HOW MIGRANTS CHOOSE THEIR DESTINATIONS

FACTORS INFLUENCING POST-EU ACCESSION CHOICES AND DECISIONS TO REMAIN

Dominika Pszczółkowska

How Migrants Choose Their Destinations

This book reveals how decisions regarding where to migrate are made, what factors are considered, how these change over time and why some destinations are more attractive to certain categories of people.

Based on rich existent, and new data, the book explains the destination choices of Polish migrants to the four most frequently chosen destinations countries: the UK, Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands. Examined through a sophisticated theoretical framework allowing for the incorporation of factors resulting from several fields – economics, public policies, demography – and migration theories, it paints a nuanced and balanced picture of European migration.

This book will be of key interest to scholars and students of migration studies, Central and Eastern European politics, and more broadly to sociology, political science, social geography and international relations.

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Introduction

Why were the migrants so different?

The idea for this book – or, rather, the research behind it – was born at a playground in Brussels, as my daughter climbed the monkey bars. I had just arrived from London to become the European Union (EU) correspondent for the Polish daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*. In the UK, the Polish newcomers provided much to report on: they were setting up associations and Polish-language media, importing their dogs and cats or becoming homeless. In Belgium, Poles remained largely invisible – finding work and housing through their networks from towns back in Poland and keeping themselves to themselves. Their only manifestations were numerous Polish food shops and, now, the Polish political graffiti sprayed on the playground installations. These differences made me wonder who chose the particular destinations of migration and on what basis.

Polish migration to various countries after the EU enlargement of 2004 was strongly selective. Young and educated Poles, as well as Lithuanians, Slovaks and others, headed mostly to the UK or Ireland – where over a quarter of Central and Eastern Europeans held third-level degrees – whereas those without degrees chose continental Europe, for example, Germany, Italy or the Netherlands (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009). This led researchers to speak of two types of emigration from the region after 2004: one consisting of young, educated persons seeking new personal and professional experiences and the other resembling pre-accession migrants, who frequently circulated between the home and a job abroad and whose motivations were mostly financial – they needed to earn money to spend back home and did not have high aspirations for their positions abroad (Kaczmarczyk 2011; Kaczmarczyk and Okólski 2008; White 2022). My puzzlement regarding the differences between Poles in various countries led me to switch to academic research and investigate how and why particular post-accession migrants chose specific destinations. This book is the result of my enquiry.

The research questions

Demographers and economists were the first to study the reasons behind the large flows of post-accession migrants, focusing on the push factors in the countries of origin – such as unemployment and the overproduction of young

graduates who could not fit into the labour market – and pull factors, especially in the UK or Ireland, such as the demand for labour in general and in particular sectors or for flexible labour (e.g., Okólski and Salt 2014). Sociologists soon stepped in to underline the cultural and lifestyle-related factors attracting migrants to particular destinations (Krings *et al*. 2013) and the fact that many of these migrations were 'unpredictable' or 'liquid', with the migrants searching for experiences and opportunities and having open-ended plans regarding both the length of their stay and the next destination (Drinkwater, Eade, and Garapich 2009; Engbersen, Snel, and de Boom 2010). Although the role of social networks became less obvious than in the pre-accession period, they were underlined as fundamental for the less human- and economic-capital-endowed migrants (White 2011).

In the negotiations preceding the 2004 EU enlargement, the freedom of movement of people – which included the freedom to undertake employment – was a contentious issue, with Germany and Austria fearing a mass influx of workers who would bring down wages, burden the social security systems and cause other social problems. After delicate negotiations, an asynchronous opening was agreed: each of the 'old' EU15 countries would be able to restrict access to their labour market for a maximum of seven years in a two-year + three-year + two-year system, with an assessment of the labour market situation conducted after each period. Several studies aimed to predict the scale and directions of post-2004 migration from Central and Eastern Europe (Alvarez-Plata, Brücker, and Siliverstovs 2003; Boeri and Brücker 2000; Dustmann *et al*. 2003; Kupiszewski 2001). Some were broadly accurate concerning the total number of migrants but not one predicted the geographic directions of migration, even when it was known that only three countries (the UK, Ireland and Sweden) would open their labour markets to new EU citizens on the day of accession, May 1, 2004. After enlargement, the role of transitional arrangements in redirecting migrants from Germany to the British Isles was initially perceived as important (Baas and Brücker 2008; Zaiceva 2006). However, it was soon pointed out that, rather than redirecting migrants, the earlier opening of some labour markets stimulated a new, qualitatively different wave of migrations (Fihel *et al*. 2015; Kaczmarczyk 2011; Kaczmarczyk and Okólski 2008).

Undoubtedly, all of the above factors impacted upon migration decisions but, frequently, they were an equally valid reason to migrate to at least several countries. Potential earnings were similar in many Western European destinations. Speaking English was a reason to choose the British Isles instead of Germany but it did not explain the choice between the UK and Ireland. Many people had friends or relatives they could go to in Germany but chose, nevertheless, the UK or Ireland. Finally, although three countries opened their labour markets to new EU citizens immediately upon accession, only two experienced a large migration flow from Poland, while Sweden, despite having a history of Polish migration, received only a small group of newcomers. The aim of this research thus became to focus not on the reasons for migration but on the destination choices of Polish post-accession migrants. To grasp how and dependant on what factors

migrants chose these destinations, the following detailed research questions were formulated:

1. How did Polish post-accession migrants make their decisions to migrate? Was this a one-step process, where a particular opportunity presented itself and they sought it? Or did they first decide to emigrate and then look for an appropriate destination?
2. What kinds of factors did they take into consideration when making their decision? Were these factors predominantly economic, social, cultural, legal or other?
3. How were the factors taken into consideration dependent on the demographic features of the particular migrant, especially their level of education?
4. How did factors considered by migrants vary depending on the destination? Why were Ireland and the UK more attractive to graduates than Germany, the Netherlands and other European destinations?
5. Would migrants have made a different decision regarding their destination if all EU labour markets had been open to them at the time of migration?

   Since 2004, the circumstances of migration have changed significantly several times in both sending and receiving countries, especially due to the financial and economic crisis and Brexit (Chapter 1 offers an overview and periodization of migration from Central and Eastern Europe from 2004). It was never the case that particular countries attracted only one specific type of migrant. With time and the lifting of restrictions on access to the labour markets, destination countries that initially attracted predominantly low-qualified workers, such as Germany and the Netherlands, started to attract more varied groups (Strockmeijer, de Beer, and Dagevos 2019; White 2022). By the time of my research for this book from 2015 to 2017, many post-accession migrants had had the time to learn more about their destination and to re-assess their migration decisions – not only due to changed economic or political circumstances but also to changes in their own lives, particularly in terms of life stage. Hence the sixth and seventh research questions:
6. Were the reasons for remaining at the destination the same as the initial reasons for migrating there? If they had changed, then why and for whom?
7. Which public policies in origin and destination countries, other than those regarding labour market access, influenced migrants' decisions to migrate, to choose a particular destination and to remain there?

The theoretical framework, methods and structure of the book

The failure to predict the directions of migration flows before the EU enlargement of 2004 resulted in part from migration theories being too narrow to encompass the wealth of economic, social, cultural, political and other factors possibly considered by migrants when choosing the destination. Each theory – from economic ones like neoclassical theory and New Economics of Labour Migration to sociological theories such as network theory or concepts such as lifestyle migration – helps

to explain the decisions of only particular sections of migrants. Factors resulting from migration policies and other public policies are not well theorized and are frequently undervalued in studies on destination choice.

Scholars have argued that migration theories can and should be combined to draw more comprehensive pictures of reality (de Haas 2014, 2021; Massey 1999; Massey *et al.* 1993). To do so, Chapter 3 in this volume builds on the push–pull framework of Everett Lee (1966) and its later iterations and proposes a framework for analysing migration destination choices which incorporates factors resulting from the main migration theories and some recent perspectives – e.g., that of the life course.

The push–pull framework has been criticized for being a purely descriptive model (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2013), with no explanatory power. However, here it is treated not as a theory but as a framework encompassing factors which can be explained through a number of theories and perspectives. It has also been criticized as too deterministic, depriving the migrants of agency (Crawley and Hagen-Zanker 2019; de Haas 2021). Some researchers have, in response, chosen to replace Lee's 'factors' by 'drivers' (Carling and Talleras 2016; van Hear, Bakewell, and Long 2018) – a kind of background force based on which potential migrants may or may not decide to migrate. This research, however, aimed to name particular factors which had been acted upon – such as insufficient earnings – rather than general phenomena, such as poverty, so the basic term, factors, was kept.

Factors exposed in the literature on Polish migration (which is reviewed in Chapter 2) were incorporated into the framework and classified into *push*/*retain* factors in origin countries, *pull*/*repel* factors in destinations (all of these can be economic, social or cultural), *intervening factors* (for example, the transitional arrangements regarding access to the labour market or geographical distance) and *personal factors* (such as age, gender, life stage and family situation, level of education and professional situation). A 'tree' of factors was thus created, which served as a basis for the analysis of decisions to migrate, choices of destination and decisions to remain at the destination. Analysing these factors separately but within the same framework allowed me to demonstrate how various factors gained or lost importance with time spent in the destination and upon reaching new life stages.

The empirical material consisted of semi-structured qualitative interviews with 73 Polish migrants to four European countries (21 in the UK, 18 in Ireland, 16 in the Netherlands and 18 in Germany). These four countries were chosen not only because they were the most popular destinations for Polish post-accession migrants, with the varied demographic profiles of Poles who went there; they also had very different histories of migration from Poland. Germany had, since the nineteenth century, been the dominant receiving destination, while the UK had a much smaller and ageing post-war political emigration, plus some younger migrants who had arrived in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Netherlands had a relatively small number, and Ireland had almost no Poles.

The sample included only people who had been living in the destination for at least a year and who did not intend to leave within the following year – in line with the United Nations (2023) definition of long-term or permanent migrants – in

order to exclude incomplete and other temporary migrants for whom the reasons for remaining could not be studied. In each country, the samples, which were very diverse in demographic and life-stage-related terms, were strongly skewed towards graduates to allow for the comparison of graduate- and non-graduate groups. Interviews were conducted among people in various locations within the destination countries, from the capitals to small towns. This was possible because the research was conducted almost entirely online, with participants recruited via Polish Facebook groups. The methods of this study, as well as the advantages and challenges of recruiting respondents and conducting qualitative research online, are discussed in Chapter 4.

The findings regarding the factors influencing the initial destination choice among respondents in the UK, Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands are discussed respectively in Chapters 5–8. The UK, the most popular destination in the first decade after enlargement, which attracted a very varied population of Polish migrants, was treated by many other migrants as a reference point – they felt the need to justify why they did not go there. A difference in preferences – and thus factors taken into consideration – was visible especially for migrants to Ireland, many of whom underlined that they would not have wanted to live in the UK. Migrants to the Netherlands frequently would have liked to go to the UK (other destinations such as Ireland and Norway were also mentioned) but explained their choices in terms of a lack of possibilities to do so, which made them settle for what they perceived as a second-best destination. For migrants to Germany, not only economic conditions but also geographical closeness were fundamental. Chapter 9 focuses on how migrants' reasons for remaining at the destination changed over time, as they learned more about their new homes and also reached new life stages – parenthood or middle age.

Terms related to migration are never neutral, either in academic or in public discourse. In this book, I choose to speak of 'migrants' (as opposed to, for example, 'emigrants', 'immigrants' or 'free movers') and of 'migration' (as opposed to 'free movement' or 'mobility', for example). The latter terms, which have been used especially when referring to movements within the EU (Favell 2008; Glorius, Grabowska-Lusińska, and Kuvik 2013; Krings *et al.* 2013), have two underlying assumptions, which I did not wish to suggest to the respondents nor to the readers – that the movement is temporary and is, somehow, a positive, modernizing phenomenon (Łukowski 2023). Although, for many of the respondents, migration was a temporary and enriching experience, for others it was a necessity, undertaken because of family or other pressures or due to the lack of a better choice. I thus stuck to the most neutral term available – migrants. To underline the diverse character of migration, even from one country, I sometimes refer to migrations in the plural.

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1 Two decades of East–West migrations in the enlarged European Union

Westbound migrations were the most visible social phenomenon resulting from the European Union (EU) enlargements of 2004 and 2007. Suddenly, 'Irish gift shops' in Dublin were staffed almost exclusively by Polish and Lithuanian vendors and everybody back in Riga or Wrocław knew somebody who had left. The accession of eight Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries[1] (the so-called EU8) in 2004, Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 (EU2) and Croatia in 2013, changed the scale and direction of migrations within the EU. The total number of CEE nationals in 'old' EU15 countries rose from about 1.3 million in 2003 to 3.7 million in 2007 and 6.1 million in 2014 (Brücker 2009; Engbersen 2018; Fihel *et al*. 2015). For the first time in decades, mobility within the EU, not from outside of the bloc, became the main source of inflows into the 'old' EU15, particularly flows of workers. This remained true until the arrival of refugees and migrants across the Mediterranean in 2015–2016 (Kaczmarczyk 2019; OECD 2013). The movement of CEEs was described by academics, politicians and the media alike as unprecedented – 'A Continent Moving West?' (Black *et al*. 2012), a 'tsunami of Polish migrants' (Engbersen 2018, 69) or the 'Biggest wave of migrants in [UK] history' (Light and Young 2009, 287). This chapter presents an overview of these migration flows, focusing particularly on the destination choices made by migrants. Much of the research on post-accession migration focuses exclusively on Poles and is discussed in Chapter 2. Here, the aim is to paint a broad-brush picture of migration from all countries that joined the EU in 2004, 2007 and 2013.

The revolution in migration routes from Central and Eastern Europe

Before EU enlargement, the migration situation across Central and Eastern Europe was far from uniform. In the 1990s and early 2000s, most countries of the region were undoubtedly countries of emigration, with Poland, Romania and Bulgaria, in particular, experiencing sizeable outflows. Incomplete migrations (Okólski 2001a, 2001b) were a characteristic feature of the period, with Poles circulating most often between their homes in Poland and workplaces in Germany, while Romanians and Bulgarians chose predominantly Italy and Spain to engage in temporary work in construction or farming or within households (Ambrosini *et al*. 2015; Engbersen

et al. 2012; Glorius, Grabowska-Lusińska, and Kuvik 2013). At the same time, several countries of the region – the Czech Republic, Hungary and, according to some sources, also Slovenia – were already starting to experience a migration transition, with the balance of migrations turning positive before EU accession, especially for the Czech Republic (Drbohlav 2012; Mansoor and Quillin 2007; Okólski 2001a, 2004).

The EU enlargement of May 1, 2004 greatly influenced the numbers and the geographic distribution of migrants, bringing about a revolution in migration routes in Europe. This was largely unexpected. Several studies (Alvarez-Plata, Brücker, and Siliverstovs 2003; Boeri and Brücker 2000; Dustmann *et al.* 2003; Kupiszewski 2001) attempted to predict the scale and directions of migration from Central and Eastern Europe after the 2004 enlargement. Some predictions were broadly accurate concerning the total number of migrants. However, not one predicted the geographic directions of this migration. This was the case even after the 'two years + three years + two years' system was agreed upon in EU accession negotiations (meaning that each country could restrict access to its labour market for new EU citizens for a maximum of seven years but the labour market situation had to be assessed after each of the above periods). Only three countries decided to open their labour markets from the first day: the UK, Ireland and Sweden. Data from one study published after the transitory arrangements had been agreed (Alvarez-Plata, Brücker, and Siliverstovs 2003) suggested that the share of migrants going to Germany would decrease rapidly in favour of the UK but the authors then discarded this scenario as implausible because they believed that 'the geographical distribution of the migrant population across European countries is fairly stable over time' (2003, 39). In reality, migration flows proved to be very volatile (King and Okólski 2019; Okólski 2017) – changing almost overnight – and the UK overtook Germany as the most popular destination. This volatility makes the post-accession period a great case for the study of the choices which migrants make regarding their destinations, creating what may be perceived as a natural experiment (Bahna 2008; Kaczmarczyk, Aldaz-Carroll, and Hołda 2020).

Period 1: From the enlargement to the economic crisis

The migrations of the two decades since the 2004 enlargement can be roughly divided into four periods (compare, for example, Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al. 2021). The first, from May 1, 2004 to the beginning of the economic crisis in late 2008, was marked by the largest intensification of flows from new to old EU member states, especially from Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia (Okólski 2012; Okólski and Salt 2014). At the same time, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia saw limited or no increases in emigration (Drbohlav *et al.* 2009; Kureková 2013; Moreh 2014). The directions of flows changed fundamentally: the UK and the Republic of Ireland started receiving large groups of migrants from the CEE region and the UK soon overtook Germany as the country with the largest inflows and the largest stocks of CEEs. This was unprecedented – for

the first time since the beginning of mass migrations in the nineteenth century, Germany was not the number one destination for the inhabitants of the region.

The change was, in significant part, because of the change of preferred directions of Polish migrants who – due to the size of Poland's population and the large outflow – constituted over half of all the migrants. In the last Polish census before EU accession in 2002, there were 12 times more Poles in Germany than in the UK (294,000 vs 24,000) (GUS 2013). By 2007, the UK had overtaken Germany (700,000 vs 500,000 resident Poles), although the numbers for Germany were also rising, in part due to open possibilities of self-employment (GUS 2021; Kahanec, Zaiceva, and Zimmermann 2010; Ulceluse and Kahanec 2023). Ireland, which – before enlargement – had very few Poles, became the third most popular destination.

A similar or even more pronounced preference for the UK and Ireland was visible among other new EU citizens. Among Lithuanians, the UK was by far the most popular – with more migrants than in all other EU countries added together – followed by Ireland, Norway and, only in fourth place, Germany (IOM Lithuania 2023). In the case of Latvians, the UK and Ireland competed for the title of top destination in the years 2004–2008, with Germany and the Nordic countries far behind (Hazans 2019). For citizens of Slovakia, the neighbouring Czech Republic, as well as Germany and Austria, remained the main migration destinations but the UK advanced to the fourth most popular destination (BMP 2010).

As a result, the numbers of EU8 citizens in the UK and Ireland grew dramatically. Between May 2004 and June 2008, 888,000 EU8 nationals applied to the UK's Worker Registration Scheme, in which all workers who were not self-employed were to register; 67 per cent were from Poland, 10 per cent from Slovakia and 9 per cent from Lithuania, followed by Latvia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia and Slovenia, with only 800 people (Home Office 2008). In Ireland, the total number of Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Slovaks, Hungarians and Romanians who received insurance numbers (Personal Public Service Numbers) increased from below 10,000 in 2002 to over 130,000 in 2006, followed by a similar number in 2007 (Kloc-Nowak 2023). This turned the Republic into the first EU country according to the share of other EU nationals as residents (Kahanec, Zaiceva, and Zimmermann 2010). At the same time, numbers of EU8 migrants in Germany, Austria and other countries of the EU and the European Economic Area – such as Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Iceland, the Netherlands and Norway – were also growing, especially after the restrictions in access to their labour markets for new EU entrants were gradually lifted (Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2019).

The first period of post-accession migrations distinguished here was also marked by the entry of Bulgaria and Romania into the EU in 2007. Both experienced intense emigration, with Romania quickly becoming the record-holder for the largest out-migration rates in the whole of the EU, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the population (Eurostat 2018). Their accession further contributed to the diversification of migrations within the Union as, for these countries, Spain and especially Italy were the most popular destinations in the first year of membership, when 85 per cent of migrants from Romania chose either one or the other (OECD 2019).

Period 2. The crisis years

The first major structural change after the 2004 and 2007 enlargements of the EU was the economic crisis, which started in 2008 and touched both European sending and destination countries to various degrees. It caused double-digit unemployment in both sending and receiving countries: the Baltics and Slovakia on the one hand and Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Greece on the other (Lafleur, Stanek, and Veira 2017), which resulted in varied reactions by migrants and potential migrants, depending on the situation in their country of residence. While emigration from Poland and Slovakia slowed down, it increased from Latvia, Lithuania and Hungary (Apsite-Berina, Manea, and Berzins 2020). As a result, while the former countries experienced a 'single hump' post-accession migration, with the largest numbers departing in the years immediately after these countries joined the EU, the latter saw a 'double hump', with a second significant increase in emigration coinciding with severe economic crises in these countries (Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al. 2021; Moreh 2014).

High unemployment in receiving countries, in particular Spain, led to a significant redirecting of migration flows, especially of Romanians and Bulgarians. Before EU accession and in the first year of membership (2007), Italy and Spain (in the case of Romanians) and Italy and Greece (in the case of Bulgarians) were by far the most popular destinations (Holland *et al*. 2011; Kovacheva 2021; Markova 2012). Work in the grey economy in these countries could easily be obtained, especially since Schengen visa requirements for tourists from Bulgaria and Romania had been lifted in 2001 and 2002 (Kovacheva 2014). From 2008, the numbers of migrants heading to Spain and Greece dropped manifoldly (Van Mol and de Valk 2016). Most Romanians and Bulgarians chose Italy instead and also started looking at a broader spectrum of destinations, especially Germany, followed by the UK and Ireland (Anghel *et al*. 2017; Holland *et al*. 2011; Kovacheva 2014, 2021; OECD 2019). Transitional arrangements, which were in place for Bulgarian and Romanian citizens until the end of 2013, did not influence destination choices in the same way as they did for the EU8, because almost all EU15 countries, with the exception of Sweden and Finland, introduced such temporary restrictions (Holland *et al*. 2011; Kovacheva 2014). However, their lifting led to an upsurge of migrants to Northern European countries (Manolova 2019).

Period 3. The post-crisis years

The end of the economic crisis, which came about in Ireland and the UK in 2010 and some years later in Southern Europe, translated into an increase in the inflows of migrants from the EU8 and EU2, although the numbers were not as dramatic as in the first years after the 2004 enlargement. Nevertheless, by the end of the first post-enlargement decade, the geographical directions of migration had changed dramatically – Germany had dropped from first to second and, according to some sources, even third most popular migration destination for EU8 plus EU2 citizens, preceded not only by the UK but also by Italy (Apsite-Berina, Manea, and Berzins

2020; Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2019; Moreh 2014). However, especially after the transitional arrangements had ended for the EU8 in 2011 and the EU2 at the end of 2013, numbers in Germany started increasing more rapidly. Germany had also weathered the economic crisis relatively well, which resulted in some multiple migrants arriving from crisis-hit countries (Ciobanu 2015; Kovacheva 2014; Salamońska and Czeranowska 2021). Other destinations which experienced relatively mild or no crises were also receiving increased numbers of arrivals from the South (Lafleur, Stanek, and Veira 2017). Particularly Norway and the Netherlands but also Austria, Belgium and Denmark were hosting increasingly large groups of CEEs, making the map of European migrations much more 'diverse, fragile and fragmented' (King and Okólski 2019).

Two sending countries also increased their presence on this map. Hungary, which experienced only a small emigration increase in the first period after enlargement, saw it go up from 2010 due to the country's difficult economic and political situation (Moreh 2014). The accession of Croatia to the EU in 2013 intensified outflows, mainly to Germany and Austria but with Ireland also appearing as a new and popular destination. The migration balance of Croatia – which had been positive from the early 2000s until the economic crisis – turned negative (Draženović, Kunovac, and Pripužić 2018).

The average age of EU8 and EU2 migrants in all destinations increased, suggesting that some who had arrived as 20-somethings in the first phase of post-accession migrations had settled in their new homes (Apsite-Berina, Manea, and Berzins 2020; Kloc-Nowak 2023). Also, although post-accession migrations were generally less male-dominated than pre-accession ones, this balancing of genders intensified in the crisis and post-crisis periods, especially in countries such as Ireland, where many of the early-arriving migrants worked in the construction sector (Kloc-Nowak 2023; Moreh 2014).

Period 4. No longer 'post-accession' migrations

The Brexit referendum in the UK in June 2016 marked what some researchers have come to consider the symbolic end of the post-accession migration period (Garapich *et al.* 2023; White 2022). In part due to the referendum result, three important changes regarding migration from Central and Eastern Europe took place: returns increased, the total number of migrants from EU8 countries decreased and Germany again became the destination of choice for migrants from this region.

Changes in the behaviours of migrants and potential migrants to the UK became apparent even before it was known what legal consequences the country's departure from the EU would bring for EU nationals. The numbers of new migrants from EU8 countries – and stocks of those present – had decreased significantly already by 2017, with the trend gaining speed in the following years (ONS 2021). Interestingly, the referendum did not have a similar effect for Romanians and Bulgarians (Markova and King 2021). Britain's departure from the EU in 2020 coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, which provided a further impulse to return to the home country for some migrants who found themselves without work, while

the costs of housing and life generally remained significantly higher than in their home countries (Economist 2021; Grosa 2022; Salaris *et al*. 2022). According to Eurostat data, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and the three Baltic countries in particular experienced high rates of return (Garapich *et al*. 2023). By 2020, all EU countries except Romania and Latvia had positive net mobility although, for Poland and Croatia, the balance for their own nationals was still negative (European Commission 2023). This, coupled with rather intense immigration to these countries, led scholars to speak of the beginning of a migration transition (Fihel, Janicka, and Okólski 2023; Okólski 2021).

Among those EU8 and EU2 residents who were still migrating, Germany by 2018 had again become the destination with the largest stocks of CEEs, mainly due to the country regaining its status of preferred destination for Poles (GUS 2021) and also a large presence of Romanians, for whom it was the second most popular destination after Italy, and before Spain and the UK (IOM 2023).

At about the same time, the Netherlands overtook Ireland as the third European country with the largest number of Poles, with Norway and Italy not far behind (GUS 2021). Scandinavian countries had increasingly become attractive destinations for migrants from the Baltics – Norway and Sweden for Lithuanians and Latvians, Finland and, to a lesser degree, Sweden for Estonians (Anniste, Pukkonen, and Paas 2017; IOM Lithuania 2023; Lulle, Krisjane, and Bauls 2019).

The selectivity of CEE migrations

One of the striking features of the intra-EU flows was their selectivity, especially in the first phase of post-accession migrations (Elsner and Zimmermann 2013; Fihel *et al*. 2015; Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009; Kureková 2013). Young and educated Poles, Lithuanians or Slovaks headed mostly to the UK or Ireland (where over a quarter of CEEs held third-level degrees), whereas a huge majority of those without degrees chose continental Europe; on the other end of the spectrum, only 4 per cent of Poles in the Netherlands in the first years after accession held third-level degrees (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009). After the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the pattern repeated itself: young graduates, whose emigration rates increased with enlargement, tended to choose the UK or Ireland and, to a certain degree, Germany, while Italy and Spain continued to receive mostly non-graduates, as had been the case in very large numbers already before these countries' EU accession (Ambrosini *et al*. 2015; Andrén and Roman 2016; Anghel *et al*. 2017; OECD 2019).

The differences highlighted above suggest that we should speak of at least two different types of migration (Kaczmarczyk 2011; White 2022). One consisted of young, educated persons who hoped to profit from migration by gaining new professional or personal experiences. The other type resembled pre-accession migrants, who frequently circulated between home and job abroad, whose motivations were mostly financial – they wanted to earn money for spending back home and did not have high aspirations for their positions abroad. Similar distinctions were drawn for EU2 migrants, with, for example, young and educated Bulgarian migrants being termed 'new Bulgarians' (Manolova 2019).

Several researchers proposed classifications into a greater number of types – based on the migrants' strategies and intended durations of stay – as well as on other features, such as family situation, education level and the use of qualifications abroad. Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich (2007) classified early Polish post-accession migrants in the UK into four categories, based on their strategies and aims: *storks* (20 per cent of migrants) – circular migrants, mostly found in low occupations; *hamsters* (16 per cent), who saw their move as a one-time event to acquire capital for a particular purpose; *searchers* (42 per cent), who 'kept their options deliberately open' and *stayers* (22 per cent), who intended to remain for a long time. Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski (2009) proposed a similar classification, based on a number of factors ranging from family situation and use of qualifications to return intentions, dividing migrants into *circular*, *intentionally unpredictable*, *migrant/emigrant* (long-term migrants, who typically migrate with families and intend to return only after having fulfilled particular professional goals or personal ones, such as educating their children) and *emigrant* (with the intention to settle). Luthra, Platt, and Salamońska (2014) offered a classification based on a study in the same four countries as this book (the UK, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands) and decided that a classification into six categories was the most appropriate, to include non-work-related motivations such as student or family migrations. Their proposed categories were *circular migrants, temporary migrants, settled migrants, family migrants, students and adventurers*. Other classification focused in particular on the levels of attachment to the home and destination country (Düvell and Vogel 2006; Engbersen *et al.* 2013) or the duration of migration and socio-economic status (Sert 2018).

All of these classifications shed some light on the topic of this book's research: destination choices. They demonstrate clearly that the factors which motivated migrants can be placed along a wide spectrum, from purely economic – such as saving for a particular goal – to non-economic – such as gaining freedom of life choices or exploring the world. However, as Luthra, Platt, and Salamońska (2014) point out, all 'types' were present in all countries, so such categories illustrate broad trends but cannot serve to determine the choices and factors taken into consideration by individual migrants.

A characteristic feature of all of the early descriptions and classifications of CEE migrants was a focus on the unpredictable nature of their migration – a large section of migrants could not determine at the moment of migration how long they would stay or where they would go next, a phenomenon dubbed as *intentional unpredictability* (Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich 2007), *deliberate indeterminacy* (Moriarty *et al.* 2010) or *liquidity* (Engbersen 2012; Engbersen and Snel 2013; Engbersen *et al.* 2013). Many authors saw this unpredictability or liquidity as a result of new opportunities, linked with the freedom acquired by joining the EU (Favell 2008). However, Engbersen (2018) underlined that sometimes the liquidity was not so much a question of opportunities but rather of circumstances which made an unstable life and work situation more viable or cost-effective.

With time and the lifting of restrictions on accession to the labour market, destination countries that initially attracted predominantly low-qualified workers, such as Germany and the Netherlands, started to attract even more varied groups

(Strockmeijer, de Beer, and Dagevos 2019; White 2022). Poles and other CEEs discovered Berlin not only for its economic opportunities but also as a multicultural metropolis, where they could fit in and profit from its lively cultural scene or affordable higher education (Cichocka 2021; OECD 2020; Szczepaniak-Kroll and Szymoszyn 2023). Some migrants changed destinations; others returned home only to migrate again to the same or to a different country (Jancewicz and Salamońska 2020; Salamońska and Czeranowska 2021; White 2014).

Migration during the second and subsequent periods distinguished in this chapter was thus perhaps somewhat less unpredictable or liquid than that immediately after 2004. Numerous authors underlined the gradually more settlement-oriented strategies of migrants (Friberg 2012; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2018; Ryan 2018). As Garapich *et al.* (2023) point out, middle-class migrants who today migrate abroad from large Polish cities usually do so with a particular purpose and time-span in mind – e.g., to gain a degree. They usually have more knowledge about the destination countries than their parents or older siblings who departed two decades earlier. Fihel and Kaczmarczyk (2023, 648) summed up that 'Over the years, migration from the region has become more settlement-oriented and much more diverse in terms of its motives'. Nevertheless – or perhaps even as a result of this diversity and greater knowledge of migrants – the question of how and based on what factors they choose their destination remains very worth pondering.

Note

1 The eight Central and Eastern European new EU members were the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Cyprus and Malta also joined at the same time.

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2 Push and pull factors of post-accession migrations from Poland

Emigration from Poland before EU accession

Emigration has been a significant part of many Poles' lives for generations. It started in the eighteenth century (when the former territories of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were partitioned by three neighbouring empires: Russia, Prussia and Austria-Hungary) and reached great magnitude in the nineteenth century. Some of these migrations were for political reasons, but most were undertaken by peasants and inhabitants of small towns, who responded to the huge demographic pressures created by population growth and a developing capitalist economy.

At first, migrants headed to other countries of Europe, finding work on German farms or in French coal mines. Soon, like other Europeans before them, Poles sailed across the Atlantic to the US, Brazil and other countries of the Americas (Kula and Assorodobraj-Kula 2012; Walaszek 2007). The scale of this exodus – termed the 'Great Emigration' – was enormous. As Stasik (1973) writes, in the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, over one-fifth of the Polish population left for the US. In today's numbers, this would mean 7–8 million Poles leaving the country (Pszczółkowska 2013).

Each subsequent historical period saw migrations from Poland to Germany, France, Belgium and other countries of Europe, as well as the Americas. World War II and the resulting territorial and political changes brought about voluntary and involuntary movements, sometimes referred to as the 'Second Great Emigration'. Perhaps the only period in recent Polish history when Poles did not emigrate in large numbers was during the Great Closure at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, when the newly created, Soviet-dominated Polish People's Republic did not allow its citizens to travel abroad (Stola 2001, 2010).

From 1954, restrictions regarding departure from Poland were gradually loosened, particularly for people with German and Jewish roots (Stola 2015a). More and more people chose to go through the inquisitorial, bureaucratic procedure of applying for a passport for various types of travel, some never to return (Stola 2015b). This gradual liberalization culminated in a mass wave of departures in the 1980s, when 1 million Poles settled abroad and a further 1 million chose temporary migration (Okólski 2001a). Some of those leaving were political *emigrés*,

especially after the introduction of martial law in Poland in 1981; however, most were economic migrants who profited from the relative ease of obtaining refugee status or other residence documents in Western Europe and the US (Slany 1995). The second half of the decade, when travel restrictions were eased, also witnessed an intensification of travel for the purposes of petty trade between communist countries, particularly from Poland to the German Democratic Republic (Stola 2020).

The long-term emigration of the 1980s was, in significant part, an emigration of educated people and the percentage of graduates leaving Poland reached alarming proportions (Kaczmarczyk and Okólski 2005; Sakson 1997). The trend changed after the transition to democracy and a market economy in 1989 – the number of migrants dropped as migrations of graduates diminished due to new opportunities in Poland (Iglicka 2000, 2019). However, other less privileged groups found it difficult to adapt to the new economic realities and sough income from abroad. Many profited from the open borders to engage in petty – but very lucrative – trade by circulating between their hometowns and Berlin, Vienna and other cities, with numbers of such traders exploding immediately after the fall of the Polish communist regime in 1989 (Irek 1998; Miera 2008; Stola 2020).

Later, when the petty trade became a less viable economic strategy, the traders – who had gained contacts, especially in Germany – were able to secure jobs there for themselves, their friends and their family. This resulted in a significant number of circular migrants, who earned money working on farms and construction sites and in homes caring for children and the elderly – and spent most of the money earned back in Poland. This incomplete migration (Okólski 2001a, 2001b, 2012b) was the result of, on the one hand, a large surplus of workers – who did not find their place in the new capitalist economy of Poland and were already used to circulating from their village to larger towns for work – and, on the other, by a large demand for workers in certain sectors in Western Europe. It was further facilitated by the abolition of tourist visas for Polish citizens in the early 1990s and by bilateral agreements concerning seasonal workers concluded by Poland with, *inter alia*, Germany, Belgium, France and Czechoslovakia (Fihel and Jaźwińska 2023).

Germany was the main but not the only destination of incomplete migration. Italy attracted Polish women, who worked mainly as maids, childminders or carers for the elderly but who also spread into other jobs and careers (Kordasiewicz 2014; Kowalska 2022; Małek 2011). Well-trodden and very particular migration routes developed: the inhabitants of the town of Siemiatycze in Eastern Poland went mostly to Brussels (Hirszfeld and Kaczmarczyk 2000); those from Stare Juchy in the Masurian Lakes circulated between their village and Iceland (Budyta-Budzyńska 2016, 2020); inhabitants of the Opolszczyzna region (some of whom held German passports) went to Germany and later to the Netherlands (Solga 2012); while those from the mountain region of Podhale headed for the US. In the second half of the 1990s, migration to the US continued but on a smaller scale. Many inhabitants of towns and regions known for their considerable emigration to the US (such as Nowy Targ in Podhale or Mońki in the east) turned their gaze towards European destinations (Jaźwińska and Okólski 2001) which were much less expensive to reach and where they did not need to apply for visas, at least

for short stays. Incomplete migration was, then, the characteristic feature of emigration from Poland before the 2004 enlargement of the European Union (EU) (Okólski 2004a, 2004b).

Post-accession migrations from Poland

Poland's accession to the EU on May 1, 2004 changed the migration situation almost overnight. The UK quickly overtook Germany as the main migration destination, although the number of Poles in Germany was also rising (Lesińska *et al.* 2014; Okólski and Salt 2014). Ireland, previously almost absent from the map of Polish migrations, became the third most popular destination (Kloc-Nowak 2023; Pszczółkowska and Lesińska 2022). Emigration in general – and emigration to destinations such as the UK and Ireland in particular – was strongly selective. Age, level of education and type and location of origin were the main selective factors (Anacka and Fihel 2012; Anacka and Okólski 2010; Dustmann, Frattini, and Halls 2010; Grabowska-Lusinska 2013; Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009), with the islands attracting younger, better educated migrants from larger cities in Poland. In the first years after accession, the average age of a Polish migrant to the UK or Ireland did not exceed 28 years while, in Germany or Italy, it was 35 (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009, 111). The differences in the levels of education were even more striking. The percentage of persons with tertiary education among Poles in Ireland and the UK was the highest (respectively 26 and 22.5 per cent), whereas the same number for Germany was 6.1 per cent and for the Netherlands, which received the least-educated Poles, it was only 4 per cent (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009, 113). Several scholars (Fihel *et al.* 2015; Kaczmarczyk 2008, 2011) concluded that the wave of young, educated and usually childless Polish migrants heading to the UK and Ireland was a new, qualitatively different wave of migration, which broke with the pre-accession traditions of incomplete migration of the somewhat older and less-educated persons who frequently had families back home.

The list of European countries attracting Polish migrants also became longer and more diverse (King and Okólski 2019), with previously exotic destinations such as Norway, Iceland or Spain attracting much larger groups of Polish migrants.[1] Later events, particularly the successive opening of all 'old' EU countries' labour markets to Polish citizens between 2004 and 2011, the global financial crisis which started in 2008 and the UK's 2016 referendum decision to leave the EU all significantly influenced the legal, economic and political conditions in various EU countries and the decisions of migrants. After a slight drop in the numbers of Polish migrants in most countries in the years of the crisis, the figures started increasing again from 2010, especially in Germany and the UK (GUS 2021). After the Brexit referendum in the UK, the number of newly arriving Poles dropped significantly (ONS 2020). As a result, in 2018, Germany again became the number one destination for Polish migrants. Numbers in the Netherlands were also increasing somewhat, while they remained stable or even dropped slightly in Ireland, which resulted in the Netherlands overtaking Ireland

in 2017 as the country with the third-largest population of Polish migrants (GUS 2021; Kloc-Nowak 2023).

More-detailed presentations of the history and literature regarding migrations to the four countries considered in this book (the UK, Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands) are set out in the following chapters. The literature concerning Polish post-accession migrants is extremely rich, probably amounting to several thousand articles and books. A number of these publications (*inter alia*, Horolets, Lesińska, and Okólski 2018; Lesińska *et al.* 2014; White 2016) provide a bird's-eye view of what has been researched in the field; the list of publications regarding Polish migrations is also continually updated on a website managed by Prof. Anne White (UCL 2017). The aim here is thus not to repeat these efforts or update the list but, rather, to focus on the findings and publications which shed light on the issues of migration motivations and factors influencing destination choices among Polish post-accession migrants.

Economic, cultural and social factors influencing post-accession migrations

It seems that demographers and economists were the first to analyse Polish post-accession migrations. Sociologists and anthropologists followed slightly later but came to dominate post-accession migration studies (Brzozowski and Kaczmarczyk 2018). During enlargement negotiations, representatives of other fields – notably political science – took great interest in post-accession migrations even before they happened but their publications remain somewhat less numerous (Chałupczak *et al.* 2018). Each of these fields provided important input regarding the factors which influenced migrants' decisions. In line with Bourdieu's (1986) division of types of capital, which has been used to categorize factors influencing migrations, for example, by Verwiebe (2014), factors influencing Polish migrants' decisions are divided below into economic, cultural and social.

Economic push and pull factors

Economic research regarding post-accession migrants was facilitated by the wealth of demographic and economic data available, especially those collected by British institutions but also institutions such as the National Bank of Poland, which published data regarding remittances. It is hardly surprising, then, that the economic motivations of migrants were the first to be acknowledged. This concerned both the push factors in Poland and pull factors in various destinations – and especially the UK – and resulted in both more theoretically and more strictly empirically oriented academic publications.

On the push side, researchers pointed to both the high level of unemployment in Poland (19.1 per cent in 2004) and to the large oversupply of young people leaving schools and universities who could not find suitable and stable jobs, as the two main factors motivating Poles to migrate (Fihel, Kaczmarczyk, and Okólski 2006; Okólski and Salt 2014). This was in line with the 'crowding-out' hypothesis

(Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009; Kaczmarczyk and Okólski 2008; Okólski 2012a), which assumed that a reallocation of workers from places where they could not be used effectively in the labour market, such as small Polish towns, to places where they could, such as the labour markets of Western Europe, was a logical and beneficial step on the way to the modernization of Poland. The differences in wages between sending and receiving countries were very significant (Blanchflower and Lawton 2008; Kahanec and Zimmermann 2009) – as Jończy (2010) calculated, at the moment of Poland's entry into the EU, the Index of Profitability of Migration (which is a comparison of wages in both sending and destination country) was 5 for Germany (meaning wages in Germany were five times higher than in Poland), 5.6 for Ireland and 5.8 for the UK. It then rapidly dropped to 3 in 2008 in all three countries. Several authors (among whom Szewczyk 2015; White 2011) also pointed to other economic push factors motivating young people, in particular, to migrate: the lack of resources to move out of the parental home. In such cases, migration was seen as offering a better possibility for an independent start in life (Szewczyk 2015).

Economic pull factors in destination countries, especially the UK and Ireland, were a mirror image of the situation in Poland: unemployment in 2004 was almost non-existent in Ireland (4.5 per cent) and the UK (4.7 per cent) while, in Germany, it was 10.3 per cent (Eurostat 2005). Both in the UK and Ireland there was a large and unfulfilled demand for workers. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, announced – three days before Poland and nine other countries joined the EU – that 'There are half a million vacancies in our job market and our strong and growing economy needs migration to fill these vacancies' (The Guardian 2004).

