

**MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF  
FEMALE POLISH MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE UK**

**Karima Aziz**

School of Social Sciences,  
London Metropolitan University, UK

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of PhD of  
London Metropolitan University

2018

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	6
Acknowledgements.....	7
List of Tables .....	8
List of Figures.....	8
List of Abbreviations .....	9
CHAPTER 1: Introduction .....	11
1.1 Introduction.....	11
1.2 Background and rationale of the research.....	12
1.3 Research aim and objective .....	16
1.4 Thesis structure.....	17
CHAPTER 2: Contextualisation.....	20
2.1 Introduction.....	20
2.2 Polish migration to the UK .....	21
2.2.1 History of Polish migration to the UK.....	21
2.2.2 Post-accession Polish migration to the UK .....	25
2.2.3 Polish return migration from the UK.....	28
2.3 Female Polish migration to the UK .....	30
2.3.1 Effects of transformation on women in Poland .....	30
2.3.2 Women in the Polish labour market .....	31
2.3.3 Polish women in the UK labour market.....	33
2.4 Conclusion .....	39
CHAPTER 3: Literature Review .....	41
3.1 Introduction.....	41
3.2 Globalisation, migration and work .....	42
3.3 Migration theories.....	45
3.3.1 Macro level migration theories .....	46
3.3.2 Micro and meso level migration theories .....	48
3.3.3 Theoretical and methodological debates in migration research.....	51
3.4 The feminisation of migration .....	54

3.4.1 The feminisation of the labour market.....	56
3.4.2 Social construction of Polish women .....	58
3.5 East-West migration .....	60
3.6 Polish migration to the UK .....	66
3.7 Migrants' attitudes and women's experiences.....	72
3.8 Conclusion .....	77
CHAPTER 4: Methodology .....	79
4.1 Introduction.....	79
4.2 Methodological and theoretical approach.....	79
4.2.1 Epistemological debates in migration research.....	80
4.2.2 Grounded theory methodology.....	82
4.2.3 Theoretical sensitivity .....	86
4.3 Discussion of methods of data collection .....	87
4.3.1 Biographical narrative interview .....	89
4.3.2 Semi-structured expert interviews.....	94
4.3.3 Secondary quantitative data analysis.....	95
4.4 Implementation of methods of data collection and analysis.....	96
4.4.1 Sampling.....	96
4.4.2 Fieldwork .....	105
4.4.2.1 Access to the field.....	105
4.4.2.2 Ethical considerations.....	108
4.4.2.3 Interviewing female Polish migrant workers.....	110
4.4.3 Data analysis .....	113
4.5 Conclusion .....	117
CHAPTER 5: The construction of migration aspirations in the context of life experiences in Poland .....	119
5.1 Introduction.....	119
5.2 Migration as a solution... ..	120
5.2.1 ... to economic difficulties in the context of transformation .....	121
5.2.2 ... to economic dependence and problematic partnerships.....	124
5.2.3 ... for sole providers for one's children .....	128
5.3 Migration as a family strategy and the role of femininity and masculinity.....	131

5.4 Migration as an opportunity .....	135
5.4.1 ... for an intended short-term gap year or an open-ended adventure .....	136
5.4.2 ... to be mobile .....	141
5.4.3 ... for professional fulfilment or higher education .....	143
5.5 Conclusion .....	146
CHAPTER 6: Experiences of work in the UK .....	149
6.1 Introduction .....	149
6.2 Routes into work .....	150
6.2.1 Informal work, regularisation and access to legal employment .....	150
6.2.2 Work agencies: risk assessment, precariousness and the role of social networks .....	154
6.2.3 Alternative ways of accessing work: door-to-door enquiry and online advertisements .....	156
6.2.4 Finding work in one's own Polish profession: w swoim zawodzie .....	159
6.3 Experiences of migrant and feminised work .....	163
6.4 Migrant work trajectories between occupational stagnation and mobility .....	168
6.5 Conclusion .....	177
CHAPTER 7: Social networks, transnational lives and the experiences of women and family life .....	179
7.1 Introduction .....	179
7.2 Social networks .....	180
7.2.1 Polish community-oriented .....	181
7.2.2 Local community-oriented .....	184
7.2.3 Identifying with versus distancing from 'Polishness' .....	187
7.3 Transnational lives .....	193
7.4 Experiences of women and migrant family life .....	198
7.4.1 (In)compatibility of work and family .....	199
7.4.2 Challenging or reinforcing gender roles .....	201
7.5 Conclusion .....	205
CHAPTER 8: The construction of return decisions and experiences after return .....	208
8.1 Introduction .....	208

8.2 Return ‘to what?’ .....	210
8.3 Adapted return plans .....	214
8.4 Return as a family strategy .....	215
8.5 Return for personal and professional fulfilment .....	218
8.6 Mobility for opportunities .....	220
8.7 Return out of disappointment .....	221
8.8 Conclusion .....	225
CHAPTER 9: Conclusion .....	229
9.1 Introduction .....	229
9.2 Theoretical contributions .....	231
9.3 Methodological contributions .....	234
9.4 Empirical findings .....	235
9.5 Limitations and outlook .....	238
References .....	241
Appendices .....	259
Appendix I – List of interviewees with demographic characteristics .....	259
Appendix II – Research ethics .....	269
Appendix III – Aide-mémoire for biographical narrative interviews .....	277

## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers and returnees, who have been working and living in the UK. In the face of theoretical debates and a lack of knowledge on the experience of Polish women as migrant workers in the UK, a contextualised study prioritising the narratives of the interviewees was established. The theoretical and methodological approach is characterised by grounded theory methodology informed by theoretical sensitivity, which is combined with the analysis of biographical narrative interviews, semi-structured expert interviews, and secondary quantitative data. Through this approach, the conditions and influential factors that shape female Polish migrant workers' aspirations and experiences, as well the way in which they make meaning of them, are scrutinised. Different patterns of migration aspirations have been constructed by the informants' narratives – migration as a solution, as a family strategy or as an opportunity. Furthermore, specificities of working and living in the UK have been established, marked by different routes into employment, migrant and feminised work, and different patterns of work trajectories; as well as social networks, transnational lives and experiences of women and family life. Constructions of return decisions or the lack of return motivations, as well as experiences after return, bring forth the relevance of expectations resulting in the question: 'return to what?' Additionally, return plans have been adapted in the face of structural constraints or because of individual preferences, which were at times overruled in the context of return as a family strategy. Return was also constructed, however, as path to personal or professional fulfilment, as an opportunity, or as a result of disappointment. In the context of the conditions of the enlarged EU providing the freedom of movement, the post-transformation labour market in Poland, and the gendered and migrant labour market segmentation in the UK, as well as gender regimes, female Polish migrant workers actively mediated their migration aspirations and experiences.

