
 16 write. And then I- the final was between Portsmouth and
 17 Southampton. I think they are very similar. So finally
 18 Southampton because=because=because...ah, because
 19 Southampton has more ehm more jobs in internet. You can
 20 choose more vacancies.

Simón's case is exceptional as his level of preparedness seems extreme at first. However, the aspects he takes into consideration in order to make an informed decision about his migration destination are quite reasonable: availability of jobs in total (8-9), availability of jobs in hospitality and catering (10), population size (13) and presence of co-nationals. In that respect, his migration strategies are very different from the rather unconcerned 'come-and-see' approach most Polish participants take.

Although Simón mentions at another point in the interview friends living in London and Manchester, he chooses Southampton – as the primary goal of his migration project is to improve his English language skills, he wants to avoid initial contact to fellow Spaniards (6). Like Leocadio he talks about accessing information online to prepare the relocation to the UK. As for his route into employment, he does try a recruitment agency specialised in hospitality, but as this does not lead to sufficient results, he starts delivering CVs to three different restaurants "and in the third I got the- a job. [laughs]". Simón does not rely on support from others, and in contrast to Leocadio he does not have accommodation upon arrival in Southampton.

1 Oh, then I just got a- three- three days in the- in a
 2 guesthouse, and I didn't have a flat, I didn't have a job,
 3 I didn't have anything, and was funny because I started to
 4 call to the people, to the landlords, to say 'Hey please,
 5 have you got a room, because I saw in gumtree.' And I
 6 couldn't understand anything. [laughs] And 'Sorry, I can't
 7 understand you'. And first, in the first time they were
 8 talking- trying to talk with me, and then they say, some
 9 of them they say 'No room! No room!' And me 'Okay. They
 10 say no room. Okay.' Because I couldn't understand it.
 11 Was=was funny, but was hard, actually. Because I didn't
 12 want to pay more money in the guesthouse. So one of them
 13 knew about Spanish just a little bit, so I could
 14 understand him. And finally is the flat I saw, the flat I
 15 choose, and yeah. But uff, in that moment...

Leocadio and Simón both foreground the influence of their perceived lack of language skills on their start in Southampton. Where Leocadio manages to find employment that is in accordance with his qualification, Simón chooses to look for a catering job, because in his opinion his level of English proficiency is not crucial for this kind of work. For Simón, however, the process of finding accommodation turns out to be hard, although funny in retrospect (10). Only after finding a landlord that is able to speak a bit of Spanish does he manage to find a room in a shared house (12–14).

Cassarino (2004), in his discussion of conceptual approaches to return migration, argues that returnee's levels of preparedness consist of the willingness to return as well as the readiness to do so. In order to be 'ready', tangible and intangible resources have to be mobilised, such as financial capital, contacts or skills. Using Cassarino's (2004: 273) typology of preparedness it can be said that all participants demonstrate a high level of preparedness, as all of them activate resources to prepare for the move abroad. However, as I am going to show in the following, the patterns of resource mobilisation differ vastly between Polish and Spanish participants.

I am now going to compare the excerpts from Mariusz' and Leocadio's interviews I briefly discussed above. The analysis of both excerpts demonstrates differences in the agentic structure of the narratives: where Leocadio takes an active stance and positions himself as the driving force behind the narrated events, Mariusz presents the narrated self as rather passive and reliant on others. These narrative patterns, I argue, are significant, because they reflect very different evaluations of the individual migration projects.

Leocadio's text is characterised by the centrality of the narrator and the overall absence of 'helper figures'. It is the narrator who presents himself as the central force driving the narrative forward, and this centrality is represented linguistically: "I arranged a meeting" (1), "I arrived" (4), "I was up" (5), "I went to the centre and I went to the college" (5–6), "I went to the interview" (6).

Mariusz' account, on the other hand, is driven by 'helper figures'. Although he gives a personal account of his (and his wife's) first days in Southampton, he chooses not to position himself as the driving force of the story and assigns

himself a rather passive role: "he took us to a few places" (1-2), "drive us around the city" (3), "she was trying to help" (7), "he showed us" (10). In Mariusz' account there is also a rather expectational stance: "None of the places that he showed us were good for us." (10) He does not elaborate on this point, nor does he express some sort of gratitude. Instead, the reliance on helper figures and the concrete act of being driven through town in order to find work is taken for granted.

Leocadio's as well as Mariusz' account of their early days in Southampton are characterised by mobility: narrated selves arrive, they are going places and being driven around the city. Of course, reducing both accounts to active or passive constructions would be a discourse analytical (over-) simplification, however, the main difference of both excerpts is the perceived agency of the narrators. Leocadio describes himself as being in charge, whereas Mariusz is reliant on others. These perceptions are reflected linguistically. In Leocadio's case (textual) reality is presented as something that can be influenced, shaped and altered – the narrator is able to organise jobs, accommodation, English courses and social networks on his own, whereas for Mariusz these 'commodities' can only be accessed via others, something that is textually reflected through a passive stance: he is being taken to places, someone is driving him around town, someone else is trying to help him.

Exploring the way Mariusz positions his 'past self' (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2004: 172), one of the striking characteristics of Mariusz' account is that he does not make use of the possibility to restage, alter or reframe past events. The narrated self is a central character in this excerpt, but it is not positioned as the 'driving force' behind events. Instead, 'helper figures' are introduced that help drive the story forward at crucial points. Again: these patterns are significant beyond the narrative form, because they reveal different levels of self-efficacy with which actors approach the 'new life' abroad, and these beliefs in agentic power lead to very different dynamics of the individual migration projects.

Like Mariusz, Cristina (25, 1 year in the UK), who moved from Spain to the UK in 2012, relies on friends to help her get started. After her graduation she struggles to find work in her professional field (Civil Engineering) and finally starts to work as a cashier in a supermarket where she is made redundant after

six months. As two of her childhood friends are already living in Southampton, she follows them in order to improve her English. For a few weeks she is staying with her friends before finding a room in a shared house. What makes her narrative different from Mariusz', though, is that she manages to find a job before coming to the UK.

1 I asked them, I asked to [name of friend] 'Maybe in the
2 restaurant that you are working, there is any vacancy for
3 me? Because I need- it would be perfect to go there and
4 already have a job.' And yeah, and thanks to [name of
5 friend] I could, yeah. So from the last- I was really,
6 really lucky, because from the- from the beginning I had the
7 job.

Like Mariusz, Cristina relies on a 'helper figure' to support her in finding a job, but in contrast to Mariusz she is able to organize employment in advance. In this context it is also noteworthy that a friend is helping, but that it is Cristina herself that sets things in motion: "I asked them" (1). She also expresses a certain amount of gratitude in her narrative: "thanks to" (4) her friend she can work as a waitress, an aspect she interprets as having been "really, really lucky" (5). So although both Cristina and Mariusz apply similar migration strategies, the texts reveal small narrative differences in the way narrators position themselves. In one case, the narrator assumes a rather passive position, in another case, even though 'helper figures' are introduced, the narrator creates the agentic dynamics of the text in a way that positions her as the driving force behind the narrated events. At a crucial point, the moment she is made redundant and loses her job as a cashier in Spain, it is her who, self-reportedly, takes the initiative and asks a friend for a specific job opportunity in the UK. The narrative design of her account is therefore different from Mariusz' where 'helper figures' are introduced at crucial points – without them the stream of events would either get 'stuck' and the migration project would fail due to not being able to find employment, or the narrated self would have to 'take over' and shape further events.

In this respect Mariusz' and Cristina's accounts are representative of their respective group of participants: while Spanish interviewees foregrounded a strong belief in their agentic powers, Polish participants often relied on helpers to overcome structural constraints. Of course, structural constraints exist in Cristina's narrative as well as she is made redundant and loses her job. Also, the very fact that she is working below her qualification is a direct result of the

recession in Spain. However, although being affected by these structural constraints, she regains agency by actively shaping the process of emigrating to the UK. In contrast to that, the narrated reality in the early stages of Mariusz' account is shaped by other figures; it is not the narrator who accesses jobs and housing, he can do so only by relying on others.

Furthermore, the individual narratives differ in the way the act of preparing for the move abroad is presented. Mariusz does not know what to expect and the UK is in retrospect referred to as a 'big unknown'. Janina, although in some way prepared by having studied English, reports having had 'no plan' and applies a 'come-and-see' approach. In contrast to that, Leocadio, although talking about his limited knowledge of English, arranges accommodation and job interview prior to his departure from Spain, and Simón calculates his options using Excel spreadsheets before finding work through delivering CVs to several restaurant in towns.

In conclusion, the different approaches do not necessarily seem to produce different outcomes with regards to the kind of initial jobs people are able to access. In both groups, the aim of finding work according to one's level of qualification is an exception; in that respect both Leocadio and Anastazja stand out from the other participants. Mariusz finds initial work in an industrial bakery, Janina, Simón and Cristina work as waiters – in these cases it is irrelevant, at least for initial employment, whether they rely on weak or strong ties or no ties at all. It is, of course, not the aim of this study to judge and categorize certain strategies as 'good' or 'bad', as a multitude of factors influence the outcomes of the migration project. However, even at this early stage of the migration project, very different levels of preparation and initiative become evident. With the exception of Anastazja, these differences run along the lines of nationality: while the Polish participants tend to arrive rather unprepared, the cases of 'extreme' preparation are to be found in the Spanish group.

To analyse these differences in perception and practices further, the following section will investigate the concept of *habitus* in relation to individual migration projects. In other words: in what ways and how far are participants' practices in the present connected to experiences made in the past?

5.4 Habituation

Section 5.2, especially the sub-section on ‘personal normality’ (5.2.3), has analysed how some participants narrate the decision to emigrate as a conscious act of initiating a break with their previous life. It became clear that personal circumstances like the end of a long-term relationship and being ‘fed up’ with the daily routines of (work) life are influential factors in this context. All of the participants did indeed create a break in their life, as all of them left their home country and started ‘anew’ in the UK. Furthermore, as outlined in the previous section, for those participants who could not make use of an initial support network of friends or acquaintances the start in Southampton was accompanied by uncertainty and insecurity, especially when interviewees’ proficiency in English was limited, and very often participants initially found themselves in situations very different from their previous life.

While the move abroad does indeed establish a break, this section will demonstrate how participants’ migration trajectories can be very much affected by a certain *habitus* (Bourdieu 1986, 1990) acquired prior to the move abroad; in some cases people’s actions and the way they are narrated are so similar that present actions seem to be a direct continuation of the past.

In what follows, I will demonstrate the influence of habituation for two participants, Tomás (31, 1 year in the UK) from Spain and Danuta (38, 6 years in the UK) from Poland, offering an in-depth analysis of their educational and professional trajectories and the way these are represented narratively. These two participants have been chosen because in their narratives underlying dynamics influencing the migration trajectory, especially the influence of past experiences on present perceptions and actions, become particularly visible. Although their trajectories initially seem to be similar as both set out to initiate a break with their previous life in their home countries, I demonstrate how *habitus* does not simply disappear after migration and as a result facilitates very different outcomes of Tomás’ and Danuta’s migration projects.

When using the term ‘habituation’ in this section, this does, of course, imply Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* as “necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions” (Bourdieu 1986: 170). For now, I will use the term to describe

actors' acquisition of dispositions shaped by events in the past, dispositions that influence actors' practices in the present and their perception of present structures. To be clear: 'habituation' emphasizes the process of acquiring certain dispositions, a form of adaptive behaviour or 'learning process', whereas 'habitus' refers to the 'end product', the internalised practices and perceptions. I will come back to Bourdieu's idea of *habitus* later (p. 193ff.). In addition to that, I will also apply concepts of *misrecognition*, that is the act of unquestioningly accepting a society's taken-for-granted truths, or what Bourdieu calls *doxa*. I will then demonstrate how for a significant number of Polish participants the act of *misrecognition* and readily accepting certain *doxa* can potentially lead to habitual underemployment; no matter how good their language skills and educational background are, some participants do readily accept the *doxa* that doing low level work is a necessary condition of being a migrant.