The significance of economic push and pull factors was confirmed by the migrants themselves in several surveys soon after EU enlargement. In a survey conducted by the University of Surrey (2006) among Poles in the UK, 58.4 per cent stated the reason for migration as 'financial/lack of jobs in Poland'. The second most frequent answer, by 41.4 per cent, was 'more options/easier to live'. Such an answer does not clearly show if the reasons for migration were purely economic (it was easier to live off one's wage) or if the respondents were thinking of options of another sort. The next most popular answer, chosen by 31.3 per cent of respondents, pointed to possibly non-economic factors: 'personal or professional development'. The authors of the survey underline that the answers varied depending on age. Financial reasons were the cause of migration of 55 per cent of people below the age of 24 and 83 per cent of those above 46 years. 'The set of migration motivations is complex and dependent on age and education – younger and educated migrants stressing the will to live in a foreign country, language acquisition, making friends and living in a global city', conclude the authors (University of Surrey 2006). In another study, by Milewski and Ruszczak-Żbikowska (2008), conducted in the form of an internet survey among Poles in the UK and Ireland, economic answers were also the most frequent: 'the possibility of finding a well-paid job' (63 per cent) or the 'chance of finding work easily' (36 per cent). A large group also pointed to cultural reasons: 'intention to study, deepen knowledge of language' (46 per cent) or 'new experiences' (34 per cent).

Jończy (2010), in a study of the inhabitants of the Opolszczyzna region, asked participants in a survey about their reason for choosing a particular country. The answer 'because I can earn more there' was chosen by 60 per cent of emigrants to the UK, 54 per cent of emigrants to Ireland, 42 per cent of those who went to Germany and 35 per cent of those who went to the Netherlands. The second most frequent reason was the existence of migrant networks in the form of friends or relatives already working at the destination, which was chosen by 51 per cent of migrants to the UK, 36 per cent to Ireland and Germany and 32 per cent to the Netherlands. The third reason was the participants' knowledge of the language of the destination country, chosen by 44 per cent of migrants to Germany, 43 per cent to the UK, 18 per cent to Ireland and 7 per cent to the Netherlands. Migrants to the Netherlands most frequently (55 per cent) chose the answer 'because it is easy to find a job, for example through a work agency', which was moderately popular for migrants to the UK and Ireland (19 and 18 per cent respectively) and not at all popular for those in Germany (7 per cent). Migrants to Germany were the only ones to point to the small costs and time needed to get to the destination (20 per cent). The above surveys demonstrated that economic issues were the most important factors motivating migrants but not the whole story.

Another group of researched economic push and pull factors – not as easily grasped in surveys – concerned welfare in sending and, especially, receiving states (Kureková 2013). The welfare magnet hypothesis, formulated by Borjas (1999), states that a high level of welfare acts as a magnet for migrants who seek to insure themselves against events such as unemployment and deters them from leaving the destination country in times of economic hardship. Several studies concerning post-enlargement migration from Central and Eastern Europe conclude that there was no excessive use of welfare by migrants (Blanchflower and Lawton 2008; Constant 2011; Kahanec, Zaiceva, and Zimmermann 2010; Pedersen, Pytlikova, and Smith 2008), which suggested that the level of welfare was probably not a factor taken into consideration by migrants when choosing their destination. Many migrants before migration are not aware or have only a very general idea about the social support to which they may be entitled in various destinations and almost none have enough practical information to be able to compare destinations.

However, research also suggests that some factors related to public policies played a role as push factors, motivating Poles and other Central and Eastern Europeans to leave their countries of origin (Chałupczak *et al*. 2018). Such factors certainly included unstable work conditions and the resulting precarity (a common problem which impacted especially young Poles) and a low level of social protection in case of unemployment, old age, health problems, disability, family disruption or poverty (as enumerated by Firlit-Fesnak 2013). Kureková (2013), who investigated why emigration from some EU8 countries (e.g., Poland) was much larger than from others (e.g., the Czech Republic or Hungary) found that these differences could be attributed to differences in social policy – that general welfare spending was significant, and that unemployment insurance, family support and health care were significant in the case of older persons, whereas for young adults the most important welfare schemes were those mediating labour market

mismatches. Unequal access to good-quality education and health care were also found to be significant factors (Anacka *et al.* 2014). This included reproductive health and the range of accessible procedures (Main 2018). Górecki, Matuszczyk, and Stec (2019), studying Polish migrants in the UK and Germany, found that labour market security was of limited importance for destination choice. However, it was somewhat more important for Poles in Germany than in the UK, which was likely related to their older age and family status. All the above suggests that factors resulting from public policies could, in fact, have been significant push factors encouraging migrants to leave Poland.

Research in later years, especially after the global financial crisis and the Brexit referendum in the UK – which were theorized as 'unsettling events' that could change migration decisions (Kilkey and Ryan 2021; Ryan 2018) – focused in particular on the impact on the decisions of Polish migrants already at the destination (Jancewicz and Markowski 2021; Jancewicz *et al.* 2020; Janicka and Kaczmarczyk 2016). Germany weathered the economic crisis better than most countries and some post-crisis research has shown that the state of the economy and the labour market was key in diverting migrant workers from one European country to another (Bertoli, Brücker, and Moraga 2016). Data regarding Polish migrants have shown not only increased numbers of new Polish migrants to Germany but also some multiple migrants changing their destinations (Salamońska and Czeranowska 2021; Salamońska and Winiarska 2021).

Cultural push and pull factors

Sociologists followed in the footsteps of economists in studying various aspects of post-accession migration, including those which impacted destination choices. Non-economic factors influencing decisions were not always easy to pinpoint since, as Szewczyk (2015, 159) noticed, some decisions were 'spontaneous (…), often made in days, with a simple, immediate or most often non-existent preparation'. However – in line with Bourdieu's (1986) classification of forms of capital – the non-economic push and pull factors of migration can be divided into two broad categories: cultural factors – frequently linked with language or lifestyle – and social factors, among which the most prominent were the role of migrant networks and factors related to life stage and gender.

Knowledge of the language of the destination country was certainly an important cultural factor taken into consideration by migrants. This is not surprising and has been demonstrated in several world-scale studies (Adserà and Pytliková 2015; Chiswick and Miller 2014; there are also studies, such as that by Mayda 2010, which question the influence of linguistic proximity on destination choice). Since no Western European language is close to Polish, the fact that English was the most widely spoken foreign language in Poland certainly played a part. In a survey by TNS (2015) conducted in May 2015, 33 per cent of Poles declared that they spoke English well or very well. The share for German and Russian was 12 per cent, with other languages at 1 per cent or less. The popularity of the English language in Poland has increased dramatically in recent decades and depends very much on

the age of the respondents. Of those aged 18–24 years old, 77 per cent claimed to be able to speak English; among pupils and university students, the figure was 85 per cent (CBOS 2012). As Adserà and Pytliková (2015) pointed out, not only is the case of migration to English-speaking countries special, since English 'seems to constitute less of a barrier to migrants than other languages' but returns on English proficiency in linguistically distant countries may also be high and may act as an incitement to migrate temporarily to learn the language. This is certainly the case in Poland.

Knowledge or attractiveness of the language is not the only cultural motivation found by researchers. Numerous studies pointed out the importance of other cultural factors in determining migration choices, such as a quest for self-development by living in a different or multicultural environment, gaining new experiences or living an adventure (Krings *et al.* 2013; Luthra, Platt, and Salamońska 2018; Salamońska 2012). Krings *et al.* (2013, 87), who conducted panel surveys among Poles in Ireland, concluded the following:

> The younger and more educated of these migrants, especially, are part of a new generation of mobile Europeans for whom the move abroad is not only work-related but also involves lifestyle choices as part of a broader aspiration for self-development.

Some of the Polish migrants could be considered 'Eurostars', as described by (Favell 2008) – people who profited from European freedoms to create a new identity for themselves, not necessarily linked with one nation but sometimes with more or with no nation at all but with a particular international city such as Amsterdam or London. In line with the above, Trevena (2011, 92) found that educated Poles working below their qualification level in London 'do not perceive themselves as part of the British society but rather as members of the international London community, where origin and class do not matter'.

Self-development as a motive for migration has been broadly researched. Isański, Mleczko, and Seredyńska-Abu Eid (2014) wrote about the migration strategy of Poles in the UK, which they call 'Project: ME', as part of a wider project of self-development. In their study, 288 respondents moved to the UK for work-related reasons while an even larger group of 369 respondents gave their reason as 'work and education combined' and a further 99 as 'tourism, work and education combined'; 35 pointed to education only. Especially for migrants in the second decade of the twenty-first century, a quest for personal development, understood as gaining new experiences, immeasurable competencies and a better understanding of oneself, was important (Grabowska 2019; Grabowska and Jastrzebowska 2022). Although most research demonstrated the attractiveness of the Anglo-Saxon culture and London as a world metropolis, especially by the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, researchers were discovering that this role of a cultural and multicultural 'hub' could also be played by other cities, particularly Berlin (Cichocka 2021; Szczepaniak-Kroll and Szymoszyn 2023) and that continental European destinations such as Germany and the Netherlands were also attracting

varied groups of Central and Eastern European migrants with diverse aspirations (Strockmeijer, de Beer, and Dagevos 2019; White 2022).

Social push and pull factors

It has been the subject of some debate whether the changing demographic profiles and life strategies of Polish migrants after accession meant less reliance on social networks for choosing the destination. Before EU accession, networks certainly played a very significant role. Kępińska (2008) reported that, among the seasonal workers she interviewed in Germany, 80 per cent received job offers in their name from a German employer whom they did not personally know (these offers were necessary for legal employment based on a Polish–German state agreement). These people's personal data were passed on to the employers by family, friends and acquaintances already working in Germany.

The directions chosen by Polish migrants after 2004 suggest that the role of networks may have become less significant. Migrations to countries in which there were strong Polish networks before EU accession, such as Germany, the US or Italy (Jaźwińska and Okólski 2001), all declined in relative importance. Numbers of migrants grew in countries – such as Ireland – which initially had no Polish networks or in relatively less-developed ones, such as the UK or the Netherlands. In the case of Ireland, a great majority of the precursors who migrated soon after EU accession on May 1, 2004 certainly did not have any networks on which they could rely. Anacka *et al.* (2014) pointed out that EU accession stimulated emigration from Polish regions which previously did not have strong migration networks, which also suggests that the role of networks decreased.

Nevertheless, even research from relatively new migration destinations, such as the UK and Ireland, demonstrated the importance of networks for destination choices and some migrants' lives in their new homes (Bojarczuk 2023; Bojarczuk and Mühlau 2018; Ryan 2009, 2023; White 2011; White and Ryan 2008). White (2011), who studied migration from two relatively small Polish towns, wrote: 'The evidence from Grajewo and Sanok tends to suggest that networks do constitute a factor of primary importance in explaining recent East–West migration in Europe' (2011, 73). She pointed out that, in these towns, migration 'to somebody' – friends or family who could arrange a first job and first housing (as opposed to going 'into the dark') – was still the norm. Sumption (2009) underlined that, due to modern methods of communication, migration networks can work and develop much faster than before.

The exact time of migration may have been key. Sumption (2009) points out, based on UK Labour Force Survey data, how networks might have affected labour recruitment. She noticed that, between 2004 and 2007, the number of Poles who found a job through someone already working at a given company rose quickly. In the year that Poland joined the EU, 26 per cent of people questioned had found a job this way (only those who had recently found a job were asked this question). Three years later, the figure was 36 per cent. This was partly the effect of the size of the Polish population in the UK. The author also ascribes the change to the fact

that more women went to the UK at later dates and that women generally rely on networks more often for finding a job.

In the aforementioned survey by Jończy (2010) in the Opolszczyzna region, the role of networks seems to have been important for all countries. The reason 'friends or relatives work there' for choosing a particular destination was mentioned almost as often as economic motivations, especially by migrants to the UK. The answer 'friends or relatives live there' was also popular. Jończy concludes that 'migration networks are most important not only in mass migrations but also in new ones, where the migrants had never before worked abroad' (2010, 233). Studies regarding the spatial distribution of migrants within the UK also suggest a strong role of networks. Bauere *et al*. (2007), studying the distribution of Poles and Lithuanians in the UK, noticed that where there are many Poles, there are few Lithuanians and *vice versa*, which may suggest that networks determined in which locality these nationals settled.

It is obvious that new migration networks developed in destination countries where there were previously few Polish migrants. The question is still, however, how fast they did this and how their role changed from the period immediately after May 1, 2004, to a few months or years later. Differences may have to do with the demographic profiles of the respondents. It is highly probable that less-educated and poorer people had to rely on the help of family or friends, whereas the better educated and better-off made their decisions based on other factors. Networks may have also been used in varied ways depending on the year of migration and the generation to which the migrant belonged. Some researchers (Grabowska 2019; Grabowska and Jastrzebowska 2021; Szewczyk 2015) think it appropriate to already speak of two generations of Polish post-accession migrants. Grabowska (2019) differentiates between those born between 1968 and 1982 – for whom the fall of communism in Poland was a formative event – and those born in the period 1983–1993, for whom Poland's EU accession was such an event. The latter usually spoke English or another foreign language and were more familiar than their predecessors with Western European realities; thus, they perhaps did not need to rely as much on networks in their migratory movements.

In this context, it is also interesting to note the kind of connections which were important to migrants and how they used them as sources of information or help. Already in 1973, Granovetter brought to light the strength of weak ties – that is, the fact that, for some purposes such as passing on information about a job opening, the most important ties are not the strong ones among family or friends but the weak ones which connect, for example, former schoolmates or other persons who remain in sporadic contact. The post-accession migration of Poles coincided with the dynamic development of various internet fora and social media, such as the Polish Nasza Klasa (our class) or Facebook, which made maintaining and re-establishing weak contacts much easier. Social media quickly started serving as sources of 'strategic information' for migrants (Dekker and Engbersen 2014), lowering the threshold for those wishing to migrate. 'This social media infrastructure has changed the nature of migrant networks and has lowered the threshold for aspiring migrants in various ways' (2014, 11),

they write. At the same time, the degree of access to these media and the willingness to use them depend very much on age and education level. It is probable that people departing for the UK and Ireland (statistically younger and better educated) used them more often to access information about work and life at the destination.

Social factors on the push side have also played a role in migration decisions. These were related especially to life stage and gender, especially the position of women in families and society. Some young people, particularly from smaller towns, have been found to use migration as a sort of rite of passage on their way to adulthood and as a way of escaping social controls imposed by their families, neighbours and friends at home (Grabowska 2016; Sarnowska 2016). As many authors (*inter alia* Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich 2007; Favell 2008; Grabowska 2016) point out, for younger people migration was frequently a kind of school of life, a rite of passage into adulthood or a way to prolong this transition and extend their youth (Dziekońska 2023; Krzaklewska 2019). Some of the attractiveness of a large, anonymous city far from home, such as London, may result from the fact that migrants escape the social control of their places of origin and gain freedom in their lifestyle choices (Favell 2008; Grabowska 2016; Szewczyk 2015). Non-gender-normative people were also reported to have migrated in order to gain more freedom in their personal choices and to escape the control of their families and social circles, although this motivation was usually intertwined with other, even more important ones related, for example, to economic needs (Stella, Gawlewicz, and Flynn 2016).

For women, migration was found to be, at times, an emancipatory decision, an opportunity to develop and challenge traditional gender roles or at least to rest from the pressures of managing the daily life of a family (Aziz 2015; Barglowski and Pustulka 2018; Grabowska-Lusińska and Jaźwińska-Motylska 2013; Herzberg 2015; Main 2016; Main and Czerniejewska 2017; Siara 2009). Some women chose migration in order to flee from violence at home (Anacka *et al.* 2014; Kordasiewicz 2016). However, for many others, gender- and life-stage-related factors, such as the need to care for their children or ageing parents, were also factors which impacted and sometimes impeded their migration decisions (Perek-Białas and Slany 2016; Radziwinowiczówna, Rosinska-Kordasiewicz, and Kloc-Nowak 2018).

All of the above social factors – which operated both on the push and the pull sides – significantly influenced some migrants' decisions, both those questioning whether to migrate at all and those regarding the choice of destination.

A decade after EU enlargement, the not exclusively economic character of factors influencing migrations was widely accepted. As Luthra, Platt, and Salamońska (2014, 10) wrote

> A body of primarily qualitative research is emerging that documents the complex, specifically non-economic motivations of the new EU migrants (…), as well as the complexity of their migration patterns. It is now widely accepted that this 'new' migration system is qualitatively different – more varied in terms of the demographic characteristics of the migrants, their motivations,

and their economic and social experiences in the destination country – than traditional economic migration.

Verwiebe, Wiesböck, and Teitzer (2014, 128–29) agreed

The change in intra-European migration has been accompanied by a differentiation of the causes of and motivations for migration […] Recent research has revealed that migration processes are the result of complex decision-making processes in which economic factors, social network resources and a number of other social, familial and cultural factors play important roles.

Intervening factors

Among the intervening factors influencing destination choice, especially the transitional arrangements which limited access to continental European labour markets for two to seven years received much academic interest. This concerned particularly the question of redirection of migrants from Germany, which implemented the transitional arrangements for the maximum allowed time of seven years, to the UK and Ireland, which opened their labour markets on the day of accession.

Researchers agree that the restrictions caused some diversion of workers particularly from Germany to the UK and Ireland. There is no agreement, however, about the scale of this effect. The problem stems partly from the migration forecasts prepared during accession negotiations. These were created using three methods. Some (Faßmann and Hintermann 1997; Wallace 1998; Krieger 2004) were based on intentions potential migrants declared in opinion polls, which had more to do with aspirations than with plans that would be put into practice. Others predicted migrations based on experiences from previous enlargements when Spain and Portugal joined the European Communities (Bauer and Zimmermann 1999; Orłowski and Zienkowski 1998). The largest group of forecasts made use of econometric models, which took into consideration such factors as wage differences and levels of unemployment in sending and receiving countries (Alvarez-Plata, Brücker, and Siliverstovs 2003; Boeri and Brücker 2004; Boeri *et al.* 2009; Dustmann *et al.* 2003; Kupiszewski 2001). Most of the forecasts proved to be somewhat distant from reality in terms of the total numbers of migrants and completely wrong on which countries the migrants would go to. Dustmann and co-authors (2003) in a report for the British Home Office predicted that 4,900–12,600 migrants from Central and Eastern Europe per year would reach the UK and that the number for Germany would be 20,500–209,600.

Most forecasts were prepared before it was known that the EU15 labour markets would not be opened to new EU citizens simultaneously. Even when it became known that the transition periods would be implemented in some countries but not others, no forecast predicted the mass flow of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe to the UK and Ireland. Alvarez-Plata, Brücker, and Siliverstovs (2003) simulated a situation (which later occurred) where Germany implemented a

transition period until 2011. They concluded that the increase of foreign population in Germany would come later and be 135,000 to over 180,000 per year in the five years after the lifting of restrictions (2011–2016) but were careful not to draw conclusions for other countries and the EU15 as a whole. Even when their calculations suggested that Germany's share in the number of migrant workers from Central and Eastern Europe would fall from 60 per cent of the total to between 12 and 30 per cent (2003, 45), they discarded this possibility as implausible because 'the geographical distribution of the migrant population across European countries is fairly stable over time' (2003, 39). In reality, the distribution of migrants after accession did not remain stable and Germany's share did drop significantly. The above suggests that the differences between predictions and reality did not stem only from a diversion effect, but that the predictions were flawed in the first place.

Nevertheless, some early research after enlargement took the forecasts as a basis for estimating the size of the diversion effect. Baas and Brücker (2008) in their publication on the macroeconomic effects of the diversion assumed that it was as large as the whole difference between predicted and actual numbers of migrants in particular countries (taking as the basis the numbers in the Alvarez-Plata *et al.* scenario from 2003). They wrote that 'it is likely that migration flows have been diverted away from the preferred destinations towards countries which have opened their labour markets immediately after the EU Eastern enlargement' (2008, 3). Other researchers (Boeri and Brücker 2004; Zaiceva 2006) also concluded that there was a diversion effect from German to English-speaking countries.

Later publications did not put into question the existence of such a diversion effect but drew attention to the fact that it was responsible for only a minor part of the migration to the UK and Ireland. A number of scholars pointed out that the demographic profiles of Polish migrants to the UK and Ireland on one hand and to Germany and other countries of continental Europe on the other were so different that one could not speak of a redirection of migrants but rather of a qualitatively different new wave to the British Isles (Black *et al.* 2010; Kaczmarczyk 2008, 2011), and that the liquid or undetermined character of their plans (Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich 2007; Engbersen, Snel, and De Boom 2010; Moriarty *et al.* 2010) also suggests a new type of migration. Holland *et al.* (2011) wrote: 'There appears to be clear evidence that the pattern of restrictions in place at the beginning of the 2004 enlargement diverted mobile workers away from traditional destinations – namely Germany – and towards the more easily accessed labour markets in the UK and Ireland. However, we should not over-emphasize the magnitude of this impact, as macroeconomic developments and demographics have also played a role in the location decision, and in many cases appear to have played the dominant role' (2011, 15). According to this study, only about 20 per cent of the shift of flows in Germany and the UK could be explained by the transition periods.

Valuable input to the discussion from Kahanec, Pytliková, and Zimmermann (2014) differentiated between the effect of EU entry and the effect of labour market opening. This was significant because EU entry meant Poles and other new EU citizens could freely move to and reside in all member states, even those whose labour market was not open to them. Certain possibilities were available for Poles

and others to gain legal employment even before these seven years were over, such as self-employment and the freedom to provide services. The authors conclude that the EU entry effect was, in fact, larger than the labour market opening effect: it was responsible for 33 per cent of migration from new member states and the labour market opening for 28 per cent. Even when the EU entry effect was not considered separately as a factor, labour market opening was responsible for only 36 per cent of the rise of migration rates from the new EU10 countries. Other factors taken into consideration included macroeconomic push and pull factors, physical and linguistic distance and the presence of other migrants from a given country at the destination.

The question can also be reversed to ask why so many Central and Eastern Europeans remained in Germany or continued migrating there after the British, Irish and Swedish labour markets were opened. Some had legal work, profiting from particular arrangements such as the freedom of providing services, but others continued to work illegally. For them, the main criterion for choosing the destination was not the legality of employment.

The scenario of simple diversion due to the transition periods was also put into question by the case of Sweden, a country which is geographically close to Central and Eastern Europe and opened its labour market simultaneously with the UK and Ireland. It got only very few Central and Eastern European migrants, e.g., according to the 2011 Polish census, only 34.7 thousand Poles resided there (GUS 2013). No significant diversion to Sweden took place. Fihel and co-authors suggest this was due to socio-cultural factors, particularly the language spoken, as well as the strong regulation of the labour market resulting from the influential position of trade unions (Fihel *et al.* 2015).

When Germany fully opened its labour market to Polish workers in 2011, the number of Poles there started increasing faster than the number of Poles in the UK (by 90,000 in the years 2011–2013; in the same period the number of Poles in the UK increased by 17,000). Polish citizens expressed interest in working in Germany almost two times more often than in the UK: 27 per cent vs 14 per cent of respondents even before the Brexit referendum (CBOS 2014). Interestingly, the Netherlands drew as much interest as the UK. However, it is still difficult to disentangle the effect of the labour market opening from other factors, particularly the state of the economy, as the opening of the German labour market coincided with the crisis or immediate post-crisis years in other destinations.

Another intervening factor was the ease of reaching a particular destination. This can be understood in terms of costs, time needed or ease of organizing the trip (e.g., by road vs. flight). Research not concerning Poland (most notably Spörlein 2015) found that potential costs, such as geographic distance and a lack of support from people of the same nationality, dissuade uneducated migrants but not the educated ones, who usually have more resources to deal with these difficulties. This conclusion may also be valid for emigrants from Poland. As quoted in the above survey by Jończy (2010), the short geographical distance was a factor which attracted migrants to Germany. Kaczmarczyk (2008) pointed out that the costs of moving to work in the EU were very different depending on the destination country. Those departing for Italy or Germany, who frequently had pre-arranged jobs,

estimated the costs of migration as respectively 609.6 PLN and 748.9 PLN (about 130 and 150 Euros at the time). At the other extreme were migrants to Ireland, who had to invest an average of 2,542.9 PLN (about 540 Euros) in a plane ticket, housing and subsistence during their search for a job. Especially immediately after Poland's accession, Ireland was not yet that easy to reach – there were no direct and inexpensive flights between Poland and Ireland (LOT operated the first flight in 2004, cheap airlines Centralwings entered in 2005, Ryanair and Wizz Air in 2006). As Kaczmarczyk (2008, 194) writes

> The financial cost of migration may have been a factor of negative selection of migrants. The choice of relatively cheaper migrations to Italy or Germany (…) was accessible for both poorer and more well-off households. Travel to more expensive destinations such as the US, Ireland or even the UK was accessible only for the more well-off.

Conclusions

The literature on Polish emigration post-2004 is extensive and depicts a very broad spectrum of possible reasons for choosing some destination countries over others. These included economic push, pull and intervening factors, such as the high demand for labour in the UK and Ireland on the one hand and the large supply of young, quite well-educated people in Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe on the other. Sociologists were, however, quick to point out that reasons for migration and for choosing particular destinations could not be reduced to economic rationale. Cultural factors – such as the knowledge or willingness to learn English, the attractiveness of the British or Irish lifestyle or work culture or London as one of the world's economic and cultural capitals – were also taken into consideration by many. This was particularly the case among young and more-educated migrants, who came from larger cities in Poland.

The role of networks in directing migrants to chosen destinations seems unquestionable in traditional migration such as that to Germany. More debatable is its importance for migrants to the UK and Ireland. Since Ireland, in particular, did not have large numbers of Polish residents in 2004, initially networks must not have played a large role. Later, several studies and surveys (Jończy 2010; White 2011; White and Ryan 2008) showed them playing a very important role. The question remains as to what point they became important and also for whom: was it the case, as earlier studies from other countries suggested, that the presence of a large community of compatriots at the destination was important for uneducated migrants but less important or even a deterrent for graduates?

All of the above economic, cultural and social factors certainly influenced Polish migrants' decisions about whether to emigrate and where to go. Initially, several studies suggested that transitional arrangements in Germany redirected Polish and other Central and Eastern European migrants to Anglo-Saxon countries. This so-called diversion effect certainly played a role, but its size has rightly been

questioned in later studies. If the legality of employment had indeed been the main factor taken into consideration by Polish migrants, they should have also gone in large numbers to neighbouring Sweden, which opened its labour market at the same time as the UK and Ireland. This was not the case.

The rich body of existing research on Polish migrants to various countries informs the following sections of this book, which aim to compare and demonstrate the differences between factors taken into consideration in various destinations and how these depend on the demographic features of migrants, such as their age, life stage and level of education.

Note

1 Migration to these countries has also received significant scholarly interest: in the case of Norway from, for example, Bygnes and Bivand Erdal (2017); Fiałkowska and Napierała (2013); Friberg (2012); Gmaj (2019); Huang, Krzaklewska, and Pustułka (2016); Napierała and Trevena (2012); Slany and Strzemecka (2016); Slany et al. (2018); Strzemecka (2018); in the case of Iceland, for example, Budyta-Budzyńska (2017); Krzyżowski and Mucha (2014); Napierała and Wojtyńska (2017); and Spain, for example, Main (2014, 2016); Rzepnikowska (2019).

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3 Why are theories of migration so poor at explaining destination choice?

Scholars have attempted theoretical reflection on migration at least since the times of Adam Smith who, in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (2007, first published 1776), observed how the costs of labour differed in the various parishes of Britain more than the prices of commodities. This should have caused huge migration flows to even out the price of labour but it did not. Smith concluded that 'it appears evidently from experience that a man is, of all sorts of luggage, the most difficult to be transported' (2007, 63). Geographer Ernst Ravenstein proposed general 'Laws of migration', some of which still function as basic, even intuitive, assumptions on migration today – for example, that 'each main current of migration produces a compensating counter-current' or that 'migrants proceeding long distances generally go by preference to one of the great centres of commerce or industry' (Ravenstein 1885, 199).

Nevertheless, in spite of the more-than-century-long history of theoretical reflection on migration, no general theory explaining its basic mechanisms has been agreed upon and there is an often-expressed belief that migration studies are undertheorized and in need of further conceptual input (Carling and Collins 2018; de Haas 2021). As Arango (2000, 294) diagnosed it:

> Rather than fulfilling the function of guiding empirical research and providing testable hypotheses that can be contrasted with the facts, existing migration theories are mainly useful for providing explanations ex-post. The starting point is usually one or more common-sense, empirical observations, which are then dressed in more or less formal and abstract terms.

Some scholars (Castles 2010; Castles and Miller 2009; Portes 2010) argue that it is impossible to create a comprehensive theory of migration and that theories can serve only to explain particular types of migration or to answer particular questions. Attempts have been made to create frameworks or combinations of theories, which could serve as a universal base for studies on fundamental questions regarding, for example, why people migrate and how they choose their destinations. Before turning to these frameworks, which seem to offer the best inspiration for a theoretical basis of a study such as this one, I briefly resume the existent migration theories, some of which have been an inspiration for or building block of these frameworks.

Main migration theories and their applicability
to the study of destination choices

Although the first laws of migration came from a geographer (Ravenstein), most of today's theories originate from the field of economics (neoclassical theory, New Economics of Labour Migration [NELM], world-systems theory, dual labour market theory) or sociology (network theory, cumulative causation). Migration theories can be classified in several ways:

1. According to the broad sociological paradigm they operate within.

   As Castles, de Haas, and Miller (2013), de Haas (2011) and many others point out, migration theories can broadly be classified as fitting into two sociological paradigms: the functionalist and the historical–structural. The first treats society as a system which tends towards an equilibrium and whose parts (individuals) usually make decisions that benefit the majority and bring the system closer to that equilibrium. Such is the logic of the neoclassical theory of migration, in which individuals make migration decisions based on the logic of supply and demand, while making calculations based on their own expected benefit.

   Within the historical–structural paradigm, which is broadly inspired by Marxist thought, societies do not tend towards any equilibrium. Rather, there is a constant struggle going on between economic, political or other forces and individuals, who are constrained in their decisions. Inequalities tend to be reproduced or reinforced – among other things – by migration, which provides a cheap labour force, causes a 'brain drain' from poorer locations and reinforces inequalities between persons, regions and countries.

   Wallerstein's (2011, first published in 1974) world-systems theory, which sees the world as divided into the economic core, periphery and semi-periphery, with the core siphoning valuable workers from the periphery or semi-periphery and reinforcing economic differences, clearly fits into this paradigm. So does the dual labour market theory (Piore 1979, 1986), according to which labour markets are divided into 'primary' and 'secondary' sectors, with workers in the secondary – who are frequently migrants – doing low-paid, unstable and uninspiring jobs which the locals do not want to do, with little prospect of advancing to the primary sector. Both are still very applicable to intra-European and intra-European Union (EU) migrations (King 2018) but more at the macro level of whole societies than at the micro level of individual decision-making.

2. Migration theories can also be classified according to the level of analysis they focus on: the macro, micro or mezzo level (Faist 2000; Hammar *et al.* 1997).

   Some theories – such as the world-systems theory or the dual labour market theory – are theories of the macro level of states, societies or even the global reach. The neoclassical migration theory has been developed to serve both the macro level and the micro level of individual migration decisions. The NELM, which posits that it is the family (household), group or clan which is the basic

unit of migration decision-making, can be treated as a theory of the mezzo level, similar to network theory, which assumes that it is the presence, help and information obtained from family, friends and acquaintances that drive migration decisions.

Since this study is focused on the decisions of individuals regarding the choice of destination and then the decision to remain at that destination, obviously a micro- or mezzo-level theory is needed. It is also equally obvious, however, that there does not exist one comprehensive migration theory which could serve as a theoretical basis for such a study. Each theory may fit a section of cases well. For those migrants who left Poland for economic reasons and looked for a destination where they could find work and better earnings, the neoclassical theory may be a fitting one. Many migrants decided on their own (neoclassical theory) but others did so collectively, within their families or as a result of family pressure (NELM). Many migrants may have chosen their destination because of the presence and help of family and friends, in line with network theory. Finally, for some, cultural factors or a search for new experiences and personal development were probably more important than economic or social arguments.

Clearly, no migration theory can shed light on the decisions of the whole spectrum of Polish post-EU accession migrants, who were a diverse group. This, of course, is not a particularity of this migration wave. As de Haas (2014, 14) points out:

> Across different social groups, even at the same point of time and in the same geographical and national context, migration is a socially differentiated process, and different theories are likely to have different degrees of applicability to different occupational, skill, income or ethnic groups.

Hence the need to look more closely at attempts to combine theories or create broad frameworks, as discussed in the following section.

Combining theories

Migration scholars (de Haas 2014, 2021; Massey 1999; Massey *et al.* 1993) have argued in favour of combining migration theories or using different ones for different stages of the migration process. At the initial stages of migration between two locations, organized recruitment often plays a key role in initiating migration. Later, when personal and cultural links are in place, networks influence the process much more (de Haas 2010; Piore 1979). Pioneers do not have networks to rely on but the availability and importance of networks increases for subsequent migrants (de Haas 2010). When the costs and risks of migration are low, wage differentials (neoclassical theory of migration) and the demand for particular categories of workers in developed economies (dual labour market theory) are often the main factors influencing migration.

Massey *et al.* (1993, 45) argue that, even in single studies of migration, theories can be combined:

> Rather than adopting the narrow argument of theoretical exclusivity, we adopt the broader position that causal processes relevant to international migration might operate on multiple levels simultaneously, and that sorting out which of the explanations are useful is an empirical and not only a logical task.

In a later paper, Massey (1999, 48) enumerates how assumptions of various migration theories can coexist in the analysis of one case:

> It is entirely possible for individuals to engage in cost-benefit calculations; for households to minimize risk or overcome barriers to capital and credit; for both individuals and households to draw on social capital to facilitate international movement; and for the socio-economic context within which migration decisions are made to be determined by structural factors operating at the national and international levels, often influenced by migration itself.

de Haas also encourages the combining of existing migration theories 'to understand migration across different levels of analysis (and aggregation), different contexts, social groups, and eras' (2014, 14). He advocates that migration theory formation 'should be a conceptually eclectic affair in which prior theories should not be rejected out of hand' (2014, 14) and believes several theories can be combined, as long as they fit into the same sociological paradigm, such as the functionalist paradigm, or – more recently (de Haas 2021) – even when they do not fit into the same paradigm.

The difficulty with such combinations of theories is their operationalization. As Arango comments (2000, 294), existing migration theories still serve better as something on which migration scholars can lean ex-post than something which could illuminate their research. Thus, trying to put them together would serve little practical purpose.

> The level of aggregation at which such an overarching and all-encompassing theory should operate would be so high as to render it useless for all practical purposes. Migration is too diverse and multifaceted to be explained by a single theory.
>
> (2000, 283)

Nevertheless, for this study, it seems impossible to revert to one theory only and an attempt is made to combine and operationalize several. This can only be done by fitting them in a broad framework. The push–pull framework (Lee 1966) seems to offer such a possibility.

Push–pull as a framework for combining theories on migration decision-making

In 1966, Everett Lee presented what is now called the 'push–pull framework' for migration decisions. He classified factors that influence migration decisions into: (1) Factors associated with the area of origin; (2) Factors associated with the area of destination; (3) Intervening obstacles (such as distance, costs of transportation, physical or political barriers); and (4) Personal factors (such as the level of education, the stage of the life cycle or personality welcoming or resisting change) (1966, 50). This simple and elegant framework has been visualized in Figure 3.1.

Lee pointed out that it is not the objectively defined factors but, rather, the perception of them by the individual (based, *inter alia*, on personal sensitivities and the information to which they have access) which is important. Thus, 'clearly the set of pluses and minuses at both the origin and the destination is differently defined for every migrant or prospective migrant' (1966, 50).

Lee also came to several conclusions regarding the characteristics of migrants, including the fact that migrants who respond mainly to the plus factors at the destination tend to be positively selected, while migrants who respond to minus factors at the origin are negatively selected in terms, in particular, of their level of education and occupational class. 'The degree of positive selection increases with the difficulty of the intervening obstacle', such as the distance or cost of reaching the destination (Lee 1966, 56). These observations suggest clearly that, when studying migration decisions, we should look at factors on both sides of the equation – the origin and the destination – and not treat a given group, such as migrants from one country, as homogenous.

The push–pull framework has received much criticism over the years, especially for not having the explanatory power of a theory. Skeldon wrote:

> The disadvantage with the push–pull model is that it is never entirely clear how the various factors combine together to cause population movement. We are left with a list of factors, all of which can clearly contribute to migration, but which lack a framework to bring them together in an explanatory system… The push–pull theory is but a platitude at best.
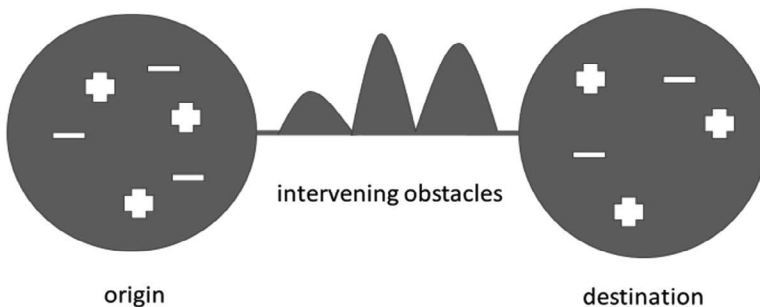>
> (Skeldon 1990, 125–26)

Figure 3.1 Push–pull framework (based on Lee 1966).

Castles, de Haas, and Miller (2013), in the fifth edition of *The Age of Migration*, agreed that push–pull 'is a purely descriptive model in which factors assumed to play a role in migration are enumerated in a relatively arbitrary manner, without specifying their role and interactions' (2013, 22). The model has been criticized as simplistic and deterministic (Crawley and Hagen-Zanker 2019), static and inapplicable to the study of social processes (de Haas 2021).

Despite the above and due to its elegant simplicity, the push–pull framework has been used in a number of studies and many scholars have endeavoured to develop it. One of the better-known theoretical models of individual decision-making, which has built on the push–pull framework, is the 'value-expectancy model' proposed by de Jong and Fawcett (1981). It assumes that each factor influencing migration decisions has a certain perceived value or importance for the decision maker and that this value must be multiplied by the perceived likelihood that a given value will be achieved due to migration to place X. As the authors point out, such an approach is especially valuable when attempting to establish why one migration destination was chosen over another.

> Expectancies can be measured for alternative places. For example, having established that 'fun and excitement' is highly valued by the respondent, the researcher can ask what the chances are for achieving this goal in the community of current residence and at several alternative destinations.
>
> (de Jong and Fawcett 1981, 51)

The authors suggest that a list of potential values influencing decision-making by migrants can be drawn from a review of the literature or from the research material itself. They used the first method to create a list of values considered by potential migrants, which they categorized into seven general values/goals: wealth, status, comfort, stimulation, autonomy, affiliation and morality. To each of these goals, they attached indicators, such as 'having a prestigious job' (status) or 'being economically independent' (autonomy).

Although the categories chosen by de Jong and Fawcett are certainly not the only ones possible – and migration-related aspirations of people can change as a result of many factors, including life stage (King 2002, 2018) and the act of migration itself (Czaika and Vothknecht 2014) – the general strategy of identifying values to which potential migrants and migrants aspire, based on existing studies and then bringing them down to particular factors or manifestations of those values, will be followed in this study.

Another valuable point made both by Lee (1966) and by de Jong and Fawcett (1981), which will also be followed in the creation of the theoretical model below, is that both positive and negative factors must be taken into consideration in origin and potential destinations. A model including negative and positive factors at both origin and destination has been proposed by Fihel (2018, based on Bodvarsson and van den Berg 2009). For this study, a more specific model, with factors actually taken into consideration by Polish migrants and revealed by recently conducted empirical studies, was needed.

de Jong and Fawcett warn that positive and negative factors should be considered 'not in simplistic push and pull terms, but as a constellation of factors that are weighed for each location or potential move' (1981, 52). More recently, scholars have underlined that not only the relative importance of various factors but also their interplay must be considered. Czaika, Bijak, and Prike (2021) see the need for more research on the interplay of four dimensions of migration decisions, which they identify as aspirations, availability and use of information, time and life course horizon and locus of control – who makes the migration decision. A qualitative study based on in-depth interviews allows for the weighing and observation of the interactions of factors considered by the migrant, both by asking the respondent directly to judge their importance and by inferring things which are not directly stated.

The plus and minus factors at origin and destination have also, alternatively, been classified as 'push' and 'stick' factors at origin (influencing migrants to emigrate or remain) and 'pull' and 'stick' factors at destination (influencing them to immigrate and remain at the destination) (Chebel d'Appollonia and Reich 2010; Tjadens, Weilandt, and Eckert 2010). The same term on both sides of the equation may create a certain confusion. Herbst, Kaczmarczyk, and Wójcik (2017) refer to 'stick' and 'stay' factors at origin and destination. Such classifications, however, omit the factors, also present, that repel migrants from a particular destination. Akl *et al*. (2007), in their study of the migration motivations of Lebanese medical professionals, propose the notions of 'retain' factors at the origin and 'repel' factors at the destination, in addition to 'pull' and 'push' factors. The notions of 'push/retain' on one side and 'pull/repel' on the other have also been referred to by Carling and Bivand Erdal (2014) – and will also be used in this study – as the most clearly reflecting the 'pluses' and 'minuses' on both sides of the migration decision.

The push–pull framework has also been criticized as too deterministic, treating potential migrants as devoid of agency (Bakewell 2010; King 2012; Morawska 2001), like atoms pushed around by various outside forces. A solution to this problem has been sought by some authors by introducing the notion of 'drivers' (Black *et al*. 2011; Carling and Talleras 2016; Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long 2018), which has hugely gained in popularity since its first appearance in 2002 and, especially, since 2008 (Carling and Collins 2018, 12). Drivers seem to be a more general notion than 'factors', 'causes' or 'determinants' of migration, a kind of background force based on which potential migrants may or may not decide to migrate. Some authors seem to treat 'drivers' as being close to 'desires' and 'aspirations', two other notions that have been used in the literature (Carling and Collins 2018). Others, such as Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long (2018, 5), believe that the term should be reserved 'for the more external material forces that influence mobility'; Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long (2018, 5) propose what they call a 'push–pull plus framework', defining 'factors as conditions that may shape migration and drivers as activated factors'.

In the theoretical model created for this study, one option considered was to group particular factors into categories of drivers – for example, 'low wages',

'lack of appropriate jobs' and 'insecure work contracts' could be placed together as a driver labelled 'poverty'. However, the results of the research will be more informative – also for policymaking – when considering the most detailed level of factors, as close as possible to how they were presented by the respondents in interviews. Also, since both positive and negative factors in origin and destination have been included, some have certainly not been 'activated' to push people to migrate. 'Factors' – the term originally used by Lee (1966) – are thus the basic term used.

The theoretical model of migration decision-making for this research

As stipulated by Lee (1966), de Jong and Fawcett (1981) and many authors who followed, the rich literature on Polish post-accession migration was analysed to create a list of positive and negative factors in origin and destinations which influenced Poles' decision to migrate. This list was supplemented with factors emerging from the interviews I conducted.