## **Acknowledgements**

The research for this thesis was financially supported by the FP7-PEOPLE-2012-ITN project ‘Changing Employment’: ‘The changing nature of employment in Europe in the context of challenges, threats and opportunities for employees and employers’, project no. 317321’. The continuous support of the supervisors Prof Sonia McKay, Dr Cilla Ross, SFHEA and Dr hab. Assoc. Prof. UWร Adam Mrozowicki was vital in realising this thesis as well as the willingness and openness of all interviewees, to whom I owe its existence. The PhD thesis contains no material that has been submitted for examination or accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any educational institution. Previous publications are clearly indicated within the body of the text and in the references.

### **Publications Informed by the PhD Research in Process**

Aziz, K. (2015) ‘Inclusion through trade unions’ community organising and migrant workers’ activism: the case of Polish migrants in the UK’, *Marie Curie Changing Employment ITN Research Paper Series*, Number 2, pp. 1-28.

Aziz, K. (2015) ‘Female Migrants’ Work Trajectories: Polish Women in the UK Labour Market’, *Central and Eastern European Migration Review*, Volume 4, Number 2, pp. 87–105.

Aziz, K. (2015) ‘Trade unions and Polish migrants in the UK: the benefits and limitations of different inclusion strategies’, *Warsaw Forum of Economic Sociology*, Volume 6, Number 1/11, pp. 27-48.

Aziz, K., Egan, B., and Polkowski, R. (2018) ‘Trade unions’ responses at the intersection of class and migration’, in: Fedyuk, O. and Stewart, P. (eds.) *Inclusion and exclusion in Europe: migration, work and employment perspectives*, London and New York: ECPR Press, pp. 171-196.

Aziz, K. (2018) ‘Female migrants’ agency: work trajectories of Polish women in the UK’, in: Fedyuk, O. and Stewart, P. (eds.) *Inclusion and exclusion in Europe: migration, work and employment perspectives*, London and New York: ECPR Press, pp. 123-145.

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1</b> Periods of Polish migration to the UK.....	24
<b>Table 2</b> Polish-born population and all residents by economic activity and sex aged 16 to 74 years in England and Wales.....	34
<b>Table 3</b> Economic activity of female Polish-born population by age in England and Wales .....	35
<b>Table 4</b> Polish-born aged 16 and over and all residents aged 16 to 74 by industry by sex in England and Wales.....	36
<b>Table 5</b> Polish-born population aged 16 to 64 years by occupation and sex in England and Wales .....	37
<b>Table 6</b> Summary of demographic characteristics of sample of interviewees....	99
<b>Table 7</b> Phases of research (Strauss 1987: 19).....	114

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1</b> Polish-born population by industry in England and Wales .....	28
<b>Figure 2</b> Polish-born population by age and sex in England and Wales .....	33
<b>Figure 3</b> Polish-born residents aged 16 and above and all residents aged 16 to 74 by occupation and sex in England and Wales .....	38
<b>Figure 4</b> Utilised and successful means of accessing interviewees .....	108
<b>Figure 5</b> Applied form of grounded theory methodology for the PhD research project on experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK	117
<b>Figure 6</b> Construction of migration aspirations .....	147
<b>Figure 7</b> Experiences of work in the UK .....	177
<b>Figure 8</b> Experiences of social networks, of transnational lives and of women and family life .....	206
<b>Figure 9</b> The construction of return decisions .....	226
<b>Figure 10</b> Grounded theory model of migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK.....	230

## **List of Abbreviations**

A8 – The A8 countries include the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, which all besides Cyprus and Malta joined the EU in 2004.

BA – Bachelor of Arts

BAEL – Badanie Aktywności Ekonomicznej Ludności w Polsce (Data on people's economic activity in Poland; Polish equivalent to the LFS)

CAB – Citizens Advice Bureau

Caqdas – Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software

CEE – Central Eastern Europe

CV – Curriculum Vitae

Et al. – et alia (and others)

EU – European Union

EU-15 – This includes countries which were EU member states before 2004 such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GUS – Główny Urząd Statystyczny (Polish Central Statistical Office)

HR – Human Resources

IPS – International Passenger Survey

IOM – International Organisation for Migration

LFS – Labour Force Survey

LGBTIQ – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, intersex, and queer.

MA – Master of Arts

NHS – National Health Service

NINo– National Insurance Number

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OPZZ – Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych (All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions)

PhD – philosophiae doctor (Doctor of Philosophy)

PiS – Prawo I Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice party)

PO – Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform party)

PZPR – Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (Polish United Workers' Party)

SAWS– Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme

SBS – Sector-based Scheme

SLD – Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Democratic Left Alliance party)

TUC – Trade Union Congress

UK – United Kingdom

USA – United States of America

WRS – Worker Registration Scheme

ZUS – Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych (Polish Social Insurance Institution)

# **CHAPTER 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This thesis targets a specific topic within the broader context of East-West migration and the enlarged EU. Its focus lies on migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK, the conditions and influencing factors as well as how the women make meaning of them. The aim of the study is to offer a contextualised analysis of this specific migration movement, while acknowledging the women's own construction of their experiences through putting forward the narratives of female Polish migrant workers. In this introductory chapter the background and rationale of the research will be outlined. The research aim and objective including research questions will also be elaborated; and the thesis structure – consisting of context, literature and methodology chapters, as well as four empirical chapters and the conclusion – will be sketched in order to convey what this thesis offers.