I will start by investigating Tomás' life and migration trajectory over the last 14 years in greater detail and outline reoccurring themes and patterns. Tomás left school in 1999. His father, who spent his childhood and early youth in Germany, works as Head of Reception in a hotel, his mother is a housewife. After leaving school Tomás studies Software Engineering; the first three years of university are mentioned in the interview, but generally characterised by low tellability: only very few details are mentioned, no anecdotes or events from that time are reported, instead three years are summarised by saying:

- 1 Ehm so the first three years, as I say, were more or less
- 2 straight forward. I got good grades, I was passing exams and
- 3 what not, ehm but then on the fourth year I- I did my
- 4 Erasmus in Norway and everything changed.

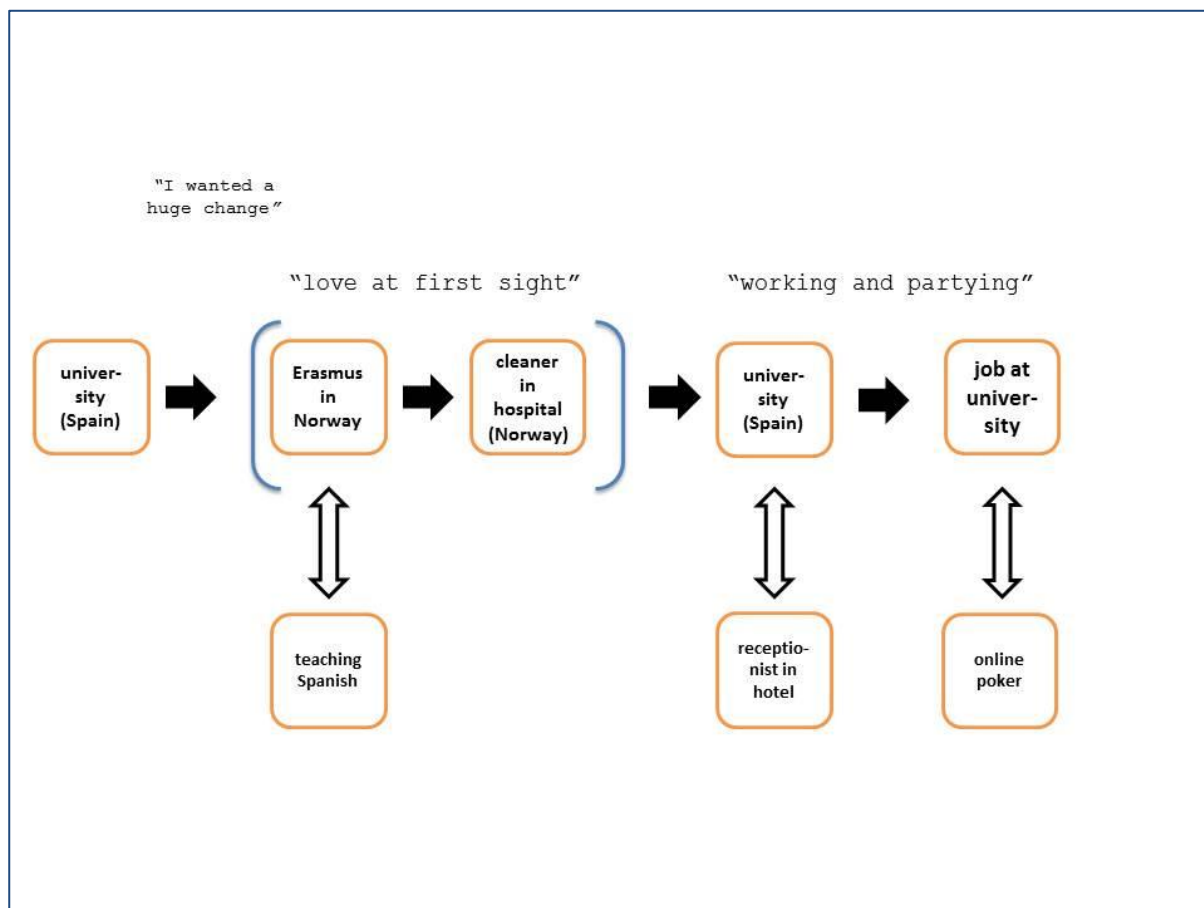


Figure 10: Tomás trajectory in Spain and Norway

The decision to spend his Erasmus year in Norway is introduced as being influenced by an urge to initiate a “huge change” in his life and to experience living in a country very different from Southern Europe in almost all aspects of life including language. He reports how the time in Norway had lasting consequences.

- 1 I still remember if- as if it was- as if it were
- 2 yesterday in a sense that- it was such a huge change to me
- 3 that everything that's happened afterwards, even if- I've
- 4 had quite a particular life doesn't seem like like that
- 5 huge of a change. I mean, I went to Norway with 20 years
- 6 old, I had been living with my parents my whole life. I
- 7 probably had never used a laundry machine before or cook
- 8 like meals, for what it's worth. I was complete kid and I
- 9 was a quite spoiled kid, too. And then suddenly I appear
- 10 in a country that is twice already as expensive as Spain
- 11 is, with no knowledge what so ever of what money and
- 12 management is, because I was [chuckles] getting whatever I
- 13 wanted from my parents and what not, and then, yeah,
- 14 everything changed like, as I always say, everything that
- 15 Norway is, Spain is not. And=and the way around.

For Tomás the move to Norway becomes an initiation into adulthood. Although Tomás is 20 years old when he leaves Spain, he has not led a self-reliant and independent life until then (5–8). The reliance on his parents and the move to Norway do also have monetary connotations; living in Norway Tomás has to learn about “money and management” (11), whereas before his parents cared for him financially (11–12). This act of ‘growing up’ is given an extraordinary status in the entire interview, and in the above excerpt Tomás emphasises how the experience changed his perception of ‘change’ until today (2–3). He later describes his time in Norway as a time when he went through his “whole teenagehood and early manhood in just a year”. Interestingly, this process of growing up happens in the narrator’s early 20s and it is only through the act of crossing borders that this process of maturation is possible.

Tomás says he felt “love at first sight” for Norway, so after the end of his 10 months as an Erasmus student he does not want to go back to Spain. Tomás decides to finish his studies at a Norwegian university, but in order to do this he has to pass an advanced Norwegian test. Tomás prepares for this test while working part-time as a cleaner in a hospital, something that involves “a lot of shit and blood”. Tomás carries on working as a cleaner, but because of the pressure of working early mornings and at the same time studying for the language test until late at night, he abandons his plan of finishing his studies in Norway after half a year. He repeatedly mentions how hard the move back to Spain was for him: “It nearly was probably one of worst times in my life when I had to accept the fact that I was not going to stay there.”

Back in Spain he re-enrols at university, but because he does not want to live with his parents anymore he takes on a job as a full-time receptionist in a hotel, thereby demonstrating how the time in Norway changed his perception of independence – living with parents is not an option anymore – while at the same time following in his father’s footsteps by taking on exactly the same job. However, his full-time job at the hotel inevitably collides with his studies, so Tomás ends up not attending lectures or seminars and not taking any exams, focusing on “working and partying” and on having “a wonderful life”. In terms of temporal orientations, Tomás’ time in Norway is

characterised by a heavy investment in the future: working in the hospital from 8 till 3, then going to the library to study Norwegian in order to pass the language test that would have allowed him to get access to a Norwegian university. The return to Spain, on the other hand, is characterised by a focus on the present: not studying, but being independent, not living with parents and enjoying life. The severity of having to leave Norway ('worst time of my life') is followed by a time of enjoyment ('wonderful life') in which the sequentiality of the life course is further disabled – finishing his studies has, for the moment, a lower priority than enjoying a re-established independence.

Tomás does finally graduate, albeit later than initially planned. Because his grades are above average he receives a job offer from the university where he works for a year. This time coincides with the rise of online poker, something that Tomás does for a couple of hours every day: "I made my living out of poker more or less for some time". Because of his fascination with poker and his degree in Software Engineering he finally starts working for a Spanish poker website. In the beginning, Tomás reports online from international poker tournaments, a task that involves a lot of travelling, and it is during this time that the second major shift in his life is takes place.

1 I started travelling a lot. I hadn't- like despite living in
 2 Norway for two years I didn't travel much because I had no
 3 money. And even though I was really interested in other
 4 cultures, yeah, essentially because of money and career I
 5 never afforded or I never tried to afford travelling.
 6 Indeed, I only- after Norway for the next five years, I
 7 think I- no, for the next ehm yeah, almost five years. I
 8 only went out of Spain once to- to Milano, but all this
 9 travelling started like to make me feel like 'Oh, this is
 10 what, like, I was really missing.'

The above excerpt shows how travelling becomes a manifestation of independence, and it is in this context that the narrator's time in Norway, a time of independence and 'growing up', is reintroduced (6). In the past, travelling opportunities were restricted due to financial restraints as well as the need to follow a sequential life path (4–5). However, the travelling during Tomás' job as a poker tournament reporter triggers a sense of longing for this particular kind of mobility (9–10), and this longing is established in retrospect through looking back in time and space and 'diagnosing' a 'deficiency' in the present ('This is what I was missing').

Tomás story could end here as independence is established in accordance with financial stability, but it does not. The company he is working for is growing fast and he changes from being a reporter to being editor-in-chief and content manager of the website: “[...] so suddenly my job became 9 to 5, well then sometimes 8 to 6 or even more, work in an office. I would never travel anymore, and I was getting paid a lot.” Finally, because of a life that Tomás perceives as monotonous and restricting and because of arguments with his boss, he decides to quit this job. However, he reports how the conversation with a friend and a particular question played a key role in this. In that conversation both friends are imagining what they would do once they were able to retire and Tomás mentions his wish to travel and live in different countries and learn about different cultures and languages.

- 1 And he asked me something that probably changed everything
- 2 that I did after that. He asked me ‘Why don’t you do it
- 3 now?’ And I had no answer. I felt like ‘Why don’t I do it
- 4 now? I mean I’m young right now, I could do it now.’

The conversation is narrated as another key event in Tomás’ life and similar to his time in Norway the event is in retrospect narrated as ‘life changing’ (1-2). The re-occurring themes of independence and agency are re-introduced, this time through the narrative introduction of a friend. A question directed at him by this friend (2) turns into an interior monologue (3), the personal pronoun changes from ‘you’ to ‘I’. Again, the narrator’s life trajectory is negotiated and again, the narrator is the one actively initiating an alteration of this trajectory. This alteration of the life course, again, coincides with crossing borders.

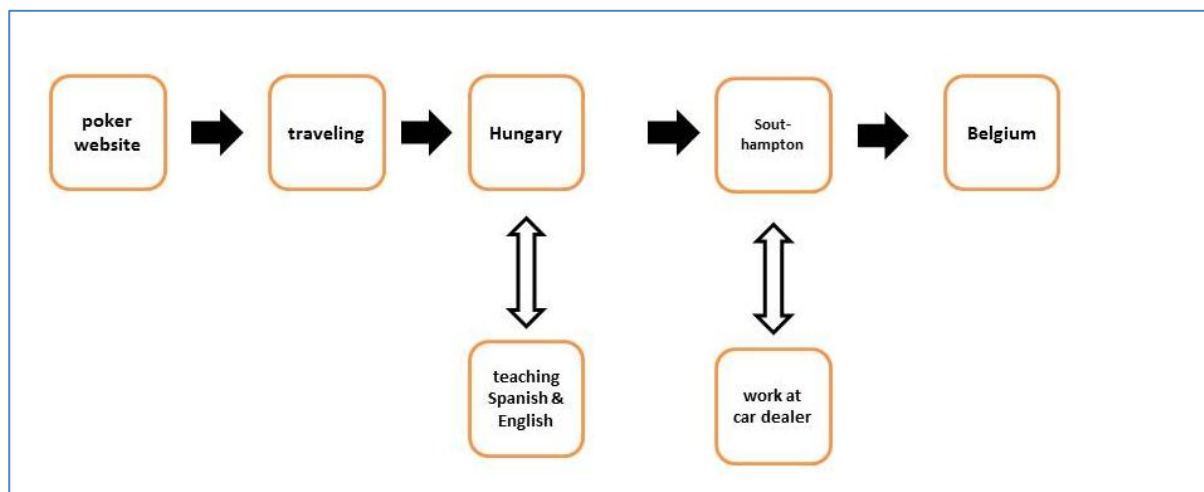


Figure 11: Tomás trajectory in Spain, Hungary, Southampton and Belgium

Tomás finally decides to quit his job. His plan is to become a travel writer, so he first spends a year doing short trips through Europe, living on his savings and publishing articles about his travels on his website. He then develops the plan for a book project: living in six different European countries, spending half a year in each country and integrating as much as possible, trying to learn the majority language and finding a job. His first destination is Hungary, mainly because of the comparably low cost of living there – at the time of his departure to Hungary there is not much left from the savings he made during his time at the poker website. He then spends six months in Hungary working as an English and Spanish teacher, before coming to Southampton and working in the online marketing department of a car dealership, a job that covers his cost of living and allows him to save up enough money for the next destination, Belgium.