Dividing the factors into those on the origin and those on the destination side is the only way to bring light to the issue researched here: why Polish migrants chose a particular destination (or destination country) over another. These migrants, like many others migrating in the global North, were in a situation of being able to choose from among many destinations which were broadly similar in their general economic and work conditions. It may thus well be that a migrant who left Poland for economic reasons (for example, because they could not find a suitable job) chose whether to go to the UK, Ireland or Sweden not due to the availability of a job or level of wages there but due to other factors – for example, their linguistic ability or the fact that they wanted to live in a Catholic country. Looking separately at factors at the origin and factors at the destination facilitates the analysis of choices made between different destinations.

Following in the footsteps of Bourdieu (1986) and many other scholars – notably Verwiebe (2014) – factors on both sides were divided into three broad categories: economic, social and cultural. Lee's (1996) push–pull framework also foresaw obstacles along the way (physical, economic, political or other) as a possible influence on migration decisions. In the case of Polish post-accession migrants, an especially important obstacle – which has received much attention from scholars and the public – were the transition periods imposed by Germany and 11 other countries of continental Europe regarding free access to the labour market. The transition periods, treated here as intervening obstacles, were different depending on the country and on the moment of migration (since they ended at different moments depending on the country). Intervening factors need not always be obstacles – in some cases they may also act as facilitators of migration, channelling it in particular directions. This role is especially played by work agencies and other actors in the migration industry (Garapich 2008; Hernández-León 2012; Xiang and Lindquist 2014).

The 'tree' of possible factors in the origin and destination, together with intervening factors influencing migration decisions, is presented in Figure 3.2.
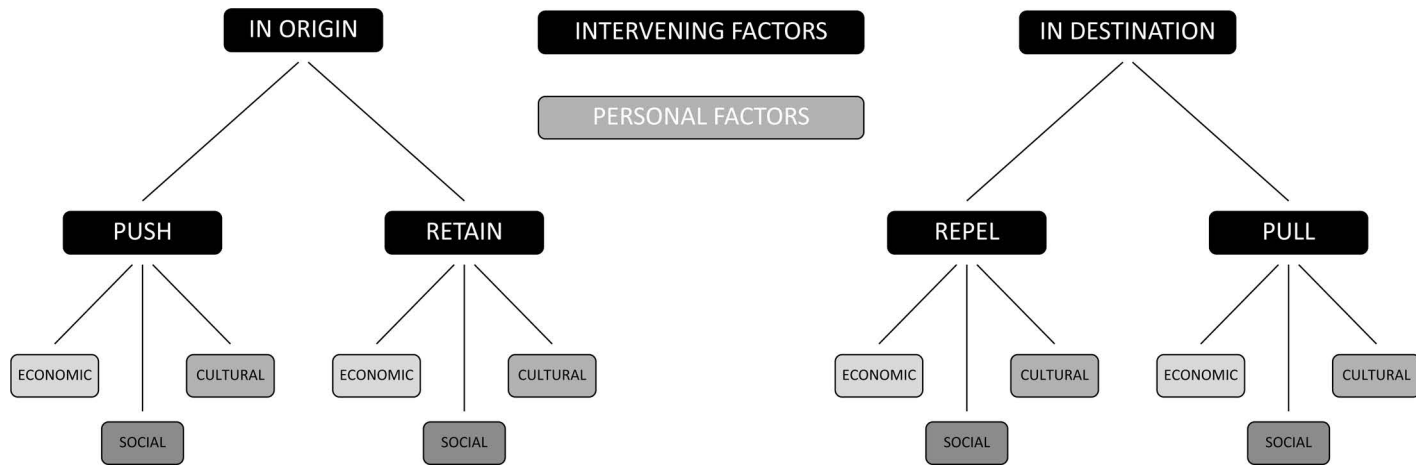
Figure 3.2 'Tree' of push, pull and intervening factors for post-accession migrants from Poland.

Personal factors, which are the fourth element of Lee's (1966) framework, play a key role in the analysis – one of the goals of this research was to compare how demographics, education, gender and life stage influence how other (e.g., economic, social or cultural) factors are taken into consideration by migrants. Several authors have concluded that the influence of various factors is selective depending on the demographic profile, especially the level of education of the migrants. Verwiebe (2014), who studied British, French, Italian and Polish migrants to Berlin, has argued that, irrespective of nationality, people of higher social class migrate the most frequently for cultural reasons, whereas members of lower classes migrate for economic and social reasons. He established that 30 per cent of all migrants to Berlin moved solely for social reasons, 19 per cent for purely cultural reasons and 14 per cent for economic reasons only (the remaining 37 per cent had mixed motives). He also concluded that the type of motivation depends on the age of the respondents: 20–29-year-olds named cultural motives for their migration more often than 30–39-year-olds – and social and economic motives less often.

Other studies, from overseas, confirm differences being dependent on education level. Spörlein (2015) researched the issue of choice between countries of South and North America. Migration in the Americas is selective depending on the level of education even more than in Europe – for example, among Mexicans emigrating to the US, only 7 per cent hold a tertiary degree whereas, among emigrants to other countries, the number is 46 per cent. Spörlein took into consideration two economic factors: the expected gains from migration and the level of inequality in the distribution of wealth (a measure of the amount of social protection on which workers can count in the case of poor labour market outcomes) and several non-economic factors: the geographic and cultural distance from the destination country, the number of co-ethnics already there, the level of political freedom and whether the country of destination encourages migration. He established that, for the general population of migrants, the factors encouraging migration to a given country were the size of the co-ethnic population in the destination, the expected economic gains from migration, the small geographical or cultural distance and the low level of inequality in the destination. However, people with a tertiary degree behaved differently to the averages above. The number of co-ethnics did not matter to them. They did not prefer countries that were closer in geographical or cultural distance but, rather, more remote ones.

Several authors (Bartel 1989; Pedersen, Pytlikova, and Smith 2008; Spörlein 2015; Verwiebe 2014) conclude that network effects are stronger for migrants with lower incomes. This is most probably because people with fewer financial and cultural resources need to rely more on the help of others when looking for a job and setting up in a foreign country. The category of personal factors, especially education level, is thus superimposed on the above model to analyse which factors play important roles for which demographic categories.

Gender is another personal factor which has often been shown to influence the migration decisions of migrants from almost all regions of the world (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003), including Central and Eastern Europe (Barglowski and Pustulka 2018; Fiałkowska 2019; Grabowska-Lusińska and Jaźwińska-Motylska 2013;

Pustułka, Winogrodzka, and Buler 2019; Slany and Ślusarczyk 2019; Urbańska 2015; Żadkowska *et al.* 2022). The fast-developing feminist scholarship has demonstrated that issues such as gender norms within society or gender roles within the family shape decisions to migrate or, even more so, decisions to remain at the destination. Having lived in their new home for some time, migrants become conscious of the more subtle legal and cultural differences between their origin and their new home and how these influence their lives. A similar phenomenon was noticed by Stella, Flynn, and Gawlewicz (2018) regarding LGBTQ+ migrants – societal and legal norms were not important for these migrants in their initial migration decisions but gained importance for their decisions to remain, as migrants became more aware of cultural and legal differences.

Life stage is also a powerful personal factor influencing migrations. Its significance for migrants' aspirations, capabilities and actual decisions has been acknowledged and extensively researched since the beginning of the twenty-first century (de Jong and de Valk 2020; King 2002), particularly within youth studies (Cairns 2018; Cairns, Cuzzocrea, and Krzaklewska 2022; King 2018; Winogrodzka and Grabowska 2022). Migration has long been perceived as a rite of passage in the transition to adulthood (Grabowska 2016) but recently also as a non-linear, circular sequence of events which may lead to other migrations in adult life (Cairns and Clemente 2022). Gender and life stage must often be considered jointly, since various life stages, especially parenthood, are experienced differently depending on gender and due to gendered societal norms of parental roles, which vary by country.

Finally, a growing body of research focuses on how intangible personal factors, such as personality traits, risk aversion, values or happiness, influence migration decisions (Berlinschi and Harutyunyan 2019; Brzozowski and Coniglio 2021; Docquier, Tansel, and Turati 2020; Hagen-Zanker and Hennessey 2021; Huber and Nowotny 2020).

Figure 3.3 presents a complete list of factors used in the analysis, including factors at origin and destination and intervening and personal factors.

Theories combined within the push–pull framework

Each of the factors included above in the push–pull framework results conceptually from and can be analysed in light of existing migration theories. However, the theories that might be helpful for this exercise are different depending on the particular factor or particular migrant, hence the need for a broad framework. Theories that help to explain post-accession migrations from Central and Eastern Europe and that have inspired the above framework are discussed below.

Economic factors and economic theories of migration

The two main economic theories of migration, the neoclassical theory and the NELM, are useful for analysing factors motivating a large group of Polish post-accession migrants. The neoclassical theory, which originated from macroeconomics, holds as its basic premise that differences in pay are the main reason for migration (Harris and Todaro 1970; Hicks 1963). Later, this statement was refined to include the probability
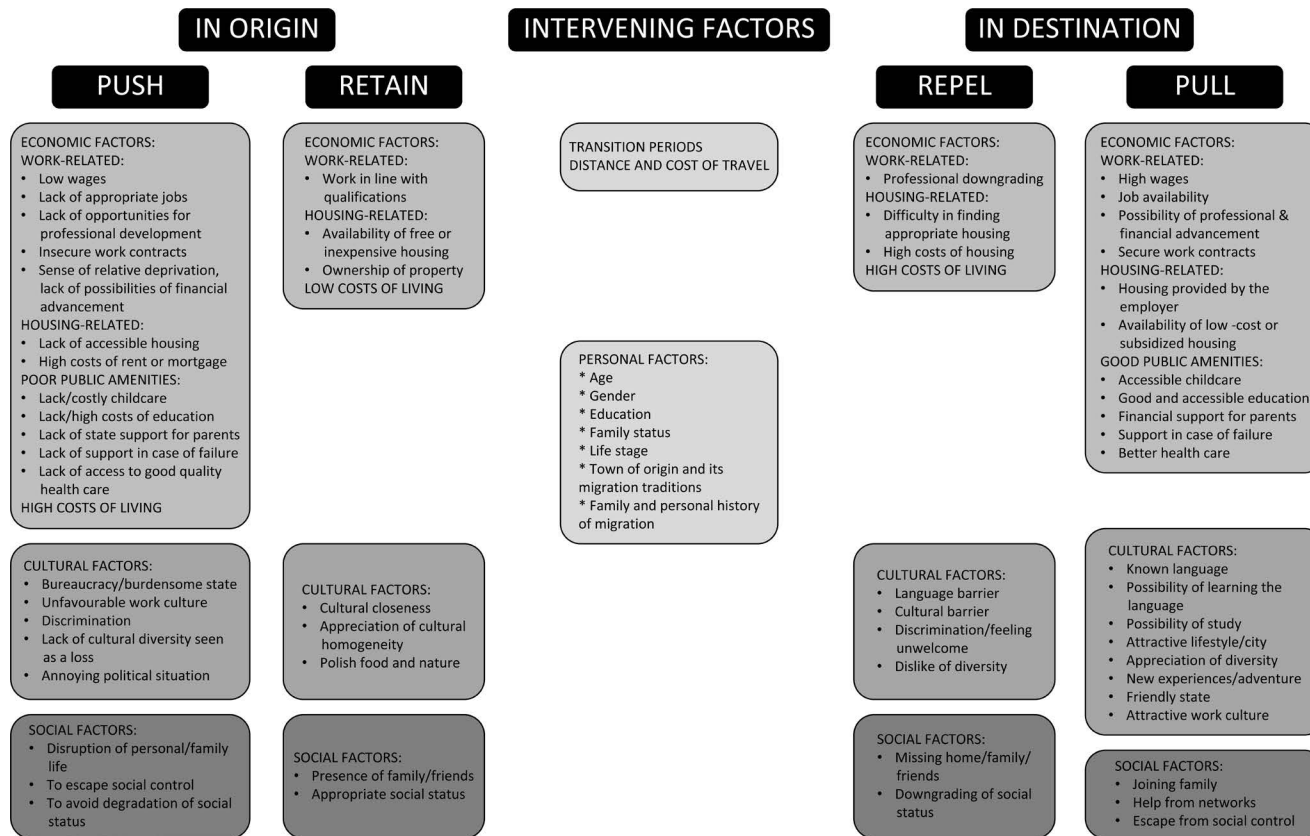
IN ORIGIN

PUSH

ECONOMIC FACTORS:
WORK-RELATED:
- Low wages
- Lack of appropriate jobs
- Lack of opportunities for professional development
- Insecure work contracts
- Sense of relative deprivation, lack of possibilities of financial advancement

HOUSING-RELATED:
- Lack of accessible housing
- High costs of rent or mortgage

POOR PUBLIC AMENITIES:
- Lack/costly childcare
- Lack/high costs of education
- Lack of state support for parents
- Lack of support in case of failure
- Lack of access to good quality health care

HIGH COSTS OF LIVING

CULTURAL FACTORS:
- Bureaucracy/burdensome state
- Unfavourable work culture
- Discrimination
- Lack of cultural diversity seen as a loss
- Annoying political situation

SOCIAL FACTORS:
- Disruption of personal/family life
- To escape social control
- To avoid degradation of social status

RETAIN

ECONOMIC FACTORS:
WORK-RELATED:
- Work in line with qualifications

HOUSING-RELATED:
- Availability of free or inexpensive housing
- Ownership of property

LOW COSTS OF LIVING

CULTURAL FACTORS:
- Cultural closeness
- Appreciation of cultural homogeneity
- Polish food and nature

SOCIAL FACTORS:
- Presence of family/friends
- Appropriate social status

INTERVENING FACTORS

TRANSITION PERIODS
DISTANCE AND COST OF TRAVEL

PERSONAL FACTORS:
* Age
* Gender
* Education
* Family status
* Life stage
* Town of origin and its migration traditions
* Family and personal history of migration

IN DESTINATION

REPEL

ECONOMIC FACTORS:
WORK-RELATED:
- Professional downgrading

HOUSING-RELATED:
- Difficulty in finding appropriate housing
- High costs of housing

HIGH COSTS OF LIVING

CULTURAL FACTORS:
- Language barrier
- Cultural barrier
- Discrimination/feeling unwelcome
- Dislike of diversity

SOCIAL FACTORS:
- Missing home/family/friends
- Downgrading of social status

PULL

ECONOMIC FACTORS:
WORK-RELATED:
- High wages
- Job availability
- Possibility of professional & financial advancement
- Secure work contracts

HOUSING-RELATED:
- Housing provided by the employer
- Availability of low-cost or subsidized housing

GOOD PUBLIC AMENITIES:
- Accessible childcare
- Good and accessible education
- Financial support for parents
- Support in case of failure
- Better health care

CULTURAL FACTORS:
- Known language
- Possibility of learning the language
- Possibility of study
- Attractive lifestyle/city
- Appreciation of diversity
- New experiences/adventure
- Friendly state
- Attractive work culture

SOCIAL FACTORS:
- Joining family
- Help from networks
- Escape from social control

Figure 3.3 Factors taken into consideration by post-EU accession migrants from Poland.

of employment in the equation (Borjas 1989). A micro-level version of the theory has been developed, starting from the works of Sjaastad (1962), who treated migration as an individual investment to increase a person's productivity. He noticed that migration decisions were made based on calculations of costs and benefits for individuals. These could be both monetary – which include the differences in pay, in the cost of living and in the costs (of travel) in reaching the new job – and non-monetary – such as the psychological costs of parting from family or the educational or cultural benefits from being in a particular location. This was an attempt to make the neoclassical theory useful not only for economic analysis but also for a more general analysis of migration motives. Sjaastad pointed out that the costs and benefits may be very different for several people migrating from the same place A to the same place B, due to their various demographic and professional characteristics or even their different psychological features (for example, parting from family may be a big cost to one person but a small one or even a benefit for another). This led to the creation of the human capital approach (Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2003; Todaro 1969). It was developed to include the expected, rather than the actual, level of earnings (Massey *et al.* 1993; Todaro and Maruszko 1987), which reflects the fact that individuals do not have full and completely reliable information on the conditions in the destination country. Migrants are boundedly rational in their decisions not only due to limited information but also – especially in the Internet age, when information overload is equally likely – due to their individual limited ability to analyse the wealth of information available on the potential destination countries (Baláž, Williams, and Fifeková 2016; Brunarska 2019; Simon 1955, 2000; Williams and Baláž 2012).

Neoclassical theory fits most neatly into the push–pull framework and can certainly be used to analyse the decisions of many post-accession migrants from 'new' to 'old' EU member states, especially those who are single and go abroad to earn more than at home. Some of the economic factors named in Figure 3.3, such as 'low/high wages' or 'lack of appropriate jobs/job availability', fit neatly into this theory. Factors related to the costs of living or of housing also fit into the neoclassical logic. Others, however, even among the economic factors, do not.

For other factors, NELM provides a more useful analytical framework. The theory, proposed by Stark and Bloom (1985), considers families and households (or other groups, such as tribes) – not individuals – as the basic decision-making unit in migrations. It also treats decisions to migrate not only as aimed at maximizing financial gains but also as a way of diversifying sources of household income to minimize risks. Much research in various cultures has demonstrated the influence of family, relatives and even friends and social circles on migration decisions (for a review see, for example, Pustułka, Grabowska, and Sarnowska 2018; Tabor, Milfont, and Ward 2015; Urbańska 2009). However, NELM is especially well suited for analysing two types of migration: from poor countries – where families (households) have few ways of protecting themselves against failure (for example, through insurance, credit or government support) – and in cases of temporary or circular migration.

Neither type of migration is the subject of this study. Several scholars (Drinkwater, Eade, and Garapich 2009; Kaczmarczyk 2011), looking at post-EU accession migration, have pointed out the more individualistic nature of migrants after

2004, who were frequently young persons without families, thus suggesting that NELM is not a useful theory for analysing this wave of migration. However, if we focus on the notion of security as a key goal for migrants, it becomes evident that a number of these migrants moved to achieve this goal. Those who, in previously cited studies, mentioned factors such as the lack of a permanent job (which usually entails a lack of health or old-age insurance) or poor state support in the case of ill health, unemployment or other misfortunes as a reason for their migration clearly sought security. NELM, which sees the diversification of risk within families or households as key, cannot be applied directly here for migrants who were single or migrated with their entire families. The notion of protecting oneself in case of risks, however, is still key. In societies such as those of Central and Eastern Europe, individuals minimise risk by diversifying their sources of income: at the same time earning money and participating in state (and sometimes other) insurance schemes. If one of these elements is seen as malfunctioning (such as is the perception of social security in Poland), individuals may seek work abroad to earn more and increase their security by making savings for a rainy day or retirement or to participate in better-functioning health or old-age insurance schemes. Thus, if we treat the notion of security broadly, it may turn out that a significant number of the migrants were, in fact, in search of security for themselves or their family members.

At the same time, we need to pay attention to how the particular migrant perceives him/herself: whether the unit of analysis is the individual of a larger group, since – as Carling and Schewel (2018) point out – NELM has the disadvantage of disregarding individual aspirations and how they play out within the family.

NELM also treats relative deprivation as a key notion, positing that people undertake migration not only to improve their financial situation in absolute terms but also to improve it compared to other households which they treat as their reference group (Portes 1997; Stark and Taylor 1989) – hence, the fact that a neighbour has migrated and bought a new car may push one to do the same.

This notion is especially justified in the analysis of circular migrants, for whom family/friends/neighbours back in the country of origin almost always remain the reference group. However, in some cases, the notion is also pertinent for long-term migrants. This can be especially true when many migrants lead transnational lives and remain in close contact with people in their home countries. Numerous studies have shown that many migrants judge their situation by comparing to those of others at home, not by comparing themselves with the local population in the destination, even years after migrating.

Social factors and network theory

Although the above theories explain the economic factors which could have been taken into consideration by post-accession migrants, they certainly do not account for all factors. A second, significant group of factors can be derived from social network theory.

The importance of networks – understood as ties between migrants and non-migrants who may be friends, family members or members of the same community – was

already underlined by Thomas and Znaniecki in their study of Polish transatlantic migration (1996, published for the first time in volumes in 1918–1920). Networks influence both the aspirations and the capabilities to migrate (Bivand Erdal and Hagen-Zanker 2022). According to some sociologists, it is even impossible to analyse the migration of individuals or families and 'the effective units of migration were (and are) neither individuals nor households but sets of people linked by an acquaintance, kinship, and work experience' (Tilly 1991, 84).

Networks, also earlier described as 'migration chains' (MacDonald and MacDonald 1964), 'auspices' of migration or 'friends and family effect' (Portes 1997), are known to facilitate migration by increasing access to information and other resources, thus lowering the risk involved (Massey 1999; Portes 1997). They are part of what Bourdieu classifies as social capital (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), as opposed to economic and cultural capital. Economic capital is understood here as one that can easily be turned into money; cultural capital is more-or-less explicit knowledge, such as that of languages or manners. Social capital, according to Bourdieu, is dependent on the size of a person's network and on the kinds of economic and cultural capital that can be accessed through it. Not all networks, then, are of equal utility to the migrant or any other person.

It is well-established knowledge that networks function as pull factors (Massey *et al.* 1993; Mayda 2010). Their existence lowers the costs and risks of migration by providing information, logistic (especially job- and housing-related), linguistic and even emotional support. As a result, 'acts of migration at one point in time systematically alter the context within which future migration decisions are made, greatly increasing the likelihood that later decisionmakers will choose to migrate' (Massey *et al.* 1993, 449). Network theory thus helps to explain why people follow their friends or relatives and move disproportionately to certain locations and not others, forming what Faist (2000) calls migration regimes. This is key for studying destination choice.

The theory has been used numerous times to explain migration from Poland (e.g., Górny and Stola 2001), including post-accession migration (Kępińska 2008; Ryan 2009; Sumption 2009; White 2011). At the same time, as many have pointed out (Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2003; Kilkey and Ryan 2021; Massey *et al.* 1993; Portes 1997), the problem with this theory is that it explains well why migration is perpetuated – why many followers follow – but does not explain how it starts, i.e. why the leaders go where they do (Massey *et al.* 1993). This is an issue relevant to this study, especially in the case of Ireland, which had very few Polish migrants before 2004 and then quickly became the third most popular destination. Network theory can explain why people who already knew someone in Ireland went there; however, recourse to other theories is necessary to provide insight into the question of why the pioneers chose this destination. Nevertheless, the case of migration from Poland to Ireland may demonstrate that networks can start playing a role quickly – perhaps even within a few weeks – as soon as the first migrant finds a job and housing and makes an initial positive assessment of the situation in the destination.

Some authors even believe that the existence of networks can be the sole reason for migration when other factors, for example, economic ones, cease to

operate. Massey *et al*. (1998) have called this phenomenon cumulative causation. In the Polish context, Romaniszyn (2003) also speaks of 'chain migrations' between two regions, even when the original factors causing migration may have changed.

Migration networks can also be considered not only as a factor attracting migrants to a particular place but also as a factor pushing them out of their place of origin. As Haug (2012) points out, the existence of a network is a push factor if the network is a source of conflict. If we take the word 'conflict' in its broad meaning, for example, as a generational conflict or conflict between a more traditional and more modern lifestyle, then certainly such conflict also took place in the social networks of some Polish migrants. This is documented, for example, by media reports (Jarkowiec 2007) of homosexuals using migration to escape the restraint of their hometowns. For some, including migrants in this study, migration was also a rite of passage into adulthood, a way to set themselves free from their family networks (Grabowska 2016; Sarnowska 2016). As is clear from the above-quoted literature, factors included in the model for this study such as 'joining family', 'presence of family/friends', 'help from networks' and also 'to escape social control' can be explained through network theory.

Some researchers (Epstein 2002, 2008) have differentiated between network effects – when a potential migrant decides to move to a particular place because he is counting on the help of people he knows there – and herd effects, where the person does not know anybody at destination but knows that many, like him/her, have gone there and acts on assumption that 'so many before me could not have been wrong'. This may be an interesting differentiation when analysing Polish post-accession migration which, in the peak years of 2006–2007, seemed to be under the influence of a 'herd effect', with people arriving at London's Victoria Station without having any pre-arranged housing, job or resources (Romejko 2009).

More recently, scholars have noticed that networks do not always encourage more migration. In some cases, migrants already at the destination can act as gatekeepers, discouraging some types of migration or generally discouraging new migrants when they do not judge the conditions as favourable. As de Haas (2011, 22) warns:

> Migrants do not necessarily help each other, and strong social ties and networks can also exclude non-group members. One of the methodological lessons is that empirical models should not just assume that the strength of network effects is a function of the size of migrant communities, as recent quantitative work tends to do.

He and other researchers also point out that the role of migrant networks depends very much on the other types of capital (economic, cultural) available to migrants. This is a key point also when analysing post-accession migrations, as earlier research has demonstrated that less-educated and less-wealthy migrants rely more on networks.

Not all factors classified as 'social' in our model can be explained through network theory. Some authors (Janicka 2009; Stark and Fan 2011) argue that reducing humiliation linked with performing degrading jobs can also be a motivation for migration. This could explain movement in both directions and also a lack of movement. A potential migrant can leave his/her home to avoid doing a degrading job in the eyes of his/her family or friends but can also forego migration knowing that only degrading jobs would be available at the destination. Factors explained by the above are present in the model for this study on both the 'push' and the 'retain' side at the origin ('to avoid degradation of social status' vs 'appropriate social status') and on the destination side as a 'repel' factor ('degradation of social status'). Theoretically, they could also be present on the 'pull' side in destination country but such a factor was not included since it was not found in the literature review.

Cultural factors

As described in the previous chapter, after an initial wave of studies focusing on the economic motives for post-EU accession migration, social scientists stepped in to show that cultural factors, especially on the pull side in the UK and Ireland, were also prominent in influencing post-accession migrants' decisions.

There are no comprehensive theories that focus on cultural factors influencing the migration decisions of individuals. However, migration motivated by cultural or lifestyle-related factors has been noticed as an important phenomenon already in Zelinsky's (1971, 144) work on mobility transition, in which he noticed that, in advanced societies, non-economic motivations for migration emerge; he hypothesized that

> the increasingly free exercise of individual preferences as to values, pleasures, self-improvement, social and physical habitat, and general life-style in an individualistic affluent national community may have begun to alter the spatial attributes of society and culture in the United States.

These non-economically motivated migrations, termed 'lifestyle migration' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009, 2016), have since become a generally accepted type of mobility, especially among the youth in Western countries. Benson and O'Reilly (2009, 621) define lifestyle migrants as:

> relatively affluent individuals of all ages, moving either part-time or full-time to places that signify for the migrant a better way of life. The fundamental features of the different lifestyle sought include the re-negotiation of the work-life balance, quality of life, and freedom from prior constraints.

A similar transition as that noticed by Zelinsky in the US took place in Europe. This is perhaps best illustrated in the work of Favell (2008) who – inspired

by Wallerstein's notions of core and periphery – coined the terms 'eurostars' and 'eurocities'. 'Eurostars' are, in his definition, educated Europeans who profit from the opportunities provided by the free circulation of labour in the EU to move (from peripheral or not-so-peripheral places) to cores of economic, cultural, political and other activity such as London, Amsterdam or Brussels ('eurocities'). For such people, cultural factors regarding destination are frequently important – or even the most important – when they choose the destination of their move.

Most Central and Eastern European post-accession migrants are not 'eurostars' but, rather, economic migrants of a more traditional sort. However, the appearance of cultural factors among the reasons which some migrants name suggests that the young, educated migrants who work abroad in line with their qualifications fit in this category. They are the ones who frequently mentioned such factors included in the model as 'knowledge of language', 'possibility of study', 'attractive lifestyle/city' and 'appreciation of multiculturalism' on the pull side in the destination country and the 'lack of cultural diversity seen as a loss' on the push side in that of origin. As King (2018, 9) writes about London:

> This European and global city is seen as a place where a highly desirable young-adult lifestyle can be experienced at a particular life stage of being young, single, individualistic, ambitious and open to new challenges. Alongside opportunities to 'escalate' their careers, interviewees and survey respondents speak of such features as openness, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, 'high' and 'popular' cultural attractions and the way that these place-embedded features enable young migrants to realize their potential before moving on to the next stage of life.

Benson and O'Reilly (2016) and Cichocka (2021) draw attention to similar 'city imaginaries' which draw young people to Berlin.

In this research, another issue touched upon, which has started to receive scholarly attention in the last decade, is how the process of migration decision-making takes place and why some destinations and factors are included in potential migrants' analysis and not others. Roseman (1983) suggested that a sorting of potential destinations takes place constantly over a person's lifetime, resulting in only a short list of destinations left to be considered when the actual decision is made. As in many decision-making processes, heuristics or mental shortcuts (Tversky and Kahneman 1974) are certainly relied upon and decisions are, at best, boundedly rational.

Tabor, Milfont, and Ward (2015) argue that the migration decision can be split into three separate ones: whether to migrate, where to migrate and when to migrate, which may take place at different moments and take significant time. Such a division seems partly justified but will not be followed in this research because it blurs the division into push/retain and pull/repel factors, since both can influence the decision as to whether to migrate. Another interesting question, which has long been pondered in the literature (Wiseman and Roseman 1979), is whether migration decision-making is a one- or two-step

process (the two steps being the decision to migrate and the choice of destination). Brunarska (2019) develops this classification further and offers a division of Polish migrants into 'primed one-step decision makers' (who have family or other connections to the destination country) and 'non-primed one-step decision makers' (whose decisions are quite random in response to an opportunity which appeared), as well as 'single criterion two-step decision makers' and 'multiple-criteria decision makers', who first decide to move and then search for a destination. The decisions of respondents in this study will also be looked at from this perspective.

Decisions to remain at the destination

During the first decade or so after the EU enlargement of 2004, scholars underlined the intentionally unpredictable (Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich 2007) or liquid character of post-EU accession migrations (Engbersen and Snel 2013; Engbersen, Snel, and De Boom 2010; Glorius, Grabowska-Lusińska, and Kuvik 2013) with these notions focusing on the lack of long-term planning by, mostly, young migrants. With passing time and with many of the migrants entering new stages of life and wishing to build more permanent lives at the destination (Bygnes and Bivand Erdal 2017; Lulle *et al.* 2019), the focus of research turned to more stability- or settlement-oriented perspectives. This was, for example, the case of publications by Grzymala-Kazlowska (2018, 2020); Grzymała-Kazłowska and Brzozowska (2017); Grzymala-Kazlowska and Ryan (2022) and Ryan and Mulholland (2015), who developed the concepts of anchoring and embedding to explain the processes of migrants' psychological and social 'taking root' in their new country.

This research focuses not only on the initial decisions of migrants but also on their decisions to remain at the destination. Although – as discussed in the previous section – the decision to migrate can be drawn out in time, decisions to remain can be even more spread out, with migrants assessing and re-assessing their situations almost daily, depending on external circumstances and migrants' knowledge of them, as well as their own psychosocial (un)anchoring and social (dis)embedding in the destination (which are processes that can take place in both directions). Only respondents who planned to stay for at least one more year in their place of residence were included in this research and their reasons for staying were discussed and analysed.

The same 'tree' of factors was used for the analysis; however, the goal here was to compare how the factors influencing decisions had changed. These research results certainly cannot be treated as a general study of why people remain (or do not remain) in various destinations, since those who left or were planning to leave soon were not included. They can, however, shed light on how the factors which migrants take into consideration change over time and the life course. This is in line with recent postulates by many migration scholars (Carling and Collins 2018; Kilkey and Ryan 2021) to devote more attention to time and the stages of the life of migrants as an influence on their decision-making. Obviously, many of the Polish migrants who had left Poland in the first years after EU accession – as young

20-somethings – were, at the time of the interviews, in a completely different stage of their lives, often with partners and children. Circumstances important to them in Poland and in the destination countries may also have changed significantly. The comparison of factors that led them to migrate and factors that were making them remain at the destination at the time of the interview can thus be treated as a realization of recent postulates to give time and life course more serious consideration in migration studies.

Conclusions

As Carling and Collins observe, the dominant trend in migration literature today is 'to invoke push–pull only as a crude counterpart that implicitly props up the author's own analytical sophistication' (2018, 13). This book obviously does not fit into that trend. The criticism of the push–pull framework mainly results from it being treated as a migration theory in line with neoclassical thinking (O'Reilly 2023) or even a prototype of a neoclassical theory (de Haas 2021). For this research, it is treated not as a theory but as a framework: a way to organise or categorise factors which are best explained by various theories and concepts or still not well theorised and which are related to each other in various ways (Bivand Erdal and Hagen-Zanker 2022). The framework does not impose any paradigm. In the model, the only delimitation is its focus on micro- or meso-level factors as they are perceived by individuals.

Although the model does not specify how interactions between various factors take place, a qualitative analysis of factors included in the model creates the opportunity to look at these interactions, particularly between the personal features of migrants – including their level of education, gender and life stage – and their perception of factors attracting them to a particular destination.

It is also worth pointing out that no theory or model to date is applicable to all migration situations. This is also the case for the model proposed here: it is applicable to a specific geographical and historical context – a situation such as that within the EU or, more broadly, within developed countries, when a huge majority of migrants are relatively free in their decisions and have a broad spectrum of choices (which applies also to those among them who are in a difficult situation, economically or otherwise). The same model would certainly not fit other contexts – for example, refugee migrations or migrations caused by war or an environmental crisis. However, it should be remembered that, in all contexts, the degree of freedom and constraint varies for all persons, thus limiting their degree of agency.

Many researchers of Polish post-accession migration have drawn attention to the diversity of migration paths, motivations and aspirations, depending on the age, gender and education level of migrants. It thus seems inevitable that several migration theories need to be relied upon to explain these migrations. From neoclassical theory, I draw the belief, which is a central assumption of my research, that individuals do conduct a sort of cost-and-benefit analysis regarding whether to migrate and where to go. These calculations are, of course, based not only on economic but also on social, cultural and other factors; the value ascribed to each

factor can differ greatly depending on the individual, as underlined in the human capital approach (Todaro 1969).

de Jong and Fawcett's (1981) focus on goals inspired my research questions, especially when respondents were asked which factors were important to them and how these factors could have been realized in a different location (for example, did the respondent think that they would have earned more in the UK than in Germany? How did they judge the education which their children were receiving compared to that at home or elsewhere?).

Some post-accession migrants conducted the cost-benefit analysis not only for themselves but also for their families. For them, the family was often the basic decision-making unit, in accordance with the NELM – the analysis of the factors they took into consideration had to reflect that. The notion that people seek not only economic gain but also insurance resonated in many interviews and had to be included as a factor influencing migration decisions. Life stage and gender have been shown to influence the perceived need for security.

Research clearly shows that networks play an important part for many migrants in their decision to emigrate and in the choice of destination. Network theory and factors related to it were thus also included. Heeding to recent calls to give migrants more agency, this research aimed to observe migration networks not only as a structural factor influencing the decisions of individuals but, rather, as a dynamically changing structure which influences the perceptions of different destinations by migrants and non-migrants and is influenced all the time by those migrating and remaining. It is obvious that migrants analysing the pull factors in various countries were only boundedly rational due to incomplete knowledge and their own capacities and were influenced by the information passed on to them by members of their network.

The push–pull framework also allowed for the inclusion of cultural factors, which – as Favell (2008) and others have noticed – are important, especially, for educated migrants. It also allowed for the inclusion (as intervening factors or in particular countries) of factors resulting from public policies, particularly migration and labour market policies. To date, these have not been well theorised in migration research. Finally, the framework allowed for a consideration of the role of other intervening factors, such as distance and cost of travel. Superimposed on this and influencing the perception of various factors were the personal characteristics of migrants, such as age, life stage, gender and level of education.

The push–pull framework has also been criticized for its static character: presenting migration as a single action, not a process (Bivand Erdal and Oeppen 2018; Carling and Collins 2018; Carling and Schewel 2018; de Haas 2011, 2021). This would not be in line with current trends of looking at migrations as multi-directional and multi-stage processes, which are not finite due not only to future migrations and multiple migrations (Jancewicz and Salamońska 2020; Salamońska and Czeranowska 2021) but also to the transnational character of many migrants' lives – despite being physically present in one place, they may be members of societies in two or more places, taking part in social, cultural, political, economic and other activities in two or more transnational social fields (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004).

However, I do not find such criticism relevant to push–pull as a framework for researching destination choice. Despite sometimes functioning in transnational spheres, none of the respondents in this study had trouble answering the question about when they migrated (although some gave two or more dates). In their minds, the migration decision was, in fact, taken at a particular moment. The decision to remain, on the other hand, was taken continuously or, rather, at several moments in time when circumstances or the life stage changed. In the interviews conducted for this study, respondents were asked about the current situation – their current reason(s) for remaining at the destination. The study may thus be treated as re-searching factors influencing decisions in two moments in time: at the moment when the migration decision was taken (which, in some cases, was in fact several moments) and at the moment of the interview (which was one of many moments when migrants assessed and re-assessed their decisions to remain where they were).

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4 Recruiting respondents and conducting qualitative migration research online[1]

Introduction

This chapter has a somewhat practical aim: to discuss the benefits and difficulties resulting from using Facebook to recruit migrant respondents for qualitative interviews, as well as the benefits and difficulties resulting from online interviewing of the said respondents. The reflections are based on the research project discussed in this book and a review of the methodological literature. The possible ways to use Facebook for recruiting research participants are classified into five groups. The benefits and technical and ethical challenges related to two of these – recruiting via Facebook groups and via Facebook Messenger – are discussed in detail. The chapter then considers the benefits and challenges of the use of online tools, such as Skype or Zoom, for conducting qualitative interviews with migrants. Finally, it offers conclusions and practical advice for those who choose to recruit via Facebook and to conduct interviews via online communicators. Before focusing on its main theme of using online methods, it summarizes the methods chosen for this book's research.

Method and respondents for this research

Much of the research on post-accession migration is centred on one destination country or even one location. For a study of destination choice, a much broader geographical scope was necessary and much information could be gained from a comparative study conducted in several destinations. Four countries were chosen for this study: the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Ireland. These were not only the most frequent migration destinations after Poland's European Union (EU) accession in 2004; they were also varied in terms of the history of Polish migrations and the demographic profiles of the Polish migrants who went there, especially in terms of age and levels of education (as discussed in Chapter 2 and in detail in Chapters 5–8, devoted to each of the destinations).

A total of 73 interviews were conducted between July 2015 and December 2017 with migrants to the UK, 18 with migrants to Germany and Ireland and 16 with migrants to the Netherlands. The respondents had to be long-term

migrants (a minimum of one year in the destination country) who had left Poland in 2004 or later, without any plans to return to Poland or to migrate elsewhere within the next year, as part of the design of the study was to compare their initial reasons for migrating to a particular destination with their reasons for remaining at the destination. Short-term or circular migrants were thus excluded from the sample. Polish seasonal migrants and their motivations (with a particular focus on gender-related motivations) have already been studied quite extensively (especially Fiałkowska 2019; Urbańska 2015). In each country, a gender-balanced group was sought, with about half of the respondents holding a third-level degree. Respondents with tertiary degrees were over-represented in all the samples. This was done to have a large enough sample of the educated to be able to make comparisons between graduates and non-graduates and between both groups in various countries. The respondents also represented a wide spectrum of ages, family situations, life stages, professions, jobs held and sizes of locality of origin and of residence. They ranged from people who had spent only a year in the destination to people who had spent over 15 years there. This was a huge difference, especially given the legal and economic changes which took place during that period, both in Poland and in all the destination countries. Significantly, the times of arrival at the destination differed between countries. While for the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands the average year of arrival was 2008, for Germany, it was 2012. This was not intentional but probably resulted from the large inflow of Polish migrants to Germany in the second decade of the millennium. Detailed demographic information about respondents in each country is provided in the country chapters and in the Appendices.

Given the complexity of an issue such as the decision to migrate and the destination choice, qualitative in-depth narrative interviews were an appropriate method via which to explore the variety of factors involved and the decision-making process behind the choice (Mason 2018; Ryan 2015). In-depth narrative interviews, which let the respondents tell and interpret their own life story rather than just answering a set of questions, have been used in many studies of various aspects of migration (e.g., Kaźmierska 2004, 2013; Morawska 2018). They are most useful for letting the participant share their life story or, as in this case, the story of their migration and the events that preceded and influenced it (Bryman and Burgess 2002; Mason 2018). Narrative interviews are also likely to produce information about the relative importance of events or factors and the sequence of impacting on the migration decision (Morawska 2018). This was key for a study such as this one, which aimed to establish which were the most important factors motivating migrants' choices of migration and migration destination. They also allow the researcher access to the perceptions of various factors, which are often somewhat different from the actual objective factors.

In line with the methodology of narrative interviews (Mason 2018), I first asked my respondents to narrate in full the story of why they left Poland and why they chose a particular destination. These narratives provided a rich source of

information. Then, following a prepared list of topics, I asked about things they might have omitted or about which I wanted to learn more.

The list of topics included the following:

1. questions about the participant's life before migration (childhood and family migration history, professional, personal and housing situation before migration, influential people in their lives, which aspects of their lives the participants were content or not content with);
2. questions about the migration decision (how they decided to migrate, had they migrated before and if so where, why did they choose country X);
3. questions about the influence of economic, social, cultural and legal (open labour market vs transition period) factors on the decision to migrate and the destination choice;
4. the participant's life after migration; and
5. their plans, particularly regarding where to live and their retrospective judgement about their choice of destination.

These questions were never asked in sequence since many had usually been answered by the respondent in their first narrative. In line with the technique recommended for narrative interviews (Mason 2018), I attempted, as much as possible, to treat the story created by the person being interviewed as central and only to enrich it with further detail or factors which the respondent might have forgotten about.

Demographic data on the respondents were also collected: their gender, year of birth, year(s) of migration and level of education at the moment of migration. Often these were stated during the interview but, if not, I asked them directly at the end. All the interviews were recorded. They were conducted and transcribed in Polish, with only the quotes used in publications translated into English.

The interviews were coded and analysed in line with the theoretical framework and 'tree' of factors derived from the literature, presented in Chapter 3. Several codes were added based on the material gathered. For each person, the main reason(s) were established for migrating and for choosing a particular destination. This allowed them to highlight how destinations were chosen – frequently a migrant had economic push factors which made them leave Poland but also other or more varied pull factors in the destination. Initial reasons for migrating and for choosing the destination were also compared with the same respondent's reasons for remaining in the destination. The qualitative material was analysed separately for each country and then compared between them.