At the time this research project was initiated in 2013, the phenomenon of Polish migration to the UK had already attracted a significant body of research (Burrell 2010). Migration from Poland, following the EU accession of the A8 countries – the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia – in 2004 and the opening up of the UK labour market to the then-new European citizens, became the most significant migration movement among all examples of intra-EU migration (Galgóczi *et al.* 2009). Within this context, the specific experience of female Polish migrant workers in the UK, who were living and working in the context of a gendered segmentation of the labour market and gendered expectations, exhibited a lack of knowledge (Ignatowicz 2012). The fieldwork of conducting biographical narrative interviews with female Polish migrants in the UK and female return migrants in Poland was undertaken between late 2013 and early 2015, at a time when the upcoming Brexit vote on the UK leaving the EU was public knowledge, but was not yet being discussed as threatening to the position and rights of Polish migrants as it was during the

campaign time in the months before and after the vote to leave. As with every migration phenomenon, however, developments have been highly dynamic, and research can only describe a certain movement in a specific geographical and temporal context, with specific approaches from individuals as well as from sending and receiving societies and supra-national institutions (Massey 1999). Therefore, this thesis contributes to knowledge on migration movements at a specific point in time in the context of the distinct institutional structure of the EU's provisions of freedom of movement, and the experiences of female migrant workers in these circumstances.

## **1.2 Background and rationale of the research**

Migration has been, throughout the history of Poland, a route along which citizens could seek a different way of life (Okólski 2000). While there have been difficult political and social situations in Polish history, various factors at different times contributed to migration decisions. Following the transition period of 1989/1990 from state socialism, migration from Poland became even more dynamic; and a significant number of Polish migrants moved to the UK following Poland's accession to the EU in 2004, when the UK opened up its labour market for citizens of the new member states (Galgóczi *et al.* 2009). Various forms of entry existed prior to the EU's enlargement, so these developments both enabled new migration and offered legal regularisation of previously informal arrangements (Anderson *et al.* 2006). This history of Polish migration contributed to the development of a culture of migration and the 'new migration system in Europe' constituted by free movers (Favell 2008). The implementation of the European principle of freedom of movement has affected the size of the Polish population in the UK so substantially that in the census of 2011 Poland was the top country of citizenship for foreign citizens and the second country of birth for foreign-born citizens; additionally, Polish was the second most spoken language (Booth 2013; Rienzo and Vargas-Silva 2012).

This background has developed in the context of globalisation, international migration, and changing employment. While continuity in the movement of

people and the development of transnational networks has been confirmed (Sassen 2007), increased deregulation, informalisation, flexibilisation and de-standardisation of work characterise the context in which international migration is taking place (Beck 2000; Edgell 2006). The politico-legal system, which is the enlarged EU in the present research, and technological change (Czaika and de Haas 2013); as well as trends towards a globalisation, acceleration, differentiation, feminisation, and politicisation of migration are conditions of relevance (Castles and Miller 1998). Therefore, globalisation processes have increased both people's capabilities and their aspirations to migrate (de Haas 2009).

The economic systems of the sending and receiving countries contribute to the developing characteristics of migration movements. While the UK has been described as characterised by low levels of employment regulation, competitive market arrangements, and market-based economic policy, migrants find themselves in flexible labour markets, often segmented in specific low-paid industries (MacKinnon *et al.* 2011). The economic system of Poland is influenced by the transition from state socialism with specific gendered consequences through the changing character of work and a renegotiation of the private and the public sphere (Pine 2002). The Polish economy is furthermore shaped by broader global processes, social change, and has exhibited dynamic changes (Kurekova 2011). Despite the impact of the EU and its legal consequences, East-West migration has been portrayed as a privatised migration regime – shaped by market forces and migrants' agency, with limited control exerted by national governments or the EU (Ciupijus 2011). Polish migration to the UK has been mainly conceptualised as economic migration, and Polish migrants as mobile workers pursuing work migration; work has consequently been acknowledged as central to the migration experience (Burrell 2010).

The feminisation of migration has been discussed in the context of a lack of focus on the diversity of the female migration experience (Kofman *et al.* 2000). However, female migrants have attracted a substantial amount of research and the feminisation of migration has been widely recognised. Different approaches framed female migrants as subjected to the dynamics of economic systems often

working in the informal and secondary sector or in contrast to this as agents of change (Kofman *et al.* 2000; Kofman 2004; Morokvasić 1984). Migration was also found to be a chosen life-style for some women trying to achieve self-realisation through work and a higher social status (Ignatowicz 2012). The main sectors in which migrant women work, however, often reproduce traditional gender roles and highlight the intersection of inequalities such as class, ethnicity and gender (McCall 2005). Migrant women combine their reproductive and gainful work in the context of a gendered labour market and occupational segmentation in the UK (Aufhauser 2000; Bradley and Healy 2008). The dynamics of post-accession female Polish migration to the UK could pose a challenge to Polish gender roles through the experiences and changing aspirations of women or it could also – through the practice of migration as family strategy or through the labour market position of female migrant workers – perpetuate gendered expectations (Cook *et al.* 2011; Ignatowicz 2012).

Different types of migrants and their aspirations and experiences – manifested in employment, social mobility, transnational social spaces, individual and collective opportunities, and the mediation and perception of experiences – have been identified, but there has been some agreement reached that post-accession migrants are diverse and not predictable, constructing different strategies (Burrell 2010). Instead of trying to establish a grand theory of migration, research needs to focus in on specific migratory phenomena taking into account historically and culturally embedded developments on the micro, meso and macro levels (Castles 2012; Massey 1999). The multiplicity of theories in the field of migration and the call for contextual studies underpin the rationale of this research, which aims to examine the experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK. Polish post-accession migration to the UK combined with women's frequent experience of gendered labour market and occupational segmentation, are the contexts that build the background of this thesis.

The phenomenon of Polish migration to the UK has thus attracted a significant body of research on its various aspects – which poses the challenge of situating this thesis within existing academic knowledge as well as finding a compelling aspect worthy of further research. Gender has been addressed in the literature on

Polish migration to the UK predominantly in the family setting and discussions on motherhood (Burrell 2009), whereas this thesis focuses on the working lives of women and the ways in which they narrate their experiences. Pilot interviews and preliminary observations had suggested that female Polish migrant workers had high motivation for educational and professional progression despite their often difficult position in low-paid feminised employment. Furthermore, biographical research has proven useful for research on migration and gender as well as constructions of aspirations (Apitzsch and Siouti 2007). This thesis will bring in the women's meaning-making processes in order to give them a voice to construct their own life stories.