Overall, his narrative presents two key events: the time in Norway and the decision not to lead a ‘conventional’ life anymore. Both events are closely connected through the theme of ‘independence’: Norway is presented as a space where the narrator gained independence through ‘growing up’ and learning to be self-reliant without depending on his parents, whereas later on, independence has to be re-gained through the act of abandoning a conventional, sequential life course governed primarily by work, and once more independence is established through repeatedly crossing borders of nation states.

Tomás is an example of someone who chose to consciously disable a 'traditional' life course and who has no plans to stop living the way he does (6–7). Overall, Tomás represents what Cwerner (2001) calls a “nomadic migrant” (c.f. section 3.3).

Often the decision to emigrate implies a break with what immigrants were doing before, their education, jobs, and even well-delineated careers. Although the initial expectation is often of an eventual return to the same life paths designed before, many immigrants soon fall under the grip or magic of the immigrant experience, which makes them rethink their previous engagements with time. Immigration can then become a way of life, never settling, never contemplating the definitive return. (Cwerner 2001: 29-30)

While Tomás' story certainly is not the norm in the interview corpus, there are, as section 5.2 ('personal normality') has shown, other examples of participants who decide to migrate in order to initiate a break with their previous lives, however, none of the other participants decided to lead a 'nomadic' lifestyle like Tomás.

I will now focus on the migration trajectory of Danuta who came to the UK in 2007 following her boyfriend who had a job offer in a town close to Southampton. Aged 38, Danuta is the oldest participant in the sample and her pre- and post-migration life course bear significant similarities to those of Tomás. Similar to Tomás, Danuta's motivation for the move abroad is a wish to initiate a break with her previous life where she feels stuck professionally and personally. However, unlike Tomás her life in the UK turns almost into a mirror image of the life she wanted to leave behind in Poland, and I will show how this can be explained through the concept of *habitus*.

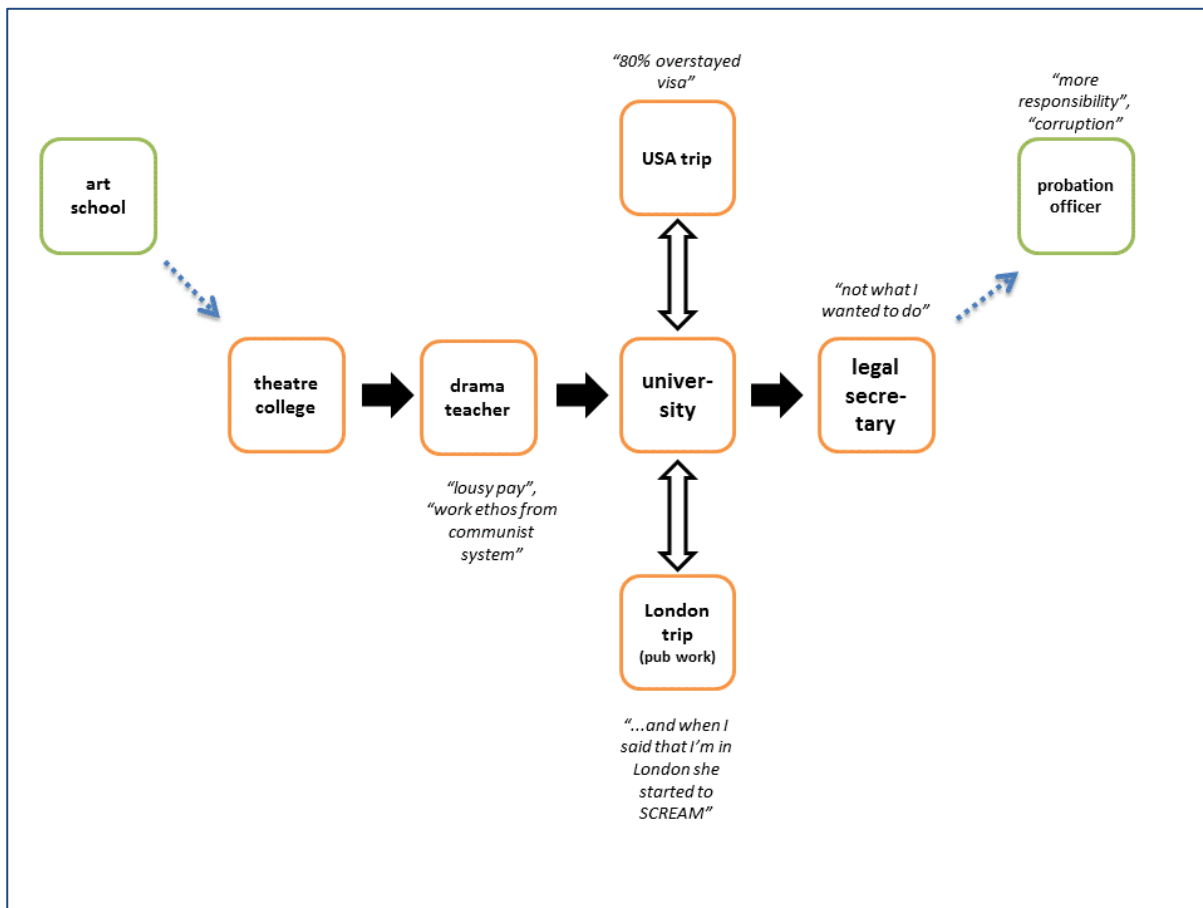


Figure 12: Danuta's trajectory in Poland

After school Danuta wants to go to Art School but gets rejected, something she says she has been “very upset” about. Instead of going to Art School, she attends a theatre college and after that starts working as a drama teacher and event organiser in a community centre, something she describes as a “quite important part of social organisations” and her job as a “quite important position”. Nonetheless, the pay is very low and her colleagues display “a work ethos which was from communist system”, a system that taught people to “do as little as possible, because you get the same money.” Because of that, she applies to university and successfully studies for a Master's degree in Sociology. Similar to Tomás' account, the years at university are characterised by low tellability: her studies only get mentioned briefly and no details are given about these years.

Instead, Danuta talks about two trips to the UK and the US. Her trip to the UK is her first visit to the ‘West’ – before she had only travelled to other Eastern European countries. Initially it was supposed to be a weekend trip, but Danuta

ends up staying in London and doing pub work for two months. The trip to London is given extraordinary status; at times, the narrative structure resembles a fairy tale: before her trip, a lady on a bus in the narrator's hometown in Poland gives her a book which she is supposed to give to a friend of the woman in London ('the quest'). This friend in London turns out to be a retired member of the National Council of Poland, a body of the former Polish government in exile based in London. While trying to find accommodation in London she has an encounter with potentially abusive Polish males ('the villains') who offer her a place to stay in exchange for 'kindness' – the tone of voice and the interviewee's body language made clear that this 'kindness' was sexual in nature. Finally, the former councillor ('the White Knight') offers her to stay in a studio flat on Portobello Road ('the castle'), situated in the comparably affluent area of Notting Hill in West London, for free. In retrospect, Danuta gives these events a mystical and fantastic textual structure. The extraordinariness of the narrator's stay in London in 2000 is emphasised further by remembering a telephone call to a friend back home in Poland:

1 But I remember I was standing on a Portobello Street,
 2 calling to my friend from the, you know, this cold box, ehm
 3 ...now they've got the red one, and I managed to- to get in
 4 touch with my best friend in Poland, and when I said that
 5 I'm in London she started to SCREAM, basically, she STARTED
 6 to scream. Because it was such a NEW thing. [laughs] Sounds
 7 rather childish now...yeah.

Not only do the fairy tale structure of finding accommodation and the telephone conversation with the narrator's best friend dramatise Danuta's account and emphasise the extraordinary status of her stay in London, these accounts also link her story to the history of the Polish state and position the narrator at a particular point in time. Through the transmission of cultural goods (the book) she meets a representative of the 'old', the 'real' Poland, someone representing the former government in exile. Representatives of the 'new' Poland of the transition period are introduced through the encounter with exploitative Polish migrants who make indecent accommodation proposals, and the co-existence of both groups, as well as the narrator's encounter with them, is only possible in the city of London at the turn of the century, less than a decade after the collapse of the communist regime. Furthermore, the 'novelty' of the situation is underlined in the above excerpt: in a 'cold box' (2), an open telephone booth, she 'manages' (3) to call her best

friend in Poland – it is not a common thing for the ‘former self’ to be in London, nor is it common to be able to easily establish communication with friends back home. The very emotional reaction of the narrator’s friend (5) is linked to the novelty of the situation (6), something that the ‘present self’ labels “childish” in retrospect.

In the USA, a trip undertaken a year later, Danuta takes part in a work and travel programme where, she says, 80% of participants overstayed their visas and managed to find unofficial employment. Not much detail is given about this trip, however, Danuta does not choose to stay, returns to Poland, finishes her degree in Sociology and starts to work as a legal secretary, something that, she says, “wasn’t what I wanted to do”. She wants to become a probation officer, a job that involves more responsibility, but her applications fail three times, for which she blames a system of corruption and bribery: “it was pretty OBVIOUS that you get in such a job for money.” The job as a legal secretary does not offer the possibility for progression or promotion, so she decides to follow her boyfriend to the UK where he has a job offer as an engineer. After a year the relationship ends, Danuta’s ex-boyfriend moves back to Poland while she stays in Southampton.

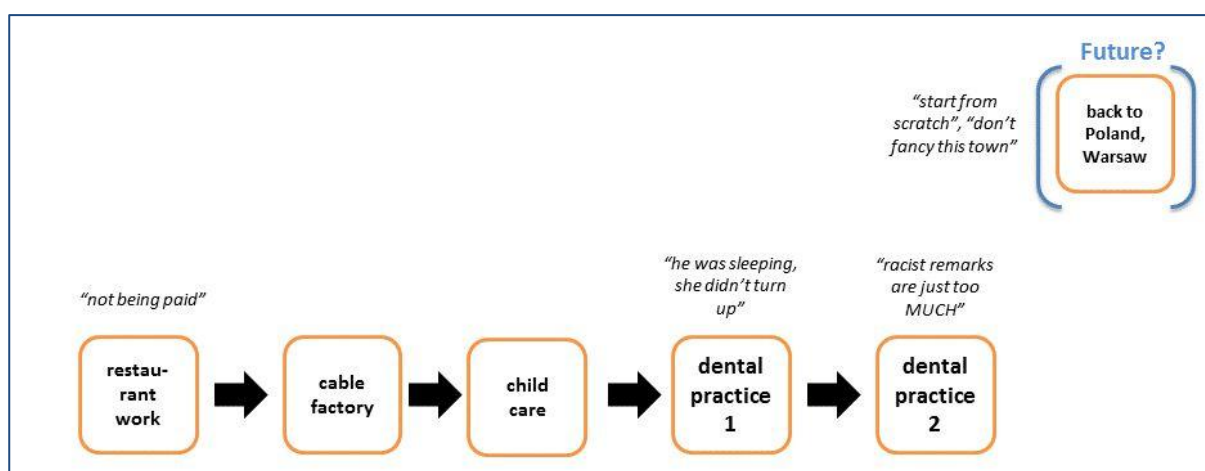


Figure 13: Danuta’s trajectory in the UK

Danuta briefly works in a restaurant where she does not get paid during a week of probation, she then goes on to work in a cable factory. During a following job as a child carer the parents of one of the children she looks after offer her work in their dental practice, “and this is how I became a dental nurse.” She is paid six pounds an hour, something that she does not

think is fair because of her workload as “he was sleeping at his work, and she [laughs] she was coming very rarely”. When her request for a pay rise is turned down she hands in her notice and quickly finds a job in another dental practice where she still used to work at the time of the interview. In this job she reports being subjected to racist remarks by doctors most of the time who ‘jokingly’ reproduce stereotypes of vodka-drinking Poles, something that is “funny for the first time or second” but over time becomes “just too MUCH”. Overall, after five years the excitement of living in the UK has worn off and she feels that there is “nothing more to discover, really”. She reports planning to move back to Poland where she would have to “start from scratch” again, and because of the high unemployment in Poland she would have to move to Warsaw: “I don’t fancy this town, this city, particularly but this is the only chance to get a job.” Further questions about the future are evaded.