Recruiting via Facebook

Facebook has been used to recruit respondents for a large number of studies, especially quantitative ones (Brickman Bhutta 2012) and especially in the field of health (Baltar and Brunet 2012; Valdez *et al.* 2014). For quantitative studies, which require a large number of respondents, many researchers have resorted to Facebook advertisements, which have proven to be a cost-effective method of recruiting

respondents (Samuels and Zucco 2013). Thornton *et al*. (2016) attempted to review the usage of Facebook in research on medical and psychosocial issues and concluded that a great majority of researchers used it for quantitative studies, with only 3.6 per cent using it for qualitative ones.

Nevertheless, the network also creates great opportunities for qualitative research, for example, by bringing together people united by a common interest or feature. Many authors underline Facebook's usefulness in attaining populations that are hard to reach due to their spatial distribution, the sensitivity of the issue, the difficulty of finding persons with a particular rare feature – such as extreme political views – or who have experienced a particular life event (Baltar and Brunet 2012; Brickman Bhutta 2012; Sikkens *et al*. 2017; Sledzieski *et al*. 2023; Weiner *et al*. 2017).

The network's potential as a source of respondents has also already been noticed by migration scholars (Pötzschke and Rinken 2022). It has been used to recruit migrant respondents – for example, Argentinian entrepreneurs in Spain (Baltar and Brunet 2012) and Polish migrants in the UK, Ireland, Austria and Switzerland (Pötzschke and Braun 2017), in the UK (Grabowska *et al*. 2017; Radziwinowiczówna, Rosinska-Kordasiewicz, and Kloc-Nowak 2018; Ryan, Rodriguez, and Trevena 2016) and in the UK and Italy (Kloc-Nowak 2018). It can greatly facilitate the task of finding respondents who are dispersed across large territories or are hard to reach due to their lack of a permanent address or telephone number. Facebook was also a huge benefit for this study, which aimed to reach Poles living in four countries and in various parts of those countries, from large cities to small towns. The financial and time cost of travel not only *to* those countries but also *within* them would have been significant.

Amon and her colleagues (2014), who reviewed methods of using Facebook for recruiting participants for research on adolescent health, classified the possible uses of the network into three types: paid advertising, searching for former participants for a follow-up interview and creating a Facebook page for the project. Based on the literature and my own experiences, I believe that there are, in fact, five possible ways of recruiting respondents via Facebook (and other online social networks):

1. Paid advertising. This can be targeted at particular populations and has already been extensively used (methodological discussions can be found, for example, in Amon *et al*. 2014; Brickman Bhutta 2012; Kosinski *et al*. 2015; Pötzschke 2022; Pötzschke and Braun 2017; Samuels and Zucco 2013; Valdez *et al*. 2014). Due to the costs involved, it is usually reserved for quantitative studies, where a large number of respondents are sought. Since the research project discussed here was qualitative and did not use it, I will not discuss it in detail in this chapter.
2. Creating a page devoted to a research project which, in turn, can be advertised elsewhere.
3. Placing announcements on particular Facebook groups, such as those of people of a particular nationality living in a particular location and those in a particular professional or personal situation etc.

4. Contacting potential respondents through private messages.
5. Placing an announcement on the researcher's or the institution's profile and ask-ing friends to respond and forward it.

Only ways 3 and 4 were used in this study and are discussed in detail. First, however, general questions regarding recruitment via online social networks need to be addressed.

Representativeness

The issue of how representative Facebook is for populations in general – and for the populations of migrants in particular – is, of course, key. The network, which has been open to the general public since 2006, has 2.5 billion users (Monthly Ac-tive Users, as defined by Facebook [Facebook 2020]). The question of the digital divide, which initially focused on the divide between those who do and those who do not have access to the internet, today is more of a question of inequalities in the use of various internet sites, dependent on the personal ease and effectiveness of use (Dimaggio *et al*. 2004). This also applies to social network sites, which are accessed daily or even hourly by some of their users but only very infrequently by others registered on them. A number of researchers (Dekker and Engbersen 2014; Dimaggio *et al*. 2004; Hargittai 2007) have found that Facebook and other social network site use depends on the age and level of education (or level of education of the parents, in the case of young people) and place of residence (urban/rural) of users. People over the age of 60 use Facebook and other sites less frequently (Dek-ker and Engbersen 2014), as do those with lower education levels and those who are rural dwellers. Some studies in the US (Hargittai 2007) have also shown that the choice of social network used, if any, is also related to the level of education, with Facebook having on average more educated users than other online social networks.

Significantly for this study, Facebook is also hugely popular among Poles (Ge-mius 2020), including Polish migrants. Facebook-generated data for a different study showed that 410,000 adult Polish migrants live in the UK and are users of the site, together with 54,000 such migrants in Ireland (Pötzschke and Braun 2017); thus, about half of the Polish population there use it.

However, the large number of Facebook users does not mean that all kinds of respondents can be reached with equal ease. The above issues concerning the new digital divide are also very relevant to Polish Facebook users. We do not have detailed data about the demographic profiles of Polish Facebook users in the four countries discussed, but it is certain that they are a select group. Those who vol-unteered to give an interview for this study were diverse in terms of gender, age, origin in Poland, level of education and type of work undertaken in the destination country. Only three groups seem to have been under-represented: people of retire-ment age (who constitute a small fraction of Polish migrants), those with only primary education and people originating in the countryside. It is quite possible that the less-educated use Facebook less frequently and that those who do may

have felt intimidated by the perspective of an interview. Indeed, among those who responded to the recruitment announcement, there was not a single person who declared having had only a primary-school education and only one who left after middle school (*gimnazjum*). Issues of internet access may have played a part for the group originating from rural areas if they also work in the countryside in their destination. Some respondents in the Netherlands declared that they had poor internet access and chose to be interviewed by telephone rather than online.

Depending on the way in which Facebook is used, a number of issues have to be considered. In the case of paid advertising, the customer can choose to display ads, for example, only to people from Poland. This 'from' section is, however, filled out by the profile owner. This means that the above-mentioned numbers cited by Pötzschke and Braun (2017) did not include people who put their current place of residence in the 'from' section or who did not fill it in at all. This is significant for researching migrants, as those with looser ties to their place of origin could probably not be reached.

This factor is perhaps even more significant when choosing method 3 – placing announcements on particular group sites. Certainly, those who choose to become a member of a group like 'Poles in…' may be more attached to their home country than those who do not. The smallest of the Polish migrant groups used in this study had several hundred members, the largest ('Poles in Berlin') over 32,000 members. However, they still represented only a small percentage of all Poles living in the four countries studied. It is not clear if there are particular categories of people who avoid these types of groups but certainly those who no longer have any interest in Polish affairs or need to access information through Polish channels may choose not to be members. Also, the most underprivileged people, who work and live in conditions which do not allow for much internet access, would not be likely to participate actively in such groups and perhaps even less likely to volunteer for an interview.

Although qualitative studies do not need to be representative of particular populations, the risk of omitting certain types of cases by recruiting through Facebook is certainly present, especially if the researcher is not fluent in the detailed practicalities of how the network functions.

Technical issues

A total of 73 interviews were conducted, with respondents located in various parts of Ireland, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. The great majority (all but five) of the respondents were recruited through Facebook, and most of the interviews (all but two, which took place when the respondents were on vacation in Poland) were conducted via Skype, Facebook Messenger or telephone. Requests for interviews were placed on 23 Polish-language Facebook profiles geared towards Poles living abroad, such as '*Polacy w Wielkiej Brytanii i Irlandii Północnej*' [Poles in the UK and Northern Ireland], '*Polacy w Berlinie*' [Poles in Berlin], '*Polacy w Irlandii*' [Poles in Ireland] and '*Polacy w Holandii*' [Poles in the Netherlands].

Before placing such requests, the researcher first had to become a member of the respective group. For some groups, this happened automatically while, for others,

consent had to be requested from the group administrator. No requests were rejected, which was perhaps facilitated by the fact that I acted under my own profile, not a project or institutional one. This, including the fact that my Facebook account had existed for a significant time, perhaps increased my credibility and made me more welcome than if I had applied from the recently created account of a research project. The request, several lines long, explained briefly the aims of my project and the kind of respondents sought. Most of the responses to my request appeared within the first day of posting. It was thus necessary to devote the whole of the following day or two to corresponding and setting up interviews. Also, keeping track of interview times can be tricky, since many respondents may want to change these or forget when their preferred date was. Many also suggested that I contact them again on a particular day, for example, Friday, to set up an interview over the weekend. Time-flexibility on the part of the researcher, for example, being able to talk after work, in the late hours of the evening, was helpful.

A number of potential respondents, identified as participants of particular groups, were also contacted by private message. None of them responded, and the strategy was abandoned. The lack of response may have been because messages from non-friends usually appear in another folder called 'message requests', which most people are not even aware exists. Balfe, Doyle, and Conroy (2012) reported similar problems in their study, whereas Radziwinowiczówna, Rosinska-Kordasiewicz, and Kloc-Nowak (2018) reported successfully contacting future respondents through Messenger. To effectively contact somebody via Messenger, it is advisable to send them a 'friend request' first and to wait for their approval. This creates privacy issues for the respondents and the interviewer and researchers should carefully consider the benefits and downsides of conducting research from their own private accounts vs creating a Facebook page for their project.

A number of messages from potential respondents also appeared in the researcher's 'message requests' folder and were not immediately visible. This seems to have depended on the kind of device which people used to message me. Most of the messages from the Netherlands ended up in this folder, perhaps because people there used Messenger more often on their phones than on their computers (which only became clear during the interviews). This may be due to the internet packages sold in the country or to the migrants' housing arrangements. When attempting to recruit respondents from a particular country or area, it is thus helpful to know on what devices people use Facebook there and how good the network is likely to be (which may allow for video or only audio interviews or – in some cases – none at all). Recruiting through direct messages may be more effective when it is narrowly focused on a particular group and it is obvious that the researcher wants to talk to this particular person.

Ethical considerations

Recruiting respondents for qualitative research via Facebook raises some ethical dilemmas, particularly linked with the issue of protecting the respondents' privacy. I was first struck by this problem immediately after posting my announcements on

profiles used by Poles in other countries. My request did not specify how I wished to be contacted by potential respondents. A number chose to post reactions such as 'I will' or 'priv' (meaning: send me a private message) directly under my request. This had the positive effect of making my post more popular and thus, perhaps, attracting further respondents but it also meant that the authors of those posts were revealing themselves to all the users of the forum as potential participants in my research.

Although I finally interviewed only some of them, since the number of volunteers was significantly greater than I needed, I cannot completely exclude a situation in which data from the published fragments of my interviews would be meticulously compared with information given in public by the forum users (those who do publish, in public, information about their whereabouts, job, children etc.) to identify the person interviewed. It may be argued that Facebook users are making their own choices by disclosing information about themselves. However, some may not be fully aware which elements of their information are visible and to whom. To protect their privacy, in my later announcements, I specified that I would like to be contacted by private message. As Kosinski *et al.* (2015) point out, researchers should be careful to protect their participants from 'outing' themselves as members of a particular group, especially when the research concerns a sensitive subject. The participants can easily do this by joining a group created by a researcher or commenting under a particular post, as was the case in this study.

As the sole author of this research, I chose to act on Facebook under my personal profile, rather than creating a separate profile of the research project – as is common particularly in the case of larger projects and recruitment for surveys. This had the advantage of increasing the confidence of potential respondents (as Baltar and Brunet 2012 have observed before) because Facebook users could access publicly visible information about the researcher, such as my professional history. However, it also created practical and ethical problems.

Some of the respondents – either before or after the interview – requested to be Facebook 'friends'. Other researchers had also found themselves in such a situation before me and dealt with it in various ways – for example, Valdez *et al.* (2014) decided to ignore the friend requests, whereas Ryan, Rodriguez, and Trevena (2016) did become 'friends' with their respondents. Becoming 'friends' has ethical implications as well as practical benefits, especially in longitudinal studies (this is discussed in detail, for example, by Ryan, Rodriguez, and Trevena 2016 and Winiarska 2017).

I did not want to become Facebook 'friends' with my respondents for three reasons: (1) the above-mentioned issue of protecting my respondents' anonymity; (2) I did not wish the respondents, whom I did not know, to have access to what I publish on Facebook for my friends; and (3) some of the information provided on my profile, such as my rather clearly defined political views, could influence the answers of respondents. The 'friend' requests were thus ignored, which led to a slightly awkward situation but was not commented upon by any of the respondents.

Interviewing online

Online interviews have been used for over two decades (Deakin and Wakefield 2014; Sullivan 2013) but have received particular attention since 2020 when in-person interviewing became more difficult or impossible due to Covid-19-related lockdowns (Andrejuk 2020; Dolińska, Łuczaj, and Kurek-Ochmańska 2022; Howlett 2022; Lobe, Morgan, and Hoffman 2020; Pocock, Smith, and Wiles 2021; Pszczółkowska 2020; Tomás and Bidet 2023).

Initially, interviewing methods other than in-person were approached with much scepticism. However, as better technologies were created, researchers in the social sciences, health sciences and other fields began to see more potential in using them. The methodological literature focused initially on the use of Skype (Deakin and Wakefield 2014; Janghorban, Roudsari, and Taghipour 2014; Lo Iacono, Symonds, and Brown 2016; Mirick and Wladkowski 2019; Seitz 2016; Sullivan 2013) and, more recently, on the use of Zoom in particular (Archibald *et al.* 2019; Binder 2022; Gray *et al.* 2020; Howlett 2022; Oliffe *et al.* 2021). Changes over the last decade or so concerned not only the availability and quality of technologies but also their commonality. Today, especially after the Covid-19 period, arguments regarding the digital divide and non-accessibility of these technologies seem valid only for very particular groups or persons – for example, the elderly or the homeless (Andrejuk 2020).

The commonly held view from a decade ago – that in-person interviews are preferable to online communication – seems to no longer be the consensus. Most publications judge online methods to be a viable alternative to in-person interviewing (Archibald *et al.* 2019; Salmons 2014) or even see them as providing richer material (Gray *et al.* 2020; Howlett 2022; Jenner and Myers 2019; Oliffe *et al.* 2021). However, there are also some who have come to the opposite conclusion, still seeing online communication as limiting the available research material – for example, in biographical interviews (Dolińska, Łuczaj, and Kurek-Ochmańska 2022; Johnson, Scheitle, and Ecklund 2021). The remainder of this section will focus on the benefits and challenges of online interviewing, based on the experience of the 73 interviews conducted for this study.

Geographical location

An obvious benefit of online research, already noted by many researchers, is being able to reach respondents in various locations around the world, including geographically remote and dispersed populations (Binder 2022; Brown 2018; Mirick and Wladkowski 2019; Tomás and Bidet 2023). This is particularly significant for migration research and was an enormous benefit for this study. Although there is a rich body of research on Polish migrants to other countries of the EU, most of these studies, especially the smaller projects, concentrate on only one country or even one city. The use of online methods for both recruitment (Facebook) and interviewing (Skype/Messenger) enabled me in this study to reach respondents in diverse locations – various regions of the countries studied (e.g., England, Scotland and Northern Ireland in the UK and various German states), including quite remote

destinations where little research on Polish migrants had been conducted. Perhaps even more important was the fact that respondents in both large cities and small towns could be reached, which was significant for their destination preferences.

For migration research, online methods can mean access to otherwise difficult-to-reach populations and places (for example, when governments try to limit access, as was the case in the border zone next to the Polish–Belarussian border, where the Polish government in 2022 banned non-locals from entering to prevent them helping refugees and reporting on border-guard activities). However, it also may cause new difficulties – for example, when interviewing people who found themselves locked in refugee camps or other communal housing during the Covid-19 pandemic (Greatrick *et al.* 2022).

Convenience

Interviews through online communicators seem particularly suitable for a group such as migrants, not only because some might be hard to reach but also because they are particularly familiar with these technologies, which are frequently used to communicate with family or friends back home. It was obvious in many of my interviews that the respondent had a particular place in their house which was already set up for Skyping – maybe at a table but with the camera directed in such a way that the respondent could go to the kitchen to make him- or herself some tea while continuously being seen by the camera and heard. It did not seem, in my study, that much was lost because the interviews were not held in person.

Time convenience is also an important argument in favour of online communication (Pocock, Smith, and Wiles 2021). Thanks to using Skype, I was better able to adjust to the interviewees' schedules – a number of interviews were held late in the evening – even at midnight, after the respondents had finished work and put the children to bed etc.

Psychological comfort of the respondents

This study confirmed the observations of several other researchers (Gray *et al.* 2020; Janghorban, Roudsari, and Taghipour 2014; Jenner and Myers 2019; Oliffe *et al.* 2021) that online interviews, conducted from the respondent's own home, possibly in their sweatpants and drinking from their favourite cup, may make the respondents more at ease than in-person encounters. Thus, especially when discussing personal topics, online interviews may be more appropriate. When talking to some respondents in this study, I had the impression that they treated the interview as a kind of late-night therapy after a long and busy day or a remedy against evening loneliness for those who lived alone. Resorting to online methods may also help reach socially isolated populations and increase research participation among other groups (Mirick and Wladkowski 2019; Tomás and Bidet 2023).

While some people may not be comfortable using communication technology or may be suffering from Zoom fatigue due to overuse (Andrejuk 2020), for others – inversely – communicating through a microphone and screen may be

more comfortable for not only logistical but also psychological reasons. Winiarska (2017) points out that online interviews may have the advantage of being less intrusive for the respondent. Several respondents said that they would not have agreed to an interview in person due to a lack of time or inconvenience. One respondent, who used an obviously fake name on Facebook, stated clearly that he would never agree to an interview in person or to giving me his phone number, since he was trying to avoid paying child support in Poland. I never even learned his real first name.

The use of online communication tools (if used in line with data protection rules) may guarantee the respondents more privacy, since the researcher does not know where they live and does not have their phone numbers or sometimes even their real names. Such privacy allows access to respondents who, in another situation, may not have been willing to give an interview.

Agency of respondents

Several respondents who agreed to be interviewed did not 'show up' at the agreed time and did not respond to further contact from me. Some researchers believe this is a more frequent problem during online appointments. However, from an ethical point of view, it may be treated as an advantage of online interviewing – respondents have more agency because it is easier for them to change their mind about giving the interview or even withdrawing mid-interview (Thunberg and Arnell 2022). In a face-to-face situation, the respondent may not feel comfortable enough to get up and leave or ask the researcher to leave their premises (Deakin and Wakefield 2014; Lobe, Morgan, and Hoffman 2022).

Length of interviews

Initially, especially when telephone and in-person interviews were compared (Irvine 2011), impersonal modes of communication were judged as poor replacements which provided less research material. In telephone conversations, interviewees gave briefer answers and the average interview time was shorter, thus resulting in more-limited research material. However, this rule does not seem to find confirmation for interviews via Skype, Zoom or other online communicators (Jenner and Myers 2019). In this study, a great majority of the 73 interviews were conducted online, two were conducted in person (while the respondents were on vacation in Poland) and several were conducted by telephone at the request of the respondents. While no apparent difference in length was noticed between the in-person and the online interviews, the telephone interviews were the shortest and least successful of all the interviews conducted, thus questioning whether this method should have been used at all.

Information about the surroundings

The limitations of using internet communicators are that the interviewer sees less of the respondent's home and neighbourhood (compared to visiting them at home but certainly not compared to conducting the interview in an office or public place).

Also, the interviewer may miss some of the non-verbal messages (Lo Iacono, Symonds, and Brown 2016; Seitz 2016; Winiarska 2017). To partly counter these problems, I started my interviews with the video option turned on, which allowed me to see the respondents and parts of their houses. As Brown (2018) has found before, it seemed quite possible to build a relationship and a certain intimacy between my respondents and myself in this way. Several participants turned the camera to show me other things, such as their view from the window or the weather. I conducted the interviews from a room in my home which the participants could see, which sometimes served as an effective way to break the initial ice (especially if my dog decided to accompany me during the interview). On the other hand, several respondents said that they did not have cameras – or simply did not turn them on – and I did not insist.

Video transmission usually reduced the quality of the sound so, in many cases, after several minutes, I requested that the camera be turned off. This reduced the non-verbal messages I could receive but also had an unexpected benefit: I could take notes without the respondent seeing me do so. Such note-taking sometimes intimidates respondents during interviews in person. Also, the formalities linked with the interview, such as gaining consent, were dealt with beforehand in writing not only for documentation purposes but also to be able to start the interview in a less-formal way.

In the comparative study of telephone and personal interviews mentioned above, Irvine (2011) noticed that, during telephone interviews, the interviewer uttered fewer 'acknowledgement tokens' (expressions such as 'mm hm', 'right', 'okay', which invited the speaker to continue). This was also my behaviour initially, brought to my attention by one of the first respondents when he asked 'Are you still there?'. In subsequent interviews, I made an effort to make such utterances – which, perhaps, do not come as naturally in telephone or online conversations but which are even more necessary, especially if the video is turned off and the respondent cannot see the researcher nodding or showing other signs of interest. However, this acknowledging of the presence and continuing interest of the researcher has to be done very carefully so as not to interrupt the respondent's stream of thought, especially in a narrative biographical interview. Such interviews may often include pauses when the interviewee reflects or deals with their emotions (Dolińska, Łuczaj, and Kurek-Ochmańska 2022) and knowing when the respondent has paused but not finished is particularly difficult in online interviews, especially when the camera is turned off, since a 'pause' may also be the result of technical interruptions.

Information about the researcher

My position in these interviews was more that of an insider (Botterill 2015; Ryan 2015) than an outsider, not only because I am Polish like my respondents but also because I have been a migrant myself several times and could relate to some of their realities. The use of Facebook and Skype seemed to influence how the participants viewed me in this respect. Many were very open, addressing me by my first

name, perhaps because they felt that I was a member of their 'in' group – meaning the participants believed that I was somehow similar to them, and that we had common experiences (Ryan 2015) because I was as a member of the same Facebook group. Interviewing on Skype had the strange effect whereby sometimes the participants only realized halfway through the interview where I was physically located (despite having been informed that I work at the University of Warsaw, Poland), that I did not live in the same country as them (which some people assumed) and that, at the time of the interview, I was not a migrant. A conclusion could be that information on the current location and migration status of the interviewer in particular should be reiterated so as not to mislead interviewees.

Conclusions

As this and other studies have found, Facebook can be a formidable and cost-effective tool for recruiting respondents for qualitative interviews. In the field of migration studies, a combination of Facebook recruitment and long-distance interviewing via Skype, Zoom or other online communicators can be particularly useful for conducting studies with respondents spread over long distances.

To be effective, the recruitment method must be well-matched to the population sought. The subject and size of the study's potential respondent group may largely influence how well Facebook can be used. Some researchers, myself included, found it relatively easy (although time-consuming) to recruit participants. This may have been a result of the population of migrant Poles under study being large and relatively well-organized into groups on Facebook. The researcher's announcements could thus be displayed to many people who fit the respondent profile. When conducting research on a narrower group of migrants, for example, those from a particular town who do not have their own Facebook group, the method may not prove as effective – as, for example, Pustułka, Juchniewicz, and Grabowska (2017) found.

The use of Facebook creates a number of issues regarding the privacy and anonymity of the respondents, the most serious perhaps being that respondents can inadvertently reveal themselves to the world as members of a particular group. It is worth debating to what degree researchers can be held responsible for the disclosure of private information on the internet when the respondent discloses it him- or herself in reaction to a research project.

A consensus seems to be emerging that, in some circumstances, high-quality material can be gathered through online qualitative research and that such research can allow access to geographically remote, dispersed or socially isolated populations and may even increase research participation among various groups. However, the choice of interview method and tools should be well matched to the research participants and the theme – while some groups, particularly young people who conduct much of their lives online, may be the most comfortable and responsive while answering questions via Skype, Zoom or other communicators, others, particularly older people or people without access to technology, may not. Questions of technology, accessibility, privacy and anonymity, the sensitivity of the topic and

psychological and other health issues should thus all be taken into consideration when choosing the interview method. Online interviews should not be treated as a convenient replacement for in-person interviews but as a potential tool which – like all the others – needs to be well matched to the purposes and circumstances of the research.

Below, I summarise some practical advice for researchers who decide to resort to recruitment via Facebook and online interviewing.

1. The recruitment method on Facebook (paid advertising vs posting on groups etc.) must be well adapted to the group sought – some respondents can be found more easily through advertising, which takes into account demographic features and location, whereas others can be sought through thematic or other groups.
2. When using Facebook groups, be aware of the implications of a double self-selection of respondents: as members of a particular group and as respondents for your study.
3. When placing recruitment announcements, reflect upon and make clear how you would like to be contacted in order to protect respondents from 'outing' themselves as your respondents or members of a particular group/holders of a particular trait.
4. Consider issues of your own privacy and of possible influence on the self-selection of respondents when using a personal vs an institutional or project Facebook account.
5. Consider how your interview method matches not only your respondents and their preferences but also the topic of your research.
6. When conducting online interviews, try to hold at least the initial conversation before the interview with the video turned on, which facilitates breaking the ice and allows the researcher to gather at least some information about the respondent's surroundings.
7. Reveal information about yourself and your location/circumstances at the moment of the interview so that the respondent is not misled about where you are located, is comfortable with you and the situation and is reassured that nobody else is listening to the conversation etc.
8. Avoid reading consent formulas at the beginning of the interview, as this may give it an excessively formal character. Consent for the interview and the recording should preferably be obtained beforehand – for example, by e-mail.
9. While listening to long utterances, make noises or gestures confirming your presence and continued interest as, otherwise, the respondent may think that the connection has been cut off. However, especially when conducting narrative interviews, be extra careful not to interrupt long passages of speech or cut short the pauses your respondent makes when reflecting or attempting to regain control of their emotions.

Note

1 An earlier version of this text was published in Pszczółkowska (2020).

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5   The United Kingdom

Where the wild things were

History of Polish emigration to the UK

The UK has been a destination for Polish migrants for generations, albeit never in such large numbers as in the twenty-first century. Especially after the nineteenth-century uprisings in occupied Poland and during and after World War II, London was a centre of Polish political activity. The Polish government and president in exile (who did not recognize the communist authorities of Poland) resided there until 1990. Before the European Union (EU) enlargement of 2004, the Polish post-war migration generation was still present, although their numbers had inevitably dwindled – from 152,000 in 1951 to 58,000 in 2001 (Okólski and Salt 2014, 12). Some persons included in this last figure provided by the UK census were much more recent migrants from the 1990s or early 2000s, who found a way to settle in the UK despite restrictions – for example, through a scheme for the self-employed, which had been in place since the entry into force of the Europe Agreement with Poland in 1994 (Drinkwater, Eade, and Garapich 2009). An indeterminate additional number went to work in the UK illegally for vacations or longer periods, not discouraged by the fact that some people were turned back at the border. The Polish census of 2002, which included only persons still registered as living in Poland, gave the number of Poles in the UK as 24,000 (GUS 2014), while the British census of 2001 gave the number of Polish-born in the country as 61,000, most of whom were of retirement age (Drinkwater, Eade, and Garapich 2009).

When the British government decided to allow freedom of work for citizens of the eight Central and Eastern European (the so-called A8) countries from the first day of their membership of the EU – that is, from May 1, 2004 – some of the Poles already present certainly served as sources of information and help in finding work and housing for their followers (Okólski and Salt 2014). However, researchers also point to a great disparity and sometimes even a 'discursive hostility' (Garapich 2012) between 'old' post-war and 'new' Poles in the UK. The inflow of Poles after accession was both very significant and unexpected, as several pre-accession forecasts (Alvarez-Plata, Brücker, and Siliverstovs 2003; Boeri and Brücker 2000; Dustmann *et al.* 2003; Kupiszewski 2001) predicted much smaller numbers of Central and Eastern European migrants to the UK. Contrary to these predictions,

the UK became the No. 1 most popular destination for Polish migrants, attracting even more people than Germany, even though the number of Polish migrants to Germany was also rising (GUS 2013).

The number of Poles in the UK rose steeply in the years 2004–2007, to reach 690,000 in 2007 (GUS 2013). The year 2008, due to the economic crisis, showed a significant drop in inflows and rise in outflows, with the two numbers nearly balanced. In the post-crisis years, there was again a steady level of inflows, accompanied by a smaller number of outflows. By 2016, the number of Polish residents in the UK had reached 1,006,000 (Salt 2018). That year, in which the British voted in the Brexit referendum to leave the EU, seems to have been a turning point concerning the balance of migrations of Polish citizens. In subsequent years, starting from 2017 and accelerating thereafter, British statistics demonstrated decreases in the number of Poles present, due to larger outflows of Polish citizens and – especially – smaller inflows (ONS 2018). By mid-2021, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated the number of Polish-born residents of the UK at 682,000 (ONS 2021). Polish Central Statistical Office data also showed the number of Poles in the UK as dropping from a high of 793,000 in 2017 to 514,000 in 2020 (GUS 2021). Polish statistics over the previous two decades regularly showed the number of Poles in the UK as smaller than in British statistics, which was due to different counting methods, including whole families who had left Poland frequently not being well captured in Polish statistics.

The UK is thus the only country among the four in this study where the number of Poles has, in recent years, been dropping rather than rising (as in Germany and the Netherlands) or remaining stable (as in Ireland). The post-Brexit drop in the number of Poles was much more significant than the drop in the EU-born population in general – estimated to have shrunk from 3.6 million in mid-2017 to 3.5 million in mid-2021 (ONS 2021).

The number of publications on post-accession migration to the UK grew at least proportionately to the number of Poles there, far exceeding the number of publications regarding these migrants in other destination countries. This was facilitated in part by a wealth of official data. In addition to labour-force surveys on the sending and receiving side and UK passenger surveys, a Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) was set up in the UK to monitor post-accession migration. All A8 migrants taking up employment in the UK were obliged to register (the self-employed were not under this obligation). Although certainly not everybody fulfilled their obligation (in part because of the fee required), the WRS, which operated until 2009, became an important source of data about the numbers and economic activities of migrants.

As the statistics demonstrate, Polish migration to the UK was more elite than that to other countries, except other English-speaking destinations. Both before and after accession, Polish migrants to the UK were better educated than the average Polish migrant and the average Pole. They were also younger and more often came from larger Polish cities. Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski (2009, 112), basing their numbers on the Polish Labour Force Survey (*Badanie Aktywności Ekonomicznej Ludności*), calculated that 25 per cent of pre-accession

Polish migrants to the UK and 22.5 per cent of post-accession migrants (from the years 2004 to 2007) held a third-level degree. The figure for post-2004 migrants was higher only for Ireland (26 per cent) and the US (25.4), which became a much less popular destination than the UK, Germany and, in some years, even Ireland. Dustmann, Frattini, and Halls (2010, 9), basing their calculations on the British Labour Force Survey, gave the percentage of highly educated A8 immigrants in the UK as 32 per cent among the men and 40 per cent among the women ('highly educated' was defined as those who finished their education at age 21 or later, a majority of the A8 were Polish). The same figures for UK natives were 18 per cent for men and 16 per cent for women. Persons from the lowest educated categories (who did not obtain even a vocational degree) constituted 2.1 per cent before accession and 6 per cent after (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009, 112) and were five times less frequent than among the locals (Dustmann, Frattini, and Halls 2010, 9).

Age also distinguished Polish migrants to the UK from those to other countries. A great majority of both pre- and early-post-accession migrants were in their 20s (75.5 before accession and 71.6 per cent of those who came after). This was the highest percentage in any country – Ireland came second with over 60 per cent; for all other countries included by Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski (2009, 111), the number was around 40 per cent.

Polish migrants to the UK (as well as those to Ireland and the US), more frequently than their compatriots in Germany, came from large cities in Poland. This was true both before and after 2004. Later data suggest that, with time, Polish migration to the UK became somewhat less 'elite'. Okólski and Salt (2014, 18) point out that the proportion of degree-holders among newcomers decreased to 17.5 per cent in the years 2008–2011 (the years of the economic crisis, when the numbers of newcomers were generally smaller). They explain it in the following way:

> An initial attraction of Polish workers for UK employers was their ability, even in relatively mundane occupations. As they settled in the UK, the abler managed to move into jobs higher up the socio-economic ladder, for example from bar staff into hospitality management. This process in turn created low-skilled vacancies that could be filled by a less-qualified workforce.

The position of Polish and other A8 workers in the labour market was investigated in detail by researchers. A number of authors have pointed out that, despite their high levels of education, the post-accession migrants were occupying the lower ranks of the labour market, even compared to other immigrants (Csedő 2012; Drinkwater, Eade, and Garapich 2009; Dustmann, Frattini, and Halls 2010; Janicka and Kaczmarczyk 2016; Salt 2017), while those who were educated were not receiving significant returns on their education, unlike locals or immigrants from 'old' member countries of the EU14 (Kaczmarczyk 2013; Kaczmarczyk and Tyrowicz 2015). Some authors see little improvement in the migrants' position as a group over the years (Salt 2017), whereas others point out that individuals *do*

progress significantly in terms of wages. Dustmann, Frattini, and Halls (2010, 13) conclude, based on LSF data, that:

> The numbers show a remarkable increase in average wages with time spent in the UK: for example, the wages of the 2004 arrival cohort have increased by 40 per cent four years after migration; wage growth for later cohorts follows a similar pattern. (…) their wage growth in the first four years of arrival is remarkable and far higher than that of native-born workers during the same period.

A large part of the research on post-accession migrants in the early years after 2004 was focused on economic issues and was conducted mostly by demographers and economists. As Burrell (2010, 300) summarized: 'Work has been dominant in most of the larger research reports into accession migration and new migrants have generally been defined principally as workers'. However, a number of researchers soon started pointing out that work- and earnings-related motivations were not the only ones driving migrants to the UK and that there was much more to their stories: a quest for self-development, wanting to learn English, live an adventure, experience life in a dominant culture or a world metropolis such as London (Isański, Mleczko, and Eid 2014; King *et al.* 2016; Luthra, Platt, and Salamońska 2014, 2018; Trevena 2011) or – on the push side – leave the parental home or home town and experience a kind of passage into adulthood through migration (Grabowska 2016; Szewczyk 2016) or emancipate themselves from their family (Grabowska-Lusińska and Jaźwińska-Motylska 2013; Siara 2009).

These diverse motivations of migrants were in part reflected in the typologies which researchers created (these were discussed in Chapter 1). It is worth pointing out again that the typology created by Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich (2007), based on respondents in the UK, contained a very large proportion of '*searchers*' (42 per cent), or migrants who came without particular economic goals and who intended to gain new experiences rather than, for example, save a particular sum of money. These 'searchers' – classified similarly by other scholars as migrants with 'unpredictable intentions' (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009), 'liquid' migrants (Engbersen, Snel, and De Boom 2010; Engbersen and Snel 2013; Grabowska-Lusinska 2013) or 'drifters' (Trevena 2013) – seem to have been especially characteristic of migration to the UK.

The distinct demographic profile of Polish migrants to the UK (and Ireland) in terms of age, level of education and size of cities from which they originated, coupled with the diverse motivations for their migration, led scholars (Kaczmarczyk 2011; Luthra, Platt, and Salamońska 2014) to believe that we were, in fact, witnessing a new, qualitatively different wave of migration from Poland, which probably would not have happened if not for the new opportunities offered by the UK and Ireland. These opportunities resulted from a conflation of factors, especially the demand on the labour market and the freedom of employment introduced for new EU citizens and also the cultural and linguistic attractiveness of the country and the presence of some migration networks. Exactly which factors were important for

whom – and why the UK proved more attractive than some other destinations – are the subjects of this chapter.

It is also worth pointing out that aspirations and factors influencing migration decisions have most probably changed in the almost two decades since EU enlargement, not only due to Brexit but also due to the different life experiences of Polish migrants from various age cohorts. Grabowska (2019) and Grabowska and Jastrzebowska (2021, 2022) believe we can already speak of two generations of Polish post-accession migrants: those born in 1968–1982 – for whom the change of political and economic system in 1989 and Poland's EU accession were formative events – and those born in 1983–1993, for whom the freedom resulting from the above was an unquestionable given. The older cohort saw migration as an opportunity to gain linguistic competence and learn to interact with foreigners; for the younger ones, these were competencies and experiences which they already had, so migration was more of a quest for self-development, related to the life stage at which they undertook mobility. In this research, life stage proved to be a key determinant influencing which factors were taken into consideration by migrants.

Political and economic events also proved important. In the British case, one of those events was, of course, Brexit – both the referendum on whether the UK should leave the EU in 2016 and its actual exit in 2020. Some authors even argue that Brexit can be treated as a symbolic endpoint of post-accession migrations (Garapich *et al.* 2023). Its influence on the decisions, perceptions and well-being of Polish and other migrants has already received much attention in the academic literature (Antonucci and Varriale 2020; Benson *et al.* 2022; Burrell and Schweyher 2019; Fanning, Kloc-Nowak, and Lesińska 2020; Kilkey, Piekut, and Ryan 2020; McGhee, Moreh, and Vlachantoni 2017; Rzepnikowska 2019; Sime, Tyrrell, and Moskal 2020), as well as from the author of this book (Jancewicz, Kloc-Nowak, and Pszczółkowska 2020). I shall return to this subject in the chapter regarding the reasons why migrants remain at the destination, although – given that the interviews for this research were conducted in the months immediately preceding and following the Brexit referendum – they provide a good illustration of the psychological effects of the referendum campaign and vote, rather than the effects of the legal changes introduced with Britain's departure from the EU, as the details of the latter were not yet known at the time of the interviews.

Respondents

Of the 21 respondents of this study residing in the UK, 4 were recruited through personal channels and 17 through announcements on Facebook profiles such as '*Polacy w Irlandii i UK*' [Poles in Ireland and the UK], '*Polacy na Wyspach*' [Poles in the Isles] and '*Polish Professionals in London*'. The respondents were of both genders (11 men, 10 women) and aged from 26 to 53 years old (respectively 19 and 41 at the moment of migration); they had arrived in the UK at various stages of their lives – after completing their high school or university and sometimes even interrupting it or already with professional experiences from Poland or elsewhere. Some came as

singles, others with partners and very young or school-aged children. Some children were also born in the UK. They arrived in the years 2004–2007 or 2010–2014, with no one arriving during the 2008–2009 years of the economic crisis.

They came from towns of various sizes in Poland – from a town of 8,000 inhabitants to many larger cities and the capital – and originated mainly but not exclusively from central and western Poland. As many as 12 of the respondents had been living in towns of 100,000 or more inhabitants before they left Poland. Many had complex migration trajectories. Three respondents arrived from countries other than Poland (namely the US, Cyprus and Italy/Switzerland), three returned to Poland and then re-migrated to the UK again, while one left for a different country (Switzerland) and then returned to the UK. Due to the interviews being conducted online, a broad range of destinations could be included: six of the respondents lived in London at the time of the interview (in the second half of 2015 and 2016), five in other parts of England, four in Scotland and six in Northern Ireland. Apart from London, they lived in other large cities such as Manchester, Glasgow and Belfast, as well as in smaller towns.

As education was a key factor for the analysis, about half of the respondents recruited held a tertiary degree and half did not, among both men and women. The sample was thus skewed towards the better educated compared to both the general Polish population and the population of Poles in the UK. This was deliberate in order to have large enough samples of both graduates and non-graduates to be able to compare the two groups. The levels of education which the respondents had varied from vocational high-school diplomas to high-quality degrees in medicine, mathematics or finance. Professionally, the respondents were also a very diverse group – from people who had been unemployed before leaving Poland or, in one case, even homeless and begging in the streets, to people pursuing high-level careers in finance, medicine or IT. Also, when looking at the jobs they did in the UK, the spectrum was broad: from dishwashing and loading shelves in a supermarket, to a doctor, a head-hunter and a maths teacher. All but one of the interviews were conducted via Skype or other internet communicators. One was conducted in person when the respondent was on vacation in Poland.

Factors taken into consideration by Polish migrants to the UK

Push factors in Poland

As the literature suggests, uneducated migrants respond more often to push factors in the origin country, whereas educated migrants – who are usually also better off economically – respond more often to pull factors in possible destinations (Spörlein 2015; Verwiebe 2014). This differentiation was very visible among Polish respondents in the UK. The level of education, as well as life stage, seem to have been the best predictors of factors taken into consideration by migrants, including whether these would be factors in Poland or in the UK.

Almost all of the non-graduate respondents focused on economic push factors in Poland as the main reason for their migration and did not dwell on the factors

attracting them to the UK. Some seem to have treated the UK as a 'default' location, where everybody was going and which did not require further justification, while others responded to opportunities which presented themselves, either through friends or acquaintances already in place or when they applied to a work agency. Most graduate respondents, particularly those who were young and childless, approached the issue differently. When asked about their reasons for migrating, they usually did not speak of particular push factors or things they disliked in Poland but, rather, focused on the positives of and opportunities offered by the UK.

For almost all non-graduates and a minority of graduates, push factors in Poland were mainly of an economic nature. A number had burning economic problems – being unemployed or in debt – which pushed them to search for work abroad. Others wanted to save for a wedding, to buy a car or to start a business which, at the moment of departure, put them clearly in the '*hamsters*' (Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich 2007) category of migrants who treat their migration as a one-off event to earn money for a particular goal. Among graduates, economic push factors seem to have been strong only for people who had children to support and who, at the same time, lived in smaller cities and towns, where professional opportunities were less abundant at the time of their migration. This was the case for three respondents who either could not find employment after finishing their studies or were laid off from their jobs. All migrated in the early years after Poland's EU accession, when the unemployment levels in Poland, especially in small towns, were high.

Many of the respondents with lower economic and cultural capital, who struggled to make ends meet or progress in Poland, shared a frustration with the organization of the state, which, in their opinion, did not create opportunities for them. One respondent ('Mr Polish-Irish', born 1980, migrated to Northern Ireland in 2004) summarized it as follows:

> I knew since I was 10 that I wouldn't want to live in Poland. My parents worked their whole lives and had nothing because the government and the system stole from them. I didn't want to repeat that.

However, for many others, especially among graduates and people living in large cities, it was not a question of conditions in Poland but of the new opportunities which presented themselves in the UK after the enlargement of the EU and opening of the British labour market – they were clearly responding to pull factors in the destination.

Pull factors in the UK

Interviews with Polish migrants in the UK showed that the main difference between graduate and non-graduate migrants was in the prevalence of cultural pull factors. For the graduates, cultural pull factors seemed to dominate. Of the 11 respondents with tertiary degrees, only 3 did not mention cultural factors among their

main reasons for migrating. It was clear that the higher the educational, social and economic status of the migrant, the more prevalent were the cultural arguments.

The types of cultural argument considered were dependent on the particular life stage of the migrant. For young people who had just completed their studies, these were frequently related to lifestyle and gaining new experiences in a multicultural or otherwise diverse environment, placing them among the '*searchers*' category distinguished by Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich (2007). This is well illustrated by the narratives of several respondents.