The approach of theoretical sensitivity in grounded theory methodology offers the possibility for literature, theory and existing knowledge to inform the data analysis, while not directing it (Glaser and Strauss 1968). In this thesis theoretical sensitivity is derived from the critical literature review, pilot interviews and prior knowledge on Polish migration. Besides understandings of globalisation, international migration, changing employment, the feminisation of migration and the labour market as well as post-accession East-West migration, some insights are pivotal for this study. In face of debates in migration research an approach of investigating specific migration experiences in their broader context was chosen (Castles 2012) and the concept of a culture of migration appeared fruitful (Favell 2008). Furthermore the social construction of gender and the Polish ideal of the Mother Pole *Matka Polka* (Ignatowicz 2012: 125) as well as findings on the relevance of different degrees of subjection to structures or individual agency in Polish women's migrant work trajectories informed the analysis (Grabowska-Lusińska 2012; Grabowska-Lusińska and Jaźwińska-Motyłska 2013).

The theoretical debates in the field of migration, as well as the lack of research into the experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK, encourage this thesis' approach of combining grounded theory methodology informed by theoretical sensitivity with the analysis of biographical narrative interviews, semi-structured expert interviews and secondary quantitative data. As will be

outlined in the literature review and the methodology chapter, this will support the investigation of the research focus.

### **1.3 Research aim and objective**

The overall research aim of this thesis is to scrutinise migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK. In doing so the way these are shaped by structural conditions such as labour markets, migration movements and gender regimes, and influenced by individual factors as for example age, education, family situation, geographical location and so forth is analysed. Furthermore the objective of the study is to investigate how women interpret and make meaning of their migration aspirations and experiences. When examining the key literature it was found that a conceptual framework of combining grounded theory methodology with biographical narrative interviews on female migrants' experiences focusing on working lives will contribute new knowledge to the field.

This thesis will explore the following central research questions:

- What structural conditions shape the construction of migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers to the UK?
- What individual factors influence the construction of migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers to the UK?
- How do female Polish migrant workers in the UK make meaning of their migration aspirations and experiences?

These migration experiences constitute different aspects of the interviewees' life stories: migration aspirations in the context of life in Poland, work experiences in the UK, social networks, transnational lives, the experiences of women and family life, return aspirations and experiences after return. Throughout the thesis its empirical analysis has been based on all conducted interviews including female migrant workers who have returned to Poland as well as those who at the time of the interview were staying in the UK. Migration aspirations and experiences are therefore understood as dynamic processes, which can also

include return aspirations and experiences. The term ‘aspirations,’ in this context, is not meant to describe as is often the case in migration research the mere aspiration to migrate, but rather a combination of the migrants’ expectations and hopes for migration and their developing and changing ambitions during the migration experience, possibly influenced by relative deprivation. The main aim of the research – to analyse the roles of conditions, influencing factors, and meaning-making for these experiences – is encouraged by the debate on how female migrant workers experience different degrees of subjection to structures or application of individual agency. This is crucial for understanding the ways in which Polish women in this study experience their migration. The objective of this research is to provide a contextualised migration study of this specific movement; enriched by the narratives of the individuals concerned, facilitating recognition of the women’s own construction of their experiences.

## **1.4 Thesis structure**

Following the introductory chapter outlining the background, rationale, and objective of the thesis, chapter two on contextualisation will further the elaboration of research problems by investigating the history of Polish migration to the UK and the development of a culture of migration, as well as the specificities of the female experience herein; an experience influenced by the effects of transformation, their position in the Polish labour market, and the migrant and gendered segmentation present within the UK labour market. This illustrates the need for theoretical thinking and investigation regarding the research problems at hand, offering substantial insights into both the quantitative dimension and the meso and macro levels of the research topic including the conditions of the sending and receiving country while at the same time refining the focus. The chapter on contextualisation seeks to further the research focus and at the same time offers new knowledge on the research topic.

Chapter three constitutes the critical literature review exploring existing knowledge, identifying gaps, and informing the theoretical approach of this thesis. The theoretical debates around globalisation, migration and work, which

precede this research, are investigated as they relate to the topic at hand. Migration theories have been developed on different levels. The theoretical debates in the field seek to be overcome by contextualised studies incorporating various insights from theory. While the literature review does not strive to explore all existing connected literature, it provides foundation for the theoretical sensitivity in this thesis and shows the existing knowledge gap concerning the experience of female Polish migrant workers in the UK.

The chapter on methodology discusses the chosen approach of combining a grounded theory methodology, inspired by its constructivist and feminist conceptualisations (Charmaz 2006; Olesen 2007), informed by theoretical sensitivity from existing theories with the methods applied. The method of biographical narrative interviews (Schütze 1983) enabled the realisation of the research objective: to give the interviewees a voice by examining their narratives. Semi-structured expert interviews were conducted in order to appropriately contextualise and understand these experiences. The secondary data analysis provides input on the conditions in which the informants find themselves, and is mainly presented in the context chapter as well as in the subsequent empirical chapters when appropriate.

The following empirical chapters turn the focus on the narration of the interviewed female Polish migrant workers in the UK and in Poland. While these chapters always focus on certain aspects of the interviewees' life stories, the investigation of these topics is based on all conducted interviews with female Polish migrant workers in the UK as well as in Poland with those who had returned. Chapter five focuses on the construction of migration aspirations in the context of life experiences in Poland. Different circumstances cause migration to be framed differently by the interviewees, influencing their decision and meaning-making processes.

These aspirations also influence the following experiences of living and working in the UK, which will be analysed in chapters six and seven. Chapter six scrutinises the experiences of the interviewees in the context of routes into employment, migrant and feminised work; it also explores patterns of

occupational stagnation and mobility. These experiences take place in the context of the UK labour market and EU citizenship, influenced by various factors and mediated by the interviewees.

Beyond work, experiences of social networks, the transnational lives of women, and family life are analysed in chapter seven. These aspects of life stories contribute to the development and perception of migration aspirations and experiences influencing migrant workers' meaning-making while work can also facilitate social networks beyond the workplace. In this chapter the relevance of social life engagement and the tendencies of identifying or distancing oneself from 'Polishness' are discussed. Furthermore, the multiplicity of transnational life patterns provides insights into the ways in which Polish women experience their migration. The specificities of the female experience, as well as of family life, help illuminate gender dynamics.

As shown by current debates in migration theories, movement has become dynamic, rendering staying and returning elements of the same migratory agency (de Haas 2014), therefore the empirical analysis in all chapters includes interviews with migrants at different stages. Chapter eight, which is also based on all conducted interviews, investigates the construction of return decisions including an insight into a lack of return aspirations and experiences after return.