- 1 I haven’t got fixed date. May I not talk about it? Because
- 2 I just CAN’T- I just don’t know myself. But I didn’t know-
- 3 I just feel that I can’t achieve anymore in here, so
- 4 achieve in a sense that I’m ehm not developing any more.
- 5 That’s probably my problem, because if you’re creative you
- 6 can develop everywhere, no matter where you are, but it’s
- 7 just a feeling.

Immediately after the above excerpt, Danuta ends the interview, thereby further underlining her wish not to talk about the future (1). Overall, a sense of stagnation becomes tangible in the way she talks about her life in the UK: further achievement and development are not possible anymore (3–4), however, this is being interpreted as a personal (5–6) instead of a structural fault.

Danuta’s narrative echoes a discourse of progression not unlike, for example, Miguel who identified Spain as a space of stagnation and the move abroad as the only option to develop and progress (section 5.2.1). However, her actions are different. While Miguel subsequently applies for an EU mobility grant and secures an internship in a media design company in London, Danuta’s narrative is characterised by a sense of ‘closed doors’ – the lack of progression and personal development is problematised, but in general there is a less strong sense of agency, and throughout her narrative, she positions herself in

places where she does not want to be or that are 'second best' options. In Poland, she does not get accepted into art school and 'has to' attend theatre college instead. She finds work as a drama teacher in a community centre, but the pay is insufficient and colleagues are lazy – a laziness that then is given a political frame by being interpreted as a manifestation of a work ethos acquired under communist rule. Danuta graduates from university, but a system of corruption, again something related to communist rule and a 'homo sovieticus' syndrome (Morawska 2001, see section 3.5), makes it impossible to become a probation officer, and she starts working as a legal secretary in court, something that she does not want to do. Overall, her life course in Poland is shaped by restrictions imposed on her by individuals and institutions, and these restrictions are narratively connected to a 'communist' habitus: other drama teachers display a communist work ethic, cronyism and bribery restrict her job opportunities, and during the first part of her narrative one of the very few positive figures is the representative of the former Polish government in exile.

Danuta tries to initiate a break from her previous life in Poland, but in fact her experience in the UK is very similar to that. A system of corruption is followed by a system of jovial racism in the workplace. Lazy colleagues with a communist work ethic narratively morph into a dentist couple where 'he is sleeping and she does not turn up for work', and finally, a job without prospects of being promoted – the job as a legal secretary in Poland – is followed by a sense of stagnation and 'not being able to develop further' in the UK. In many ways, Danuta's narrated life in the UK is almost a mirror image of her previous life in Poland, minus country specific political and historical connotations. With regards to the future, the narrator seems trapped in a reiterative loop of restrictions and 'second best', and with regard to her professional life, she is aware how similar Poland and England in her account actually are.

1 [...] when I was working as a court clerk I wasn't- I didn't
 2 fulfil my ehm dream as well, because it wasn't what I wanted
 3 to do. I wanted to do something more important. I wanted to
 4 do job which would involve more responsibility. [...] So I was
 5 not doing this as well in Poland, so it's like the same
 6 level. And I was working with people who were not very
 7 qualified as well, except of the judges, but judges were not
 8 socialising with us, so I would say it stay on the same
 9 level, because I was a judge assistant, now I'm a dentist

10 assistant, it's the same level. The dentists are as much
 11 arrogant as the judges, so [laughs]... They thinking they
 12 worth more than they really are, so I know it from Poland
 13 already.

In terms of work life and social class her position in Poland and England are described as being exactly the same. Both in Poland and in the UK she does not fulfil her dreams (2–5) and is stagnating on “the same level” (5), while in terms of social hierarchies nothing has changed either; she is still working as an assistant (9), and both in Poland and in the UK her superiors are said to be “arrogant” and condescending (10–12). Interestingly, as Danuta talks about having reached a point where she feels no further progress is possible, her reaction to this is (return) migration, a reaction very similar to the decision to emigrate from Poland where she was ‘stuck’ in a job without career prospects, too, and this is where Tomás’ and Danuta’s migration trajectories meet.

Tomás as well as Danuta initiate a break from their previous life through the act of migration. Tomás first decides to move to Norway and later leaves his old life behind in order to exercise independence, living and working in different European countries. Danuta, on the other hand, follows her boyfriend to the UK partly because of restrictive gender roles (section 5.2) and partly because of a situation where she is stuck in a job she is not happy with and that does not offer her any opportunities for development. The UK, on the other hand, first seems to deliver this longing for personal development and progression, but when this progression comes to an end, Danuta’s reaction is to cross borders again in order to initiate a break.

Tomás narrates a more successful break than Danuta: in his account, Norway is said to be completely different from Spain; he is successful in initiating the “huge change” he wanted. Similarly, his ‘old life’ of office work and earning money are different from his ‘new life’ as a travel writer, which at the time of the interview was still characterised by a high degree of precariousness. In contrast to that, Danuta’s initiation of change was unsuccessful. Apart from living in a more liberal society, her old life is very similar to her new life; it is “on the same level”. Of course, gender aspects do play a role in her narrative, but overall she chooses to foreground other aspects like racism and a general sense of stagnation. As she is planning to move back to Poland, the

perks of living in a more liberal society do not seem to outweigh this sense of stagnation.

With regards to social class Tomás' various references to his high salary in Spain in comparison with his precarious position as a travel writer emphasise a deliberate downward social mobility. Giving up financial stability is, so to speak, the price he is willing to pay for a sense of freedom and independence. Danuta, on the other hand, leaves Poland partly because upward social mobility is not possible – she cannot get a promotion and a corrupt system keeps her from getting the job she wants. However, the UK does not turn out to be the meritocracy she hopes to find – in the first dental practice her superiors are lazy, in the second racist, and overall she finds herself in the same position as in Poland, experiencing horizontal social mobility.

Finally, Tomás and Danuta make different use of their qualifications. In Hungary, Tomás uses his Spanish teaching certificate and his English skills to find work at a language school, and in Southampton he is in charge of the online marketing of a car dealership. Even though he describes himself as being overqualified for that job, he is still making use of his degree as a Software Engineer and is very much aware of his skills and qualifications.

1 I mean, if I can get a qualified job I'll take it. It's not
 2 that I'm going to do ehm it's not that I'm going to do the
 3 low-class job, just because that's the one that most
 4 immigrants do. No, obviously, but the point is that once I
 5 get a job I don't really care what that is.

Tomás positions himself in relation to the majority of immigrants who are readily taking on low-level work (3–4). It is not that he will not do menial jobs (4–5), as his objective is just to make a living and save up money for the next leg of his journey, but priority is given to jobs matching his qualification (1).

Danuta's job as a dental nurse cannot be described as a "low-class job", but it is a job that reflects neither her interests nor her qualification or experience, but while Tomás reports accepting his 'new' precarious life in order to be independent and happy, Danuta problematises her situation and expresses an overall feeling of frustration. In that way, her narrative is very much related to those of other Polish participants.

For example, Aniela (29, 6 years in the UK), a Polish Economics post-graduate working in a call centre in Southampton (section 5.2) mentions migrating to Spain as a possibility in case things in the UK do not work out. The following excerpt demonstrates her general perception of the act of emigration.

1 But if ehm something doesn't work out HERE I would like to...I
 2 would like to try some other country. I know that I would
 3 have to start from the very beginning, but it's just the way
 4 it is [smiling] so I have to accept it and I WOULD start
 5 from the very beginning=I was thinking of Spain, even though
 6 there is, you know, eh not very good economical situation. I
 7 would go there because of the language, simply. Just like
 8 for a year or two. To learn the language properly. And then
 9 just go somewhere else. I don't know. Yeah, but I already
 10 thought of it, yeah.

The idea of emigrating to Spain has still a very hypothetical character in Aniela's narrative; only if things do not work out in the UK would further migration be a viable option (1–2). While the move to Spain serves as a hypothetical frame, Aniela presents a rather concrete rule inside this frame: the move to another country is inevitably connected to having to start from “the very beginning” (3). ‘Starting from scratch’ in her account is presented as a pre-condition of migration, something she has to accept (4). Her willingness to accept this rule is underlined by the emphasis of “WOULD” (4), while at the same time her ‘smiling’ tone of voice (4) as well as a faster talking speed, indicated by latched utterances (5), give this idea of having to start ‘from scratch’ quite literally a romanticised undertone: the way Aniela talks about ‘starting from scratch’ to a certain extent echoes the idealised image of a (poor) migrant going through a period of initial hardship before climbing the social ladder through hard work and persistence. Aniela does not elaborate on her understanding of starting from ‘the very beginning’, but given the context of the excerpt this use of “the very beginning” can be interpreted as describing job level and socio-economic status rather than, say, social networks.

It is interesting that she chooses to foreground (and to identify with) this particular discourse of emigration in which the migrant necessarily has to start at the bottom (of the labour market) before climbing the social ladder, even though at another point in the interview she mentions having studied Spanish for several years. Given Aniela's current life in the UK, it is unsurprising that she does not reproduce a discourse of transnational elites (Beaverstock 2005),

something more closely related to managers and executives of transnational cooperations. However, her decision to re-produce a discourse in which the move abroad has to be accompanied by underemployment and in which initial hardship is a pre-condition is noteworthy, especially because Aniela narrates a migration trajectory in which, even after seven years in the UK and going through a phase of initial hardship, her socio-economic status has not improved significantly, something that has an impact on, for example, her housing situation and the realisation of plans for the future.

Janina (28, 6 years in the UK), to give another example, although having a BA degree in English, first works as a waitress, then as a sales assistant in a coffee shop and as a factory worker before applying for her current job as a support worker in a school. In the interview she describes how she saw the advertisement for her current job in the window of a Polish shop.

- 1 D: *Were you looking for a teaching job during that time?*
- 2 J: No, it didn't cross my mind that I could do any teaching
- 3 here.
- 4 D: *Okay.*
- 5 J: But the job at [name of school], the fact that I got it,
- 6 actually it- it made me realise that I can do some more
- 7 ambitious things in here rather than just a sales assistant
- 8 in a shop or production operator in a factory.

Even though Janina holds a BA degree in English language teaching and does not report any initial language difficulties when coming to the UK, she has an expectation of working below her qualification; using her degree does not 'cross her mind' (2). It is only through the act of securing a job that is in accordance with her qualification that her perception changes and she realises that other jobs than "sales assistant" (6) or factory worker (7) are available and accessible to her, and it is this *habitus*, a "disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions" (Bourdieu 1986: 170), that occurs in at least half of the Polish interviews. As Janina's example demonstrates, this does not mean that this learned schema is deterministic – *habitus* has the potential to change according to the surrounding social environment, it is "not fixed or permanent and can be changed under unexpected situations or over a long historical period" (Navarro 2006: 16).