'Mathematician' (born 1979, migrated 2004) graduated from university with a diploma in mathematics and a friend convinced her to go and spend some time in England before embarking on adult life.

> Really, we wanted to extend this time right after university, not look for a job right away, not start it all, so it was a sort of escape, at least for a moment. To put it all aside after writing and defending my thesis and to polish my English.

Wanting to improve her English language abilities, she signed up for courses and, at the same time, chose to work in pubs in London to practice conversation in English. This was, as she perceived, a carefree life and a way to extend her youth before returning to Poland to embark on a career related to her degree. However, due to having met a local partner, who did not picture himself in Poland, she remained in the UK and embarked on a professional career there. At the time of the interview in 2016, she was still in London – a mother of two – and worked as a maths teacher in a private school.

'Programmer from Gotham City' (born 1986, migrated 2014) was another respondent who did not have economic factors pushing him out of Poland, as he was in a relatively comfortable economic position due to his programming job. However, he very much longed for a more exciting life than his native Szczecin offered. He considered the city somewhat parochial:

> It's like Gotham City in Batman. On the map it's huge, looks impressive but, on a Saturday night at 9 p.m., it just dies. (…) I have a big city gene in me. I was dreaming of a city where you can go out mid-week in the evening and you won't have the impression that an atomic bomb had been dropped and everybody had died.

He wanted to go to London, but his girlfriend convinced him to go to Edinburgh, because she wanted to study in Scotland (where, unlike in England, EU citizens could, at the time, earn a British diploma without paying university tuition fees). He later moved to London because Edinburgh did not prove to be enough of a metropolis for him.

'Video producer' (born 1986, migrated 2014) gave similar, life-stage-related reasons for migrating and also ended up in London. He was several years into his

career and doing well professionally but decided that he wanted to experience life elsewhere.

> It was a few years after university. I was working in Poznań. Me and my fiancée, we wanted to go to another European country, to see what life is like there. (…) You know, when you are in your 20s, approaching 30s, you want to change something. And that was the main reason.

They went to the Isle of Wight because he found a suitable job offer there; however, they later moved to London because of the more developed video production sector and the more abundant opportunities for spending their free time.

The above respondents, when deciding to migrate, were young and with no children or other family obligations. They were free to experience the world. Their initial strategy was not to make plans for the future but, rather, to collect experiences and see where life would take them – a phenomenon dubbed by scholars as '*intentional unpredictability*' (Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich 2007), '*deliberate indeterminacy*' (Moriarty *et al*. 2010) or '*liquid migration*' (Engbersen, Snel, and De Boom 2010). In line with the findings of Trevena, McGhee, and Heath (2013), they were also prone to move within the UK when the initial location did not suit them.

For slightly older graduate respondents, usually in their 30s and with children, cultural arguments were also key, together with opportunities for professional development. However, these cultural opportunities were also frequently understood as an opportunity for the children to learn English.

'Adrianna' (born 1978, migrated 2011), who was definitely an extreme and rare example of a Polish migrant due to a privileged economic position, moved exclusively to educate her children. Her husband still worked in his high-powered job in Poland and joined them at weekends.

> We went because we can afford it and because that was the only way to give our children the experience of studying in an English school and learning English to as high a standard as English children.

She talks of the British or, more broadly, the Anglo-Saxon culture as '*the dominant culture*', fluency in which is '*a gateway to doing well in the future*' for her children. Although she could certainly have organized her move even if Poland had not been in the EU, she says she probably would not have, as it would have been more cumbersome, and the idea might not have come into her head if not for the friends and her sister who had moved there before her.

A similar perception of the importance of access to English-language education and rich cultural offer was suggested by 'Dora' (born 1976, migrated from Cyprus in 2014). She had been living in Cyprus with her husband and two children, due to the husband's job in international finance. When his contract ended, they did not consider going back to Poland as, for him, it would have been a step back professionally. They had a choice between a smaller European country – where the

company had its headquarters and where the husband also had family links – and London. 'We wanted London because of all the possibilities here, in terms of work, schools, culture, art', said 'Dora'.

As Kaczmarczyk (2011) has pointed out, these educated Poles were a new category of Polish migrants who might not have gone anywhere were it not for the possibilities offered by EU membership; they certainly would not have followed the traditional pre-accession routes of Polish migration to go work in simple jobs in Germany or elsewhere. Some of the respondents fit the description of Eurostars (Favell 2008) – people who profit from the European freedom of movement to become part of a larger, multicultural society such as that of London and use the opportunities provided by such a community not only for professional but also for personal development. Several respondents spoke of the possibilities which they had in London that they might not have had in Poland or elsewhere in the UK: going to free public lectures on various subjects, a wide choice of cultural events, living next to a major airport with flights to different parts of Europe and the world or playing badminton on a team and participating in competitions with many other local teams. Economic pull factors, such as the availability of work or even appropriate work, were a necessary condition of migrating to a particular place for a great majority of the interviewed graduate migrants. However, they did not consider economic pull factors as the main ones influencing their decision. They had or could get an appropriate job in Poland or elsewhere.

This was in contrast to the non-graduates in this study, who not only responded more to push factors but also made their choice of destination based on economic factors, such as the strong pound in the first years after EU enlargement or, even more often, the help they could get from family or friends with setting up their new lives.

'Seamstress' (born 1975, migrated 2006) went to Northern Ireland, because her brother, who was already there, found her a job and a place to stay.

> I was a single mum with three kids. I sometimes worked and sometimes didn't, so financially it was hard. The social services helped me a lot. My brother asked if I would like to go abroad. Life was hard with my husband's debts (…) and three kids, so who wouldn't profit from such an opportunity? He found me a job and I was working from Day 1.

'Photographer' (born 1981, migrated 2005) and her fiancée wanted to save money to pay off a car they had bought. She had been thinking for a long time about migrating to various destinations, but they finally did so only when an acquaintance offered to arrange a job for her fiancée.

> My husband had a good friend in Northern Ireland and asked him about work, but he never found him any. Suddenly this other friend, just an acquaintance really, offered him a job [in Northern Ireland]. So, he decided that that's like a lottery win.

It seems that, for migrants without degrees, economic reasons were the most prominent on the push side – making them leave Poland – and that the availability of a job was a *sine qua non* condition at the destination. However, when they were choosing where to go, social arguments in the form of help from family or friends already in place played the role of a trigger, making them depart and go to a particular place. This is in line with White's (2011) analysis of migrants from two Polish towns (Grajewo and Sanok), who also tried to go 'to someone' as opposed to going 'into the dark', to a place where they could not count on anybody's help.

The above demonstrates that it is the education level which determines the reliance on migration networks, irrespective of whether the migrant is from a small town or big city. Most of the non-graduate migrants in this study were from small- to medium-sized towns, although a few were from big cities such as Kraków or Szczecin. It was obvious that the lower the education level (which usually went together with an unfavourable economic situation and little or no knowledge of English), the more dependant the migrants were on networks in their searches for work and housing. They also did not seem to attach much importance to where in the UK they were going (an extreme case was a respondent who admitted that, initially, he did not realize what country he was going to because he did not know that Northern Ireland was not part of the Republic of Ireland), whereas many of the graduates either had a preference for London or looked in detail at the particular destination they were considering.

Two respondents migrated between Poland and the UK twice and their changing motivations illustrate well how factors taken into consideration may change depending on life stage. The first time, when they were in their early 20s, they were seeking an adventure and a break from their lives in Poland. As 'Future librarian' (born 1985, migrated to UK in 2006 and again 2010) recalls, he migrated for the first time after failing an exam at university.

> I decided it was a great occasion to go abroad for a year, rest, learn the language, prepare for my exam and resume my studies a year later. (…) I wouldn't describe myself as an economic migrant at that point. I wanted to see something different, live a different life, this famous 'West' I didn't know.

The second time, he had completed his studies, could no longer use his student accommodation and could not find satisfying employment, except selling financial products which were, in his opinion, morally 'dubious'. Instead, he chose to return to his Tesco job in the UK, which was not intellectually satisfying but which guaranteed stability and enough free time. In this second migration, he classified himself as an '*economic but also a moral migrant*', with the '*moral*' apparently being a form of economic argument as well: a protest not only against the financial products he was to sell but generally against what he saw as Poland's aggressive capitalism, which did not allow him a good start in adult life.

The other 'double' migrant ('Accountant', born 1987, migrated to the UK in 2007 and 2013) also migrated in a somewhat spontaneous way the first time and

made precise economic calculations, which included the costs of buying housing and stabilizing his and his partner's situation with 'a house and maybe a dog', the second time round.

Both of these migrants' situations at the time of the interview will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9, devoted to the reasons for remaining at the destination. Both of their life stories suggest that – in line with the recent more stability-oriented perspective in scholarship on post-EU accession migrants (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2018, 2020; Ryan 2018), those who started out as 'searchers' or as 'liquid' migrants became more 'solid' as they went, in their life course, from being 20- to 30- or 40-somethings.

Intervening factors: Legal

Among the 21 respondents interviewed, 15 had arrived in the UK for the first time before 2011 – that is, before all EU labour markets were open to workers from Poland and while the UK was still part of the EU. For five of them, the fact that they could work legally was perhaps not the main but an important factor which pushed them to choose the UK as a destination.

'Polish philologist' (born 1967, migrated 2006), who had a degree in Polish philology but worked in a factory in Northern Ireland, says:

> I would have been scared to go to a country where I would have to work illegally, hide. I have a strong fear of such situations. For sure, the fact that I could come here legally, that I have insurance, that I have rights like other European Union citizens, was decisive in why I am still here.

'Builder' (born 1985, migrated 2006), who worked in an aluminium plant in Northern Ireland, agreed:

> I wouldn't want to mess up my papers, to be caught working illegally because later, if you want to drive through that country or even change planes there, it becomes a problem. I could have gotten a 'bear' in my passport [a stamp given by German authorities to people who had worked illegally], which would mean I couldn't enter that country.

A key question in light of the debate on the 'diversion effect' is, of course: would these migrants have gone elsewhere if all the labour markets were open? In at least one case, the answer seems to have been 'Yes'. 'Music fan' (born 1973, migrated 2005), who had an extremely colourful biography in Poland – from running his own company to being homeless and begging in the streets – had a period in his life when he worked illegally in the Netherlands. His boss was afraid of being caught and fired him but promised him the job back once Poles were allowed to work legally. 'Music fan' went back to Poland, intending to later return to the Netherlands but, when Poland joined the EU and the UK immediately opened its labour market, whereas the Netherlands did not, he decided to join a friend who

was planning to go to Scotland – 'I saw that you could get a legal job here and that also played a part in my decision', he says.

Although none of the respondents put the legality of work as their No. 1 most important factor for choosing a destination, it is clear that, particularly for those without a graduate diploma and doing relatively simple jobs, the perspective of having legal employment was appealing. A domino effect might also have occurred as the friends who drew them to particular destinations in the UK might have gone there because the labour market had been opened.

A number of studies have been devoted to the so-called diversion effect – that is, the diverting of migrants from new EU member states from Germany, Austria and other countries of continental Europe to the UK and Ireland, which were the first to open their labour markets to new EU citizens. All but one of the respondents who mentioned the legality of work as an important issue and who did consider other destinations in Europe belonged to the group of respondents without tertiary degrees. This shows (as Holland *et al.* 2011; Kaczmarczyk 2011 and others have suggested) that the diversion effect may have been strong for the non-graduates and not so significant for the graduate respondents, who were, instead, choosing between going to a new and exciting destination and staying in Poland.

A much less discussed diversion effect may also have taken place from the US and other English-speaking destinations outside of the EU to the UK (or Ireland). For two respondents in this study ('Michał' and 'Dad'), the UK was the second-best choice after the US, which proved inaccessible. 'Dad' (born 1984, migrated 2005) would have liked to go to the US because his mother and other extended family members were living there. He applied for a US visa three times but was rejected each time, perhaps because of his mother's illegal residence status.

> If not for that, I would have ended up in New York, where my uncle could get me a job in a car parts warehouse. (…) I am glad I ended up in England and not the States because I am working legally, saving for my retirement.

His mother eventually returned to Poland and then joined him to work in England.

'Michał' (born 1975, migrated from the US in 2005) and his wife are both doctors. They had been living in the US since 2002. He was following a post-doctoral programme; she was not working because they had just had a baby. In 2005, when his post-doc ended, they had to decide about where to live. They did not want to return to Poland as, in their judgement, the possibilities for doing medical research were not good, wages were low and there was a lot of nepotism in the employment procedures. Staying in the US was also difficult, since his wife would have to nostrify her medical diploma before she could enter the labour market in her discipline. 'England was a natural option because we both spoke English and there was no requirement to nostrify our diplomas'.

These two interviews highlight an issue which deserves further investigation, especially given Brexit: How many and what types of Central and Eastern

European migrants were diverted from the US, Canada or Australia to the UK or Ireland when the latter opened up their labour markets to new EU citizens? Did these preferences change again after the UK left the EU and no longer offered preferential conditions to newcomers from EU countries? Several respondents in this study, among both those with and those without high professional qualifications, seemed to treat all the English-speaking countries as a common 'Anglosphere', culturally and – in some ways – economically similar but differing significantly in the legal conditions.

Conclusions

Both the existing literature and the interviews gathered in this study show that Polish migrants to the UK were a very heterogeneous group. The respondents in the UK – like Polish migrants to the UK in general – were extremely diverse in terms of their education, life stage, jobs performed at home and abroad and financial situation. They ranged from a person who had been homeless in Poland before his migration, to a highly qualified medical doctor and the wife of a City of London banker.

For Polish migrants to the UK, education level and life stage were the determining factors which influenced their reasons for migration. Non-graduates, who were usually also people with a smaller economic capital, responded mostly to push factors in Poland, while graduates responded more to pull factors in the UK.

Migrants with tertiary degrees went to the UK most often for cultural reasons and the higher the education level and material status, the more prominent cultural arguments were in their calculations. These included speaking or wanting to learn English or, as the above-mentioned wealthy mother of two said, 'wanting to educate my sons in English and a dominant culture'. Young people without dependants perceived the UK as the place where one could live an adventure, gain exciting experiences, profit from the 'bright lights' of London – the cultural diversity, cuisine, concerts, museums, sports events. If that was not enough, living in the UK also offered them the opportunity of vacations in other countries, due to better earnings and numerous flights to exotic destinations from London.

Non-graduate respondents in the UK also sometimes mentioned cultural arguments, such as knowing or wanting to learn English. For them, the most frequently cited reasons for choosing the particular destination were, however, social – the existence of a network of family or friends in a place they could go to. Economic push and pull factors in the form of the availability of a job – or at least the belief that it would be easy to find one – were a necessary precondition but not something which made them choose the UK over Ireland or another destination where work was also available. Their decisions were frequently one-step (Brunarska 2019; Wiseman and Roseman 1979): they went when an opportunity presented itself (usually in the form of friends, acquaintances or an intermediary offering them a job) and did not give alternative destinations much thought. Some admitted that they did not give the destination country any thought at all, only establishing the basic information about their own work and housing circumstances.

Well-educated migrants, who were in pursuit either of a career or of an exciting lifestyle, seem to have been more characteristic of Polish post-accession migrants to the UK than those to other destinations. Some, especially those from in and around London, fit Favell's (2008) definition of 'Eurostars' – people who use their migration to profit from the opportunities of a big metropolis and use it for self-development and creating a new identity for themselves. Others, especially those who migrated as young adults, could better be described as 'searchers' (Eade *et al.* 2007), frequently without precise plans or a project for whom they wanted to be but with a great openness to new experiences. The above two overlapping groups were characteristic of migrants to the UK, even if they were not numerically dominant among the respondents in Britain. They did, however, seem more characteristic of Polish migrants to this country than those to the three others.

Migrants similar to all of the above have been researched and described in the literature devoted to Central and Eastern Europeans in the UK, a literature which is much richer than for any other destination country. However, this research could certainly not omit migrants to the UK because – as will become obvious in the following chapters – this group was frequently a point of reference and comparisons for Polish migrants who chose other destinations, especially Ireland and the Netherlands. They frequently felt the need to justify why they did not choose this most popular early post-accession destination. As this research will demonstrate, despite being a demographically similar group (as in the case of Polish migrants to Ireland) or speaking English (as was the case for some respondents in the Netherlands), they had particular reasons for not choosing the UK and took into consideration factors which attracted them to other destinations.

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6 Ireland

Where the calm things were[1]

History of Polish migrations to Ireland

Ireland had, for generations, been a country of emigration, a fact deeply ingrained in its psyche and literature (Fanning 2018). Large numbers of Irish people left their country as recently as the 1980s, heading mostly to the UK and also the US. Only in the second half of the 1990s did net migration become positive for the island, at first mainly due to returning Irish migrants. Since then, Ireland has gone through a fundamental transformation, from being a country of emigration to one of the top immigrant-receiving countries in the European Union (EU), relative to the size of the population. As many as 16 per cent of the residents of the Republic of Ireland today were born abroad (Eurostat 2023). Among them, a significant number originate from other EU countries, due to the large waves of migration from Poland, Lithuania and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe after May 1, 2004.

Only two decades ago, there were almost no Poles on the island. Some Polish World War II veterans arrived there in the 1950s–1960s, followed mostly by women in the 1980s, who came through marriage. The first labour migrants, including IT specialists, arrived in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Grabowska 2005). However, in 2002 the Polish census still gave the number of Poles in Ireland as only 2,000 persons (GUS 2014). The Irish census of the same year did not have Polish as a category – only 'other European', meaning non-EU – however, 2,645 Poles were granted a PPSN (social-security) number in that year (Kloc-Nowak 2017). That number almost doubled in 2003 and exceeded 25,000 by 2004, the year of Poland's EU accession. These early migrants were clearly pioneers, who were followed by very significant streams of Poles in the next three years. By 2007, the number of Polish citizens residing on the island had reached 200,000 (GUS 2018). Ireland, previously almost absent from the map of Polish migrations, had become the Number 3 most popular destination (on a list of destinations which had become much longer and more diverse after EU accession) and Poles had become the largest immigrant group in the country (King and Okólski 2019).

In 2004, Ireland was in the middle of an economic boom and was one of the three 'old' EU countries (together with the UK and Sweden) which opened its labour market to Polish employees from the day of accession. From 2008, it experienced a severe economic crisis, especially in the construction sector. This caused

some Poles, especially employees of that sector, to leave, while others started to perceive their stay as more long term and to consider non-economic factors such as their quality of life or their social networks as important for their decisions (Bobek *et al*. 2018; Krings *et al*. 2009, 2011). In the years 2008–2014, more Poles were departing from Ireland than arriving. From 2015, the balance became positive for Ireland again, although the inflow of Poles was not comparable to that of the early post-accession years. According to Polish statistics, the Polish population of Ireland was 114,000 at the end of 2020 (data from the Polish Central Statistical Office – GUS 2021). However, the most recent Irish data demonstrated that the number of residents with Polish citizenship had declined again from 122,515 in the census of 2016 to 93,680 in the census of 2022 (CSO [Central Statistical Office] 2023). This was partly due to Poles taking up Irish citizenship, since the number of persons born in Poland was 106,143 (CSO [Central Statistical Office] 2023; Kloc-Nowak 2023).

The sudden interest in migrating to Ireland from 2004 was part of a broader revolution in migration routes brought on by EU accession (which saw the UK overtake Germany as the Number 1 most often chosen destination, with several other countries appearing as frequent destinations). Polish migrants to Ireland, like those to the UK, differed from their compatriots who migrated to continental Europe. They were significantly younger, better educated and came from larger cities in Poland. In the first years after accession, there were 26 per cent of people with tertiary education among Poles in Ireland and 22.5 per cent in the UK. In Germany and the Netherlands, the percentage was respectively 6.1 and 4 per cent (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009). This inspired many scholars (Fihel *et al*. 2015; Kaczmarczyk 2011; Krings *et al*. 2013a, 2013b) to speak of a new, qualitatively different wave of migration. In this context, a crucial question is why educated Polish migrants, in particular, chose Ireland as their destination and some preferred it over many other destinations, including the UK. Although a large body of research has been devoted to this new wave of migrants and their motivations, the differences in factors attracting them to various countries and how these varied depending on educational background, gender and life stage have not been thoroughly explored.

A large percentage of Poles in Ireland have tertiary degrees, but an even larger number do not. As Kloc-Nowak (2017) points out, there were two most frequent types of Polish migrant to Ireland: a young, educated person from a large Polish city; and a qualified male worker, coming from a smaller city or town. The latter worked especially in the construction sector (Bobek *et al*. 2008). In the first three years after EU enlargement, men strongly dominated flows to Ireland. The situation evened out from 2007, in large part because many male construction workers left (Kloc-Nowak 2017).

Several studies have shown that Polish migrants in Ireland perceive themselves as two distinct groups, depending on their level of education – even nick-naming themselves '*wykształciuchy*' (a pejorative term derived from the Polish word *wykształceni* or 'the educated') and '*Mariany*' (derived from the Polish first name *Marian* and used to mean 'the uneducated'); see, in particular, Bobek and

Salamońska (2010). The aspirations of these two groups were frequently contrasting, with the first group focusing on personal development or professional advancement in Ireland and the second on accumulating capital for use back in Poland. The 'careers' of Poles in Ireland ranged widely – from doing simple jobs which required no English or even, at times, being unemployed and homeless, to holding high-level positions in IT, architecture or other fields (Krings *et al*. 2013a; White 2016).

Studies particular to Poles in Ireland suggest that economic push and pull factors of migration, such as unemployment in Poland, differences in wages or the availability of jobs in Ireland, were strong (Bobek and Salamońska 2010; Jończy 2010; Milewski and Ruszczak-Żbikowska 2008; Okólski and Salt 2014). In 2004, unemployment in Poland was 19.1 per cent and there was a large supply of new workers leaving schools and universities who were unable to find suitable jobs. At just 4.5 per cent, unemployment in Ireland practically did not exist and many businesses in construction, the services, food processing and other sectors were searching for employees. Few studies differentiate between graduate and non-graduate Poles in Ireland; however, those which do (Bobek and Salamońska 2010; Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009; Okólski and Salt 2014) suggest that economic factors strongly influenced the migration decisions of both groups.

Economic obstacles to migration, such as the cost of travel, may also have influenced the choice of destination of some Poles and pushed those with few financial resources to go elsewhere. When the first significant numbers of Poles set out for the Emerald Isle, it was still relatively hard to reach. The Polish national airline LOT operated their first direct flight in 2004; cheap airlines entered the market later – Centralwings in 2005, Ryanair and Wizz Air in 2006. As Kaczmarczyk (2008) points out, the costs of moving to work in the EU were very different depending on the destination country – several times larger for Ireland than for destinations which could be reached by road, such as Germany or Italy.

Several qualitative studies draw attention to the fact that the motivations of Poles in Ireland, as well as the UK, were in fact much more diverse than only economic. English as a language which young Poles speak more frequently than any other or wish to learn was an obvious factor. Other cultural factors were also pointed out in a number of studies, such as a quest for self-development, gaining new experiences or living an adventure (Krings *et al*. 2013b; Luthra, Platt, and Salamońska 2018; Salamońska 2012). This seems to be especially true for the young, more educated or higher class migrants.

The role of social networks in Polish migrants' decisions to go to Ireland is especially equivocal, given the almost complete absence of a Polish community on the island at the moment of accession. It seems, as Sumption (2009) has noticed, that, in the times of instant internet communication, migration networks can form very rapidly. In Ireland, the role of these networks has been documented in the private lives of migrants (Bojarczuk 2023; Bojarczuk and Mühlau 2018) as well as through the rapid development of Polish NGOs and their involvement in civic and political events in Ireland and in the Polish–Irish transnational space (Bobek 2010; Lesińska 2023; Pszczółkowska 2023;

Pszczółkowska and Lesińska 2022; Salamońska, Lesińska, and Kloc-Nowak 2021; Szlovak 2017). The fact that a strong Polish community had quickly formed in Ireland certainly influenced further Poles to choose the destination, although exactly for whom and how this influence was significant was under-investigated.

Respondents

Between May 2016 and February 2017, 18 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with Polish post-accession migrants who had been living in Ireland for at least a year and who had no plans to return to Poland or migrate elsewhere within the next year (the UN definition of a migrant was followed to exclude seasonal migrants and others who had not chosen to reside in Ireland).

The respondents were of both sexes (9 men, 9 women) and aged from 29 to 58 years old (respectively 19 and 47 at the moment of migration). A majority (13 respondents) migrated in the years 2004–2006. The rest arrived in Ireland in 2010–2015, with none arriving in between, in the years of the economic crisis. The sample was varied in terms of personal and professional life stages – some respondents had worked or even had extended professional careers in Poland (for example, a doctor), whereas others arrived during or right after their studies; some arrived with their partners and children, others were single or arrived after a breakup of their relationship. One moved to Ireland to join a partner he had met online. As education was a key factor for analysis, half of the respondents chosen held a tertiary degree and half did not, both among men and women. This was done in order to have large enough samples of both graduates and non-graduates and to be able to compare the two groups.

The respondents originated from various places in Poland – from towns of 20,000 to larger cities and the capital, Warsaw – and lived in various destinations across Ireland, from small towns to Dublin. This was a particular advantage of the research, resulting from the interviews being held online – residents of small Irish towns, who were under-represented in much of the earlier research, could also be reached. Polish migrants are spread throughout Ireland, with the largest concentration in the big cities – Dublin, Cork and Limerick – but with every parliamentary constituency having at least 1,200 Polish inhabitants (Kloc-Nowak 2017). All but one of the interviews were conducted via Skype or other internet communicators (the exception was the interview with 'Doctor', conducted when he was on vacation in Poland).

Most respondents were recruited through announcements on Facebook profiles such as '*Polacy w Irlandii*' [Poles in Ireland] and several through personal channels. Facebook proved to be a source of diverse migrants. People who volunteered to take part in the study were of varying levels of education – from vocational high-school graduates to persons holding degrees from reputed Polish universities (for example, a chemist or nurse on a transplantation team) – and had varied occupations in Ireland – from doing simple jobs well below what they did in Poland to working in their chosen professions. There were also full-time mothers.

Factors influencing the decision to migrate

Push factors in Poland

According to many studies (Pedersen, Pytlikova, and Smith 2008; Spörlein 2015; Verwiebe 2014), the higher the level of education of a person, the less they take economic factors into consideration in their migration decisions and the more they include cultural factors. This seems to be only partly true for migrants from Poland. Studies on Central and Eastern European migrants in general (European Commission, Social Affairs and Inclusion [European Commission] 2008) as well as on Poles in Ireland in particular (Bobek and Salamońska 2010; Jończy 2010; Krings *et al.* 2013a) suggest that economic reasons were a very strong factor in migration, for both graduates and non-graduates. However, the issue proves more nuanced if we look separately at push factors – the reasons for leaving Poland – and pull factors – the reasons for which migrants chose Ireland and not another destination.

For both graduates and non-graduates in the sample, push factors were almost exclusively economic. The differences lay instead in the types of economic factors. Non-graduates frequently mentioned a loan to pay off, a lack of money for studies, own businesses not doing well or simply a search for better earnings. These were often coupled with life-stage-related circumstances, such as having children to support. In the case of educated respondents, the economic factors were more often related to their work-life balance or a lack of saving power. As an example, we can take the experiences of a single mother from Toruń, who worked as a chemist (alias 'Chemist', born 1972, migrated 2007). At the age of 35, she migrated to Northern Ireland and later moved south to the Republic. She claims that her wages in Poland were very good but that rents for apartments were '*crazy*'.

> I paid over half of my wages for an apartment. When I went to the bank to take out a mortgage, with instalments hopefully lower than my rent, they didn't treat me as a serious customer because I was a single mother. So, I went to the city to ask for a council apartment, but it turned out I was too rich to get one. I earned too much. So, I was trapped. I had to move back in with my mum. When I moved in with her, I cried every night, because, at 30, you are not supposed to still be living with your parents.

Another respondent, a doctor from Krakow who emigrated with his wife and three children (alias 'Doctor', born 1970, emigrated 2010), also earned decent wages but at the cost of working a lot of overtime and never seeing his family: 'There were times when I left the house on Friday afternoon and did not return until Tuesday morning'.

Some graduates claimed that they had no economic reasons for leaving Poland. These were usually respondents who happened to be in the convenient situation of being young, educated and with no children to support, such as a young lawyer. They responded mostly to pull factors, as discussed below.

Individual respondents reported non-economic push factors making them want to leave Poland, such as changing one's mind about a planned marriage or wanting to live away from one's family. For the majority, however, push factors, if they did exist, were economic. Differences between graduates and non-graduates lay mainly in the kinds of economic push factor to which they responded. For several young, educated respondents without dependents, no significant push factors were evident.

Pull factors in Ireland

For all migrants without tertiary degrees, both men and women, networks seem to have played a key role in determining Ireland as the destination. Even if the decision to emigrate was taken because of economic push factors, there was not a single person in the non-graduate group who did not point to having chosen Ireland because of some kind of personal ties and expected help with housing or finding work. One of the least-educated respondents and certainly the oldest ('Cleaner', born 1959, migrated 2006) summed up this strategy well:

> My son went first in 2004, right after Poland joined the EU. He quit his studies and went to Ireland. Me and my daughter, we came to him. When I arrived, everything was ready. We had a place to live, my son had found a job for me.

Asked if she would have migrated if not for her son being already there, she said unequivocally:

> No, no, I am not that brave to go somewhere on my own, without knowing the language. Especially since I was not 20, I was nearly 50, so it wasn't that simple.

A number of the non-graduate respondents in this study confirmed the prevalence of the strategy of going 'to somebody' as opposed to going 'into the dark' – terms first underlined by White (2011) in her book on migrants from two smaller Polish cities to the UK. This is in stark contrast to the graduates, who did not usually have network-related reasons for choosing Ireland.

There seem to have been two types of decision-making process going on. Some people were ready to migrate – mainly due to economic problems – and then looked for friends or acquaintances in various countries of Europe who could help them. This was the case for 'Satisfied lady' (born 1974, emigrated 2013), who decided to leave Poland with her husband because their car repair business was not doing well. They looked for opportunities and chose Ireland because the husband knew an Irish man from his previous migration to the UK, 15 years earlier.

> My husband thought of getting in touch with him. They had known each other for a short period but the guy was really fantastic. My husband called

and asked if he had any work for him. It so happened that the guy had opened his own business here in Ireland.

Other respondents also took a two-step decision (Brunarska 2019; Wiseman and Roseman 1979) – they decided to leave Poland and then chose between several potential destinations based on the kind of support from their family or friend networks which they could receive there.

Another type of decision-making sequence – one-step – took place for at least three non-graduate respondents. They claim that they were not thinking of migrating and would not have gone anywhere if not for the family or friends presenting an opportunity in Ireland. This was the case for 'Glazier' (born 1982, emigrated 2006), who was young, single, worked in a glass factory in a town of 20,000 inhabitants in southern Poland and still lived with his parents. A colleague from work informed him of an offer to go and work in a similar company in Ireland. The departure date was only two weeks later.

> He said the work would be organised, all you had to do was the paperwork and start working. So, I said 'Ok'. I didn't even think about it much, I just went. It was spontaneous but everything was organised for us, so you just had to accept the offer or not. I accepted and so we went.

He admits not knowing much about Ireland – just the things he read on the internet before departing. For such respondents the choice of destination was entirely accidental. 'It's not that I wanted to go to Ireland or England or any other country. The occasion just popped up, so I went'.

The above seems to confirm the importance of social networks for less educated people, who often do not have the economic, linguistic or cultural resources to organize their migration without the help of family or friends. When Poland joined the EU on May 1, 2004, there were hardly any Poles on the island. However, it seems that, in times of online communication, only a few weeks or months were needed for migration networks to be created and for family members, friends or even acquaintances to follow in the footsteps of the first migrants. In fact, the relatively recent arrival in Ireland of the leaders in these networks may have been an advantage: due to their recent experiences, they had access to resources such as job offers for newcomers with limited English or shared housing, which people residing longer in Ireland may have not known about. They were also still constructing their social lives in Ireland and so were keen to see friends and family arrive.

Networks proved much less significant for the educated Poles in the sample. Among the graduate male respondents, not a single one migrated for purely social reasons. Only two respondents among all ten of the graduates interviewed, both women, chose Ireland for reasons which could be classified as social, linked to the existence of migration networks. One went to visit a friend and stayed, another moved with her husband to where they already had family. Another two women

and one man ended up in Ireland for reasons which could broadly be classified as 'love migration' – one joined a partner who moved from the UK to Ireland while she was completing her university degree in Poland, while the other joined an old boyfriend with whom she re-started a relationship when he was on vacation in Poland. A male respondent started a relationship online with a Polish woman already living in Ireland and they finally decided that he would join her.

For graduates, cultural and economic factors were prominent in making them choose Ireland. The above-cited 'Chemist', who left Poland because she could not afford housing, looked for opportunities abroad in her field of work. The presence of such a work opportunity was a necessary condition of her migration. Speaking English and no other foreign language, she only considered the UK and Ireland as possible destinations.

> I didn't even consider other countries because of the language barrier. Maybe that's cowardice … I know people who come here without knowing any English. But for that you have to be brave or stupid. I wouldn't do it. You can judge for yourself if they are brave or stupid. They manage somehow. But I decided based on the fact that I spoke English – or so I thought at the time (laughs).

She finally chose Ireland over the UK because she found an appropriate offer in her field and also because she was attracted to the culture. More specifically, she chose it because of… U2. 'I had been a fan of U2 for years. They are from Dublin, so I figured it would be a great place for me as well (laughs)'.

A number of other respondents had cultural arguments for choosing Ireland, other than the fact that English is spoken there. The doctor from Krakow ('Doctor', cited above) first considered the UK because he read about how much doctors earn there; however, he finally chose Ireland because the family is Catholic, and they thought they would fit in well in a Catholic country. He decided he could earn similar money as in the UK but without compromising his values, especially regarding abortion. At the time of his decision, abortion was severely restricted in Ireland.

> I am anti-abortion and anti-morning-after pills. I couldn't imagine having to prescribe that or present it as a contraceptive option to my patients. In the UK, this is much more common.

Again, as in the case of 'Chemist', his motivations for leaving were economic; good economic conditions of work at destination were a *sine qua non* condition but he chose between two equally well-remunerated positions because of cultural factors.

'Trade unionist' (born 1980, emigrated 2005), a lawyer by education, claimed that he had a career planned out in Poland and no economic reason to move but

decided to take a break and spend a few weeks or months in Ireland with his girlfriend, because the country had always fascinated him:

> My brother had implanted the love of Ireland in me; we studied Gaelic from a textbook he brought from Australia. (…) I was also active in a knight brotherhood (…). There I gave lectures about the history of Ireland. I was fascinated by its history and kept reading books about it.

He also spoke about his fascination with Irish music and landscapes, a 'mysticism' which he felt was there. For him, as for some other Poles before the days of mass Polish migration to Ireland, the country had a certain exotic feeling, a sense of something different on the fringes of Europe.

Core or periphery?

Migrations within Europe have, on numerous occasions, been analysed through a core–periphery lens. Many scholars (Favell 2008a, 2008b; King *et al.* 2016; Recchi and Favell 2009) view migration to the UK and, particularly, to London, as motivated by moving from the periphery (such as Poland, Italy or many other countries around the world) to the core. This theoretical framework was not foreseen in this study and respondents were not explicitly asked to compare Ireland with other destinations. However, they repeatedly did so, perhaps because they knew that the focus of the study was destination choice.

For some respondents, Ireland seemed like a simple extension of the UK. 'Photographer' (born 1981, migrated 2006), a university graduate in pedagogy from northern Poland, who started with simple jobs in Ireland before switching to photography, said:

> Everybody was going to the UK. Ireland was a little-known country. And then it dawned on me that they also (*sic*!) have the euro, that they speak English, that everything is the same but fewer people are going there, so it seemed to me at the time that the chances of finding a job would be greater. And I was right. (…) Dublin is a very multicultural city. I relished it. During one trip [he came to Ireland for a summer job before moving permanently] I met people from all over the world: Asia, Australia, America, Europe, various countries. It was magical, so different. There was so much more variety than in Poland (…) This is an amazing country, which is developing quickly in its social aspects.

For him, the very open, multinational atmosphere was something he relished and which, in his opinion, made Ireland a lot like the UK – part of the British economic and cultural core of the world, which attracted people from many countries and continents. Several other respondents also appreciated living in a multicultural, socially progressive society, similar to that which they might have encountered

in London. 'The European' (born 1975, migrated 2005), a political scientist who worked for an international institution in Dublin, said:

> Ireland is currently accepting refugees, and this doesn't cause any contro-versy, contrary to what is happening in Poland. It seems Ireland has a vision of how to manage those coming, be they refugees or persons from other countries of the European Union. They dissolve within the country, live to-gether with the Irish. I haven't seen any ghettos where only people of one nationality would live. I have to say the Irish are very aware of the strength of their culture, even though they are not numerous. They don't seem to be afraid that an inflow of people from other cultures may put their own culture in danger. On the contrary, they are very open to sharing experiences, cul-tures; at least that is my experience.

Viewing Ireland as multicultural and home to large numbers of immigrants is a perception that placed it as forming part of the British cultural and economic core. However, this view was not shared by all respondents. In fact, many viewed Ireland as a destination on the fringes of Europe: calmer and less competitive than the core (which they located in London, Paris or – taking a more global view – New York), more traditional but also with fewer cultural or other thrills. They perceived it as a kind of periphery. This, for several respondents, was in clear contrast with Britain and sometimes even with Poland, which they perceived as more modern.

'Kasia' (born 1985, migrated 2006), who obtained a BA in pharmaceutics in Ireland, was studying for an MA and working in the production of vaccines, made the comparison:

> I was there [in the UK] for three weeks and, comparing the UK to Ireland, Ireland is paradise. England is a country of depravation. You get on a bus and on the upper deck there is a girl travelling to a party. She sits in the back seat and reveals that she has no underwear on. (…) There were such characters there that sometimes I was scared. They seemed mentally disturbed to me. I was terrified by all this variety, this freedom. Ireland is more like a village. It's so beautiful.

'Nurse' (born 1975, migrated 2015) also preferred Ireland due to its calmer life-style and excluded the UK as a possible destination:

> England for me is too European, in the negative sense of the word. Every-thing is too commercialised – at least that was my impression. Ireland is a backcountry. It's calm, like Poland 20 years ago. (…) It's more peaceful, everything happens more slowly. Maybe not technologically but mentally it's far behind Poland. In Poland, everything happens dynamically. At least in the last 10–15 years, everything seems to have gained speed. Poland has become very Westernised, you might say. (…) I tell my friends that, if somebody is young and wants some thrills, something amazing, s/he

shouldn't come to Ireland. S/he can go to New York or France. Well, maybe not France anymore but you know what I mean. The newest things. Ireland is calmer.

These respondents liked Ireland because, in their eyes, it was *not* part of the core – but was, rather, a quiet, unexciting non-threatening periphery. Some added other arguments differentiating Ireland from the UK: the fact that it is Catholic and had a history of being oppressed by a large neighbour, just like Poland.

It seems that, although almost all graduate respondents had cultural reasons for choosing Ireland, those reasons were very varied and, when looking through a core–periphery perspective, even contradictory. Some migrants assumed that they were going to the economic and cultural core of Europe, others that they were going to a quiet, remote destination on the fringes of Europe. This search for a tranquil destination may also be reflected in the fact that many Poles did not settle in Dublin but spread throughout the country, choosing smaller towns. This was the case, for example, for some families who wanted to offer their children better economic opportunities but, at the same time, preferred to live in smaller towns or cities, where the children could safely walk to school on their own. Some families made such choices even if it meant that the children lost certain opportunities which they had had back home, for example, lessons in their preferred musical instrument.

Interestingly, some respondents perceived Ireland as less developed, less first-world than… Poland, despite the better economic opportunities it offered them. This was the case especially among the less educated, who judged primarily based on the material culture, such as the choice of TVs in the shops, the disrepair of buildings and also the level of general knowledge of their co-workers and the school curriculum. 'Cleaner' (born 1959, migrated 2006), who arrived from a small town in southern Poland and worked in the room service of a hotel in Dublin, said that when she arrived she was 'a bit surprised by Dublin as the capital'.

If you compare Dublin to our Warsaw, Dublin looks like a village. Old, run down buildings that nobody renovates. I was a bit disappointed by it all. You have to go outside of Dublin, to Bray, Howth or Wicklow to see something nice here, nature, which is beautiful.

'Glazier' (born 1982, migrated 2006) agreed. He complained especially about the choice in technology:

[Ireland] seems kind of backward, like Poland 15 years ago. They are used to it and maybe they like it but… (…) Maybe not exactly backward, they have cars, houses, TVs and all. But if you go to a store and want to buy a particular type of TV, they won't have it. They will have five different TVs and that's it, you have to choose from those, the choice is not as large as in Poland.

'Swimmer's mum' (born 1980, migrated 2005) was generally very happy with her life in Ireland, spoke highly of how friendly the Irish were and how much

she enjoyed her calm, small-town life. Nevertheless, she judged Ireland as 'very backward'.

> I was surprised. I thought if Ireland is taking us Poles it would be very developed. But unfortunately, it's not, it's very backward. Poland is much, much more advanced in many respects. Ireland is one big stretch of countryside, only that. A beautiful country.

Several graduate respondents, on the other hand, perceived Ireland to be more developed than Poland, judging mainly by such non-material aspects as the treatment of sexual, ethnic or national minorities or the level of development of civil society.

Intervening factors

Of the 18 respondents in Ireland in this study, 15 migrated there before May 1, 2011, when regulations limiting access to the labour market for Poles in Germany were still in force. Only two among them ('Jacek' and 'Bartender'), both without tertiary degrees, spoke of these transition periods as one of the reasons – although not the most important one – why they chose Ireland instead of Germany as their destination.

'Jacek' (born 1983, migrated in 2006) had sisters in Germany and had earlier gone to work there for two to three months in the summer. This experience and that of his sisters and other acquaintances made him more prone to migrate since he saw how much easier life abroad could be from an economic point of view.

> I knew I wanted to leave Poland. There were no prospects in Poland. I always saw life from a different perspective. My sisters lived abroad, earned different money, could afford everything. I looked at my friends who had to work, pointlessly, without any gain. If you just work to pay your bills or pay off your loans, that's pointless. You should work also to profit from life somehow. So, I always knew I wanted to leave because I could never earn anything in Poland. Still, today, people in Poland live under huge pressure.

His sisters were trying to convince him to join them in Germany, but he did not want to for three reasons: he did not like the fact that they lived in the countryside, he did not want to live under the watchful eye of his older sisters 'who sometimes forget how old I am' and, finally, the route to getting a work permit seemed too cumbersome.