These elaborations will enable the construction of a contextualised study using female migrants' narratives and the examination of the conditions and influential factors, as well as the individual's meaning-making of migration aspirations and experiences. Alongside discussing limitations, the concluding chapter will refer back to the research questions at hand and reply to them by elaborating on the empirical findings as well as theoretical and methodological contributions from the study leading to an integrated grounded theory model on migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK. In a concluding outlook a perspective on the possible impact of the Brexit vote will be included acknowledging the changing situation of the investigated migrant group.

## **CHAPTER 2: Contextualisation**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides the background to this research on the experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK. In order to set out the context of the subject matter, it is necessary to engage with the specific migratory movement that connects the UK and Poland and the ways in which female migrants have made use of this migratory space. Polish migration to the UK has a specific history, which must be taken into account. Only then can we understand not only the dynamics of Polish post-accession migration but also return migration as contributory factors in a culture of migration (Favell 2008). Polish women's experiences are the focus of this research and are scrutinised in relation to the effects of transformation on women and women's labour market participation in Poland, and their position as migrant workers in the UK, faced with migrant and gendered labour market segmentation (McDowell 2008). This contextualisation through secondary data analysis will both provide explanatory information on the context of the topic at hand and help identify the research problems that will be tackled by this thesis.

The accessible data on this migration movement is restricted by certain circumstances, which need to be considered when investigating the phenomenon's context. Freedom of movement through EU citizenship and evolving forms of migration such as circular or pendular migration have prompted a complex situation where quantitative information can only provide a depiction of the situation at a specific historical moment. Furthermore the definition of a migrant can be challenging and is always contested which makes it difficult to compare quantitative data. For example Polish migrants can be defined as having been born in Poland. Where data is obtained from the National Insurance Number (NINo) applications, country of citizenship is used to define a migrant. The intended length of stay specifies a migrant in research based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS) (Anderson and Blinder 2012). The British

Census of 2011, however, contains the most consistent quantitative data, while not being able to display the developments of the years afterwards. The Labour Force Survey provides further available data; herein, unfortunately, the size of the sample is comparatively small, as it is for most migrant groups. Since the fieldwork for this thesis was undertaken mainly during 2014, the census data from 2011 is, besides its reliability, also the most significant for the experience of the informants at the time. Parallel to the contextualisation based on data from the British Census of 2011 and the LFS, data from the Polish perspective derives from the Polish Census of 2011 and the Polish LFS, the '*Badanie Aktywności Ekonomicznej Ludności w Polsce*' (BAEL).

## **2.2 Polish migration to the UK**

This section investigates the history of Polish migration to the UK and the consequences of how EU accession in its emigration and return dynamics contribute to a growing participation in migration in Polish society which was framed as a culture of migration (Favell 2008). Since Poland throughout history has repeatedly experienced difficult political and social situations, one way for citizens to survive or seek a better life has been emigration (Okólski 2000). However there have always been a variety of determinants for migration decisions. After the transition period of 1989/1990, migration from Poland became more commuting and flexible; and since Poland joined the EU, a substantial influx of Polish migrants has been observed in the UK, largely exceeding predictions as well as movements from other Central and Eastern European countries (Galgóczy *et al.* 2009: 1). Poland therefore takes a prominent position within East-West migration (Favell 2008).

### **2.2.1 History of Polish migration to the UK**

Migration from Poland to the UK dates as far back as to the so-called 'Great European Emigration' (Hoerder and Knauf 1992) of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when over a hundred thousand Jews fleeing from pogroms had utilised the UK as either a transition stage before continuing to the Americas and Australia or as a

destination for permanent settlement. Poland at the time was partitioned between tsarist Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Prussia. These Jewish Eastern Europeans became part of British society over time, having a distinctive impact on certain areas such as London's East End. This migration movement from Eastern Europe and Russia formed the context for the first anti-immigration debates in the UK, which led to immigration restrictions. While Polish migration today is not a continuum from this earlier migration, it has dominated the perception of British people towards Eastern Europeans for a long time. The first restrictions on migration to the UK are also relevant, starting a path to a restrictive migration regime, which has been accelerated in the past years (Düvell and Garapich 2011).

The migration movement from Poland to the UK, which constituted the most important phenomenon for the formation of the Polonia – the Polish diaspora – in the UK in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was connected to the Second World War. During that time thousands of Poles fled to Britain and the Polish Government in exile transferred to London, bringing along around 20,000 soldiers. The Polish Army under British high command was a significant ally during the war, but in the post-war political situation that followed, these refugees and soldiers could not return to Poland. This resulted in the settlement of Poles, Polish soldiers, and their families in the UK. This migration stimulated strong community activities and led to further migration through family and friendship ties (Davis 1981). In later years, the Second World War refugees were joined by tens of thousands of Eastern Europeans fleeing Soviet occupation. The Polish population in the UK had risen to 162,339 persons in 1951 from only 44,642 in 1931 (Düvell and Garapich 2011: 2). In 1968, following the Polish government's anti-Semitic campaign and the political crisis with student and intellectual protests, Polish refugees of Jewish origin and intellectuals both fled to the UK. These earlier political migrants were integrated into British society, but also built up a Polish social infrastructure of associations, shops, schools, churches and cultural centres (Düvell and Garapich 2011). Besides providing a source of identification and connection to the country of origin for the first generation of Polish political refugees, this established and deeply rooted community organising, which

emerged from the government in exile and the Polish Catholic Mission also contributed to the migration experiences of later Polish migrants (Lacroix 2011).

In an attempt to suppress political opposition, the Polish government – led by the communist party PZPR – implemented martial law in 1981. The persecution of political activists led to a small number of Polish refugees arriving in the UK. Between 1986 and 1996, the Refugee Council recorded 2,900 asylum applications from Poland related to communist repressions and the discrimination of Roma populations. Because of the disadvantages faced by Polish Roma by the time of the post 1989 economic transition and increased discrimination against them, this group has experienced a constant outflow, and is estimated to number around 20,000 in the UK. Following the mid-1990s, asylum applications from Poland were no longer made (Düvell and Garapich 2011: 2).