However, her migration trajectory until this point is characterised by *self-exclusion* and the acceptance of certain *doxa*, that is, relations of social order accepted as self-evident. In Bourdieu's terms agents like Janina

tend to attribute to themselves what the distribution attributes to them, refusing what they are refused ('That's not for the likes of us'), adjusting their expectations to their chances, defining themselves as the established order defines them, reproducing in their verdict on themselves the verdict the economy pronounces on them, in a word, condemning themselves to what is in any case their lot, [...] consenting to be what they have to be, 'modest', 'humble' and 'obscure'. (Bourdieu 1986: 471)

In other words, Janina's and Danuta's 'sense of their place' is very much a result of a *habitus* acquired in the past. In that this disposition is both structured and structuring – Janina and Danuta are to a certain point reproducing a social order – Bourdieu's theory is very similar to Giddens' *structuration theory* and the 'duality of structure' (section 3.5)⁵⁹. However, Bourdieu speaks of 'dominated agents' and it has to be questioned how far the UK economy does 'pronounce a verdict' on them, 'refuses' access to the first labour market and defines them according to the 'established order'. While in some narratives there is a strong sense of self-exclusion, none of the participants talks about acts of systemic exclusion by, say, British institutions or employers.

The underlying *doxa* participants accept are not so much taken-for-granted truths within the host country society, but assumptions originating in interviewees' home country. This is not to say that there are no cases of racism and prejudices against Polish migrants, or even instances of exclusion, at all. However, I would argue that what a significant number of Polish participants demonstrates is a particular form of *habitus* that is not, at least in the case of young, well-qualified migrants who are fluent in English, purely the result of an exclusion by the host society, but a process of habituation that happened in the past and got transmitted through spoken discourse. Galasińska (2010) demonstrates how previous, pre-2004 generations of Polish migrants tend to juxtapose their experience of coming to the UK with the situation of newcomers and create a grand narrative of struggle in which a difficult start in the new country becomes almost a normative experience. Furthermore, going

⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion of the similarities and differences in Giddens' and Bourdieu's theories of social reproduction see, for example, Morrison (2005).

further back in time, underemployment in the West was part and parcel of emigrants' experience under communist rule. Through the establishment of so-called 'Pewex' stores the communist leadership tried to bring foreign, hard currency into the country as these stores would sell Western goods for Western money.⁶⁰ The acquisition of Western status symbols reinforced a system of clandestine migration and "quite frequently allowed Poles to 'forget' their class background and perform jobs below their qualifications. Stories of Polish graduates or engineers working as cleaners, agricultural workers, builders and manual workers penetrated private spheres back in the home country, and were more often approved than condemned in private discourses." (Galasińska 2009: 191)

It would, of course, be an over interpretation to explain all cases of Polish migrants' underemployment in the UK with employment patterns of previous generations. However, if the dominant discourse of migrating to 'the West' for work was a discourse of 'forgetting' about one's qualification until recently, then the overall acceptance of low-level work abroad is at least one influential factor for the social phenomenon of large-scale underemployment. When participants like Janina say that they did not even have the idea that they could do "some more ambitious things" in the UK than menial work in factories and the service sector, or when Malina, to give yet another example, says that her expectation before coming to the UK was "that I'm gonna come here and work on the farm, actually, somewhere, and having- picking up the strawberries or something", then these statements reflect a *habitus* that is at least partly shaped by a more collective acquisition of certain schemata in the past and a certain tradition of migration.

The flipside of the coin, of course, is a general lack of interest in participants' qualifications. Not one of the interviewees, Polish or Spanish, reported employers or agencies trying to make use of their qualifications or any attempt to tap into participants' human capital. I will discuss this issue further in the following chapter.

⁶⁰ These shops were a common phenomenon across former socialist countries. In the former GDR, for example, they were known as so-called 'Intershops'.

Of course, not all Polish participants ‘get stuck’ in low-level jobs. Krzysztof, for example, came to the UK right after taking his *egzamin maturalny*, the Polish A-level equivalent. He spent a few years doing factory work and menial jobs for temp agencies, however, at the same time he attended college, improved his English and finally got accepted into university. Pietrek, a Polish university dropout, worked in factories, too, but only until he secured an apprenticeship as a glassblower, something that had been his plan all along. In these cases, the position in the UK labour market is initially conditioned by a lack of qualifications and English skills and furthermore, it is only a temporary position.

However, it is noteworthy that the particular form of *habitus* discussed above is not to be found in the Spanish sample. Instead, Spanish narrators display a strong sense of progress and belief in self-efficacy and in general a stronger focus on the future. Although the economic crisis in Spain is mentioned in almost all interviews and Spanish politicians are referred to in strong negative terms, there are no references towards the history or the society of the country, and negative references towards fellow Spanish migrants in the UK hardly ever occur. In this context it is also worth mentioning that almost all of the Spanish participants had ‘moved on’ at the time of writing: a few have moved back to Spain hoping that the qualifications they gained in the UK will help them find a job, some have moved to London where they had the opportunity to work in their professional field, and a few relocated to other countries like Belgium or the United States. As for the Polish sample, only one participant had left the UK and re-migrated to Poland, all other participants were still living in Southampton.

This section has compared the migration trajectories of two participants: Tomás, a freelance travel writer from Spain and Danuta, a dental nurse from Poland. Both were using the act of emigration to initiate a break with their previous lives, but in both cases the life trajectories pre- and post-migration to the UK were so closely interlinked that a certain *habitus* acquired in the past led to very different outcomes of the respective migration projects. We have seen how for Tomás the experience of living in Norway at the age of 20 has been an initiation into adulthood and how the independence he experienced during that time has become an ideal shaping ‘life decision’ ever since. While Tomás’ trajectory is, of course, not a common life course, his narrative is

characterised by a strong sense of agency and independence. His experience of freedom and ‘becoming an independent adult’ during his time in Norway have certainly changed his perception and shaped his subsequent actions, and although he does not talk about it in the interview, one could also speculate about the influence of his father’s experience of growing up in Germany as the child of Spanish guest workers (German ‘*Gastarbeiter*’) on Tomás’ life trajectory.

Tomás’ story is a story of voluntary downward social mobility in order to regain freedom and independence. Danuta’s life story, on the other hand, has been shaped by restrictions and a sense of constantly having to make ‘second best’ choices, and this disposition of perception and actions, the *habitus*, leads to a purely horizontal social mobility; in her narrative life in Poland is almost a mirror image of life in the UK. Whereas life in Poland was influenced by remains of the communist system (colleagues with a communist work ethic, a system of cronyism and bribery), these remains are echoed in Danuta’s narration of her life in the UK where superiors are lazy and racist and she ends up ‘being stuck’ professionally as well as personally again, just like she had been before she left Poland. Both cases demonstrate how pre- and post-migration trajectories can be closely connected, and how the past can influence present perceptions and actions.

While this section has offered a detailed analysis of two participants, the following section will bring the case of Tomás and Danuta into a wider context and summarise the findings presented in this chapter.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an in-depth analysis of the three most prevalent themes in the interview data: ‘normality’, ‘(un)preparedness’, and ‘habituation’, and it has become clear how all these themes are, at times, interconnected.

The first section investigated how ‘normality’ is narrated in the corpus, that is, how participants aspire to a certain form of ‘normality’. Three levels of aspired normality were identified: economic, societal and personal. As for economic normality, we have seen how some participants create a ‘no choice’ discourse

in which the move abroad is the only remaining livelihood strategy. In this context, the examples of Pawel and Pietrek have shown how consumption and the participation in an affluent consumer society can be a form of establishing normality, something especially relevant for Polish participants. For some Spanish participants, on the other hand, the act of migrating to the UK was narrated as an involuntary act. The ‘easiness of life in the UK’, a common theme in the Polish corpus, does not occur in the Spanish data. Instead, human/cultural capital does play a major role in that improving English skills is interpreted as an investment in the future and an ‘added value’ of low-level jobs in the UK. Spain, on the other hand, is often narrated as a space of stagnation inhibiting individuals from progressing professionally and personally. Through these two themes, the strong belief that making an investment now will pay off in the future on the one hand, and the labelling of Spain as a semantic space of stagnation that keeps individuals from ‘getting ahead’ on the other, an ideology of progress is created that proves to be highly influential for participants’ goals and expectations.

Regarding societal normality, Spanish migrants tend to demonstrate a ‘love-hate’ relationship to their home country. Politicians and political institutions are often heavily criticised, and some participants like Pablo and Sarita also demonstrate a strong sense of individualism. Yet, participants often express a sense of missing friends, family and the overall quality of life in the home country. Polish participants, on the other hand, tend to foreground how they had (and sometimes still have) to fulfil certain roles and normative expectations. The case of Janina outlines the normativity of economic success abroad, something that makes return migration highly unlikely as the image of a ‘successful’ migrant might not be kept up back in Poland. Female participants also frequently mentioned restrictive gender roles, which make the UK a libertarian space where personal freedom can be exercised. Overall, Polish participants tend to create a discourse of escape, while Spanish interviewees narrate stories of (temporary) adventure and progression.

Another common theme across the sample was the re-establishment of personal normality. Sarita, for example, interpreted the decision to migrate to the UK as an act of coming back to a ‘true self’, a form of ‘real’ identity she had lost in her previous long-term relationship in Spain. Anastazja and Leocadio, on the other hand, emphasised that it was not for financial reasons

that they left their home country, but in order to ‘break out’ of a work life experienced as monotonous and boring. In contrast to other participants, their form of aspired normality is personal and less influenced by factors on the macro-level.

‘(Un)preparedness’ focused on the migration strategies applied by the participants of this study. Some narratives foreground the immediacy of the decision to emigrate and a general level of unconcernedness about their future life in the UK (the ‘come-and-see’ approach). Other accounts illustrated cases of extreme preparedness where migrants organised accommodation, job interviews and language courses in advance, making use of information available on the internet. Apart from different levels of preparation, participants presented different agentic structures when talking about their initial time in the UK. Although some Spanish participants emphasised the involuntariness of their decision to migrate (Eloísa’s statement that “I didn’t want to come”, see section 5.2), most Spanish interviewees nonetheless positioned the narrator as the driving force behind narrated events. In contrast, most Polish participants created narratives in which helper figures played a central role; these helper figures are driving the story forward, without them the storyline would either come to a standstill or the narrator would have to ‘take over’.

Finally, habituation and the influence of the past on participants’ present has been analysed in detail by investigating Tomás’ and Danuta’s life courses as presented in their narratives. Both trajectories start out similarly as both wish to initiate change in their lives, but habitual dynamics lead to very different outcomes of the migration project. Tomás’ life course has been shaped by two key events: the act of becoming an adult, travelling and experiencing independence in Norway, and later, the re-establishment of this independence through ‘dropping out’ of a sequential life course focused on money and career advancement. Danuta’s narrative, on the other hand, is a story of blocked roads, and in many ways her migration trajectory in the UK is a mirror image of her previous life in Poland. Both participants initiate a break with their previous life, but where Tomás is able to re-gain freedom and independence, Danuta seems trapped in a reiterative loop of restrictions and ‘second best’ options. Both demonstrate how a certain habituation is shaping present perceptions and actions. Furthermore, the case of Janina exemplifies how for

many Polish participants the move to the UK is accompanied by an expectation of 'having to start from scratch', of a certain necessity to – at least initially – take up low level work, even though participants held university degrees and were fluent in English. It has been argued that this expectation is something unique to the Polish data and does not occur in the interviews with Spanish participants. They, too, did find initial employment in rather low-level jobs in hospitality and manufacturing, however, this form of underemployment is more strongly characterised by a simultaneity of actions – participants were working as, say, waiters/waitresses while improving their English and applying for jobs or internships in their professional field, and looking at their overall migration trajectories, none of the Spanish participants accepted doing menial work for an extended period of time.