> It was more difficult in Germany then. I could go there but I would have to work illegally. Working was not yet permitted. To get a permit, my sisters said they could get me registered as living there, then do all the paperwork, so first I could earn a bit in the pizza restaurant [where he had worked over the summer] and then the paperwork would be done. But it was a long route

and I said no. And then the opportunity to go to Ireland popped up [since a friend offered to help him].

For this respondent, the transition periods were one of the reasons for opting out of migration to Germany and instead going where he could work legally and where a friend could help him.

'Bartender' (born 1979, emigrated 2006) started university in Warsaw but, due to a difficult family situation (absent father, younger siblings to support), left his studies after a year and did various jobs in the banking sector. He did not find them financially satisfying, got into debt and – hearing from his friends in Ireland and the UK 'how easy it is to live here, how easy it is to earn honest money and straighten out your future a bit' – decided to emigrate. In spite of having mostly studied German in school, he did not consider Germany as a possible destination because of the transition period:

> You had to have a work permit, the labour market [in Germany] was still closed to workers from Poland, so Ireland and England seemed like the natural choice at the time.

How did he choose between these two 'natural' choices? His friends from both countries were telling him similarly optimistic stories regarding earnings but, when the time came, 'I had a concrete and precise offer from my friends in Ireland of how they could help me with housing and looking for a job'. So, he ended up in Dublin, sleeping on his friends' living room couch and working as a lunch boy in the same pub as his friend.

Other respondents did not mention the transition periods, and some were even not aware of them when asked directly. This would suggest that transition periods had a certain but not large impact on the choices of the less educated and no impact at all on the choices of graduates. This may, of course, be only part of the truth because the interviews were conducted several years after the transition periods had ended. Those who were attracted to Germany or other countries of continental Europe could have already moved to their preferred destination. Also, many migrants who chose Ireland for social reasons may not have known that their relatives or friends who went before them did so because of the transition periods in other countries.

Conclusions

On the push side, both graduates and non-graduates who migrated to Ireland had strong economic motivations for leaving Poland, perhaps illustrating the economic difficulties even some graduates still faced in the country in the first decade of the millennium. Economic push factors were not significant only for those who were, at the same time, well educated, young and with no families to support.

Where the graduates and non-graduates differed significantly was in the pull factors they considered – the reasons for which they chose Ireland and not

another destination. The non-graduates did so mainly for social reasons, which confirms earlier research (Bartel 1989; Pedersen, Pytlikova, and Smith 2008; Spörlein 2015; Verwiebe 2014; White 2011) underlining the importance of networks for people with few financial, cultural or linguistic resources. Almost all made use of social networks to find initial housing and jobs. Several made clear that they would not have migrated at all if not for the presence of family or friends at the destination.

Graduates, on the contrary, rarely relied on migrant networks. They had a much broader mix of reasons for choosing Ireland, with economic and cultural factors being especially prominent. Cultural factors were linked to the language – they spoke English or wanted their children to learn it – but they also had other, less obvious, cultural preferences such as an interest in Irish history or music or a preference for its strict abortion regulations in the case of a doctor.

When looking at the arguments of both graduates and non-graduates through a core–periphery lens, it is obvious that some respondents treated Ireland as an extension of the British cultural 'core', perceiving it as similar in terms not only of language but also of its socially progressive, multicultural atmosphere. Many, however, chose to go or stay there not for the thrills of living in the centre of a dominant culture but for exactly the opposite reasons – they preferred a calmer, more traditional destination. Some even considered Ireland to be, in certain aspects, more backward than Poland.

This is perhaps the most striking finding of the research in Ireland, since it highlights which factors influenced migrants' choices between the UK and Ireland. These two destinations were similar in many ways – linguistically and culturally in some aspects – and their economies can both be classified as liberal market economies (Hall and Soskice 2001), which easily absorb workers with non-specific qualifications; both were in need of large numbers of such workers at the time of the 2004 enlargement and did not restrict the work of new EU citizens from May 1, 2004. The levels of wages offered were also broadly similar. The research in Ireland demonstrated that, for many migrants, especially among graduates, cultural or lifestyle-related factors were very significant and strongly differentiated the two countries in their perceptions. Some of the migrants in this research chose Ireland because they were hoping to profit from economic opportunities but at the same time avoid other globalization-related phenomena which they associated with the UK – particularly a high level of tolerance for various kinds of diversity. Although demographically similar to Polish migrants to the UK, migrants to Ireland more often sought stability, peace and quiet in their new homes, instead of the 'bright lights' and 'worldly' experiences they associated with the UK.

Note

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7   Germany

The convenient life near home

History of Polish migrations to Germany

Since the nineteenth century, Germany has repeatedly been the destination of choice for large numbers of Polish migrants. It can be argued that the flows of temporary labourers from Polish to German territories over the past 150 years were a continuous phenomenon, disrupted only at times by political events. After the end of such events – for example, the border closures of the Stalinist period – migration flows always resumed. At the moment of Poland's accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004, Germany was thus not only the most popular destination country for Polish migrants but the default choice.

The nineteenth-century mass migrations of Poles to German states started from agriculture. Farmworkers travelled not only from the parts of Poland which were occupied by Prussia but also from the Russian and Austro-Hungarian partition zones, which were poorer and underwent a demographic transition somewhat later (Kula and Assorodobraj-Kula 2012; Marek 2008). Many headed to Saxony, the memories of which are still present in the Polish language through the expression '*jechać na saksy*' (go to Saxony), which means 'go to work abroad'. The phrase smells of money and adventure but also presupposes a return after some weeks or months.

Farmworkers were soon joined by other workers due to Germany's rapid industrialization. In 1871 (the year of the founding of the German Empire), government statistics put the number of foreigners in the country at 207,000; by 1910, it was 1,300,000 (Potts 1990). One of the foundations of industrialization was the coal mining sector in the Ruhr valley. At the turn of the century, 34 per cent of the labour force in mining were foreigners (Potts 1990), most of them Poles by nationality – their number was estimated at 300,000.

Each subsequent historical period saw labour migrations from Poland to Germany. As Potts (1990) argues, even the years of World War II, when large numbers of forced workers were brought from Poland to Germany, can be treated as a continuation of previous phenomena. Perhaps the only period when Poles did not work in Germany was the Great Closure during the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s, when the newly created Polish People's Republic did not allow its citizens to travel abroad (Stola 2001) and when, given the large size of the Cabinet of

Ministers and the tiny number of emigrants, it was easier to become a government minister than a migrant (Stola 2010).

Large ethnically motivated migrations, such as the departure of 1.4 million *Aussiedler* – Germans or their families and descendants who found themselves living outside of Germany due to the re-drawing of borders after World War II, can also be treated as partly labour migration, especially in periods when the ethnic origin was not checked rigorously (Kaczmarczyk 2001; Marek 2008; Nowosielski 2012). Although this was not officially labour migration, the newly arrived took up employment and filled gaps in the German labour market.

Other legal routes for moving from Poland to Germany existed in the communist period. The 1970s saw a gradual increase in the number of border crossings due to visas between Poland and the German Democratic Republic having been abolished, crossings between inhabitants of the border zones being facilitated and work contracts abroad also being offered to Poles based on bi-lateral agreements, through the intermediary of special state agencies. These agreements were signed by Poland with neighbouring communist countries, particularly the German Democratic Republic, as well as some Arab countries (Korczyńska 2003).

It can be argued that the old trail of migration from Poland to Germany was re-discovered by large numbers of people in the 1980s (Kaczmarczyk 2001) when many political refugees left. These latter were frequently persons who profited from the politically motivated liberal approach to granting legal status in Germany to create a more economically prosperous life for themselves and their children; they can thus be treated as precursors of a new wave of economic migration. In addition to the above, many Poles also undertook illegal employment in West Germany. In the years 1980–1989, 633,000 Poles moved to Germany, which constituted over half of all the Poles who had left the country (Korczyńska 2003; Slany 1995).

Korczyńska (2003), who summed up various studies on the motivations of Polish migrants to Germany in the 1980s and 1990s, believes that, in the 1980s, the motivation was the most frequently economic, followed by political and family reasons. As she points out, economic and political reasons were frequently inseparable in the minds of migrants, as the political system in Poland influenced all aspects of life, particularly making it impossible to start a business and improve one's economic well-being. Due to the migration of genuine or not entirely genuine ethnic Germans, many people also had family or other contacts in Germany.

At the moment of the fall of communism in Poland, another motivation started to be frequently mentioned: curiosity and wanting to get to know the world. As Korczyńska (2003, 56) sums it up, 'The transformation, which brought with it an opening of the borders, resulted in Poles wanting to get to know a world which previously had been closed to them'.

The 1980s also saw the development of a petty but very lucrative trade between the two countries, as epitomized by the 'Polish markets' created in many East German towns. The traders' activities were immortalized in a popular song of the time entitled 'West Berlin' by the rock band Big Cyc [Big Boob] (Big Cyc 1990), which spoke of Poles 'on every other sidewalk' in Wester Berlin selling carafes or old watches to Turks, and earning in a day what a miner would in a month.

This trade became much less lucrative after the fall of communism and the changes in the price of various goods in Poland. The traders, however, had gained the social capital needed to find temporary employment in Germany for themselves or others. The trains from Warsaw to Berlin started carrying large numbers of temporary workers, especially builders and cleaners (Irek 1998; Kaczmarczyk 2001). They heralded a new era in Polish migration to Germany: that of circular or incomplete migration (Okólski 2001a, 2012).

The situation in both countries favoured this specific type of mobility. The German labour market, which had been dependent on guestworkers for a long time, was characterized by its duality, with certain work sectors – such as manual work in agriculture – not of interest to Germans. It was in great need of workers but, at the same time, German regulations did not facilitate the permanent settlement or even legal employment of foreigners.

At the same time, the Polish labour force included a significant number of workers who, for a long time, had been circular migrants between their villages – where they had their small family farms – and larger cities, where they worked in industry. The transformation from communism to capitalism and the resulting crash or modernization of many branches of industry left them unemployed (Okólski 2001a). Being used to circulating on a daily or weekly basis, they were ideal candidates to become circular migrants on a somewhat larger geographical scale.

Some of the precursors of this circular migration between Poland and Germany and, later, also Poland and the Netherlands, were persons from the Opolszczyzna region in the south who, due to their ethnic origins, held both Polish and German citizenship and thus could work legally (Jończy 2010). Most others found themselves in precarious and illegal employment.

In 1990, Poland and Germany signed a bilateral agreement which allowed Poles to take up work for three months each year as guestworkers – mainly in agriculture but also sometimes in other sectors such as hospitality and catering (Fiałkowska 2018). This agreement, which mirrored the schemes and practices that had been in existence already in the nineteenth century, was aimed at attracting workers for sectors in which Germans did not wish to work and was partly aimed at the regularization of those Polish employees already present. The number of job offers accepted within this scheme by Polish people quickly grew from 59,700 in 1991 to 295,200 in 2003, the year preceding Poland's EU accession (Marek 2008). From the German perspective, this migration of Polish seasonal workers was also key: in the years 1992–2002, 90 per cent of all seasonal workers in the country came from Poland (Dietz 2004).

The 1990 agreement also allowed for Polish construction companies to allocate part of their workforce to building sites in Germany. Some of these companies had been active on the East German market since the 1970s – and on a much smaller scale on the West German market before reunification. Individual workers could spend three or (in the case of managers) four years in the country. They profited from the opportunity, especially in the early 1990s. Later it became somewhat less profitable due to the need to respect certain German labour regulations and, by the end of the 1990s, due to a downturn in the German construction sector (Marek 2008).

Special arrangements were also created for people living near the border and for university students. According to the census conducted in 2002 – the last census before Poland's EU accession – 294,000 Polish migrants in Germany were still registered as residents of Poland (GUS 2014).

Initially, May 1, 2004 did not seem to be a turning point in Polish migration to Germany, as much as it was in migration to the UK and Ireland. The German government implemented a transition period in the EU freedom of movement, which meant that Polish workers could seek employment in Germany as before accession – only if they obtained a work permit or benefitted from other special arrangements, such as that regarding seasonal migration, described above.

The number of work invitations from German employers for seasonal migrants decreased gradually but, in 2010, still reached 174,000 (Kępińska and Stark 2013). Nevertheless, Poland's EU accession opened other venues for legal labour migration to Germany. Especially significant were regulations allowing for the provision of services (Kahanec 2013; Kahanec, Pytliková, and Zimmermann 2014), which were used in particular by companies and self-employed individuals in the construction sector. Some of these workers were seasonal, while others stayed in Germany all year round, performing work that did not require warm weather, such as renovations. Many were incomplete migrants, who over long years intertwined periods of work in Germany with periods of stay in Poland, and as a result were not fully attached to either one (Okólski 2001a, 2001b, 2004). The life strategies and motivations for choosing the particular destinations of Polish circular migrants have been described in many studies (Kępińska 2008; Kępińska and Stark 2013; Korczyńska 2003; Łukowski and Kaczmarczyk 2004; Wieruszewska 2007). Seasonal migrants, although still a part of the migration from Poland to Germany, do not fall within the scope of this research, as it covers only persons who have been in their chosen destination for at least a year and who intend to remain for at least a year more.

The number of Poles in Germany increased steadily by several tens of thousands each year – from 385,000 in 2004 to 703,000 in 2017 – and has, since then, remained stable at 706,000 in 2020 (GUS 2021). All the restrictions on access to the labour market were lifted on May 1, 2011 but specific groups gained free access to the labour market earlier – for example, graduates who wanted to take up employment in their profession had been free to do so since 2008. This opening resulted in somewhat larger yearly increases in the numbers of Polish migrants than previously.

The level of education of Polish migrants in Germany in the immediate years after accession was one of the lowest among the main receiving countries – only 6.1 per cent held a tertiary degree (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009). This number was based on Polish statistics, which included seasonal migrants. Interestingly, German statistics gave a very different picture. As Elsner and Zimmermann (2013) calculated, 23 per cent of EU8 migrants (most of whom were Polish) arriving between 2005 and 2007 had a third-level degree. This was the same as in the years immediately preceding EU accession (2001–2003). In 2008–2009, the number increased further to 29 per cent. These numbers are so much higher than

those based on Polish statistics because they are based on the German microcensus, which probably excluded seasonal workers and others without permanent residence in Germany. Looking also at the numbers of people with lower secondary and upper secondary education, Elsner and Zimmermann (2013) conclude that the cohort arriving immediately after EU accession was less educated than its predecessors, while the cohort from 2008 to 2009 was the most educated of the three groups. They link the arrivals in 2008–2009 with the economic crisis in Europe, although this was also the moment when the German labour market was opened up to third-level degree-holders. Although the percentage of graduates may seem high, Elsner and Zimmermann still conclude – comparing with data provided by Dustmann, Frattini, and Halls (2010) – that, among EU8 citizens, 'migrants to the UK were on average 6 years younger and their share of workers with a third-level degree was 12 percentage points higher' (Elsner and Zimmermann 2013, 15).

Despite the relatively high levels of education (in each cohort, the EU8 migrants studied by Elsner and Zimmermann were better educated than the locals), a large majority are concentrated in blue-collar jobs and are significantly underrepresented in services (which include sectors such as education and health care). This was the case even though the data used in their study tended to omit seasonal or temporary workers.

The group of Polish post-accession migrants in Germany can be divided into two distinct groups: low-skilled individuals from the periphery of Poland (small villages and towns) and high-skilled individuals from the core (big cities) (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009; Kaczmarczyk and Okólski 2008). The first tend to be older and to constitute the larger part of Poles in Germany. This is not unlike Poles in the UK and other destinations, but in the first years after EU accession this duality was especially visible. However, the percentage of educated or high-skilled individuals has increased in the last decade, making Polish migrants to Germany a diverse group. Berlin in particular, perceived by many Polish migrants as open and multicultural, has become a magnet for young people in search of life and cultural and professional experiences, similarly to London or other metropoles (Cichocka 2021; Szczepaniak-Kroll and Szymoszyn 2023).

Respondents

The sample of Poles in Germany in this study consisted of 18 individuals – 11 women and 7 men – born between 1969 and 1995. They were not representative of Poles in the country in terms of level of education. The sample was strongly skewed towards the better educated. As in other destination countries, this was done in order to have significant samples of both graduates and non-graduates. Ten of the respondents had a third-level degree (BA or MA), while eight did not. Their education ranged from having a vocational high-school degree, without a high-school leaving certificate (*matura*), through third-level BA degrees of limited market value, to highly sought university degrees, such as in IT or music.

The youngest respondent in the sample was 20 (19 at the moment of arrival in Germany), the oldest 49 (45 on arrival). Most had worked in Poland before their

migration while some arrived to study at university or immediately after graduating. Some arrived with partners or families or had left children back in Poland (for example, after a divorce); many were single at the moment of migration.

The years of arrival in Germany ranged from 2004 to 2016, with the largest group – 13 respondents – arriving in 2012 or later, thus in the period after all restrictions on access to the German labour market had already been lifted. This was significantly later than for the respondents in the three other countries studied.

The sample was also not representative of Poles in Germany in general due to the exclusion from the sample of people who had spent less than a year in the country and of those who intended to leave the country within the next year. Circular migrants, who traditionally constituted and still do constitute a significant proportion of Poles in Germany, were not the subject of this study. These frequently include the above-mentioned construction or agricultural workers, as well as employees in the care sector – particularly in care for the elderly – who typically spend only a few months at a time in the country (Leiber, Matuszczyk, and Rossow 2019; Nowicka *et al*. 2021). Other migrants who spent a short time in Germany – for example, doing summer jobs or on school or university exchange programmes – were also not included.

Most of the respondents (11) chose Berlin as their destination, with the others residing in cities in various parts of, mostly, West Germany. Several had moved within Germany since their first arrival. They originated from various-sized localities in Poland: three from small villages, three from Warsaw and other large cities and the rest from small- to medium-sized towns and cities. All but one person originated from western or central Poland.

A characteristic feature of the interviewed group, which was not sought deliberately, was a high percentage of people involved in multiple migrations (Ciobanu 2015; Salamońska 2017), who moved first to another (European) country and then to Germany, sometimes with a period in Poland in between. Three respondents moved to Germany from the UK (in 2012, 2014 and 2016) and one each from Belgium (in 2009), Italy (in 2015), Ireland (in 2012) and Spain (in 2013). The motivations of this particular group will be discussed separately. Several respondents can also be considered repeat migrants (Main 2014; Salamońska and Czeranowska 2021) due to their earlier stays in Germany as school-exchange participants, *au pairs* or workers.

Interviews were conducted via Skype, Messenger and telephone between August 2016 and January 2018. Respondents were recruited through appropriate Facebook groups, such as *Polacy w Niemczech* [Poles in Germany] or *Polacy w Berlinie* [Poles in Berlin].

Factors influencing the decision to migrate

Push factors in Poland

As in previous country chapters, push, pull and intervening factors which influenced migrants' decisions will be analysed in turn. When asked why they decided

to migrate, respondents in this group seem to have focused more on the push factors making them leave Poland. Push factors of an economic nature were mentioned by almost all of the respondents. Differences between graduates and non-graduates were only visible in the kinds of economic factor they named.

For people without third-level degrees or with such degrees but not necessarily ones that were valued on the labour market, the main push factor was low wages. Some respondents described the situation in Poland in very bitter words, underlining that the wages offered did not allow them to live 'in dignity'. They stated clearly that they would have preferred to stay at home if not for the fact that they could not support their families and that daily life was a constant struggle. Most of the respondents had migrated after 2012, when unemployment in Poland was very low. Unsurprisingly then, most spoke about the work conditions in the jobs they had, not about the lack of jobs, as the main factor pushing them out of Poland. As 'Son' (born 1993, migrated to the UK 2012, to Berlin 2014), who came from a small village in the Masurian Lakes, stated:

> After high school, I didn't even look for a job in my hometown because of the wages. I come from the poorest area of the region, with high unemployment (…) Our family always was linked with Berlin [because of his father working there], so I had always known that I could afford more things because of that. If you can earn twice as much while working shorter hours, then why not?

People with higher qualifications, including some graduates, complained not only about the wages but even more about the precarity of employment. Many had job contracts without health insurance and were not contributing to an old-age pension. 'Sonia' (born 1989, migrated 2016) obtained a BA in pedagogy in Warsaw but worked in bars and a clothing shop. She did not have a regular work contract but a temporary one without health insurance. Such contracts make it nearly impossible to get a mortgage, even if one earns enough. Her boyfriend worked in the same shop and under the same conditions.

> I had absolutely no financial stability. We wanted to live in a normal apartment of a decent standard and have children but our financial situation absolutely did not allow it. (…) First, we decided to emigrate and then looked for a destination.

'Electrician' (born 1972, migrated 2016) worked in his profession in Poland for 24 years. After 23 years he was laid off from a large company but found another job. He claims that the main impulse to change something and emigrate came when he received a letter from the state social-security company (ZUS), forecasting his future old-age pension.

> It frightened me, I wouldn't have been able to survive on such a pension. (…) So, I decided, since my Polish pension will be so small, maybe it's time to

ensure I get a better one from somewhere. And Berlin is only 600 km away from my hometown.

The sense of economic insecurity, either due to economic struggles in the present or forecasted problems in the future (in case of parenthood or old age), was a fundamental issue pushing migrants out of Poland. Such push factors as low wages, insecure work contracts, high costs of rent or mortgage, lack of support for parents or lack of support in case of failure were clearly decisive for many respondents. Even for 'Computer programmer' (born 1980, migrated 2013), one of the best educated and probably the most well-off respondent in the sample, a sense that he could not count on much state help and would have to rely on himself and his partner to bring up a child was one of his motivations for leaving Poland. He came from a medium-sized city, moved to a large city for university and then to Warsaw for work. According to his account, his earnings in Warsaw were excellent, even better than those he later received in Berlin. As immigrants to Warsaw, he and his partner were renting an apartment and were not registered as residents in the city. He believed this would make it difficult to place his future child or children in a public pre-school and imagined himself driving his child to a pre-school or school located far from his house and paying large sums for his or her education.

> At a certain point, me and my girlfriend decided that, if we are thinking of starting a family, maybe we should try settling somewhere where social security is more stable, that we should give life abroad a try, see if it will be calmer than life in Poland in many respects.

Several respondents among those who were doing well financially still perceived Poland as an ultra-capitalist country, where they could make good money but only when participating in the 'rat race' at full speed. They complained of a lack of work–life balance and believed they could not count on much state support in the event of failure, ill-health, parenthood or other needs. They perceived the Polish labour market as somewhat exploitative.

'Wiktor' (born 1993, migrated 2015), who ran a company in Poland doing electrical installations, claims he had 'good money, but no life' in Poland, since he worked very long hours, seven days a week, and was under huge pressure. He believes employees in Poland are made to work overtime without pay and not given the necessary equipment, so he did not want to work for someone else in Poland. He decided to leave and find employment in Germany to gain a better work–life balance: to 'experience life', travel and take vacations without worrying about his work. He still intends to go back to Poland in a few years' time and develop his business but only once he is ready to join the race again after a period of a more leisurely, stress-free life in Germany. 'Electrician' (quoted above) also complained about the exploitative work culture in Poland, where the employer did not want to provide the right equipment and expected his employees to manage somehow and work until the job was done, irrespective of their working hours.

Economic issues were by far the dominant push factors motivating migrants to leave Poland and, in many cases, the dominant factor in migration decisions in general. Only one respondent ('Zosia', born 1976, migrated 2008 to Belgium, 2009 to Germany) had a clear social reason for departing from Poland, first to join her sister in Belgium and then to Germany: a failed marriage which she wanted to leave behind her. All other respondents spoke of economic factors pushing them out of Poland. Differences depending on the levels of education of the respondents were visible but mostly in the kinds of economic factors they spoke about. The lower educated struggled to get by on their wages, while the graduates worried mostly about their lack of stability and of the possibility of getting a mortgage, of being able to raise their children in relative comfort or of receiving a decent pension in old age.

Pull factors in Germany

For many migrants, Germany seemed to offer exactly what Poland lacked: high wages and good working conditions. Many respondents, especially those doing relatively simple jobs, talked about the stable contracts which they appreciated, the fact that appropriate tools for their work were always provided, that they were not obliged to work overtime and that any additional hours they chose to do were remunerated. For both graduates and non-graduates, the adequate work conditions meant that Germany fulfilled the minimum requirement, the *sine qua non* condition of their migration.

This was a basic factor taken into consideration in the migration decision – but not the only one. For non-graduate migrants, social arguments were frequent pull factors, which determined why they went to Germany and not elsewhere. The availability of a sufficiently well-paying job was key; however, this job was the most often found through the help of family or friends. Even for those migrants who changed destination country, the route usually went from one family member to another – for example, 'Stefan' (born 1986, migrated to Ireland in 2005, to Germany in 2012) first went to his sister who helped him find adequate housing. Later, when he migrated again after several months in Poland, he went to Berlin because his uncle was there, helped him to find a job and initially put him up.

Some migrants could benefit from the help of family members who had been in Germany for two decades or more or who had settled there permanently after a period of circular migration. This reflects the generations-long history of Polish migration to Germany, which has frequently changed character over the years, even for individual migrants. 'Joining family' and 'help from networks' (which frequently consisted of family members) were thus key social pull factors for migrants without tertiary degrees.

Networks were not nearly as important for university graduates in the sample. Only two women (and no men) mentioned social factors which influenced their decision. In both cases, their decisions could be classified as 'love migration', as they joined a partner in Germany. Interestingly, neither of the men were German.

In one case, the couple met in London. The partner was from a country neighbouring Germany, but they decided to live in Germany because it was cheaper, and the children could learn to speak German. The partner commuted to work in his country of origin. In the other case, a young Polish woman wanted to live closer to her French partner but, since she did not speak French, she decided to take up studies in Germany near the French border.

Graduates did mention cultural factors, which were almost absent from the narrations of non-graduates. These were frequently linguistic. 'Daria' (born 1987, migrated to Germany to study in 2004, to work in 2007) had studied German intensively in high school and participated in a school-exchange programme. When she became an adult and decided to migrate due to the poor pay offered by the municipal administration in Poland, where she had had an internship, Germany was the obvious choice – she spoke no other foreign language. She had also spent a summer visiting her friend and trying to find work in Ireland but, as she says, not speaking good English was a factor which prevented her from even considering a long-term stay in Ireland or another English-speaking country.

'Wiola' (born 1978, migrated 2004), who had obtained a degree in music in Poland, was strongly pushed out of the country by the fact that there were no available openings in orchestras for her instrument and because other jobs – such as that of a music teacher – were not satisfying and were poorly paid. Germany was a very attractive destination for her because, in her own words, 'it is a Mecca for musicians'. She also wanted to continue her music education with a particular professor. Economic pull arguments were also significant, since she knew that Germany offered a multitude of work opportunities for musicians; she could support herself, even working part-time during her studies.

Interestingly, some of the educated respondents in the sample admitted that they would have preferred to migrate elsewhere – particularly to the UK – but changed their plans due to practical or economic considerations. 'Olga' (born 1995, migrated 2014), an architecture student, wanted to study in London but the costs of living and travel to/from home proved prohibitive. She settled on Berlin, the foreign metropolis nearest to her home, because she believes studying abroad teaches one much more than studying in Poland.

> The possibilities afterwards are completely different to those after studying in Poland (…) I am only in my second year but I already see how my horizons have broadened. Suddenly the world becomes smaller and you just want to go further and further. [Her university offers the possibility of a semester in China, which she is considering]. Not to mention the potential jobs and pay afterwards.

Her choice of destination was dictated by a mix of a quest for self-development and practical economic considerations.

'Computer programmer' (quoted above) and his partner also had an appetite for experiencing the world (in addition to the more economic push arguments mentioned above). They also first planned to go to Ireland or the UK – because English

was their first foreign language – and only started considering Germany when a recruiter contacted him with a particularly interesting job offer. They also wanted to live in a big metropolis because they like going to concerts and Berlin fit that requirement well.

It seems that, for some educated migrants, particular cultural factors linked with Germany or Berlin were important (such as opportunities for musicians and music lovers), whereas for others the attraction was linked more generally with living abroad, in 'the West', which many Poles had been aspiring to since their childhood in communist Poland.

Intervening factors

'Because it's close to home'

Economic factors were the most important in pushing migrants out of Poland and a mix of economic, social and cultural factors were important in attracting them to Germany. The picture of factors influencing the decisions of migrants to move to Germany would, however, be largely incomplete if a key intervening factor were not mentioned: distance. Geographic proximity and the related low costs of travel seem to have been decisive for most of the migrants choosing Germany. This was true for both non-graduates and graduates, perhaps with the exception of a few of the most highly educated.

'Electrician' (mentioned above), who decided to emigrate when he realized how small his old-age pension would be, chose Germany because of his family situation: he did not want to live far from his 11-year-old son, who remained in Poland with his ex-wife.

> I wanted to visit my son and my hometown as often as possible. It had to be Berlin because it has good train connections with Warsaw and then with my hometown – and also a good highway connection.

Several respondents chose Germany even though they had concrete opportunities in other countries. 'Sonia', who could not find a permanent job after obtaining a BA in pedagogy and who left Poland in a quest for job security and better wages, could easily have chosen the Netherlands, since her brother lived there and she had worked there over one summer during her studies.

> But we decided on Berlin because it's relatively close to our families – certainly closer than the Netherlands or the UK. We also both like big cities. We liked Warsaw a lot. So, we decided Berlin was the closest big city to Poland and that's where we would like to live.

Other migrants also chose Germany because of its proximity, which sometimes overruled arguments in favour of other destinations. 'Joanna' (born 1992, migrated 2015), who moved with her boyfriend, decided to leave Poland when she was

unable to find a satisfactorily remunerated job after obtaining a BA in tourism and when her boyfriend's car repair business fell into debt. They considered going to Denmark, where her boyfriend had earlier held a summer job and had some contacts.

> It would also have been easier for me since I could get by speaking English and I did not speak any German at the time. But we chose Germany since it's close. It's only a four-hour drive to my hometown. From Denmark, visiting family would have been more difficult.

'Wiktor' (born 1993, migrated 2015 and again 2017), who migrated because he was exhausted by running an electrical company in Poland, also stated, 'In England, one can earn even more in my profession, but I wasn't looking at where I can earn the most. I just wanted to be close to my home country'.

Distance proved key for many migrants, irrespective of their gender or age. This was true for non-graduates – who considered the costs of visiting their hometowns – but also for a number of both graduates and non-graduates who felt safer being close to families, to give or receive help or simply to be able to reach them when they felt the need. The fact that almost all the respondents came from western or central Poland probably had an influence, since most lived within a one-day trip by car from their homes – or even closer. Only a few respondents who held sought-after degrees and were professionally successful, such as 'Computer programmer' or 'Viola', did not mention distance as a factor which made them choose Germany.

Legality of employment

Only four of the interviewed migrants arrived in Germany before May 1, 2011, the end of the transition period limiting free access to the labour market. Of the four, two were highly qualified (an engineer and a musician) and easily obtained a work permit. One was a university student in Germany, which allowed her to work part-time. The end of the transition period significantly influenced the status of only one respondent: 'Zosia' (born 1976, migrated to Belgium in 2008, to Germany in 2009). She mentioned how, during her first two years in Germany, she worked as a cleaner or a nanny – officially as a self-employed person – in order to have a legal work status. 'In 2011 they opened the labour market, so I could pull out my diploma as an accountant, nostrify it here and look for a job in my profession'. Today she runs her own accounting business, serving mostly other Poles in Germany.

The question of the legality of employment seemed to be an unspoken and obvious thing for those who arrived after May 1, 2011. Most did not mention it as a factor which motivated them to migrate. However, the above-mentioned questions of employment security or social security, which were important to them, were accessible thanks to the legality of their status, something of which they were very aware. 'Ala' (born 1981, migrated to Italy in 2006, to Germany in 2015 with her Italian husband) had a long experience of migrating before arriving in Germany to settle and contrasts her first experiences with the situation at the time of the

interview. As a young woman, she did seasonal work in Germany and Austria – picking asparagus and strawberries – and then moved to Italy to work in care for the elderly. She recalls her early migrations as a period when she was exploited, not offered any medical services when she broke a finger on the asparagus farm – 'The Polish intermediary just asked when I would be able to return to work' – or paid below the minimum wage. She underlines that now in Germany her Italian husband has a legal job 'with 100 per cent insurance, all benefits' and they are profiting from a free creche for their son. When the economic downturn came in Italy, they considered moving to Switzerland but chose Germany because of all the benefits linked with being an EU citizen in an EU country.

Multiple migrations

As described above, as many as seven respondents in the study migrated to Germany from European countries other than Poland. Such a diverse group in terms of migration routes was not sought deliberately and may reflect the fact that multiple moves are common among Polish migrants. According to a recent study in the same four countries as this research, the percentage of those migrants who had experienced multiple moves (multiple migrants) and who had previously spent time in a different destination to their current one varies from 8.4 in the UK and 9.3 in Ireland to 12.3 in Germany and 14 per cent in the Netherlands (Jancewicz and Salamońska 2020). The significant number of multiple migrants in the sample in Germany was certainly also influenced by the moment when the study was conducted. In the years after the economic crisis which started in Europe in 2008, migration from crisis-hit countries (such as Ireland, Italy or Spain, where unemployment was high) to Germany, which weathered the global crisis well, increased significantly (Bertoli, Brücker, and Fernández-Huertas Moraga 2016). All the multiple migrants interviewed arrived in Germany either during the years of the economic crisis or after it. The larger number of multiple migrants in the sample in Germany than in other countries may, of course, have also been a result of the fact that migrants to Germany in this sample arrived later (on average, in 2012) than those to the three other countries (on average in 2008 in Ireland, the UK and the Netherlands) which gave them more time after Poland's EU accession to explore other possibilities.

An interesting issue for this group of Polish migrants is the degree to which they moved again due to the better economic opportunities in Germany, or because on May 1, 2011, transition periods limiting their access to the labour market ended. Bertoli, Brücker, and Fernández-Huertas Moraga (2016), who tried to establish which factors were significant for migrants in general (not multiple migrants), came to the conclusion that economic factors, especially unemployment levels in origin countries, influenced the levels of migration to Germany very significantly. Entry into the EU also had an effect, whereas the introduction of free movement in 2011 played a much smaller role. Kahanec, Pytliková, and Zimmermann (2014) also believe that the economic conditions played a much larger role in increasing migration to Germany than the end of the transition periods in 2011.

Among the multiple migrants interviewed, only one ('Stefan', born 1986, migrated to Ireland in 2005, to Germany in 2012) mentioned that his initial decision to go to Ireland was dictated in part by the fact that the German labour market was not open. His first migration decision was not very well thought through since the migration was intended to last only for the summer. However, 'Stefan' remained in Ireland for seven years, before returning to Poland and, six months later, moving to Germany. When migrating the second time, his main argument was to be close to his hometown, which is near the German border. An uncle in Germany helped by organizing work and initial housing for him. Distance seemed to be paramount in his second migration decision:

> The fact that it's close to home, it's 150 km to my parents' house, so I can just drive over. I wouldn't go to Ireland again, even if my friends were still there and things were as before – it's just too far. Every vacation I had, I flew to Poland and there were no vacations really, only going to Poland. During the seven years that I was there I took maybe two real vacations, even though I earned good money. Since moving to Germany, I go somewhere every year, maybe even twice a year.

Not only is he close to his family but he also values the fact that he can use many services, such as the hairdresser in Poland, which saves him money.

It seems that 'Stefan's' first migration was motivated in part by the contacts he had in Ireland and by adventure-seeking and in part by legal reasons. The second migration, to Germany, reflected his different life stage: he no longer wanted to live an adventure but, rather, to live more conveniently. At the time of the interview, 'Stefan' was married and about to have a baby and he believed that raising a child in Germany would be easier, although his reflections on the topic were quite general. However, he was convinced that a stable and comfortable life would have been much more difficult to achieve without legal employment.

Other migrants who were at similar stages in their lives, namely those with small children, also valued the fact that they were relatively close to their hometowns and families, especially grandparents. After the breakup of her marriage, 'Zosia' (born 1976, migrated 2008 to Belgium, 2009 to Germany) first went to live with her sister in Belgium. After six months she decided she would be better off in Germany, where she spoke the language and which was close to her hometown: 'If there was any problem, my parents could always come and help me with my four-year-old daughter; I could count on them'.

Several of the multiple migrants moved to Germany because of personal links in the country itself: one joined a partner whom she met in England and started up a family; another, after attempting life in the south of England where his brother was living, joined his father who had already been in Berlin for two decades.

Two other respondents moved from countries other than Poland for clearly economic reasons. 'Ala' (quoted above) had spent many years in Italy and worked as a helper in a care home. Due to the worsening economic conditions, her Italian husband, a mason, lost his job and could not find new employment. In 2015 he found

a job in Germany through a cousin, and they moved there. Another respondent, 'Joanna' (born 1989, migrated to Germany in 2008 and again in 2013 from Spain), moved back and forth between Germany and Spain, where her boyfriend lived, during her university years. In 2013, when she graduated and started to search for a job, it became obvious that Germany offered much better conditions, so she chose to settle there and have a long-distance relationship with her boyfriend, facilitated by the fact that she works for an airline and can travel at a lower cost.

It seems that, for the multiple migrants interviewed in this study, good economic conditions, coupled with being close to family, who were already in Germany or nearby in Poland, were paramount in the decision to re-migrate. The results are in line with the conclusions of Bertoli, Brücker, and Fernández-Huertas Moraga (2016) that worsening employment conditions in countries of origin were much more important in motivating migrants than the ending of restrictions in access to the labour market. Personal factors, namely distance to partners and other family members, were key and had gained in importance for some migrants as they had entered a new life stage, with children. However, were it not for appropriate economic conditions, migrants would probably not have been able to realize their wish to live close to family.

Research by Jancewicz and Salamońska (2020) suggests that multiple migrations are undertaken more often by better educated migrants. The respondents in this study constituted a very diverse group in terms of level of education and work performed and do not confirm this selectivity. They also do not fit the concepts of stepwise migration (Paul 2011), escalator migration (Hugo 2008) or go-stop-go mobility (Szewczyk 2016), which all assume that subsequent migrations are steps in professional advancement or reaching a country considered by migrants to be a better destination. These were, instead, moves to a destination where, at that time, conditions were better, or which was more convenient due to its geographic location. Life stage also seemed to play a role: some respondent had undertaken a more adventurous and longer distance migration when they were young but preferred to live closer to home and family once they reached their 30s or had children.

Conclusions

As the above examples demonstrate, economic factors, especially low wages in Poland, were the most important push factors motivating migrants to leave the country. For the choice of destination, appropriate work conditions were significant (in terms of wages, types of employment contract, working hours and equipment) but the intervening factor of distance was of key importance for those who chose Germany over other European or world destinations. Migrants probably would not have gone to Germany if sufficiently remunerated work was not available. However, such work could also have been found in other European destinations and some migrants even explicitly named other more lucrative opportunities which they had, which they chose not to pursue in order to be closer to their homes. As in research on the other countries, non-graduates relied on their social networks to provide access to economic opportunities, while graduates more often took cultural factors into consideration.

Time – understood as both historical time and personal time – seemed to be important. Events such as the economic crisis (which began in 2008 and which Germany weathered better than other countries, especially in Southern Europe) and the opening of the German labour market for Polish workers (on May 1, 2011) played a part in decisions. The legality of employment seemed to have been an infrequently mentioned but nevertheless essential condition for migrants to even consider going to Germany. Personal time – the particular life stage a migrant was at – also influenced the choices made. This was demonstrated particularly forcefully by several multiple migrants, who had moved to Germany from other European destinations. During their first migration, when they were in their 20s, distance from home was not important and stability was not something to which they aspired. During their second migration, when they were somewhat older and had children, proximity to the hometown or to the grandparents became significant. Stability and the work–life balance started to figure in their calculations, and they perceived Germany as a place where they could earn decent wages in favourable working conditions.

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8 The Netherlands

The second-best destination

History of Polish migrations to the Netherlands

Until the 2000s, the Netherlands was not one of the main destinations for Polish migration, nor were Poles a significant migrant group in the country. Nevertheless, the history of Polish migration to the Netherlands goes back over 100 years. The first Polish migrants to arrive at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century were coal miners, who found employment in the newly created mines in Limburg. Willems (2014) distinguishes three phases of Polish migration to the Netherlands. The first, in the years 1900–1945, consisted of both Polish Jews – who settled in Western Dutch cities – and miners. The second phase, in the years 1945–1990, saw a more diverse migration: Polish soldiers who fought in the Netherlands in World War II and who, for political or personal reasons, decided to remain, other asylum-seekers who fled communism, miners and seasonal workers.

The third phase, according to Willems (2014), started in 1990, after the fall of communism in Poland. First, Poles from the Opolszczyzna region, who held German passports and thus did not need visas to enter the Netherlands, started migrating as farmworkers, cleaners or construction workers. Polish passport-holders from Opolszczyzna and other regions of Poland followed, in part thanks to specific Polish–Dutch sectoral agreements regarding workers in agriculture and horticulture (Engbersen, Snel, and de Boom 2010) and in part – with the help of migrant networks – to work illegally. Their numbers were still not very large. According to the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS 2018), 23,000 Poles were living in the Netherlands in 2004.

From the moment of Poland's accession to the EU, the numbers increased rapidly. It may thus be argued that EU accession marked the beginning of the fourth phase of Polish migration to the Netherlands. Between 2004 and 2005, the number of Poles in the Netherlands almost doubled (from 23,000 to 43,000). From 2006 to 2007, the year that the Netherlands fully opened its labour market to new EU citizens, the figure doubled again (from 55,000 to 98,000) and stands at 135,000 (data for 2020 – GUS 2021). By the second decade of the twenty-first century, Polish was the most common foreign nationality of those living in the Netherlands, far ahead of Turkish and German. These official numbers do not include temporary migrants, who go to work for one summer or less, for example, in agriculture or

horticulture (the official period after which a person should register with the local commune and thus be included in the Dutch statistics is four months. Polish statistics include people abroad for over three months). If seasonal or short-term migrants were included, the numbers, especially in the summers, would probably be significantly higher.

Both pre- and post-accession migrants from Poland to the Netherlands were characterized by a low level of education. Only a few per cent held tertiary degrees (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009). This was similar to migrants in Germany but was in stark contrast with migrants to the UK and Ireland, where according to various sources, one-fourth to one-third of Poles held tertiary degrees. Most Poles in the Netherlands (over 60 per cent) were below the age of 29 at the time of migration but a significant proportion (35–40 per cent) were above the age of 40. EU enlargement saw a change in the gender balance among Polish migrants to the Netherlands. Before enlargement, women constituted about 60 per cent of those going; after enlargement, the balance became more or less equal (Engbersen, Snel, and de Boom 2010; Kindler 2015). Another significant change between pre- and post-accession migrants was that the first group was dominated by people from rural areas, whereas the second was by those from urban areas (Kaczmarczyk, Lesińska, and Stefańska 2012; Kindler 2015). Before EU accession, the Opolskie voivodship and neighbouring Śląskie (Silesia) were and continue to be a frequent source of migrants to the Netherlands, although Poles from those regions also migrate elsewhere (Jończy 2010; Kindler 2015).