Polish new arrivals were historically low in the 1990s, when especially circular migrants preferred other destinations. Following the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the fall of the ‘Iron Curtain,’ most Polish migrants went to Germany, the USA and Canada (Okólski 2000). The Polish citizens in the UK numbered around 74,000 in the early 1990s; the Polish community was decreasing in number throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the mid-1990s (Düvell and Garapich 2011: 2). In 1994, Poland became an EU candidate, and entry to the UK no longer required a visa. Irregular migration from Poland to the UK started to increase. Irregular migrants were estimated to be 10 to 20,000 in the mid-90s, rising to around 500,000 in 2000. Poland was the top country of origin for refusal of entry by 2002. The demographics of tourists, students and au-pairs overlapped partially with the irregular migrants; at the same time formalised stay was characterised by highly skilled professionals and businessmen making use of the possibilities provided by the association procedures with the EU (Düvell and Garapich 2011: 2-3). While the right to cross borders remained separate from the right to work (Ciupijus 2011), there were other legal systems of entry available prior to enlargement. For employers and families recruiting into temporary low-wage occupations, there was the Sector-based Scheme (SBS) for hospitality and the Seasonal Agricultural

Workers Scheme (SAWS) for agriculture and food processing. A special au-pair scheme was applied under the auspices of cultural exchange, and for self-employed persons there was a minimum investment into their UK based business required. Despite some available data, it is difficult to estimate precisely the number of Polish migrants who entered the UK in the period between 1994 and 2004 (Anderson *et al.* 2006: 14).

Polish migration to the UK ‘simultaneously is a continuum and a series of separate processes’ (Düvell and Garapich 2011: 3) – on the one hand it is a long social process, and on the other hand it is marked by different motivations and conditions. Two major changes were identified in the development of this migration overall. First, migration before the mid 1980s was mainly forced by political circumstances, while later migration was related to economic and social disadvantages. Secondly, there has been a transformation of Polish migration from mostly permanent to, increasingly, temporary. Düvell and Garapich (2011: 4) have produced Table 1 illustrating these transitions.

**Table 1** Periods of Polish migration to the UK

Periods	Type	Category	Context	Scale
1820s- 1930s	Permanent Transit		Great European Emigration to the Americas and Australia	Small and Medium- scale
1930s- 1950s	Permanent	Refugees, resettlement of army personnel	War and post-war	Small-scale One off
1968	Permanent	Refugees	Anti-Semitism	Small-scale
1980s	Permanent	Refugees	Martial law	Low-scale
1994-2004	Temporary	Often irregular	Pre-accession, visa free entry	Medium- scale
Since May 2004	Temporary Permanent	Regular	Post-accession, free movement	Large-scale

Source: Düvell and Garapich 2011: 4.

While there has been a long history of migration from Poland to the UK, Düvell and Garapich (2011: 1-4) identify these key movements in leading to the current period: the settlement of Polish army members after the Second World War, which consisted of about 120,000 persons settling concentrated as well as dispersed around the UK; small numbers of refugees in 1968 and following the instalment of martial law in Poland in the 1980s; often irregular, temporary labour migration since 1994, when entry into the UK became visa free for Polish citizens, on a medium scale; and the large scale post-accession migration since May 2004, when Poland joined the EU and the UK opened up its labour market for Central and Eastern European citizens. The UK used to be a less important destination country for Poles, but after EU accession it became the second most important destination and, in 2008, the top destination. This history of migration, as well as the broader migration movement out of Poland, has contributed to a culture of migration – a phenomenon characterised by a growing participation in migratory movements in a society (Favell 2008).

### **2.2.2 Post-accession Polish migration to the UK**

Since Poland joined the EU in 2004 and the UK opened up its labour market for citizens of the then new member states, the number of Polish migrants in the UK has risen significantly (Galgóczy *et al.* 2009). Although there has been a volume of return migration detected from the economic crisis in 2007 onwards, the Polish population is so significant in the UK that Polish has become the second most spoken language in England (Booth 2013). Polish migrants of the post-EU enlargement migration are characterised by complex personal and collective networks (Ryan *et al.* 2008), which show that this migration is a culturally and socially distinct phenomenon from pre-EU enlargement migration rather than a linear continuation of previous migration waves (Burrell 2009). These continuities and discontinuities of Polish migration to the UK become clear by distinguishing earlier forced migration and contemporary economic migration, manifesting in differences in migration strategies, motivations and identities (Düvell and Garapich 2011). The relationship between earlier and current Polish migrants has at times, according to Düvell and Garapich (2011), been characterised by suspicion – established post-war migrant communities would

reject the new Eastern European migrants, and the two groups did not mix. At the same time, they established economic relationships in which new migrants found employment amongst the first-wave community as carers, nannies and cleaners. This relationship seems to have changed with the post-accession migration, since existing community organising might have helped Polish migrants to perform better than their surrounding Eastern European counterparts (Cook *et al.* 2011).

Following the EU enlargement in 2004, the new migration system in Europe, as it was termed by Favell (2008), finalised the geo-political transformation in post-1989 Europe as it related to migration and mobility, and prompted the biggest demographic change in Europe since the Second World War. While this mobility had long been occurring in practice, enlargement enabled its legal regularisation promoting the EU approach of European citizens framed as mobile citizens not as migrants (Council Directive 2004/114/EC of 13 December 2004).

As the relatively low numbers of migrants in the earlier phases of Polish migration in Table 1 show, the UK was historically not a major destination country for Polish migrants. This changed, however, following EU accession, after which the UK became the number one destination (Düvell and Garapich 2011: 5). In relation to Polish emigration worldwide, 30 per cent of all Polish migrants choose the UK as their destination country (Kostrzewa and Szałtys 2013: 50). The context of the enlarged EU has provided a new political and institutional framework, regularising this previously mainly irregular movement. The implemented tool for monitoring this migration – the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) requiring workers from the A8 countries to register within a month after joining a new employer – has had limitations because of the required fees, the perception that the process was too bureaucratic and not worthwhile for temporary migration and was abolished in 2011 (Düvell and Garapich 2011: 6). This dynamic shows that regularity and irregularity are not two separate dimensions of this movement, but rather a complex process. The registration numbers at the WRS were initially high, with many already present migrants regulating their stay, rising from 71,025 to 162,495 from 2004 to 2006. In the following years, the approved application numbers dropped – overall resulting in