To sum up, the chapter has demonstrated the complexity of individual migration trajectories. While some themes occur across the interview corpus, other aspects such as the narration of a restrictive society or the normativity of economic success seem to be very much connected to Polish 'stories of migration'. I will now discuss and interpret these findings and their potential relevance beyond this study in the following chapter, as well as apply these findings to the research questions outlined in section 3.6.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The previous chapter presented an in-depth analysis of participants' narratives and demonstrated the complex dynamics influencing the individual migration projects. The aim of this chapter is to link these findings to previous research that has influenced the conceptual framework (Chapter 3), as well as to connect them to the research questions directing the study. Furthermore, the potential relevance of the research findings beyond this study will be discussed, as well as its limitations. Finally, areas for future research will be outlined.

This study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the underlying dynamics, motivations and external factors influencing individual migration trajectories, especially with regards to people's professional ambitions in the host country?
2. In what way do national factors affect intra-European, transnational migration projects of individuals?

These overarching questions were then broken down into smaller areas of interest, and carefully selected case studies were chosen to investigate content and form of the narratives. Regarding content, two areas were of particular interest:

- How do migrants experience an evolving 'normative uncertainty' of the life course?
- How do structure and agency interact in the narratives of young, well-qualified Europeans?

The exploration of the narrative form, on the other hand, tried to answer the following questions:

- How do participants narrate their different temporal agentic orientations?
- Is 'future' a salient category in these narratives? If so, is it a mistrust in the future that makes people 'drift' or 'search'? Or if not, what reasons can be identified for the narrative absence of 'future'?

This study used a small-scale, qualitative research design. Due to the small sample size ($n=22$), findings are not generalisable. Polish participants are not representative of Polish migrants in the UK in general, nor do Spanish interviewees represent all or even the majority of recent Spanish migrants. However, sampling criteria (section 4.2) as well as the particular moment in history when participants migrated to the UK make them part of larger migration movements. As discussed in section 2.4 and 2.5, Polish participants moved to the UK primarily between 2005 and 2007, making them members of a large-scale post-accession migration movement (p. 35) that has an on-going impact on the political debate about immigration to the UK.

Most Spanish participants, on the other hand, moved to the UK in 2012, making them part of a significant post-crisis movement. Although the scale of the recession-induced outflow of young people from Spain is unclear and heavily debated (cf. p. 39–42), there is evidence to suggest that the United Kingdom became the main destination country for young Spanish migrants since 2009 (INJUVE 2014).

Metaphorically speaking, this thesis presents snapshots of two particular migration streams at a particular point in time. Instead of using a wide angle lens to depict this migration landscape in its length and breadth, the study zoomed in on particular details of the wider picture. Nonetheless, the wider picture is made up of many of these smaller details.

In other words: although the findings of this study are not generalisable, the narratives participants produce are part of various larger, overarching discourses – we have seen how, for example, Spanish participants often reproduce a particular ‘forced exile’ discourse that contradicts the Spanish government’s narrative of ‘external mobility’ (p. 151–153, p. 161–162). It has also been shown how Polish participants’ references to ‘normality’ and ‘consumption’ often echo a wider discourse on emigration and the ‘abnormality’ of Polish society (p. 143–145). All of the narratives in this study capture a part of contemporary social reality in the context of intra-European migration. The observations made in this study are therefore relevant beyond the confines of this thesis as they represent important groundwork for future research.

Chapter 3, the chapter explaining the conceptual framework of this study, started out by discussing the **interaction of structure and agency** in participants' narratives, and investigated the idea of an 'emerging' or 'delayed' adulthood and the concept of individualisation as a reaction to the 'normative uncertainty' inherent in contemporary life courses of young people. Regarding the latter, Beck (1986) and Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (2002) have argued that individual biographies today are less influenced by traditional commitments and are becoming more and more self-reflexive, meaning that biographies are less often socially prescribed and more often self-produced. At first sight, this concept seems to be perfectly applicable to the data presented in this study: participants 'break out' of their old life, leave behind a state of affairs that is narrated as deficient, and actively construct their own biography in a country perceived as more 'normal', where certain features of the life course seem more easily accessible. The act of emigration for the participants in this study – young, well-educated Europeans – seems to be an act of individualisation and self-reflexive construction of biographies, an act of regaining agency and of escaping a limiting state of affairs. This seems to become particularly evident in the narratives of Leocadio, the physiotherapist from Spain who at the time of the interview had just started his own business in Southampton, or Anastazja, the Polish former English teacher who was working as an interpreter and translator. Both retrospectively express their wish to break out of a sequential life and career path, and the statement “I needed a change” seems to sum up their motivation to emigrate.

However, below the surface of most narratives, things become more complex. In the following I am going to argue that while most participants narrate their decision to migrate as an act of re-gaining agency over their life courses, only few have yet been able to establish this agency. Most Polish participants are still subjected to a certain form of *habitus*, something very closely connected to and acquired in the home country, while most Spanish migration trajectories are on-going projects shaped by an ideology of progress and as I am going to argue below, this ideology is also something participants have acquired previously to the act of emigration. Migrants do not leave these dispositions behind in their respective country of origin, but carry them with them to destination countries where these dispositions continue to generate “meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions” (Bourdieu 1986: 170).

Therefore, it has to be questioned in how far biographies in a migration context are independently created rather than shaped by past experiences. In what follows, I will elaborate on this by firstly exploring the narratives produced by Polish participants, before trying to situate Spanish participants' stories of migration in a broader context.

In the context of **national factors influencing transnational migration projects** I have discussed the analytical category of 'post-communism' before (sections 3.5 and 5.2) and have argued against the on-going use of this category to explain the behaviour of young migrants from Central and Eastern Europe today. Although most of the participants in this study grew up with stories of the communist period, hardly anyone had first-hand experience of the time. I have argued that certain practices, like the attempt to establish normality through the act of consumption, can be explained as a more general reaction to past experiences of hardship and economic privation, not necessarily as a wider post-communist 'yearning for normality', as some researchers have argued (Galasińska & Kozłowska 2009). However, individual migration trajectories do not exist in a vacuum, especially not in countries with a long-standing history of emigration like Poland.

In that respect Janina's narrative is a good example of the narrative interconnectedness of past and present migration projects: Janina was working as a Teaching Assistant in a Southampton school during the week and had an additional job as a caterer in a local hospital at the weekend. Her migration trajectory is very much influenced by the normativity of economic success and her urge to be perceived as someone who 'made it' in the UK. Her choice to take on a second job at weekends is very much connected to her supporting her family in Poland, as well as to keeping up the transnational appearance of 'doing well' in the UK. In that way, Janina's story is similar to Polish migration narratives in the years under communist rule; her account has a 'hidden part' – her success narrative has a normative character, she is supposed to 'make it' in the West, and this leads to the prioritisation of the visible success of migration that is more important than success itself (Galasinski & Galasinska 2007: 51). In other words: what is valued by the home society is the act of sending remittances, not Janina's professional progression or utilisation of her academic qualification in the UK. So although I reject 'post-communism' as a general analytical category to make sense of participants' behaviour, I do

acknowledge that previous migration patterns do in some way influence present ones.

In addition to that, Polish participants' emphasis on consumption as a form of instant gratification and 'normality' can only be understood fully if the experience of hardship and retrospectively constructed 'abnormality' prior to the decision to emigrate is taken into account. In other words: the previous experience of 'struggle' in Poland has the potential to encourage, at least temporarily, a leisure- and consumption-oriented lifestyle in the UK in order to make the transition from 'thwarted citizens' to active consumers in the UK (McGhee et al. 2012: 721). In both cases it is less the receiving country shaping individual migration trajectories; instead, the 'home society' and past experiences contribute to the application of certain migration strategies.

The narration of the semantic space Poland as an 'abnormal' or even 'sick' place has yet another consequence: whatever job participants do in the UK and whatever hardship they have to endure, it is always presented as a better option than staying in Poland. For example, even though Pawel, former English teacher in Poland and factory worker in England, talks about suffering from depressions due to monotonous work and long working hours, he emphasises that life in the UK is easier and that, no matter what kind of job one does, "your basic needs are fulfilled". While on the one hand participants problematise the present situation by, for example, mentioning bad working conditions or poor quality of affordable housing, on the other hand they tend to reframe the present by referring back to a past state of affairs narrated as 'even worse'. Operating with this 'still-better-than' logic, some of the Polish participants quite literally 'get stuck': the present is leading nowhere in terms of personal and professional development and is, more often between the lines than overtly, characterised as problematic. However, as the past and the semantic space Poland are 'abnormal', return migration becomes almost impossible, and this abnormality then serves as a justification for the present situation. Some interviewees thereby create a reiterative loop, using the discourse of escape as a means to make sense of a 'not ideal' present.

Coming back to participants' different **temporal agentic orientations** this study demonstrates how in some cases the act of migration, at first glance a step towards re-establishing agency, is instead the continued influence of the

kind of structural constraints participants wanted to overcome. The present, in other words, is not only the result of the past, but the past, manifest in the semantic space Poland keeps exerting influence on individuals. The act of emigration at first seems to be a manifestation of agency, but for some participants what looks like an attempt to re-gain independence in fact leads to a continuation of the past. Whether openly discussed by participants or not, the *habitus* they brought with them in the form of perceptions and practices influences their migration trajectories and, for example in Danuta's case, has the potential to lead to a present that resembles a mirror image of the past she wanted to leave behind. This does become a 'sore topic', and Danuta evades questions regarding plans and ambitions for the future by ending the interview (section 5.4, p. 188).

The **narrative absence of 'future'** (or at least the 'vagueness' of it) is something very unique to the Polish sample and contrasts sharply with the strong orientation towards the future prevalent in Spanish narratives. I would argue that this is not necessarily a result of a mistrust in the future, but rather an imaginative inability. Participants like Danuta arrive in the UK with a particular *habitus* that contributes to the reproduction of a certain (social) status, and to make sense of this situation a majority of participants applied a 'still-better-than' logic: the current life situation may be problematic, but it is still not as bad as life back in Poland. Now, the longer social actors are doing circles in this reiterative loop, the more vague and distant their imagined future becomes, and it is this underlying dynamic that, although not prevalent in all narratives, is a unique feature of the Polish interview corpus.

On the other hand, as the previous chapter has demonstrated, a unique feature of the Spanish corpus is the politicisation of the semantic space Spain. However, while the political establishment is heavily criticised and a strong sense of individualisation becomes evident in the individual narratives, none of the participants categorises Spanish society as a whole as 'abnormal' or 'sick'; overall, it is still the space of friendship, good weather and family, and in narratives like Garaile's and Malena's, the architect interns working on the Isle of Wight, a strong sense of longing for the home country becomes prevalent. In that sense, and in contrast to the Polish participants, the overall perception of the home country is less negative than in the Polish sample, despite the

economic crisis and a government most often referred to in strongly negative terms.

It is noteworthy that Spanish participants chose to animate a discourse prevalent in the Spanish alternative media. For example, Pablo references the '*No nos vamos, nos echan*' slogan (p. 161) and, similarly, the majority of Spanish participants shared the opinion that the current outflow of young people from Spain constitutes a 'forced exile' and a 'brain drain'. This contradicts the government's official discourse: employment minister Fatima Báñez, for example, refers to the outflow of young people from Spain as 'external mobility', something that 'leads to an exchange of ideas' and is not in itself a bad thing.⁶¹ Therefore, when participants reproduce the 'forced exile' counter discourse, this has to be understood as an act of taking a political stance and of disagreeing with the discourse produced by government officials.

The most prominent feature constituting the Spanish narratives has been what I have called the 'ideology of progress'. For example, Miguel, the former Erasmus student who chose to stay in Southampton, referred to Spain as a place where personal and professional advancement was, for the time being, impossible. One of the few remaining options for young people in Spain was to gain further academic qualifications, something described as "not improving anything" in terms of career opportunities (Garaile & Malena, section 5.1). To escape a state of stagnation, the move abroad is presented as one of the few remaining options. Spanish participants were emphasising a strong orientation towards the future and a belief that the qualifications gained in the UK would lead to better employment opportunities in the future.