A particularity of Polish migration to the Netherlands, compared to that of other countries of the EU, was that many people found employment through work agencies. As Kindler (2015, 17) writes:

> The Netherlands' labour market is characterised by a strong demand for seasonal labour, flexible forms of employment and an important role for intermediary employment agencies. In general, it is easy for Poles to enter the labour market and they work fulltime, mainly in agriculture and gardening.

According to Gijsberts and Lubbers (2013), almost a decade after EU accession, a majority of Poles in the Netherlands were employed based on temporary contracts with agencies. Several years later, Strockmeijer, De Beer, and Dagevos (2017) estimated this number among Central and Eastern Europeans to be one-quarter of all workers. This form of employment fundamentally affects the workers' position in the new country. Some agencies evade the law by offering lower pay, long working hours or poor and precarious working conditions. Some Dutch agencies also work with Polish subsidiaries, which send 'posted' workers to the Netherlands, thus avoiding having to respect some Dutch regulations (Berntsen 2015). Poles gathered in the low sectors of the Dutch labour market, had poorer paying jobs and lived in worse housing than even some other immigrants – for example, from Romania and Bulgaria (Snel, Faber, and Engbersen 2015). In some cases, the workers knew little in advance about the conditions of the job and were

not given a contract before leaving Poland – indeed, sometimes they did not receive a contract at all. As Kindler (2015, 18) wrote:

> This form of abuse and exploitation means that some Poles going to the Netherlands fall into the 'victims of human trafficking' category. On the other hand, genuine agencies are usually more effective than personal networks in matching workers with jobs that demand their particular qualifications, and they can also help in raising some qualifications, for example linguistic.

Short-term migration to the Netherlands is more frequent than to other countries because of the seasonal nature of many of the jobs there and because a developed migration industry (Cranston, Schapendonk, and Spaan 2018; Hernández-León 2012) gives employers a way to avoid offering permanent contracts, which are usually more costly for the employer. Contracts through work agencies make it easier to rotate workers or lay them off for a few months, only to employ them again based on another temporary contract (Berntsen 2015).

The type of employment in the Netherlands and the role of the migration industry have fundamental importance for this research. The availability of this organized form of migration, with agencies also dealing with housing and transportation, means that the role of networks may be much smaller than elsewhere and that people who otherwise would not be capable of organizing their migration can participate (Kaczmarczyk, Lesińska, and Stefańska 2012; Kindler 2015). On the other hand, migrating through the services of an intermediary who also organized housing means that migrants often find themselves clustered together with fellow-nationals, away from and with little chance to establish any relationship with members of the receiving society (Szytniewski and van der Haar 2022). Inadequate and expensive housing linked to the job and fewer work hours than promised leave migrants in vulnerable positions and increase the turnover of staff (McGauran *et al.* 2016).

Research has, however, demonstrated that Central and Eastern European migration to the Netherlands is not only short term or circular. Engbersen *et al.* (2013) created a typology of Bulgarian, Romanian and Polish labour migrants in the Netherlands, in which they classified 23 per cent as circular migrants, 22 per cent as settlement migrants, 13 per cent as transnational migrants who have strong ties with both the Netherlands and their country of origin and 41 per cent as footloose migrants, who are not attached to any country. A later study (Strockmeijer, de Beer, and Dagevos 2019) found that most Central and Eastern European migrants left the Netherlands after a continued period of employment which was shorter than five years; about one-third were classified as settlement migrants. Circular migrants proved to be infrequent in this study, contradicting the traditional picture of Polish migration to the Netherlands. Nijhoff and Gordano (2017), who focused on Polish migrants in The Hague, found respondents who, instead, fit the category of footloose migrants or Eurostars (Favell 2008) – that is, whose main motivation for migration was emancipation and gaining new experiences. It seems that, with time, the demographic and educational profiles of Poles in the Netherlands are becoming more and more varied, with the differences being strongly generational

and dependent on life stage – young and childless migrants frequently undertake migration independently of any agencies and direct themselves to large Dutch cities which offer varied professional and cultural opportunities.

In the first years after EU enlargement, the situation of Polish migrants in the Netherlands was also somewhat different to that in other EU countries of Polish mass migration because of the less welcoming reception from local politicians, media and the public in general (Pijpers 2006). The Netherlands had been one of the more enlargement-sceptical countries among the 'old' EU15, underlining the need for good preparation in advance rather than a speedy enlargement (Harmsen 2008; Rrustemi and Jovetic 2019). When the EU was finally enlarged, the problems which the Dutch expected came knocking at their door.

Almost from the first days after the Central Europeans' – particularly Poles' – arrival, the Dutch media focused on the problems they were causing, such as drinking, noisy partying and littering. The media and local politicians spoke of a 'Polish invasion', a 'Polish tsunami' or 'Poles flooding our country' (Mączka 2014, 196). The problems were further exacerbated by the fact that the opening of the labour market to Central and Eastern Europeans was followed by the economic crisis, which made competition on the labour market fiercer. In 2011, the Dutch government even considered introducing regulations that would oblige all those non-Dutch EU citizens who had lost their jobs and had no source of income to leave the Netherlands after three months (Pawlicki 2011). An opinion poll conducted in 2011 in four countries of large Polish post-accession migration – Germany, the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands – and repeated 1.5 years later, showed that Poles in the Netherlands felt discriminated against much more often than their compatriots in the other three countries. In 2011, 40 per cent said that they were often or very often discriminated against and, in the next wave, this number grew to 50 per cent. In the other three countries, the number was around 15 per cent in 2011 and then grew only in the UK – to 27 per cent (McGinnity and Gijsberts 2018). Interestingly, one study showed that Poles felt discriminated against more often than other nationalities in the Netherlands and that more-educated people felt it more often than the uneducated (van Doorn, Scheepers, and Dagevos 2013).

The culmination of the anti-Polish attitude came in February 2012, when the extreme-right Freedom Party (PVV) led by Geert Wilders created a website (http://www.meldpuntmiddenoosteuropeanen.nl – no longer functioning) where the Dutch could report problems caused by Central and Eastern European newcomers such as 'noise and problems with parking', 'drinking', 'run down or destroyed surroundings' or 'loss of job to immigrants from Central-Eastern Europe' (Mączka 2014, 218). Somewhat surprisingly – perhaps deciding that things had gone too far – this event caused a turn in most Dutch media, who started criticizing xenophobic politicians such as Wilders and underlining that Poles were hard-working, presenting them as victims of their Dutch employers, who frequently provided overcrowded and ill-equipped housing or exploited their employees in other ways. At the time when the interviews for this study were conducted, the atmosphere around Polish immigration was thus more positive than it had been. However, it seems that many Poles had not forgotten the previous negative public discourse.

Respondents

All respondents for the Dutch part of this study were recruited via Facebook profiles devoted to Poles in the Netherlands, such as *Polacy w Holandii* [Poles in the Netherlands], *Polacy w Hadze* [Poles in the Hague] and other local groups. The sample of Polish migrants to the Netherlands consisted of 16 respondents – 7 men and 9 women. Most were born in the 1980s and 1990s, with the oldest born in 1968 and the two youngest respondents in 1997. A great majority migrated from Poland to the Netherlands between 2008 and 2016, in the period when the Dutch labour market was already fully open to Polish workers, without the need to obtain work permits. One arrived in 2006. Three migrants had earlier experiences of migration to other countries. A number of respondents, especially but not exclusively among the non-graduates, had used the services of a work agency to provide their employment and initial housing. The fact that respondents were recruited via Facebook may mean that those working and living in the worst conditions, perhaps without internet access, may have been omitted.

Among both men and women, there was a broad spectrum of education levels. The least educated respondent had only a middle-school qualification, the mandatory minimum level of education in Poland. The most educated respondents held degrees in IT or obstetrics. With half of the respondents holding tertiary degrees, the sample was very strongly skewed towards the educated since, as described above, people with degrees constituted only a very small percentage of Poles migrating to the Netherlands. This was done in order to have a large enough sample of both graduates and non-graduates to be able to compare the two groups.

Among the non-graduates, the respondents most often held high-school diplomas from general or technical high schools. Several attempted to study at tertiary level but abandoned it. The respondent with only a *gimnazjum* (middle-school) qualification was not very typical of an uneducated person as he came from an educated family and did not pursue further education due to alcohol problems. It may thus be the case that Polish migrants with the lowest levels of education do not have internet access, are not present on Facebook or chose not to respond to my requests.

Several respondents originated from small towns or villages in Poland, including the Opolszczyzna region in the south, from where many migrants to the Netherlands traditionally came. The presence of people from villages differentiated the respondents in the Netherlands from those in the UK and Ireland, where I found it difficult to locate them. However, the sample also covers a broad range of other origins: towns and cities, from Szczecin and Gdynia in the north to Wrocław and Bielsko-Biała in the south. One respondent ('IT guy') came from Warsaw.

All interviews were conducted via Skype/Messenger or telephone (since some respondents did not have access to a good internet connection and asked to communicate by telephone).

Factors taken into consideration by Polish migrants to the Netherlands

Push factors in Poland

During the analysis of the interviews with Polish migrants in the Netherlands, it was striking that, when asked generally about their reasons for migrating, the respondents focused much more strongly on the push factors.

'Midwife' (born 1989, migrated 2015) was a typical respondent in some respects. She comes from a village in the Opolszczyzna region in the south of Poland, studied obstetrics in Wrocław and, before migrating, worked as an obstetrician in a hospital in Opole – a medium-sized city of about 130,000 inhabitants – and rented an apartment with a friend there. She had also split with her husband three years earlier. She had family members who had migrated some time before to the UK and Germany. Her decision to migrate resulted mainly from the low pay in her profession.

> Unfortunately, midwifery is almost like a charity activity in Poland, and I could not support myself and continue working. The job was also very exhausting mentally. My divorce plus midwifery brought me to a point where I had to seek therapy with a psychologist and psychiatrist; I just wasn't managing with my life. I was lost and had a breakdown. Plus, the lack of money. Renting an apartment is very expensive in Poland, compared to earnings (…). I decided I had to emigrate, or I would die there, the country would finish me off mentally. I just couldn't deal with the situation, this sense of injustice and helplessness: I graduated from a five-year university course, I did various additional trainings, I am a qualified midwife, and the pay is as it is.

Asked why she chose to go to the Netherlands, her first answer was 'I don't really know why the Netherlands'. A social factor influenced her choice the most, since a friend offered to ask his sister living in the Netherlands if she knew of work there. She did and helped 'Midwife' to get the job and even let her live in her apartment for the first few months in the Netherlands. If not for her, 'Midwife' might have gone somewhere else.

> I didn't really decide that the Netherlands is the country I want to go to. That's not true. I most wanted to go to Canada or the United States, but that's more difficult. It's much easier to go to the Netherlands.

She did not give much thought to her destination, led by the conviction that she urgently needed to leave Poland.

Other respondents also focused on the push factors which made them leave the country. 'Aniela' (born 1989, migrated 2010) from Rzeszów, a city in the south-east of Poland, attempted to study at tertiary level but quit after a few

months and held odd jobs. She returned to live with her parents, after having lived with a boyfriend for some time. Her parents decided that she should go to work abroad:

> I didn't really want to leave, I did it because my parents pressured me to. They reiterated that I didn't have a job, that they couldn't support me all the time, that things were hard for them too. So that made me leave. It didn't really convince me to leave, it made me.

A friend of Aniela's was working in the Netherlands and her parents suggested the destination for her as well. 'At the work agency, I said I preferred Holland, but any country would do'. Her first attempt to move ended badly since she was cheated by the employment agency and had to return home. The second attempt, which she undertook together with a friend through a different agency, led her to a satisfactory job in horticulture, which became even more satisfactory when she managed to move out of the overcrowded and somewhat dangerous housing provided by the employer.

'Anna' (born in 1985, migrated in 2014) also underlined that the reason for her departure was misfortunes back home. She ran two shops in a town in Western Poland – one selling groceries, the other second-hand clothing – but the businesses went bankrupt. She underlined how difficult it was to run a business in Poland, with various inspections from the authorities, an ineffective justice system and dishonest employees. After closing the shops, she held other jobs but was still in debt.

> I worked 15 to 16 hours a day to pay everything off. Just to be back to zero. And then a friend who had been living here in the Netherlands called and invited me to come for a month or two.

What was intended to be a short stay to earn some cash and pay off her debts later turned out to be a permanent move.

As demonstrated by the above statements, economic factors were very important on the push side of the migration decision, especially for the not-so-well-off migrants, who came mostly from the non-graduate group but also sometimes from among the graduates. There were only two respondents for whom economic push factors were not significant. One was an IT specialist who claimed that, due to the high costs of living in Amsterdam and the expensive pre-school for his daughter, he was financially no better off than in Warsaw. Another was a young woman who fell in love with a Dutchman while on vacation in Germany and left for the Netherlands right after graduating from high school.

Pull factors in the Netherlands

While factors pushing respondents out of Poland were very strong and made up large parts of the stories of many respondents, pull factors were not so obvious. A number of respondents, including 'Midwife' above, admitted that their choice of

destination was somewhat accidental. This was true for graduate and non-graduate respondents alike.

'IT guy' (born 1982, migrated 2014) was working in IT at a university in Warsaw and living in a nearby town with his wife and two children. The commute was long, there were no good schools in the area and his daughter's allergy symptoms were aggravated by living close to nature.

> At that time, we were thinking more about moving to the centre of Warsaw. We had entertained the thought of going abroad some years earlier – before the children arrived – to spend a few years but it wasn't our big goal, and we were not doing anything to pursue it.

Then a head-hunter contacted him about a job offer in the Netherlands and the family decided 'Why not?': 'It was a cool job and the fact that we went to the Netherlands was the effect of that offer more than anything else', he says.

Among those who did have strong pull factors attracting them to the Netherlands, economic factors, especially a good enough relation between pay and cost of living in the country, were commented upon a number of times. As 'Anna', whose shops in Poland failed, says:

> It's no utopia, no land of milk and honey. But you live normally. You don't have to wait for your next paycheck, or be in a situation where you get paid on the 1st and on the 10th you are already out of money.

Cultural pull factors were not at all important in the decisions of non-graduates. Among the graduate group, they were somewhat more significant but less frequent than economic arguments. The exception was the question of language. This language turned out to be English, not Dutch. A number of respondents, both graduate and non-graduate, mentioned how easy it was to get by in the Netherlands speaking some English. Many respondents did not know any German but had at least a basic knowledge of English and they appreciated the fact that, in the Netherlands, almost everyone speaks it, as evidenced by 'Middleschooler' (born 1997, migrated to Berlin in 2014 and to the Netherlands in 2016), who had only a middle-school qualification but spoke English:

> I chose the Netherlands [over Germany, where he had previously spent a few months] because of the language. Some 80 or 90 per cent of the Dutch speak English. So far I have only met about two people who didn't.

One respondent ('Nurse', born 1965, migrated 2006) chose the Netherlands because she spoke Dutch (due to a previous marriage with a Flemish–Belgian); another respondent ('Dominika', born 1989, migrated 2011) moved because she wanted to learn the language. She studied management at an agricultural school in Poland and had the idea that speaking Dutch would be an asset on the Polish labour market, where she wanted to find a job in a Dutch food production company.

(She may never test the usefulness of Dutch for that purpose since she fell in love with a Dutchman and decided to stay in the Netherlands.) The great majority of respondents, however, did not know any Dutch and were not studying it. English was the significant cultural pull factor for them.

Many respondents spoke about the fact that the Netherlands was not their first-choice destination. This is in line with findings among other nationals, including asylum-seekers, demonstrating that large percentages of migrants end up in the Netherlands not by choice (Kuschminder, de Bresser, and Siegel 2015). Although the respondents in this study were not directly asked to make comparisons with other countries, a number felt the need to justify why they did not go to the UK. This was sometimes in the context of speaking English and sometimes perhaps because they felt that, when discussing destination choice, it was necessary to justify why they did not make the same choice as the largest group of Polish migrants at the time of their migration. Respondents also mentioned Norway, Scotland, Iceland and North America as destinations to which they would prefer to move. Some even had experiences of migration to more- distant countries – for example, 'Grand-daughter' (born 1986, migrated 2015) had previously worked in Italy and Scotland and would now prefer to live in Iceland or Norway. However, her life circumstances had changed: her grandmother, who had raised her and was now raising her younger brother, needed financial but sometimes also personal assistance. Also, while again living in Poland, she had acquired a dog, which would be difficult to transport by plane or ferry. Respondents who had migrated with children spoke about the help they could quickly receive from grandparents if a child needed care.

A surprisingly significant number of respondents declared that they would prefer destinations other than the Netherlands because they believed 'better' Poles went there. 'Granddaughter' described Poles in the Netherlands as

> representing nothing but jagged teeth, recidivism and an inability to use any language other than Polish. And I even won't quote the Polish they use here!

She believed that Poles in Iceland or Norway 'represent a wholly different level', while Poles in the Netherlands 'are those who were last in Poland, they had nothing to do with themselves'. 'Middleschooler', despite having only a basic level of education himself, commented on how he was considering a move to Scotland to surround himself with 'a better quality of Poles'.

'In love with a Dutchman' (born 1984, migrated 2004), who went to the Netherlands after high school to join her Dutch boyfriend and stayed in the country despite finally marrying a Pole, had a similar view:

> Better Poles emigrate there [to the UK] than to the Netherlands. I am absolutely not talking about all Poles. But if I look at Poles in the Netherlands, maybe 65 to 70 per cent are very simple people. There is nothing wrong with being simple, but they are just boors. (…) When I hear the Dutch or others speaking badly of Poles, I always defend them. But sometimes, when I look at them, I am ashamed to admit that I am Polish. They curse, drink, smoke

> grass and lead lives I don't approve of. (…) Not everybody needs to have a PhD, I don't either, but they should have some ambition.

The above quotes may in part be accurate observations regarding the behaviour of some Poles but, at the same time, are likely to be a reflection of the above-discussed public discourse regarding Polish migrants in the Netherlands and an attempt to disassociate oneself from the image of 'the Pole' in the Netherlands. They may also be a reflection of class divisions among Polish migrants, as observed by other researchers in the UK and Ireland (Bobek and Salamońska 2010; Garapich 2016). Nevertheless, the above demonstrates that the images of compatriots in various countries – not only how many are there but also what kinds of people migrated to a particular destination – can constitute a 'pull' or 'repel' factor in migration decisions.

Intervening factors: Distance

Among the above-described pull factors, the availability of sufficiently well-paid work was decisively the main one in the Netherlands. However, such work was available in a number of countries. Only when we look at the intervening factors do the choices of migrants who went to the Netherlands become clearer.

What was decisive was that migration to the Netherlands was considered by many migrants to be a low cost and low risk, an 'easy' kind of migration. This ease resulted from geographic closeness and the possibility of travel by road, as well as from the functioning of work agencies. The fact that the costs of moving were low provided a form of economic and also psychological insurance – if something went wrong, one could pack up one's belongings, hop on a bus and go back home.

The fact that it was 'easy' to go to the Netherlands was brought up by 'Midwife' above and underlined by many other respondents. 'Logistics agent' (born 1997, migrated 2016), who comes from a small town in Southern Poland, wanted to go somewhere for a few months to earn cash for his university studies.

> It's hard to find something if you don't have experience and don't know the country. So, I and a friend decided to go through one of those work agencies (…) There were other offers [to the UK or Ireland] but we decided that here would be a bit easier to reach and we had some friends nearby. We thought the Netherlands would be a bit easier than the UK.

'Ethnographer' (born 1985, migrated 2012), who comes from a village in Central Poland but lived in the Western city of Poznań before migrating, wanted to leave because, in spite of her BA in cultural studies, she could only get a job as a kitchen helper. She applied to various work agencies.

> I treated England, France, the Netherlands, Belgium as possible destinations. All those countries where everybody was going and where you could earn some money. Holland happened somewhat by accident. I was offered a job

in Holland. I didn't choose it. It was offered and I decided that, OK, I would go there. It's not that far – if something goes wrong, if I am cheated or not treated well, I can always go back.

For some respondents, the decision was one-step, in response to an offer. 'Anna' (the above-quoted bankrupt former owner of two shops) says she was not even thinking about migration before her friend from the Netherlands called her and suggested that she go there.

I absolutely didn't have such a plan. Friends went, but it didn't even cross my mind. (…) I tried to reconcile everything in Poland. I had a lot of debt, and I wasn't planning to flee the country.

Nevertheless, when her friend called and gave her 'five to ten minutes to think about it and two days to pack', she took the bait.

Even if other economic arguments were key, the perceived closeness of the Netherlands sometimes served as the tipping point which pushed migrants to choose the country over other countries with equally good wages. The issue of being close to home was brought up by migrants who had few resources as well as by graduates in good jobs. 'Programmer' (born 1986, migrated 2015) was a computer programmer in the south of Poland. He, his wife and their small daughter decided to emigrate when she lost her job. His main motive was, as he says, to get more international experience in IT since he could have supported his family in Poland on his wage alone. He spoke English but considered the US or even the UK too far away. Asked if he would have gone to the UK or Ireland if he got a job there, he says: 'No, God forbid. It's too far, not a nice climate and they drive on the left side of the road'. For him, Amsterdam was the nearest metropolis where one could get by speaking English, where he could get experience working as part of an international team and which was, at the same time, fairly close in terms of distance and of way that life, such as the roads, was organized. If his daughter became sick or they had other problems with logistics, 'grandma can be here within a day or two'.

It seems that, for people with few resources, the Netherlands was a safe choice because it did not require a large initial investment in travel and housing, it could be reached by road and there were intermediaries who were meant to help with practical issues (although these did not always provide services as promised). On the other hand, for some of the highly qualified respondents, the Netherlands was a chance to experience 'the world' and be in a metropolis somewhat like London but without the hassle of having to cross the English Channel or reserve a plane ticket in advance. Both groups appreciated the possibility of reaching family in Poland or soliciting them to come when needed.

Intervening factors: The migration industry

As described above, a specificity of the Dutch labour market is that many employees, especially immigrants, are recruited through work agencies. As demonstrated

in the quotes above, several non-graduate and single respondents in this study used their services and such a possibility directed them towards the Netherlands.

We might expect that, when migrating to a country with an active migration industry, there would be less reliance on unofficial channels, such as the social networks of friends and relatives. This study disproved such a hypothesis, demonstrating clearly that social networks were a valuable resource even for those who also resorted to the services of agencies. Some respondents used these later to find a job but relied on migration networks to find a trustworthy agency; others were not afraid to use the services of such an agency because they were travelling with someone or knew someone at the destination. The knowledge that not all agencies were reliable also spread through these social networks, with many of the respondents in this study knowing of or having experienced problems with agencies themselves in their previous migrations – such as cases of fewer working days than promised or crowded housing in the company of other Poles who were deemed dangerous or disruptive.

As in the other countries studied, any reliance on social networks or work agencies was very much dependent on the level of education. Non-graduates almost all did so. Some graduates also did but mostly in the form of friends, not agencies (unless – as in the case of 'IT guy' – it was the head-hunter contacting him and not the other way around).

Intervening factors: The legality of work

Almost all the respondents arrived after May 2007, when the Dutch labour market was already open to Polish workers (the only two who arrived earlier were women who had found Dutch partners and followed them to the Netherlands). The legality of work was not an issue which they mentioned spontaneously but, when asked about it, many said they would not have wanted to work illegally. One respondent ('Aniela', born 1989, migrated 2010) compared her experiences with those of her father, who had worked illegally in Austria in earlier decades and was deported and banned from the country for several years.

> He did go again but feared being caught so he couldn't travel and visit Poland. I didn't want to go through what my father did.

The legality of work was thus another layer of security which they treated as a necessary condition of their migration.

Conclusions

For many of the Polish respondents in the Netherlands, push factors in Poland – especially economic ones – rather than pull factors in the Netherlands, were paramount in the decision to migrate. Except for several people in highly sought-after professions, this was a migration of economic necessity rather than choice, even for some graduates. They did, however, have a choice of where to migrate to.

Among the non-economic pull factors, only linguistic issues – namely the fact that one could get by in the Netherlands speaking English – were significant for a number of respondents. It seems that, for those who spoke at least basic English but did not speak German, the Netherlands was the closest available option – a sort of 'half-way' solution between staying home and migrating further, for example, to the UK, where one would have to take a plane or boat and be more cut off from home in the case of an emergency. Intervening factors – geographical closeness and ease of travel, coupled with the facilitations provided by work agencies – seem to have been decisive in the choice of the Netherlands over other destinations. Both lowered the costs of migration, which was especially important for people performing simple jobs or in financial difficulties.

A number of the respondents, especially among the non-graduates, used the services of work agencies, which have already been shown to be key for migration to the Dutch labour market (Berntsen 2015; Gijsberts and Lubbers 2013; Kindler 2015). Somewhat surprisingly, this did not seem to diminish the role of social networks, although it changed the function these networks played. Many people were only willing to use the services of a work agency or go to a particular place of employment if it was recommended by someone they knew. This was because of many experiences and stories of unscrupulous agencies and inappropriate or unsafe housing in the destination. Another social network-based strategy to diminish the risk involved with going abroad through an agency was to go with a friend.

The conclusion that migrants to the Netherlands chose the option that seemed easiest to them is indirectly confirmed by the fact that some Poles there see their compatriots as a 'worse sort' of migrant. A number complained about the 'low quality' of Poles in the Netherlands, contrasting them with compatriots who went to the UK, Ireland or Norway. Some admitted that they would have preferred to go elsewhere to surround themselves with compatriots they imagined to be different; however, costs and other practical considerations kept them from doing so.

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9   Reasons to remain

Liquid migrants seeking solid lives

Introduction: From liquid to stability-oriented migrants

As in every migration, one of the fundamental questions asked about Central and Eastern Europeans moving to Western Europe after the 2004, 2007 and 2013 European Union (EU) enlargements was 'will they stay?'. In the academic debate during the first decade after the 'big bang' enlargement, the answer seemed to have been negative – researchers underlined the temporary or undetermined character of migration plans, particularly for young and single migrants, who constituted large sections of the Poles, Lithuanians, Slovaks and others who decided to move. As discussed in Chapter 1, scholars offered various classifications of post-accession migrants, with all of them underlining the 'intentionally unpredictable' (Drinkwater, Eade, and Garapich 2009), 'deliberately indetermined' (Moriarty *et al.* 2010) or 'liquid' (Engbersen 2012; Engbersen and Snel 2013; Engbersen *et al.* 2013) intentions of a large section of migrants. The statistics confirmed that intense flows in both directions took place between pairs of 'old' and 'new' EU countries (GUS 2021; Pollard, Latorre, and Sriskandarajah 2008), as well as to third countries (Jancewicz and Salamońska 2020).

Nevertheless, a decade later, the mostly 20-something migrants had become 30-somethings and frequently also parents; many had developed professional careers. By the time of the 2011 census in Poland, the number of Poles with strategies to settle abroad had increased, as evident in their reasons for migration, such as joining family or planning to have children *(*Anacka *et al.* 2014). The economic and political situation had also changed, with the economic crises in 2008–2010 in Ireland and the UK and Brexit being particularly 'unsettling events' (Kilkey and Ryan 2021), which pushed some migrants to make more definite choices. This inspired scholars to argue that, after a number of years when a liquidity-oriented perspective dominated research on post-accession migration, it was time to accept that the migrants were, in fact, no longer as 'liquid' in their choices and plans and that a stability- or settlement-oriented perspective was due in scholarly debate (Bygnes and Bivand Erdal 2017; Friberg 2012; Grzymała-Kazłowska and Brzozowska 2017; Grzymala-Kazlowska and Ryan 2022; Ryan 2018a). The concepts of anchoring (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2018, 2020) and embedding (Ryan 2018b; Ryan and Mulholland 2015) were developed to understand how migrants construct

(and sometimes also dismantle) economic, psychological and social ties to their places of residence. In this research, the focus is on the circumstances that influence migrants to do so. The aim was to study how factors which influenced decisions to migrate – whether economic, social, cultural or other, as presented in the 'tree' of factors in Chapter 3 – changed with time spent in the destination.

Some scholars argue that migration and settlement, return or onwards migration decisions should not be treated as single events at a particular moment in time (Bobek 2020; King 2012). Rather, they should be perceived as processes which are strongly influenced by time – in the sense of both life course and historical time (Kilkey and Ryan 2019; Ryan 2015). This is especially valid for decisions to remain at the destination. While none of the respondents in this study had difficulty answering when they migrated (although some gave several dates, depending on the number of their moves), their decisions to remain at the destination were taken and re-taken every time their personal or broader circumstances changed. The fact that I speak here of one decision to remain should not be treated as contradicting this processual perception. Instead, the part of this study regarding remaining should be treated as a picture of the factors taken into consideration at one moment – the moment of the interview. Respondents could have previously had (and indeed did have) different reasons for remaining and new reasons may appear in their lives in the future.

Reasons for returning and reasons for remaining

By 2019, 21 per cent of Poles surveyed by CBOS (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej) (2019) declared that they had worked abroad in the past. A classical work by Francesco Cerase (1974) proposed the following typology of return migrations: (1) returns of failure – typically after fewer than 5 years abroad; (2) returns of conservatism, for example, for family reasons – typically after 10–15 years abroad; (3) returns of innovation – after 10–20 years; (4) returns of retirement – after more than 20 years abroad. In the first decade after accession, several significant studies in Poland focused on who was returning to the country. It seems that returns of conservatism were the most frequent among Polish migrants, with reasons such as homesickness or family and friends in Poland given in surveys – as, for example, that conducted by Frelak and Rogulska (2008) – followed by returns of failure (reasons such as difficulties in earning enough money or high costs of living). Returns of innovation were far less frequent (Anacka *et al.* 2014).

Returns for conservative reasons, such as missing family and friends and their mental and practical support – for example, in raising children – as well as general homesickness, were also found to be the most frequent reasons for return in other countries which joined the EU in 2004 or 2007 (Apsite-Berina, Manea, and Berzins 2020). Some studies questioned the relevance of success on the labour market of the destination country as a determinant of plans (Snel, Faber, and Engbersen 2015; Steinmann 2019). As White (2022) summed it up, personal reasons were dominant for return, even among those who clearly migrated for economic reasons. Since not only the migrants but also their parents were getting older, responsibilities

related with caring for one's parents also became a factor taken into consideration by migrants, especially women (Duda-Mikulin 2018; Radziwinowiczówna, Kloc-Nowak, and Rosińska 2020).

Several studies (CDS 2010a, 2010b; Iglicka 2010) have shown that returnees who had frequently worked outside of their profession and below their qualification level abroad had considerable trouble re-integrating into the Polish labour market and often remained unemployed or inactive. This sparked Iglicka's public comment about a 'lost generation' of young Poles, who were marginalized in both origin and destination (PAP 2009), which caused an outcry, especially among the Polish abroad. Many Polish and other returnees did not see their return as final and considered going to work again in the country where they had already been or even in a different one (CDS 2010a, 2010b; Frelak and Rogulska 2008; Iglicka 2010; Szymańska, Ulasiński, and Bieńkowska 2012; White 2022). White (2014a, 2014b) coined the term 'double return migration' for Poles returning to Poland only to discover that life was not as they had hoped and again returning to their place of residence in the UK, this time with a more definitive intention of staying.

In later research, migrants' reasons for remaining gained more visibility. Some researchers found that Central and Eastern European migrants were 'trapped' in migration (Nowicka 2012; Parutis 2014) because they earned enough to live comfortably in the UK but not enough to invest and prepare for their return. The economic crises – especially in Ireland and the UK – and Brexit (both the referendum in 2016 and the actual departure of the UK from the EU in 2020) were seen as 'unsettling events' (Kilkey and Ryan 2021), which inspired many migrants to rethink their plans and to either depart or start perceiving their situation as more permanent (Apsite-Berina, Manea, and Berzins 2020; Di Iasio and Wahba 2023; Jancewicz and Markowski 2021; Jancewicz, Kloc-Nowak, and Pszczółkowska 2020; Janicka and Kaczmarczyk 2016).

Economic factors continued to be seen as important but many studies, especially qualitative ones, demonstrated the importance of social and cultural factors, particularly social and cultural links with the natives of the receiving countries (Bobek 2020; Cichocka 2021; McGhee, Moreh, and Vlachantoni 2017; Piętka-Nykaza and McGhee 2017). Having children, especially of school age, has been found to be a strong factor attaching Polish migrants to their place of residence (Ryan and Sales 2013; Trevena 2013, 2014; White 2011a, 2014a). On the other hand, turning points in the children's educational trajectories, such as starting school or graduating, as well as strong transnational ties with the country of origin were found to favour decisions to return (Dziekońska 2023; Snel, Faber, and Engbersen 2015).

Respondents

The findings in this chapter are based on the 73 interviews in the four countries considered in this book: Ireland, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. The sample and methods were described earlier, in Chapter 4. Here, it is important to underline that the respondents were chosen from among post-accession Polish migrants who were in their country of residence for at least a year and intended to stay there for at

least another year. In this respect, they did not represent the full spectrum of Poles present in the four countries under study, since short-term, circular or incomplete migrants were not included (Okólski 2001, 2012). Nor were students on short study programmes, such as within the Erasmus scheme. The respondents also certainly did not represent the full range of those who had migrated since 2004, because many had already returned. The following can thus not be treated as an analysis of reasons for staying or not staying in the four destination countries among all Polish migrants. Instead, by analysing the factors considered within the extended push–pull framework (Chapter 3), it demonstrates whether and how the reasons for choosing the country of residence changed for the interviewees over time.

The sample in all four countries was very varied in terms of how long the respondents had been living in the destination at the time of the interview. Some arrived as early as 2004, when Poland joined the EU; others as late as 2016. Some had been in their destination for more than 12 years and some for not much longer than one year. This, of course, greatly influenced whether their reasons for remaining had changed compared to the original reasons for migrating. The moment of arrival of respondents in Germany was, on average, several years later than for respondents in Ireland, the UK and the Netherlands (2012 vs 2008 in the three other cases), which may have influenced their perception of the situation in Poland – e.g., because unemployment levels had dropped significantly in the years following accession.

Changes in the importance of factors in both origin and destination countries

Economic factors

Broadly speaking, economic arguments remained the most important for those respondents who emigrated from Poland for economic reasons. This concerned push factors in Poland, which were perceived by many respondents as largely unchanged, even if more than a decade had passed since their migration – they still spoke of wages too low to get by or support a family on or long working hours and work conditions which did not allow for an appropriate work–life balance.

This was the case, for example, for 'Swimmer's mom' (born 1980, migrated 2005), who left Poland for Ireland because she was not earning enough as a duty manager in a supermarket in a small town. At the time of the interview, she lived with her Polish husband and two daughters in a small Irish town and worked in a chemical laundry. One of her daughters was involved in competitive swimming, which the parents were able to support, despite holding relatively low-level jobs. More than ten years after migrating, she was still comparing her economic situation in Ireland to that back in Poland:

> There is nothing to return to since we come from a town where women earn the minimum wage, which is what, 1200 *zloty* net? I think I couldn't switch

back to living on such money. (…) With such earnings, we would not be able to give our daughters what we give them here. They travel. One went to camp, the other visited family in Norway, now she is going to Spain. We wouldn't be able to allow ourselves such things in Poland.

'Doctor' (born 1970, migrated 2010), who left for Ireland with his wife and three children because in Poland he was only able to earn good wages when working huge amounts of overtime, also saw the job situation in the Polish medical sector as unchanged.

I sometimes have [job] offers from Poland. But it's always x money plus the possibility to earn extra doing night shifts. I don't see a possibility of return. And I don't know if I would want to anymore.

Some respondents stated explicitly that they would be very willing to return to Poland (in one case, for example, because their new partner lived there) but cannot because the wages offered were not comparable with what they can earn abroad. 'Cleaner' (born 1959, migrated 2006), who joined her son in Ireland, also pointed to economic issues as still being decisive:

Here I have a bank card and I don't look into my wallet thinking that there is still a week to go until the end of the month and I am out of money. You know what I mean? I don't earn millions here, I just live normally. Nobody does, maybe with exceptions. But I can live with dignity from my wage. (…) I have 8 years to go before my retirement. Here you have to be 65, man or woman. I am paying into a private pension fund and I will have a state pension. They have calculated that, when I retire, I will have 2,000 euros a month. In Poland, nobody would give me such money.

This narrative of a 'normal' life, understood primarily as being able to cover all of one's basic needs from one's wages, has already been discussed in the academic literature (Galasińska and Kozłowska 2009; Garapich 2019; McGhee, Heath, and Trevena 2012; Piętka-Nykaza and McGhee 2017; Rabikowska 2010; Rodriguez 2010). It came up repeatedly in interviews in all the four countries. 'Dad' (born 1985, migrated 2005), who worked as a receptionist and lived with his Polish partner and their small son in Manchester, perceived the UK and many other countries of Western Europe as places where people could 'live normally' from their wages, which he contrasted with those in Poland:

I am not necessarily expecting help [from the authorities], but a normal, stable job, where I can earn enough to support my family; where I can live normally without the need to hold down several jobs, which often happens [in Poland]. Especially if you live in a smaller town, it's hard to support yourself on one wage.

The above demonstrates that basic economic push and pull factors, related to employment and the level of earnings, remained key for migrants' decisions concerning where to live. However, as they became better acquainted with life in their new homes, new economic pull factors in the destination countries also appeared and were included in their definitions of what a 'normal' life should look like. This primarily concerned services offered by the state – health care, support for parents or in case of misfortune. As de Jong and de Valk (2020) and Andrejuk *et al*. (2021) have already noticed, the functioning of the welfare state is not important in initial decisions to migrate but gains importance with time spent in the destination, due to migrants' better knowledge of the system and often also due to their entering a new life stage.

The quality and accessibility of health care was an issue which the respondents in this study – particularly those from Germany and the Netherlands – spontaneously and frequently commented upon and contrasted with what they knew from Poland. Although some resorted to 'welfare bricolage' (Phillimore *et al.* 2021), using various health care services in Poland and in the country of residence, depending on their availability, most found the Western European systems superior and more user-friendly. 'Zosia', an accountant with a young daughter (born 1976, migrated to Belgium and, several months later to Germany, in 2009), made a comparison of dental care in Poland and Germany:

> I started to take care of all my teeth because here [in Germany] it's all free, I mean included in the insurance. In Poland, they would do just your front teeth and, for the rest, you had to pay or wait in long queues.

'Midwife' (born 1989, migrated to the Netherlands in 2015), who had left Poland due to insufficient wages in her profession and chose the Netherlands – without giving much thought to the destination because an acquaintance offered to help her organize work and put her up – three years later had come to appreciate her new home. At the time of the interview, she was on sick leave from her job in a clothing store due to back problems. She received 1,000 euro a month from social security, which she claimed was enough to cover all her basic needs.

> Here things are different. The state won't leave you without care. If you don't have money, they will help you, really. Right now, it is tax season, when you have to pay tax for apartments, land, many things. They know I am on sick leave, that my income is low, so the tax office has proposed that I pay my dues in instalments, so that I can easily do it. (…) The difference between here and Poland is colossal. There, if not for my family and friends, I would have landed under a bridge, really. Here they helped me with everything. When I went to the doctor and described… He asked me why I came so late, in such a state. I said I was afraid to get fired. He said, 'Woman, they can't fire you for being sick, anybody can fall ill'. In Poland, it wasn't like that. I mean, theoretically yes but, in reality, they would fire you under one pretext or another. The moment you came back from sick leave you would be out.

Even those who had not had to use the health care and health insurance system in the host country much appreciated that they would not be left without help in the case of a health crisis. 'Ania' (born 1992, migrated in 2015), who went to Germany when she could not find a stable and well-remunerated job in Poland after obtaining a BA in tourism, told the story of her brother, who had broken an elbow and was not able to continue in his profession as a gardener. The German state not only financially supported him for two years but also financed his re-training so that he could become a truck driver.

> They prefer to invest in somebody because the investment will pay off, that person will return to work. In Poland, in a similar situation, one would remain on a disability pension or would have to start a different career on one's own.

She also commented on her own sense of security which resulted from observing the experiences of her brother and other people:

> I don't worry that, if I suddenly have to go to a doctor or something happens to me, I will be completely without resources and I will be left to myself. Or that I won't have enough money, for example, if I get cancer and have to pay for the medication. Here such problems don't exist.

The above arguments brought up by the respondents could be summarized with one word: 'security'. In all four countries studied, this sense of security resulted from sufficient earnings, and – to various degrees in the different countries – from the quality, accessibility and predictability of support from public services, especially the health care system. These good-quality services were something which many of the migrants did not know much about when making their initial migration decision and, hence, did not include them in their calculations but came to value them while in the destination. This was especially the case for non-graduates who, before migrating, often had difficulty making ends meet and so could not resort to private health care or education for their children.

The perception of the importance of various kinds of state services, regulations and support was related to life stage. The parents of small children commented on the accessibility of a wide range of free vaccinations, medication and other treatments. They spoke of wages which were high enough to need only one parent to support the family, as well as benefits. The family support system in Poland was perceived as being in its infancy, with only financial support[1] having recently been introduced but not enough public crèches and insufficient accessibility of public health care for pregnant women and children.

Not only parents but, more broadly, people who had migrated in their 20s and were in their 30s or 40s during the interview commented on security as an important aspect of their lives in the destination. Labour market security has already been noticed as having some significance for Polish migrants in Germany

(Duszczyk 2019). 'Wiola' (born 1978, migrated 2004), a musician who works in an orchestra in Germany, commented on how she came to value employment security.

> I can't imagine giving up a certain sense of stability and security that an employee has here. (…) It's a very important difference that, in Poland, an employee can be fired with three months' notice. Here not. When you are trained in such a narrow field, the risk of losing one's job is a very serious one. You have to consider it since you don't know how to do anything else. It's a personal drama for people we know who couldn't find work in their profession and had to try to retrain themselves. They are very frustrated. So having a guaranteed job here, we could not take the risk [of moving back to Poland]. Certainly not now, when we are approaching 40. Germany is exceptional in Europe in terms of workers' rights.