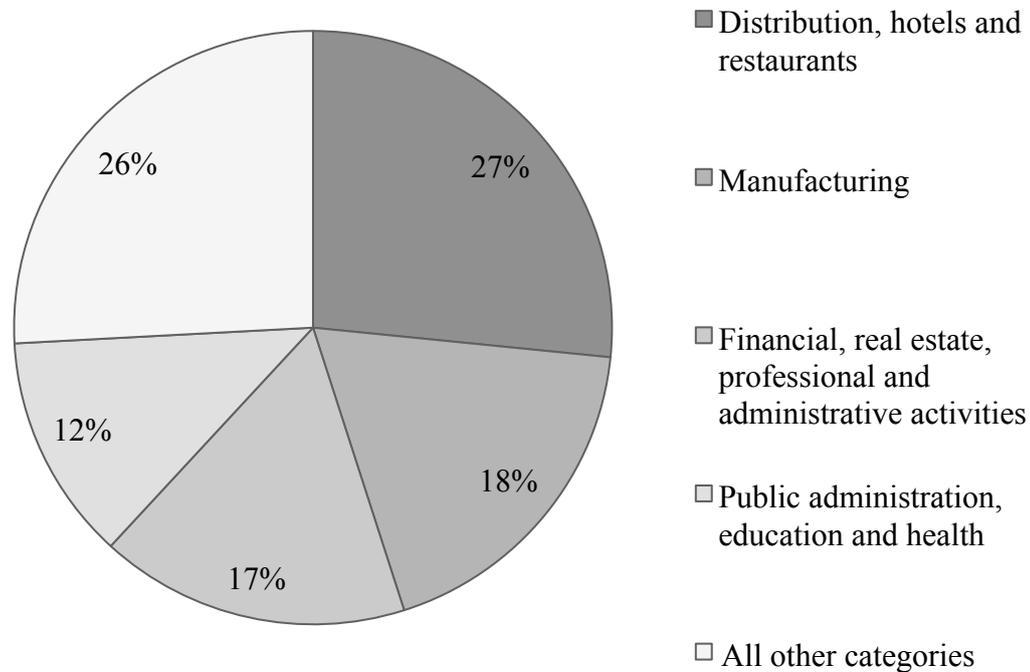
627,000 registered Poles between 2004 and March 2009 (Düvell and Garapich 2011: 7-8).

The 2011 Census was the first large scale data set to display the outcomes of Polish post-accession migration to the UK. The Census data showed a Polish-born population of 579,000 – one per cent of the total population – for England and Wales. Poland constituted the top country of citizenship of foreign citizens and the second country of birth of foreign-born UK citizens; additionally, Polish was the second most spoken language (Migration Observatory 2012: 2; Rienzo and Vargas-Silva 2012; Booth 2013). The Polish-born population constituted 51.97 per cent of Central and Eastern European migrants (Migration Observatory 2012: 5). Younger cohorts dominated the group, with 81 per cent in the age group of 18-34 years, and Polish migrants have spread across the entire country (Düvell and Garapich 2011: 7-8). According to Drinkwater *et al.* (2010) Polish migrants are perceived as young, dispersed, and relatively high educated, but still presenting language barriers, especially with workers in low-skilled sectors. Just over a third of migrants counted by the Census were married, which is a higher rate when compared to other A8 migrants, but lower than non-A8 migrants.

Concerning statistical information on this movement, most scholars would point at the problems with the available data. Drinkwater, Eade and Garapich (2010) addressed this problem by asking ‘what’s behind the figures?’. Due to the limitations of the WRS, Drinkwater *et al.* (2010) also used information gathered from National Insurance Numbers (NINo), since these included the self-employed and minimised non-registration – all legally employed migrants need a NINo. They still needed to supplement this information, however, with WRS and Labour Force Survey (LFS) data for their broader range of socio-economic indicators of migrants (Drinkwater *et al.* 2010: 80). This problematic situation with statistical data shows the need for more qualitative research on the topic of Polish migration to the UK. The information derived from statistical datasets therefore provides an insight into the context in which Polish women make meaning of their migration experiences at a certain point in time. However, in order to investigate the research aim of scrutinising migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK an overall qualitative

approach was chosen because of its appropriateness to the research subject. This will be elaborated upon in chapter four on methodology.

**Figure 1** Polish-born population by industry in England and Wales



Source: Aziz 2015: 93; Census 2011 for England and Wales.

Figure 1 highlights that while distribution, hotels and restaurants form the largest employment sector, accounting for 27 per cent of all Polish migrants in the UK, these migrants are also a relevant population in other sectors, such as manufacturing, finance, and public administration, education and health.

### **2.2.3 Polish return migration from the UK**

The Polish Census of 2011 includes information on return migration. Through accessing persons who lived abroad on a permanent basis but were also reported as part of a Polish household, even questions concerning return motivations were addressed. Amongst the people living abroad, 49.7 per cent were planning to return to Poland, while 38.7 per cent were indecisive answering the question if they were planning to return to Poland with ‘I do not know’. The Census has

counted 730,000 persons who have emigrated and returned and were at some point living abroad for at least one year. The economic crisis has affected this number significantly, with 172,000 persons returning between 2008 and 2011. Of the return migrants overall, 60 per cent were men. In the years 2002 to 2011, 73,000 persons returned from the UK, 51,000 of whom moved back to Poland after 2007. While a majority (at 64 per cent) of those who emigrated did so for work, the most referred to factor in return decisions during the period between 2002 and 2011 was family reasons. In the years affected by the economic crisis – 2007 to 2011 – return migrants also cited job loss or difficulty in finding a job abroad, which had not been a relevant reason before (Kostrzewa and Szałtys 2013: 70-74). This data provides insights such as the dominance of family reasons as a return motivation, prompting questions for the qualitative analysis to come.

In relation to economic activity in the years 2002 to 2011, return migrants were more economically active than inhabitants overall, with 61 per cent compared to 48.5 per cent working and 17 per cent in contrast to 12 per cent unemployed. Male return migrants had a higher rate of employment at 69 per cent, whereas female return migrants were more often economically inactive because of family caring responsibilities or retirement. Alongside the higher likelihood of being unemployed, return migrants were also more often self-employed, with 15 per cent as sole proprietors and four per cent employing other persons. The majority of economically active and working persons, however, at 80 per cent, were employees themselves (Kostrzewa and Szałtys 2013: 75). These employment patterns were the context in which the returned informants for this research pursued their economic activity after return.

In addition to return movement back from the UK, there was also a phenomenon of double return – when return migrants emigrated another time (White 2014). An in-depth study of the situation of return migrants in the region of Silesia has established that 69 per cent of return migrants did not plan to emigrate again, while 25 per cent wanted to – 50 per cent planned for a short time, 21 per cent for a longer time, and 17 per cent planned to move permanently. Return migrants, who were studying and learning or were unemployed while in Poland,

often planned to emigrate another time. Of those who at the moment of being questioned were emigrants, 47 per cent planned to return to Poland (Szymańska *et al.* 2012: 15-17), which shows that within different samples, the rate of return aspirations remained similar.