Similar to the habitus of Polish participants, the narrative 'behaviour' of Spanish interviewees, especially their strong belief in progress as well as the depiction of present day Spain as a place of stagnation, does not appear out of nowhere. On the contrary, I would like to argue that these beliefs and perceptions can partly be explained by the profound changes in the Spanish economy since the mid-1970s. After Franco's death in 1975 the country underwent a major transformation. The late 1970s and early 1980s were still

⁶¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.es/2013/04/17/banez-llama-movilidad-exterior-a-la-marcha-de-jovenes-al-extranjero_n_3098261.html, checked 03.06.2014

characterised by high unemployment rates due to the second oil crisis, however, things started to change in the mid-1980s – at a time when most of this study’s Spanish participants were born. Spain’s accession to the European Community in 1986 “sparked a major economic recovery, with growth averaging 4.5 percent a year during 1986–90” (Franks 1997: 8). Other effects were a fall in unemployment, a growth of the labour force, an expansion of the social protection system, a rise in unemployment benefits and an increase in union activism. Most importantly, the nature of employment changed significantly.

The progressive opening of the economy accelerated a major transformation in the economic structure that had already begun in the 1970s. The role of agriculture and basic industry (for example, coal, steel, and shipbuilding) declined sharply, while modern industry and the services sector (particularly tourism and financial services) surged. (Franks 1997: 8)

Although the Spanish economy entered into recession in 1992, this crisis did not last long. As outlined previously (p. 37–38) unemployment kept declining since the mid-1990s while real GDP in Spain grew quicker than in any other EU country, making Spain an attractive destination country for international labour migrants.

As I have shown in section 3.6, this economic boom did not necessarily improve the situation of young people in the Spanish workforce. As a result of labour market reforms in the early 1990s, by the turn of the century most young people, despite often being highly qualified, were experiencing employment in precarious low-paid jobs, something expressed by the term *mileurista* (p. 81–82).

That being said, all Spanish participants spent their formative years in a country experiencing an unprecedented economic upturn, and most participants inherited a certain ‘attitudinal capital’ from their parents. Simón, for example, recalls a conversation with his father, an aquaculture farmer, about his future career.

1 Actually my father brought me to the farm and said- to the-
 2 to the [pateas?], you know, a platform in the middle of the
 3 sea, say 'Okay, work today, but please, you don't have to be
 4 happy working as a farmer. Please study, don't do that.'
 5 Because it's- it's hard when you are 40 or 50. In the middle
 6 of the sea.

Studying and getting a degree is presented as a way of avoiding having to do manual, physically demanding labour. Simón animates his father's voice who urges him to opt for Higher Education instead of fish farming (3–4); going to university is presented as an opportunity for upward social mobility and for a life that is easier than that of the previous generation.

To give another example, Cristina's father used to work as a plumber, her mum as a cleaner. In the interview she says that it never occurred to her not to go to university: "I always had the clear idea that I want to do a degree, 'cause I grew up in a family where my parents educate me with that mentality and my other sister was doing a degree, so..." Similar to Simón, Cristina talks about the influence of her parents on her (and her sister's) decision to go to university. Cristina's parents did not encourage her to learn a trade or take up manual labour, but to study; again, Higher Education is seen as an opportunity for upward social mobility.

The Spanish participants of this study belong to a generation that has witnessed profound changes in the labour market and (apart from the recession in the early-1990s) a constant economic upturn leading to the economic bonanza that preceded the current crisis. They grew up with a 'grand narrative' of social mobility, in which investment in education opened the door to a future in which they would be better off than the previous generation. Although the younger generation had already been affected by job insecurity and low pay in the years prior to the crash, forming the *generación de los mil euros*, Spain's economic growth rates still outpaced all other European countries and contributed to a projected future when educational investment would pay off.

In this context, it may not be surprising that Spanish participants display a strong focus on the future. Remarks like the above demonstrate how participants were brought up with a belief in progress; parents still had to do labour intensive jobs like plumbing and fish farming, but interviewees grew up with the promise of a 'better' future, in a time when hundreds of thousands of migrants were coming to Spain to do the unskilled, physically demanding and 'dirty' jobs. In this context it may also not be surprising that one of the biggest current protest groups in Spain is called *Juventud sin futuro*, which again

points to the relevance of this particular temporal category for the current generation of young Spaniards.

Of course, the database of this study is too small to come to definite conclusions about young Spanish migrants' *habitus* and solely explaining participants' behaviour with economic changes in the home country would indeed be a gross oversimplification; we have seen how some Spanish interviewees were not affected by the recession at all and had other reasons to leave Spain (e.g. personal freedom, travelling, learning English). However, when participants like Simón and Cristina recall certain narratives of social mobility they inherited from their parents, then these stories cannot be understood without taking into consideration the macro-context in which these narratives were produced. It does, of course, need further research to see how prevalent this phenomenon really is and what role social class plays in this context, but for now, telling from the sample of this study, it can be said that the 'ideology of progress' most interviewees display can be linked to certain narratives participants inherited from their parents, narratives of social mobility that originate in a time of extraordinary economic growth and major transformations of the Spanish labour market.

This discourse of progression evident in most Spanish narratives also points to the fact that participants' biographies are very much shaped by a focus on 'traditional' elements of the life course such as 'finding a good job' or 'increasing one's employability'. Although **experiencing a 'normative uncertainty'** of the life course, almost no participant, with the exception of Tomás, the Spanish travel writer, can be adequately described as what Cwerner (2001) has called a *nomadic migrant* or subsumed under what Benson & O'Reilly (2009) have called *lifestyle migration*: participants are neither *residential tourists*, *rural idyll seekers* nor *bourgeois bohemians*, and none of the Spanish participants can, for the time being, be classified as a *drifter* (Trevena 2013) or *searcher* (Eade, Drinkwater et al. 2007); what may be narrated as an 'adventure' is in fact a conscious investment with the aim of establishing a certain socio-economic status in the future. This strong belief in progress and the urge to climb the social ladder does not fit well into the concept of entirely self-produced, independently created biographies that are hardly influenced by socially prescribed trajectories. In fact, most Spanish participants take Spain as their point of reference in that the qualifications

gained in the UK are anticipated to help them by-pass a state of stagnation and establish personal and professional progress in the home country. In the words of Simón, the former sales executive turned sous chef: “I think I do the best thing that I can do, and companies is going to say ‘Okay, you have now a- AT LEAST a better English than Spanish people that never go to- to England.’” In this context, the rationale behind the individual migration project is not so much the construction of a life course away from the societal norms of the home country, but the adherence to a changing set of rules. The global economic crisis has changed job requirements (Eloísa’s statement that now “in Spain for all jobs ask for your English”, section 5.1) and made foreign language skills imperative, and the migration trajectories of Spanish participants are shaped by a desire to meet these requirements in order to progress professionally and personally.

While for the time being the ideology of progress governing most of the Spanish migration trajectories has rather positive outcomes – participants actively invest in career progression by improving language skills and gaining professional experience through internships – the question remains how sustainable this sense of progression is, should participants not be able to reach their set goals, secure stable employment and climb the social ladder. An important question in this context is therefore how the political anger, prevalent in most Spanish narratives, is going to develop if participants’ belief in progress is not met by reality, that is, should good jobs remain inaccessible despite their investment in human capital.

Recent developments in Spain make clear that political protests continue, albeit on a smaller scale than during the protests of 2011 and 2012. However, social tension is persistent: the planned eviction of squatters from an abandoned warehouse in Barcelona, to give just one example, has triggered several nights of riots at the end of May 2014; unemployment and the widening income gap in Spain were said to be the main reasons behind the riots⁶². Furthermore, the electoral success of the newly founded Podemos party (cf. section 3.6) in the European elections in May 2014 has not only lead to a shift in Spain’s political landscape, it also changed the tone of the protest movement. After the

⁶² <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/31/world/europe/barcelona-spanish-evictions-lead-to-riots.html?hpw&rref=world&r=1>, checked 03.06.2014.

election, party leader Pablo Iglesias was quick to strike a more nationalist chord: in various interviews Mr Iglesias announced that he would fight to stop Spain being a “German colony” (referring to EU–IMF bailouts) and that he also wanted to “stop young Spaniards serving tapas and beers to the rich in northern Europe”.⁶³ One important area for further research is therefore the future development of the Spanish (youth) protest movement. I will elaborate on this at the end of this chapter (p. 225–226).

For now, it can be stated that a commonality between Polish and Spanish participants is their effort to narratively position themselves in opposition to their respective countries of origin and re–gain agency over their life courses. However, in most cases micro–analysis reveals a continued influence of certain norms and structures originating from those places participants intended to leave behind. Participants’ point of reference remains the respective home country instead of the receiving society. While some people might argue that this is unsurprising given that interviewees are all first generation migrants, the prolonged influence of the home country society across borders is at least worth mentioning as it contrasts with the general easiness with which the act of emigration is narrated and participants’ repeated efforts to position themselves in opposition to their respective home countries. Again, what at first glance look like accounts of young, well–qualified migrants regaining agency over their life courses very often turn out to be stories of an on–going influence of ‘national factors’ on individual transnational migration projects.

With regards to the establishment of a certain status, the concept of delayed adulthood seems to fit well in the context of this study as all participants are far from being ‘settled’: hardly anyone had children or formed an independent household, and even owning a car was rare among participants. Classical transition markers are, as almost everywhere in the global North, sequenced differently from previous generations, and longer time spent in education, later marriage and later and fewer children than in previous cohorts are indeed a common phenomenon across countries (Arnett 2006), something evident in this study’s sample, too. As for the participants of this research, however, it has to be questioned how far operating with a binary framework of ‘youth’ and ‘(delayed) adulthood’ is feasible at all. Utilising traditional transition markers

⁶³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-eu-27579898>, checked 03.06.2014.

like ‘having children’ or ‘getting married’ would certainly lead to positioning most of the study’s participants outside the ‘adult’ category, something highly inappropriate given the participants’ age, life experience and migration trajectories.

Nonetheless, interpreting these traditional transition markers more widely as socio-economic ‘status indicators’ highlights the importance of participants’ economic circumstances for their life courses. For example, section 5.1 has demonstrated how Aniela, who holds a post-graduate degree in International Relations and Economics but works as a call-centre agent in the UK, presents her decision to emigrate from Poland to the UK as a step towards establishing economic normality and escape unemployment in Poland. Although she does not discuss her job-skill mismatch she does problematise her economic situation by talking about having to live in a cramped, shared house, because even after five years in the UK, her income would not allow for renting a place of her own. Cases like Aniela’s demonstrate how strongly participants’ economic situation defines their living conditions. Her ‘way of life’ does not necessarily reflect a re-orientation of life priorities (Dwyer & Wyn 2001), nor is it a manifestation of a certain life style (Wyn & Woodman 2006), but shows the difficulties in establishing upward social mobility in the context of migration. Judging from the study’s sample there is strong evidence that the ‘systemic uncertainty of current life courses’ (ibid.) and the ‘normalization of uncertainty’ (Blatterer 2007) affect people even more in a migration context, and prolonged periods of underemployment in rather precarious jobs seem to be a common experience across the sample of young, well-qualified European migrants. As participants were not facing any restrictions to live and work in the UK (except WRS registration for Polish participants arriving before May 2011), this raises questions about systemic ‘brain waste’ (Morokvasic & de Tinguy 1993, Fihel & Kaczmarczyk 2009), especially for the group of young, well qualified Poles in the UK.

Coming back to the question of **participants’ temporal orientations**, more influential factors for the phenomenon of habitual underemployment are, among others, a prolonged phase of enjoyment and consumption as a means to establish a form of aspired normality, as well as a firm conviction that jobs matching one’s qualification are inaccessible. Polish participants tended to demonstrate a general temporal orientation focused on the immediate present

rather than the achievement of long-term goals in the future such as ‘building a career’. These issues, as well as the on-going influence of the home society on practices in the host country, are prevalent in the Polish sample but hardly ever occur in Spanish narratives of migration. Spanish participants were working in menial jobs in the service sector, too, but demonstrated a strong temporal orientation towards the future; working as a waiter/waitress or au pair was acceptable to cover the cost of living while working towards goals such as improved English skills.