Other respondents, including those in their 20s, also underlined the greater security linked with working in Germany or the Netherlands, especially the fact that they had 'proper' work contracts with health insurance (which was frequently not the case in Poland, where business-to-business contracts or contracts to perform a certain task, without health insurance or retirement contributions, were offered even to regular employees). In the case of migrants to Germany, this was perhaps an especially prominent argument for them due to the moment of their migration – most left Poland after 2012, when unemployment was already low but the quality of employment was still a persistent problem. Respondents in all four countries appreciated the fact that working-time regulations were usually respected and overtime was paid which, in their experience, was often not the case in Poland. In the UK, access to housing rented from the authorities at competitive rates was also an element of public policy valued by one of the respondents.

The above demonstrates that economic reasons continued to prevail in the decision-making of migrants – especially the lower-educated ones – but the range of economic arguments broadened, with new ones appearing and the health care services and welfare system becoming a particularly important argument for remaining at the destination. This was, according to the respondents themselves, the most important change in their perception of factors motivating them to remain in the destination country. The better-functioning state services and better implementation of employment regulations contributed to the respondents' greater sense of security and stability, which they came to value especially when reaching middle age or parenthood. They contrasted the situation with Poland where, in their opinion, one was more likely to be exploited as an employee and left to fend for oneself if some health-related or other calamity occurred.

Life stage as a determinant of the importance of economic and other factors

An interesting insight into reasons to remain in the UK or return to Poland was provided by two respondents who attempted to move back to Poland but who, after a few months, decided to return to the UK. This phenomenon was described by

White (2014a, 2014b) and termed 'double return migration'. The two respondents in this study, as White had noticed, had very different motivations during their first and second migration, due to their different life stage.

In 2006, 'Future librarian' (born 1985, migrated to the UK in 2006 and again in 2010) was studying Polish philology at university and working in a big media store. With a friend's apartment in which he could live for free and financial help from his parents, he did not have burning economic reasons to migrate. A promotion which he did not get at work and a failed exam caused him to want to take a break and join his friends in England.

> I decided it was a great occasion to go abroad for a year, rest, learn the language, prepare for my exam and resume my studies a year later. (…) I wouldn't describe myself as an economic migrant at that point. I wanted to see something different, live a different life, this famous 'West' I didn't know.

He did return to Poland after a few years to get his degree. The jobs offered to him afterwards were either not well paid or not financially stable and were 'morally dubious' in his judgement because – in one case – he would be selling risky financial products. He chose what he perceived to be the 'safe' option of going back to work in a supermarket in England, this time claiming to be an 'economic but also a moral migrant'. The 'moral' element should probably not be taken at face value, since his reason for migrating was the simple fact of not being able to find a suitably well paid and secure job to support himself in Poland (when selling the 'dubious' financial products, he would have been on commission). Seven years later, he was still doing well-paid night shifts in the supermarket and also teaching in a Polish Saturday school. He said that he was 'still searching for his place in life'.

'Accountant' (born 1987, migrated to the UK in 2007 and again in 2013) went to the UK for the first time when he was 20, after his first year at university in Poland. A friend offered to help with housing and a cousin who had a trucking company transported him for free, so he judged the move as low cost and low risk. He planned to work over the summer and then return to Poland.

> I had the mental comfort that if I didn't find a job, I could just have a cool adventure, see London, and come back. (…) I went there to observe how people live in England, as compared to Poland.

He observed that, while in the UK, he could work to support himself and study at the same time. He did a degree in finance in London but, when he graduated in 2008, due to the economic crisis it was hard to find a suitable job. He and his Polish fiancée decided to try their luck in Warsaw. He found a job in a prestigious auditing company but the pay for his entry-level job was not great and the demands were extremely high. His girlfriend, despite having high qualifications in the hotel industry, could not find a job. This inspired them to do the maths again and see what they could afford in Poland and the UK. Despite rents being much cheaper in Warsaw,

they realized that they would not be able to save for things they had while living in the UK, such as nice vacations or eating out. After a year, they returned to London.

> We still have this tradition, we call it power weekends, where we fly to Warsaw for a weekend, see our friends. It gives us a great boost. (…) It's cool to go to Poland as a tourist, not an employee. Plus, Polish food, seeing our families. But we feel safer in England.

His second migration was obviously not for adventure but for financial security. Their calculations did not end there, though. At the moment of the interview, the couple were again considering where they were better off, since they were entering a new stage in life. As they approached a moment when they want to have 'a house and a dog maybe', London property prices were making them wonder if it was worth staying in the city: 'We would have to live far [from the centre] and pay a lot for the commute. That's where the economic logic ends, I don't want to spend my life on a train'.

These calculations might lead to a 'triple return migration'. They were again considering returning to Warsaw or Wrocław, this time with enough cash to buy a property. A second option for them was to move to a cheaper British city or, for a few years, to Dubai, which is 'just like London but in a different geographic location' but which, in their judgement, would have been another period delaying their house purchase, dog and maybe procreation plans.

The above two examples show clearly that what was at first a lifestyle and adventure-related motivation can turn into an economic one as migrants age and look for stability. Nevertheless, the reverse was also possible – that other factors would prevail over initial economic arguments, due to economic conditions also having changed. This was the case for 'Michał', the doctor who moved from the US to the UK. In 2005, he chose the UK over Poland because wages and financing for medical research were much better and he judged that nepotism in Poland was high. At the moment of the interview in 2016, with two school-aged children, he believed that 'We would be better off economically in Poland now. Now doctors earn decent wages. Here the costs of properties, schools and university are very high'.

Having lived in the UK for many years, the family wanted to live the same lifestyle as British people in similarly high professional positions, buying property and sending their children to private schools, which proved expensive. However, they did not envision moving back to Poland because they believed that the change of educational system would be too difficult for their sons and because 'Michał' was at a stage in his career where new possibilities would most probably open if he invested another few years in his current job.

The three examples above demonstrate the importance of changing life stages for factors – economic and other – which are taken into consideration in migration decisions. The perception of economic factors was influenced by changing circumstances in the country of origin and in the destinations but, even more so, by the changing needs of the migrants as they transitioned from students to self-supporting adults and from singles or couples to parents who had to finance their

children's needs. Frequently, it was thus costs not earnings which determined how economic factors were perceived.

Given that many of the respondents in the sample were interviewed ten or more years after their migration, it was not only their life stages but also the people whom they considered closest to them which had changed. Some had divorced, married or found partners, both locally or in Poland. For some, social reasons encouraging them to remain now meant the presence of their adult children.

Cultural factors

Another significant change of factors influencing migration decisions concerned those related to culture. In the initial migration decisions, cultural factors proved important for graduate respondents but were rarely mentioned by non-graduates. This changed regarding the latter group' decisions to remain. Both graduates and non-graduates mentioned a long and varied list of cultural factors which encouraged them to remain at their destination. For migrants without degrees, who made their initial decisions based on economic and social factors, the cultural factors added to the mix were the most often linked with lifestyle or everyday interactions between people. These factors were also frequently related to the respondents' life stage.

For respondents with children, especially mothers, the more child-friendly style of teaching in Irish, British or Dutch schools was important, even though many believed that the level of education was generally lower. This is well illustrated with the words of 'Satisfied mum' (born 1974, emigrated 2013), who could make a direct comparison between Polish and Irish schools because her older son had gone to school in Poland and the younger one had received all but the first year of his education in Ireland. She migrated to Ireland only with her husband and younger son (the older one was already at university) because their car repair business was not earning much money. Her older son, due to being dyslexic, had a lot of difficulties in Polish schools. In his mother's judgement, the education system was not sufficiently flexible to adjust to his special needs, teachers were not always helpful and children were generally overburdened with too many school subjects, tasks and facts to remember. At the time of the interview, her ten-year-old was well settled in an Irish school which, in her opinion, offered a more practical education focused on skills rather than facts. Most importantly, she judged the school as a friendly place which supported students.

> I wouldn't want my son to return to Poland for some teacher to stress him. (…) In Poland, getting up for school was a mixed bag. Here, there is no problem, he is almost running to get to school.

The above is in line with existing research, which points to having children of school age as one of the strongest factors deterring people from moving (Ryan 2015; Ryan and Sales 2013; Trevena 2013, 2014; White 2011b). As Trevena (2014) writes, adaptation to British schools is often problematic for Polish children but,

once they are settled, it is a strong argument for families to remain in their destination, since they believe that their children could not easily re-enter the Polish education system due to the higher level and different style of teaching to that in Britain. Indeed, some studies demonstrate that re-integrating into the Polish education system is not simple even for children who speak Polish at home (Grzymała-Moszczyńska *et al.* 2015).

However, life-stage-related cultural arguments for staying in the destination were not exclusive to parents with children. Some respondents at different stages of their lives also came to value the lifestyle offered by their new homes. The above-quoted 'Cleaner' (born 1959, migrated 2006), who was clearly an economic migrant and who, by the time of the interview, was slowly approaching retirement age, saw Ireland as offering more opportunities to people of her age, particularly women. This was due to economic factors such as being able to afford to go out and also to cultural factors – the culture of going to the pub and lesser generational divisions in places where people socialize.

> People my age in Poland, let's not kid ourselves, it's just the home, TV, knitting. They don't lead social lives because where would they? Here, life is completely different. You go out with friends, go for a beer, coffee, dancing. Somehow, it's completely different. I work with young people, so that's my circle, I go out with them. There is no age barrier like in Poland.

More flexible age and gender norms, as well as changing intra-family dynamics (Barglowski 2023; Barglowski and Pustulka 2018; Żadkowska *et al.* 2022), can also be treated as cultural factors which are not usually taken into consideration at the moment of the initial migration decision but which become evident for migrants with time spent in the destination.

It would be an overstatement to conclude, as some other research has done (Bobek 2020), that those non-graduates in this study who were economic migrants to begin with evolved into lifestyle migrants. However, lifestyle-related factors certainly gained prominence in their decisions as they learned more about their countries of residence.

Cultural arguments in favour of staying in the destination were brought up by both non-graduates and graduates. This concerned a number of issues such as work culture, the culture of communication between strangers and tolerance towards difference, including towards LGBTQ people. Work culture and the generally more polite style of communication between people in certain circumstances were mentioned by many respondents from all four countries. At work, this included more collegial, less top-down styles of management. As 'Programmer' (born 1986, migrated 2015), who migrated to the Netherlands to gain international experience in his profession, commented:

> The most important thing [in favour of staying] is how people treat each other, how they treat me at work, and what the future of my daughter will look like. (…) Life here is calmer, less stress. In Poland when going to work

I wondered every day how to last till the end of the day without quitting my job. Here, I go to work and am happy I can be there, meet with people. A completely different life. I've been working here for a year and a half and never had a stressful day.

Other respondents commented on the more respectful treatment by the various authorities than that in Poland, with more smiling people on the streets or generally less judgemental attitudes, which were perhaps partly due to the respondents not having a large circle of acquaintances who had known them for a long time, which resulted in an escape from social control. As 'Satisfied mum', quoted above, commented about her life in Dublin:

I don't like crowds and I don't like people being nosy. [Back in Poland] I lived in a neighbourhood where everybody knew everything about everybody else. That scared me, overwhelmed me. Here I am incognito. I think nobody here cares what I do. They just say 'Hi, how are you?' and everybody goes their own way. But if you want help, you can ask for it and you will surely get it. I like the atmosphere.

This less judgemental attitude of people as a factor encouraging Polish migrants to stay at their destinations has already been demonstrated in research conducted with LGBTQ people. As Stella, Flynn, and Gawlewicz (2018) have noticed, societal and legal norms were not important for LGBTQ migrants in their initial migration decisions but gained in importance for their decisions to remain, as they became more aware of cultural and legal differences and incorporated tolerant attitudes of the surroundings into their definitions of what 'normal lives' should be like. In the interviews for this book, the two openly homosexual respondents did not speak of formal or informal norms as an important factor in their choice of destination, even when asked about this directly. However, the issue of the treatment of sexual and other minorities did seem to play a role for many respondents, irrespective of their sexual orientation. Some came to value diversity and the tolerance of various kinds of difference. This less-judgmental attitude by society was something that made them feel more at ease in their everyday lives and became a factor encouraging them to remain in their new homes and want to raise their children there. Nevertheless, there were also others who did not appreciate it and for whom this was an argument to leave.

Intervening factors

Most of the intervening factors which were important for respondents in their initial migration decisions remained so – for example, the fact that they could work legally was a basic underlying *sine qua non* condition which allowed them to benefit from the services offered by states, as discussed above. Geographical proximity was still important, especially for migrants to Germany and the Netherlands, as many still kept in close contact with their families and friends in Poland. The one

significant intervening factor which was about to change at the time of the interviews was the legal conditions of work and residence in the UK, linked to Brexit.

Brexit

The interviews with respondents in the UK were conducted in a period both before and after the June 2016 Brexit referendum, when UK citizens voted to leave the EU. Nine respondents were interviewed in the weeks and months following the vote. Kilkey and Ryan (2021) argue that Brexit should be perceived as not one but a series of unsettling events, with each of the events in the series having particular psychological or legal effects. At the time of the interviews, the EU Settlement Scheme had not yet been implemented and the legal conditions of work and residence that were to be offered to EU citizens were not known. The findings of this research should, then, be treated as concerning the influence of the referendum itself – the first of several Brexit-related events.

As some studies have already demonstrated, the results of the vote had psychological effects on migrants, even those who – due to holding the appropriate papers – had reason to believe that they would be allowed to stay in the UK (Lulle, Moroşanu, and King 2018; Lulle *et al.* 2019; Sredanovic 2021; Szkudlarek 2019; Winiecka 2020). This was also forcefully demonstrated in this research. For some, the referendum was a traumatic event, enough to make them feel unwelcome, even if their local friends were trying to convince them otherwise. One respondent from Northern Ireland (born 1981, migrated 2005), the mother of two children born in the country and the owner of a photographic studio, recalled:

> On that day [when the results of the referendum were announced] I went out to town and felt a thousand faces staring at me. It just felt so unpleasant, as if they were staring at me that I am in their country. (…) I think that day contributed to the fact that I don't consider this place home and never will. I can't imagine being an elderly lady with a cane and living here. In their country, not in mine.

It seems that it was not only the result of the vote but also the political atmosphere around it, with anti-immigrant sentiments expressed in the referendum campaign, which sparked their fears and made them question their belonging and future in the UK. As another respondent from Northern Ireland ('Zootechnician', born 1988, migrated 2013) commented:

> I think nothing will happen here since, in Northern Ireland, a firm majority voted to stay in the European Union. But we do hear that, in England, racist attacks are starting. So, we are ready for a scenario where racist attacks would start and we would just have to pack up and leave.

Perhaps the referendum campaign, not the vote itself, should thus be treated as the first in the series of Brexit-related unsettling events.

As Kempny (2022) points out, while Polish migrants had a sense of stability in the UK, this ended abruptly with the referendum. The sudden sense of instability was certainly evident in the interviews for this research, especially among the non-graduates. 'Future librarian' (born 1985, migrated to the UK twice in 2006 and 2010), who works in a supermarket in Luton, did not exclude any possibilities, even though he has a permanent residence document.

> I don't say, like some of my friends that 'They can't possibly kick us out'. Maybe they will. So what? You just have to live in such a way as to be able to pick up your stuff, pack what you need, leave what you don't need, buy a plane ticket and go back. Or go to some other place. Time will tell.

'Music fan', who ran an internet store from Scotland, said that he would leave if there were any formal or tax difficulties for foreigners running a business in the UK. He had already thought of a precise alternative to the UK – Frankfurt on the Oder, which is in Germany but right on the Polish border, an hour's drive from where he had family in Poland.

> I am prepared for Brexit financially and mentally. I know where I would go. I would very much like to go to Poland but the tax system there would finish me off. So, to Frankfurt on the Oder, since it is in Germany but close to family. Also, if I was selling my things from Poland… Some people still think it's like Mozambique, since that's how the media present it.

Those in managerial or higher level positions seemed less afraid of Brexit and more convinced that nothing would change. However, their rhetoric sometimes sounded like a way both of reassuring themselves that the problem did not concern them personally and of distancing themselves from the image of benefit-scrounging immigrants used by pro-Brexiteers in the campaign. 'Programmer from Gotham city' (born 1986, migrated to the UK in 2014) living in London said:

> For those who want to stay here, Brexit doesn't mean anything. If it's somebody who puts into the common coffer, not asks for benefits, then the British will surely let him stay. Given the problems they have with fulfilling employers' needs, they will surely not be kicking people out.

'Manager' (born 1977, migrated to the UK in 2012) from Kent agreed:

> Britain can't afford to give up on us, Europeans. Nobody will be forced out. Maybe someone who doesn't earn anything, who is a burden to the state can be deported somehow. But not someone productive, who lives and pays taxes here.

Several respondents were trying to regain a sense of stability by applying for citizenship or a residence permit. The subject was brought up by most interviewees.

One already had British citizenship, while another declared that he had been planning to obtain it even before the issue of Brexit came up. Several respondents said that they were trying to obtain it because of Brexit. It seems that obtaining citizenship, which was somewhat of an elite endeavour for those who had money to spare and/or an interest in British politics or travelling visa-free to the US, had also become an issue for some migrants working in lower-level jobs, as a form of insurance policy against the unknown.

None of the respondents had made decisions concerning where to live based on the referendum results. However, the effect of feeling unwelcome was very present in the interviews and a sense of suddenly facing an unknown, less stable, future was evident.

Interestingly, the question of treatment by locals as a factor included in the calculations whether to remain in the country was raised not only in the UK but also in the Netherlands. Some respondents in the Netherlands were clearly very sensitive to the public debates which had taken place in the country regarding the inflow of Central and Eastern Europeans (described in Chapter 8). Others spoke of situations which they had themselves encountered, which contributed to their feeling of being unwelcome. 'Ethnographer' (born 1985, migrated to the Netherlands in 2012) said that her opinion of the Dutch as very tolerant and open people, which she held before migrating, had changed – for example, because she noticed that the moment somebody found out that she was Polish, their approach changed: 'I don't feel fully tolerated here. If that's the case, it's hard to picture myself here in the future'.

Another respondent, who worked in the IT sector in Amsterdam, complained of situations where his Dutch acquaintances, whom he had visited at home and with whom he was very friendly, almost did not recognize him when other Dutch people were around. The above would suggest that both public and private treatment by locals are factors taken into consideration by Polish migrants, perhaps not influencing their immediate plans but making them question their long-term presence in the destination country.

Conclusions

Most of the respondents in this research did not fit the definitions of 'liquid' (Engbersen and Snel 2013) or 'intentionally unpredictable' (Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich 2007) migrants, terms coined to describe, in particular, young Central and Eastern Europeans from the migration waves immediately after the 2004 and 2007 enlargements of the EU, who made no definite plans in terms of the length or even number of destinations of their migration. Instead, the people who participated in this study were well anchored (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2020) in their destination countries through their jobs, their personal relations and the education and relationships of their children.

This is in part due to the sampling for this research – only respondents who had been in the country for at least a year and had no plans to leave within the next year were included. Such sampling, coupled with recruitment via announcements on Polish Facebook groups, excluded one group of 'liquid' migrants – incomplete

(Okólski 2001) or circular migrants who, by definition, did not remain long in the destination country. These people frequently experience 'liquidity' not by choice but, rather, because of the unstable working and living conditions which they are forced to accept (Engbersen 2018) and thus are 'trapped in liquid migration' (Bygnes and Bivand Erdal 2017). Some of the long-term migrants in this study, particularly in the Netherlands, also felt that they were 'trapped' in migration, unable to make any real choices due to their particular economic and family situations.

However, it seems that, for the majority of Polish migrants who do not circulate between home and destination country and have spent at least a year in the destination, 'unpredictability' or 'liquidity' has ceased to be a predominant strategy. For some of the participants in this research, especially among the non-graduates, migration was, in fact, a strategy to gain economic and life stability – something which they previously lacked in Poland due to insufficient earnings or unstable work contracts. Others, who were initially 'liquid' in their plans, started to seek more 'solid' lives as they reached new life stages – became 30- or 40-somethings or had children (Popyk, Lesińska, and Dambrauskas 2023). 'Searchers' (Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich 2007) or 'footloose migrants' (as Engbersen *et al*. 2013 termed young migrants who initially wished to remain in the destination for about a year) turned into 'settlers' or 'settlement' and 'bi-national migrants' (Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich 2007; Engbersen *et al.* 2013). This was well illustrated by, among others, multiple migrants who undertook their first migrations to gain new experiences and see the world and their second migrations with more practical aims, attempting to guarantee themselves appropriate and stable levels of income.

Some of the fundamental factors influencing migrant's decisions remained unchanged; for example, a number of respondents who migrated for economic reasons judged the economic push factors in Poland to be largely the same as when they were leaving, which made it impossible to return. Many social factors changed due to new life stages reached, with families making decisions based on the school trajectories of their children or even their adult children's decisions regarding where to live. However, two types of factor stood out as having significantly gained prominence for the respondents: factors related to public amenities and cultural factors.

Public amenities, particularly the functioning of the health care system and health insurance, were something about which the respondents knew little at the moment of their migration and thus did not take into consideration as an important factor. However, with time spent in the destination, respondents in Germany and the Netherlands, in particular, began to value the well-functioning health care system and other types of support offered by the state – for example, for parents or in cases of misfortune. This, along with better earnings, became a source of their sense of stability. Many respondents contrasted the situation with what they knew from Poland where, they felt, people were left to fend for themselves or rely on private support in case of any misfortune.

The other major group of factors which gained significance was cultural factors. These were almost absent from the initial decision-making of non-graduate migrants. However, after some time in the destination, they started to appreciate aspects of life linked to culture in a broad sense, especially lifestyle.

Migrants in all four countries mentioned things like respect and generally good treatment at work – a less stressful atmosphere in the workplace – as something they came to value. For respondents with children in school, this manifested itself in less stressful teaching methods and more focus on abilities rather than memorizing facts. Others extended this to the generally polite behaviour of people in the streets and public offices and contrasted it with the 'sad' faces they saw in Poland. Migrants to the UK and the Netherlands, in particular, underlined the helpfulness of state institutions – for example, tax offices or city offices in charge of public housing – where employees willingly informed them of their entitlements and procedures. Many respondents appreciated the generally more tolerant and non-judgemental attitudes, be they regarding hairstyles or sexual preferences.

All the above factors, which, in the 'tree' of factors offered in Chapter 3, fit in the categories of 'good public amenities', 'attractive lifestyle' and 'attractive work culture' (including for particular types of 'workers' – students), were something which the migrants were frequently not fully aware of when choosing their destination. They came to appreciate them later as something that contributed to a safer and less stressful life for them and their children and named them as important factors which influenced their decisions to remain in place.

The above does not, of course, mean that the respondents were satisfied with all aspects of the economic, cultural and social realities of the countries in which they resided. They complained about expensive housing, childcare or education (this was the case, especially, for respondents in the UK and Ireland), while some believed that their destinations were too multicultural and, in various ways, too diverse. Respondents not only in the UK but also in the Netherlands commented about feeling unwelcome and being ostracized by locals in social situations. This was a powerful factor which contributed to their sense of temporariness – they were willing to put up with such treatment for now but could not imagine making the UK or the Netherlands, where they felt unwelcome, their permanent home.

Although the research was conducted among people with no immediate plans to return to Poland or to migrate elsewhere, the topic of re-migration was very present in the interviews. A majority of respondents spoke of their long-term plans for return or for moving elsewhere, with the list of potential destinations being very long – from other European and North American destinations which, in the respondents' perceptions, offered even better working and living conditions, to exotic destinations on other continents which were seen as suitably sunny retirement destinations. This suggests that, while the respondents were seeking stability and economically 'solid' lives in their current destinations and in their current life stage, in the long term many still perceived themselves as 'liquid' migrants, with various options open to them.

Note

1 A child benefit, the 500+, was introduced in 2016 for second and subsequent children in a family; this was extended in 2019 to all children.

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10 Conclusions

This book has investigated how – and based on what factors – post-accession migrants from Poland chose their destinations. Although destination choice is not a new topic, the European Union enlargement of 2004 demonstrated that these choices were not well understood and were difficult to predict – not a single forecast before the 'big bang' enlargement of 2004 foresaw the change in the directions of flows of Central and Eastern Europeans towards the UK and the Republic of Ireland, even when it became known that only three countries (the UK, Ireland and Sweden) would open their labour markets to new EU citizens immediately upon accession. Some scholars underlined that migration routes would remain stable, even if the number of migrants increased (Alvarez-Plata, Brücker, and Siliverstovs 2003). In reality, the directions of the flows proved very unstable: the UK replaced Germany as Central and Eastern Europeans' preferred destination (this remained so until the effects of the Brexit referendum in 2016 became visible) and many new destinations attracted significant numbers of Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians and others, making the map of European migration much more 'diverse, fragile and fragmented' (King and Okólski 2019).

The failure to predict the directions of migration flows before 2004 was in part due to the lack of a comprehensive migration theory, which could take into consideration the wealth of economic, social, cultural and other factors possibly influencing migrants' decisions regarding destinations. Existing theories serve to explain particular types of migration or to answer particular questions (Castles 2010; Castles and Miller 2009; de Haas 2014; Portes 2010), usually focusing on only some factors, depending on the field of knowledge from which they originate. In this book, a broad theoretical framework – based on the push–pull framework of Everett Lee (1966) and its later iterations – was proposed, allowing for the incorporation of factors resulting from several fields of knowledge and migration theories (notably the neoclassical theory, New Economics of Labour Migration, network theory and lifestyle migration). Factors exposed in the literature on Polish migrations were incorporated into the framework and classified into *push/retain* factors in origin, *pull/repel* factors in destination, *intervening factors* and *personal factors*, thus creating a 'tree' of possible factors, which served as a basis for the analysis.

Admittedly, reverting to the push–pull framework was a controversial choice. Although it is still very frequently used (recently, for example, by Duszczyk 2019; Kumpikaitė -Valiūnienė *et al.* 2021) and sometimes built upon (van Hear, Bakewell, and Long 2018), it has also been vehemently criticized as being purely descriptive (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2013; Skeldon 1990) or too deterministic, depriving the migrants of agency (Crawley and Hagen-Zanker 2019; de Haas 2021). The former criticism stems from treating it as a theory meant to explain social phenomena. In this research, it was used in a narrower role – as a framework, not explaining but allowing for the classification of various factors, which could in turn be explained by reverting to various economic or sociological theories. The term 'factors' – as opposed to, for example, 'drivers' (Carling and Collins 2018; Carling and Talleras 2016) – was used not to deprive migrants of agency but to include factors that were described by the migrants themselves as decisive and had actually been acted upon, as opposed to potential background forces.

The push–pull framework offered two significant advantages. It allowed to look separately at circumstances which pushed each migrant out of the country of origin and those which attracted him/her to a particular destination. These – as the research had confirmed – can be very different, especially in case of an abundance of potential destinations, as within the European Union. Another advantage of reverting to the push–pull framework was the possibility of including factors which were undertheorized in migration studies, especially those resulting from public policies – ranging from policies regarding access to the labour market to health policies.

Reasons for migrating

A particular feature of post-accession migrations, which inspired this research, was their selectivity. Young and educated Poles, Lithuanians or Slovaks headed mostly to the UK or Ireland, where over a quarter of Central and Eastern Europeans held third-level degrees, whereas a huge majority of those without degrees chose continental Europe – for example, only 4 per cent of Poles in the Netherlands were graduates (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009). This research demonstrated that factors which migrants took into consideration were dramatically different depending on their demographic features, particularly their level of education, as well as their life stage.

On the push side, economic factors were the most prominent for all but the best financial- and cultural-capital-endowed migrants and those who were young and free of family obligations. Non-graduates were pushed out by 'bread and butter' issues, such as a lack of employment, meagre wages or precarious work conditions, coupled with a perceived lack of support from the state in case of parenthood, failure or old age. Graduates, especially those with dependents, usually faced challenges of a somewhat higher economic order: the inability to get a mortgage or an inappropriate work–life balance, which did not leave any time for family or personal life. Both of these groups migrated out of necessity, albeit differently understood depending on their professional, economic and family status. The situation was different for young people without dependents and for members of

professional and economic elites, who focused much more on the pull factors which encouraged them to migrate, while push factors were almost non-existent in their narratives. Theirs was a migration of opportunity, development or adventure-seeking. The dividing line regarding who responded to economic push factors in Poland thus ran not between graduates and non-graduates but between graduates with high-quality diplomas and young people without financial obligations towards their families on the one hand and everyone else on the other.

Reasons for choosing a particular destination

On the pull side, economic arguments were also significant for most people. The right economic and legal conditions, especially the availability of a sufficiently well-paying job, were a *sine qua non* condition of migration. However, they frequently did not determine the destination, since similar work conditions were available in many destinations. For non-graduates, the decisive factor for choosing a particular destination was the help available from their networks – going 'to somebody' as opposed to going 'into the dark' (White 2011) was the preferred strategy and the exact kind of support offered by that 'somebody' was decisive. Graduates, on the other hand, rarely relied on networks and had an array of well-thought-through economic, career-related and cultural arguments for choosing particular destinations; for example, a cellist chose Germany because of the opportunities for professional development and the availability of work in orchestras and a doctor chose Ireland over the UK because of his opposition to abortion (which, at the time, was still banned in Ireland).

The factors considered were very different depending on the destination, with the research in Ireland and the Netherlands especially demonstrating little-discussed particularities and reasons why migrants chose these destinations over larger neighbouring countries. The UK – by far the most popular choice for Poles and other Central and Eastern Europeans in the first years after EU accession – attracted very diverse migrants but those in search of new life and professional experiences were a characteristic group. In comparison, migrants to Ireland, although demographically similar, had different motivations. Many were in search of economic and life stability: they wanted to profit from the opportunities of living within the Anglo-Saxon economic and cultural 'core' but preferred to lead calmer lives, away from the dynamic environment and cultural diversity which they associated with the UK.

Migrants to Germany – which, at the time of the interviews, was returning to the status of the most frequently chosen destination – not only took into consideration job availability and high wages but also did not want to venture far from their homes. Geographic proximity was such an important intervening factor that they often chose to forego other, more lucrative, work opportunities elsewhere. Relative proximity and the fact that the country could be easily reached by road were also important for migrants to the Netherlands. Due to the above, as well as the active role of employment agencies in the Dutch labour market, migrating there was perceived as less of a risk and easier to reverse in case of failure. This was

especially the case for those who – due to speaking at least basic English but no German – were making a choice between the Netherlands and the UK, Ireland or Scandinavia. The Netherlands was frequently pictured by respondents there as a second-choice destination, attracting less audacious migrants or those who were not able to organize their migration independently. As a consequence, many Poles in the Netherlands perceived their compatriots as 'worse' migrants and formulated hypothetical plans of onward migration to surround themselves with 'better' Poles.

Reasons for remaining

The theoretical framework described above can be used to analyse decisions at any point in time – the decision not only to migrate but also to remain at destination or return. The empirical material gathered has allowed for a comparison between the initial migration decisions and decisions to remain, based on the perception of various factors at the time of the interview. An important conclusion from this analysis concerns the significance of factors resulting from public policies for decisions regarding settlement. Most migrants did not have full knowledge of these factors when choosing the destination, so they did not take them into consideration in their initial decisions. They learned to appreciate the well-functioning public services – especially the health care system – while at the destination and this became a factor retaining them *in situ*. This was particularly often commented upon by respondents in Germany and the Netherlands. As one respondent stated, in Germany she could finally get all her teeth fixed; in Poland, the long queues in the public and the prohibitive costs in the private sector meant she always had only her front teeth properly cared for. The issue of security, resulting both from sufficient income and from state support, gained importance, especially as the migrants reached parenthood or middle age. Citizen-friendly administrations, from the local authorities to tax offices, were another aspect of the well-functioning public services that they came to value. This can be taken as an important conclusion for states wishing to encourage the return of their citizens: narrow return policies aimed at migrants will probably not be effective if the provision of health and other services for the citizens in general is judged as poor. Cultural factors, especially linked to lifestyle and gender roles, gained in importance for non-graduates. Finally, factors related to the treatment of minorities, be they ethnic or sexual, were also more likely to influence decisions to remain than initial migration decisions, as respondents gained more awareness of the legal and cultural differences.

As I write these words, the European Union is approaching the twentieth anniversary of its 'big bang' enlargement, which saw the accession of ten mostly post-communist countries. Some scholars argue that the period of post-accession migrations is over (Garapich *et al.* 2023) – with the UK's departure from the European Union symbolically marking its end – and that migrations from the region should be viewed 'more in the context of the highly diverse, dynamic, individualised and transnational mobilities characterising the EU as a whole' (White 2022, 304). A growing body of research focuses simultaneously on intra-EU movers from more than one region, not differentiating between newer and older EU entrants

(for example, Bygnes and Erdal 2017; Koikkalainen *et al.* 2022; Lulle, Moroşanu, and King 2022). Although post-accession migration from Poland can, indeed, be treated as an era coming to an end, questions related to the destination choices of European migrants remain: will the next generation of young EU citizens be as mobile as those of the early 2000s? Will Berlin, Amsterdam or another EU city replace London as the new metropolis of choice? What countries will migrants from potential new accession countries choose as their possible destinations? I hope that this book will contribute to more informed choices for both policymakers and potential migrants in the future.

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Appendix 1

Respondents in the UK

Alias	Year of birth	Year of arrival in the UK	Profession in Poland	Profession in the UK	Where from in Poland	Gender	3rd-level education
Michał	1975	2002 – US 2005 – England	Doctor	Senior doctor	City over 100,000	M	Yes
Programmer from Gotham City	1986	2014 – Scotland, then London	Programmer	Programmer	Szczecin	M	Yes
Video producer	1986	2014 – Isle of Wright, then London	Video producer	Video producer	Piła/studied in Poznań	M	Yes
Manager	1977	2012 – England	Ran own company	Manager in food chain	Włocławek/Ciechocinek	M	Yes
Accountant	1987	2007 2013 – London	Accountant	University student, second time in consulting	Sokołów Podlaski/Warszawa	M	No/yes (graduated in the UK)
Future librarian	1985	2006 2010 – England	University student	Unpacker in supermarket/Polish teacher	Świdnica/Warszawa	M	First time no/second time yes
Mr. Polish Irish	1980	2004 – Northern Ireland	Logistics specialist	Sales manager	Radom	M	Yes

(*Continued*)

Alias	Year of birth	Year of arrival in the UK	Profession in Poland	Profession in the UK	Where from in Poland	Gender	3rd-level education
Dad	1984	2005 – England	University student	Receptionist	Grajewo/Szczecin	M	No
Installer	1964	2005 – Northern Ireland	Installer	Installer	Zielona Góra	M	No
Builder	1985	2006 – Northern Ireland	Helper on construction site	In industrial plant	Town of 8,000	M	No
Music fan		2005 – Scotland	Homeless/worked in NL	Runs an internet shop	Several towns near DE border	M	No
Adrianna	1978	2011 – England	Software designer	Software designer/ full-time mom	Warszawa	F	Yes
Dora	1976	2014 – London (from Cyprus)	Head-hunter	Head-hunter	Warszawa	F	Yes
Zootechnologist	1988	2013 – Northern Ireland	Student	In bakery	Bydgoszcz	F	Yes
Mathematician	1979	2004 – London	Student	Math teacher	Podkarpacie/studied in Katowice	F	Yes
Polish philologist	1967	2006 – Northern Ireland	Salesperson + sociotherapist	Operator of a machine	City of 80,000	F	Yes
Swiss	1996	2011 2016 – Glasgow/Switzerland	School student	University student	Wrocław	F	No (almost BA architecture)
Seamstress	1975	2006 – Northern Ireland	Seamstress/ unemployed	Washes dishes in restaurant	Town of 12,000	F	No
Girlfriend	1991	2010 – Scotland	High school student	In production of hospital materials	Town od 25,000	F	No
Lady from Edinburgh	1973	2006 – Scotland	In secretariat of high school	Salesperson	Kraków	F	No
Photographer	1981	2005 – Northern Ireland	Salesperson in shop	Photographer	Chojnice	F	No

Appendix 2

Respondents in Ireland

Alias	Year of birth	Year of arrival in Ireland	Profession in Poland	Profession in Ireland	Where from in Poland	Gender	3rd-level education
Doctor	1970	2010	Doctor	Doctor	Kraków	M	Yes doctor
Trade Unionist	1980	2005	Trade union lawyer	Trade unionist	Tychy	M	Yes lawyer
The European	1975	2005	European funds specialist in city hall	Official in European institution	City of 140,000 in Silesia	M	Yes PhD in political science
Photographer	1981	2006	Broker	Photographer	Trójmiasto	M	Yes pedagogy
Jacek	1983	2006	Ran his own survey company	Manual work in food market	Gliwice	M	No high school diploma
Guy in love	1984	2015	Low-level manager in security company	In security company	City of 20,000 in northern PL	M	No vocational school after high school

(*Continued*)

Alias	Year of birth	Year of arrival in Ireland	Profession in Poland	Profession in Ireland	Where from in Poland	Gender	3rd-level education
Glazier	1982	2006	Glazier	Glazier	City of 20,000 near Wrocław	M	No vocational school
Bartender	1979	2006	Advisor in finance	Bartender	Warszawa	M	No high school, started university
Assembler	1964	2005	Assembler in telecom factory	Manager in cleaning company	Zielona Góra	M	No vocational school
Business Woman	1979	2005	University student	Runs own language school	City of 20,000	F	Yes English major
Chemist	1972	2007 – Northern Irl. 2014	Chemist in laboratory	Chemist in laboratory	Toruń	F	Yes chemist
Nurse	1975	2015	Nurse in a transplant team	Not working, studying English	Szczecin	F	Yes nursing major
J. who wanted a baby	1976	2014	Ran her own business	Full-time mom	City of 180,000	F	Yes
Kasia	1987	2006	University student for a week	In production of vaccines	City of 30,000, south	F	No (got pharmaceutical degree in Irl, now doing MA)
Single mum	1981	2006	Manager of a club	Health care assistant	City of 80,000	F	Yes Hotel management
Swimmer's mum	1980	2005	Manager in supermarket	In a chemical laundry	City of 20,000	F	No Vocational school
Satisfied mum	1974	2013	Ran a family car repair business	Cleaner	Lublin	F	No High school
Cleaner	1959	2006	Ran a clothes shop	Cleaner	Tychy	F	No Vocational school – cook

Appendix 3

Respondents in Germany

Alias	Year of birth	Year of arrival in DE	Profession in PL	Profession in DE	Where from in PL	Gender	3rd-level education
Computer programmer	1980	2013	IT Programmer	IT	Zielona Góra/ Szczecin/Warsaw	M	Yes
PhD student	1978	2004	PHD student	Engineer in city hall	City of 1 mln	M	Yes
Electrician	1972	2016	Electrician	Electrician	Mszczonów	M	Yes (BA in management)
Stefan	1986	2005 Ireland 2012 Germany	High school student	dDor-to-door salesman	Dąbrowa Górnicza/ Karpacz	M	No
Wiktor	1993	2015 Munich 2017 Berlin	Own electric company	In electric/elevators company	Wrocław	M	No
Family man	1969	2014	Operator of loading machine	Driver in courier company	Village near Konin	M	No
Son	1993	2012 the UK 2014 DE	School student	Operator of loading machine	Masurian town	M	No
Pilot's wife	1978	2008 to London, 2013 to Germany	Airline clerk	Mom	Warszawa	F	Yes

Alias	Year of birth	Year of arrival in DE	Profession in PL	Profession in DE	Where from in PL	Gender	3rd-level education
Daria	1987	2004 for university, 2007 for work	School student	Geographer in planning office + social activist	Small town near Zielona Góra	F	Yes
Ania	1992	2015	University student	Studying German in state-sponsored language school	Kołobrzeg/studied Gdańsk	F	Yes (BA tourism)
Magda	1989	2008 (from PL) 2010, 2013 (from Spain)	High school student	Flight analyst in airline	Stargard Szczeciński	F	Yes (MA economics)
Megi	1991	2014, 2015	Social worker	University student/ psychologist	Stargard Szczeciński	F	Yes
Zosia	1976	2009 Niemcy (from Belgium)	Accountant	Accountant	Gorzów Wielkopolski	F	Yes
Sonia	1989	2016	In Lidl collecting internet orders	In e-sales of used clothing	Włocławek/Warszawa	F	Yes (BA pedagogy)
Wiola	1978	2004	In orchestra	Music teacher, in orchestra	Trójmiasto/studied in Warsaw	F	Yes (music academy)
Olga	1995	2014	High school student	University student in architecture	Radom	F	No
Renata	1994	2013	School student	University student	Village near Zielona Góra	F	No
Ala	1981	2015 (from Italy)	In care home in Italy	Mom	Village in southern PL	F	No

Appendix 4

Respondents in the Netherlands

Alias	Year of birth	Year of arrival in NL	Profession in Poland	Profession in NL	Where from in Poland	Gender	3rd-level education
Programmer	1986	2015	Programmer	Programmer	Bielsko-Biała/Nysa	M	Yes
IT guy	1982	2014	IT at university	IT in business	Warszawa	M	Yes
Ajax fan	1988	2013	In bar	In logistics – DHL	Gdynia	M	No Studied tourism but didn't graduate
Logistics agent	1997	2016	University student, quit after 6 months	In logistics	Small town near Bielsko-Biała, studied Krakow	M	No
Middleschooler	1997	2016 (2014 six months in Berlin)	Odd jobs/drinking	Packing vegetables in factory	Wrocław	M	No
Piotr	1990	2008	High school student	Forklift operator	Village in Opolszczyzna	M	No
Tomasz	1987	2007	Driver	In warehouse	Town of 20,000	M	No

(*Continued*)

Alias	Year of birth	Year of arrival in NL	Profession in Poland	Profession in NL	Where from in Poland	Gender	3rd-level education
Dominika	1989	2008 (6 months) 2011	University student	Roses, assistant manager, now studying for MA in management	Bydgoszcz	F	Yes (BA marketing and farming)
Midwife	1989	2015	Midwife	On sick leave, worked in sorting clothes	Village in Opolszczyzna/ Wrocław/Opole	F	Yes
Nurse	1968	2006 (after Belgium, Spain)	Nurse in hospital	Lower rank nurse in retirement home	Łódź	F	Yes
Ethnographer	1985	2012	Kitchen helper	In warehouse	Village in central Poland, then Poznań	F	Yes
Aniela	1989	2010	University student	Coordinates rose packing	Rzeszów	F	No
Happy	1990	2011	Studied archeology	In a hardware warehouse	Szczecin	F	No (studying management in a PL school over internet)
Anna	1985	2014	Ran two shops	HR – takes care of PL workers	Piła (Wielkopolska)	F	No
In love with a Dutchman	1984	2004	School student	In office of insurance company	Chojnice	F	No
Granddaughter	1986	2015	High school student, then in Italy, Scotland	Fruit packing	Small town in northern PL	F	No

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