One possible objection to these research findings has to do with the respective length of residence of both groups: overall, Polish participants had spent a longer time in the UK, while Spanish interviewees had migrated to the UK rather recently (cf. section 4.2). It is therefore valid to ask in how far both groups are comparable at all as they represent different points in time of the respective migration trajectories.

Three aspects are noteworthy here: firstly, as chapter 5 has shown, ‘Polish’ and ‘Spanish’ narratives are very different and aspects like the normative discourse of economic success or the on-going influence of the home society on participants’ practices in the receiving country are unique features of the Polish sample, while the highly politicised accounts of Spaniards, their strong sense of individualisation and belief in progress do not occur in the narratives of Polish interviewees. This might, of course, still be due to differences in the length of stay, but none of the Polish participants retrospectively talks about having had similar ambitions or aims to those of Spanish participants. I will discuss this point further below. For now it can be said that although similarities do exist across the sample, for example, the re-establishment of a certain form of normality as the main motivator behind the decision to migrate, overall Polish and Spanish narratives display very different orientations and migration strategies. As section 5.3 ((Un)Preparedness) has shown, these differences become visible from the very beginning of the migration project and are independent of participants’ length of stay in the UK.

Secondly, at the time of writing all Spanish participants except one had already ‘moved on’: some had found internship opportunities matching their qualifications in other parts of the UK or abroad, others went back to Spain hoping that their UK experience and their improved English language skills

would contribute to their employability, even in times of recession. In comparison, all but one Polish interviewees were still living in Southampton, with the majority still working in the same position and living in the same places as before. Furthermore, only one Polish participant reported problems with the recognition of his Polish university degree in the UK, while the rest of the sample had never tried to get their degrees recognised.

Thirdly, Polish participants' retrospective accounts of the first weeks and months in the UK are largely characterised by the aforementioned (section 5.3) unconcernedness and 'come-and-see' attitude, whereas Spanish interviewees demonstrated a strong orientation towards the future. For them, the time in the UK was seen as an acceptable step towards the acquisition of human capital such as language skills, and overall Spanish participants displayed a clear agenda of personal and professional progression.

So while it is true that Polish and Spanish narratives do represent different temporal 'windows' into individual migration projects, the differences in the individual narratives correspond to differences in the application of certain migration strategies and practices. Narratives and actions are closely interlinked and do therefore allow for a comparison, even though the duration of stay differs between both groups.

Surprisingly, although they are EU citizens and thereby fully entitled to live and work in the UK, the trajectories of the majority of Polish participants do bear similarities to migrants whose migration projects are highly affected by a precarious legal status. Goldring & Landolt's (2012) research on 'irregular' immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean in Toronto, for example, shows the influence of the legal status on the quality of accessible jobs in the Canadian labour market: as long as participants were residing in Canada 'illegally', the only accessible jobs were menial and highly precarious. Surprisingly, even after 'regularisation', that is, the shift from an 'illegal' to a secure legal status, people tended to stay in precarious jobs. The authors conclude that the amount of time spent in Canada and a secure legal status do not guarantee a path to decent work.

Instead, it is difficult to move away from precarious jobs. This finding also supports what has been widely reported in anecdotes: in the 'new economy' labor market a person's first job in Canada lays the foundation for later work opportunities.

Precarious work in the short term has long-term – and negative – impacts on workers. (Goldring & Landolt 2012: 87)

Of course, the legal status of Polish and Spanish workers in the UK is almost similar to the native UK population, and it was not their legal status that forced participants into low-level work. For some Spanish participants menial jobs in the service and hospitality sector were the only available work due to their initially low level of English, while most Polish participants secured initial employment through acquaintances and temp agencies promoting rather low-level work in manufacturing. What does become evident though, especially for the Polish sample, is a prolonged period of ‘being stuck’ in menial jobs in the secondary and tertiary sector of the economy. The data of this study, although admittedly limited and not generalisable, indicates that the probability of long periods of underemployment becomes ever more likely if different contributing factors come together: on the one hand employers’ and temp agencies’ general indifference towards migrants’ qualifications, on the other hand individuals’ expectation and, partly, acceptance of precarious work.

Of course, even though migrants, especially those from Eastern Europe working in Western Europe, are more likely to experience periods of underemployment the phenomenon of job-skill mismatch has also become common among ‘native’ UK graduates (Tijdens & van Klaveren 2012). While this devaluation of academic credentials is problematic in general, it becomes even more questionable with regards to current immigration regulations. Across Europe countries are designing immigration policies particularly aimed at attracting highly-skilled migrants, something often described as a global ‘Battle for Brains’ (Boeri, Brücker, Docquier, Rapoport 2012). The theory behind these policies is that skilled immigration in the destination countries is associated with economic gains, and UK government and opposition alike share this rationale. In his speech on immigration on 25 March 2013 Prime Minister David Cameron criticised the previous government for the introduction of what he considered a flawed points-based system in which highly-skilled migrants “only found low-skilled roles working as shop assistants in takeaways or as security guards” and emphasised that the policy changes initiated by his government changed this state of affairs (Cameron 2013).

So while the problem of underemployment of the ‘best and brightest’ has been acknowledged and legislation has been introduced to attract particularly highly-qualified and skilled migrants from outside the EU, the results of this study as well as LFS data (discussed in section 2.5) indicate that skills and qualifications of Eastern European migrants continue to be largely underutilised. One possible **area for future research** is therefore the effect of certain labour market policies such as the easier recognition of qualifications and degrees from other EU countries. Means of active support in finding work in accordance with one’s qualification should be explored, for example through further promotion of EU mobility grants such as the Leonardo/Erasmus+ programme for recent graduates. On a similar note, more research is needed on the employment effects of participants’ social networks. Especially Polish participants made use of ‘weak ties’ to find work in the UK, but this almost always lead to employment in unskilled jobs in the service sector or manufacturing. Further data is needed on the influence of migrants’ social networks on their way into the UK labour market.

Moreover, for those migrants who return to their country of origin or migrate to another country more longitudinal data is needed to fully understand the impact the time in the UK has on individual biographies. Some of the questions that need to be explored further in this context are: in what way are participants able to achieve a ‘return on investment’ to their experience and qualifications gained in the UK? Are Spanish return-migrants, for example, more likely to find work due to their improved level of English? Are Polish participants able to ‘make use’ of their time in the UK if they return to Poland, or does this period, especially if spent working in rather low-level jobs, lead to a devaluation of qualifications gained before emigrating?

With regard to Spanish participants: does the time in the UK influence how they position themselves in relation to their country of origin? For example, does the strong sense of individualisation and the anger at the political establishment that became salient in the Spanish sample prevail over a longer period of time? In that context, further attention should be paid to the future development of the current Spanish (youth) protest movement and how young *expatriados* position themselves in relation to these discourses of resistance as well as the recent nationalist undertone of the protest discourse.

Overall, the study's findings have to be put on a broader evidence base to see if the habitus Polish and Spanish participants present in this study can be traced across larger samples as well. Especially with regard to the Spanish sample, the influence of social class should be investigated further. Some participants recalled how parents influenced their decision to attend university in order to be able to access better jobs than the previous generation, and this narrative of upward social mobility can be traced back to a time of economic growth and an unprecedented transition of the labour market. However, due to the study's small sample size it is hard to tell if this effect also becomes prevalent in middle or upper-middle class families. Follow-up studies should investigate the influence and impact of social class on transnational migration projects further.

What this study has shown is the overall complexity behind the dynamics influencing individual migration trajectories. In that sense, to assume that any 'economic' migration functions according to general rules of push and pull factors, demand and supply, would mean severely oversimplifying the matter. The micro-analysis of participants' narratives has demonstrated the importance of their lives prior to migration. Whether operating with Bourdieu's concept of *habitation* or Giddens' idea of *structuration*, it becomes clear that the arrival in the UK hardly constitutes a 'clean slate' – participants' 'learned behaviour', expectations and habitus imported from the home country are as influential for their migration trajectories as the opportunities they find in the receiving country.

Reflecting on his migration trajectory at the end of our interview, Pawel, former English teacher in Poland, factory worker and later social worker in Southampton, made this point very clear. He said he wished he had been more focused on what he wanted in life from the very beginning of his time in the UK and had not "wasted too much time along the way". Nonetheless, the decision to come to the UK was a good decision: "I wouldn't change it. I would come again. But maybe with a different perspective. Yeah, I would do it again."

Appendices

Appendix 1: Recruitment flyer



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It has been almost 10 years since Poland became a member of the EU. Many people have come to the UK, some stayed, some returned.

...stories of coming to the UK, of (hard) work, the first months, difficulties, surprises, English weather, food, housing, language, belonging, ...

A project at the University of Southampton will look back and collect people's stories...



We are looking for people who would like to tell their story and share their experiences of coming to live in the UK. The interviews will take approx. an hour and will be completely anonymous.

Interested? Want to know more about the project? Call 07808-661877 (Daniel) or email d.jendrissek@soton.ac.uk. Dziękuję!

Appendix 2: Research information and participant consent form

Research information and interview consent form

Research project title:

Narratives of economic migration to the UK

The purpose of the research is to investigate the relationship between language, qualification and the actual job situation of young, well-qualified people from across Europe who came to live and work in the UK. The aim of the study is to produce new insights on the life-, language- and work-experiences of this particular group of migrants, to investigate problematic aspects and identify possible areas for improvement.

Using biographical interviews as a method, the project will shed light on the participants' stories, i.e. how they came to the UK, initial experiences, difficulties, cultural differences, surprises, and so on.

Interviews are being carried out with young, European migrants (roughly in the age group 25 – 35) who have been living in the UK for more than one year. All interviews will be completely confidential and anonymous.

I, _____, agree to participate in the research, *Narratives of economic migration to the UK*, conducted by Dan Jendrissek as part of his PhD qualification.

Please tick each box below to indicate your consent to participate in this research:

- ☐ I consent to participate in an interview for the above study.
- ☐ I consent to the interview being audio-recorded.
- ☐ I consent to anonymised quotes from the interview being used in the researcher's thesis and future publications.
- ☐ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or refuse to answer particular questions.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep.

Please contact the researcher (address, telephone and email details above) with any questions or to request a summary of the research findings.

The project is under the supervision of:

Professor Patrick Stevenson
Email: prs1@soton.ac.uk
Department of Modern Languages
Faculty of Humanities
University of Southampton

Professor Ulrike Meinhof
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Any concerns or complaints can be directed to:

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Head of Research Governance
Corporate Services (37/4001)
University of Southampton, Highfield Campus
Southampton, SO17 1BJ
Tel: 023 8059 (2)5058
Email: mad4@soton.ac.uk

Dan Jendrissek

-----	-----	-----
Researcher's name	Researcher's signature	Date
-----	-----	-----
Participant's name	Participant's signature	Date

Appendix 3: Ethics approval

Ethics ID: 4449



Ethics and Research Governance Online

ERGO

Accessibility toolbar Help
Logged in as: **dj2g11** | Logout

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Main Menu

[My Research](#)

[Submissions to review](#)

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[View all my research](#)

 **Narratives of Economic Migration to the UK**

Submission ID: 4449

Submission Overview

IRGA Form

Attachments

History

Adverse Incident

Amendment History

 Original Submission

Current Status

 **Approved**

Category **B** Research.

[Click here for more information on research categories](#)

Submission Checklist

IRGA Form

 Complete

Ethics Form

 Attached

Risk Form

 Attached

 **Co-ordinators**

Daniel Jendrissek

 Amend and resubmit



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Appendix 4: Transcription conventions

I was o– over the moon.	Self-interruption
=	Latched utterances by same speaker
.	Falling intonation
?	Rising intonation
[laughs]	Non-linguistic action
(x)	Inaudible word
[was tall?]	Uncertain utterance
I said ‘What?’	Reported speech
...	Longer pause up to 3 seconds
[4 sec]	Longer pause above 3 seconds
[...]	Elision
CAPS	Emphatic stress

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