## **2.3 Female Polish migration to the UK**

After characterising the migration movement between the UK and Poland, this section focuses on the position women take in this context. In order to understand the situation of female Polish migrants, it is necessary to understand how the economic transformation in Poland has influenced their experiences and in what situation they found themselves in the Polish labour market before investigating their position as migrant workers in the UK labour market with its migrant and gendered segmentation.

### **2.3.1 Effects of transformation on women in Poland**

Polish women have for some time taken advantage of the East-West ‘migratory space’ opened up at the end of the state socialist system, thereby contributing significantly to Europe’s informal migrant economy (Morokvasić *et al.* 2008). The economic situation in Poland, characterised by high unemployment and job losses, motivated Polish women to look for work abroad, often accepting low paid, low skilled and feminised work in the informal sector (Coyle 2007). Following 2004, many of the negative consequences experienced due to their irregular status have lessened because of the freedom of movement allowed by their obtained European citizenship (Lutz 2007). Within Poland, the restructuring of the economic system and transformation to a market economy has affected women in two significant ways. In addition to experiencing decreasing economic activity and labour market participation and increasing unemployment, women were also faced with the discontinuation of many services supporting them in their gendered roles (Coyle 2007). The closure of many state-run industries and public services resulted in not only job loss, but also a more difficult relationship between employment and family responsibilities resulting in a new division of

the private and the public domain (Pine 2002). The condition of diminishing state support for women's paid and unpaid work is supported by the discourse conceptualising modern gender relations as threatening (Coyle 2007). On top of the discontinuation of welfare policies intended to make it easier for mothers to stay at home rather than returning to work, the shortage of child-care facilities – with only two per cent of children under three years of age cared for in institutional child-care – also hindered women's return to and active participation in the labour market (Lewandowski *et al.* 2013). The developing private sector, at this time was characterised by gender segregation, unequal pay and gender discrimination (Coyle 2007). Women in Poland consequently demonstrated a lower employment rate than the EU and OECD average (OECD 2015). The Polish government, led until 2014 by Donald Tusk of the liberal party Civic Platform (PO), has – in order to work against the feared negative demographic development by enabling mothers to take part in the labour market – introduced some reforms. Among these were a liberalisation of child-care institutions, making more and cheaper offerings possible though undermining labour standards and pedagogical requirements. A new parental leave system was introduced with the intention of encouraging men to use paternal leave; the rhetoric of its presentation, however, still identified women as the main family carers (Plomien 2015). Following the early elections in 2015, the new Polish government, ruled by the right-wing populist Law and Justice party (PiS), realised one of its campaign promises by implementing the family 500 plus programme. This programme granted additional financial support for families starting with the second child regardless of their socio-economic status. It thereby represented a change of direction for family policies away from supporting the increase in child-care facilities towards placing the caring responsibility on the families, which in face of low wages could render staying at home for some women a more viable option (Detwiler and Snitow 2016).

### **2.3.2 Women in the Polish labour market**

Understanding the position of women in the Polish labour market is important when discussing female Polish migrants and return migrants, as this is the labour market they either left or came back to. The proportion of women who are

economically active has been steadily rising. In 2011, the Polish LFS – the BAEL – characterised 48 per cent of women as economically active, while 64.2 per cent of men were active overall. Narrowed down to working age, which is between 18 and 54 years old for women and between 18 and 64 years old for men, 67.9 per cent of women and 76.6 per cent of men were economically active (GUS 2014: 3).

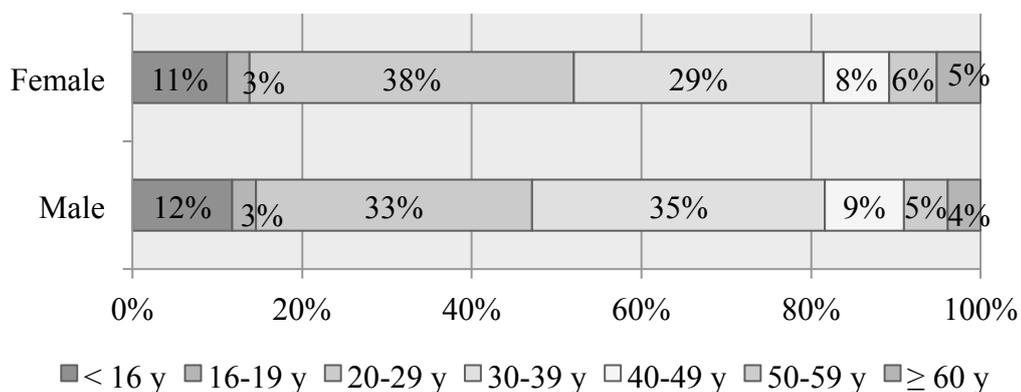
In 2013, out of all women aged more than 15 years, 43.4 per cent were working, 5.1 per cent were unemployed and 51.5 per cent were economically inactive. The most economically active age cohort was aged 40 to 44 years; and higher educational attainment correlated with a higher activity rate. In 2011, 6,640,000 women between 18 and 54 years old were working. With regard to occupations, sectors and industries, a specific gendered segmentation of the Polish labour market was observable. Women were more often employed in the public sector, with 33.6 per cent compared to men at 18.2 per cent. Men were also more often self-employed with sole proprietorship or with their own employees. Women in 2013 made up the majority in some occupations, such as office work, personal services and sales specialists. In certain industry sectors women constituted the majority of those employed, accounting for eight out of ten workers in health care, social work, and education. They also made up the majority in finances and insurance, as well as in accommodation and catering. Women also dominated in services; trade and car repair; property agencies; professional, academic and technical professions; public administration; and culture and leisure. Women were twice as likely to work part-time than men in the Polish labour market, and more women were registered as unemployed (GUS 2014: 4-8). Part-time employment in Poland, however, as in other Eastern European countries following transition, was comparatively low due to high costs of part-time employment for employers and in face of low wages a lack of employees wanting to work part-time (OECD 2015). The BAEL shows that in the period between 2011 and 2013 men were slightly more likely to be unemployed than women. The difference in the data derives from the different methods of data collection. The jobcentre based its data directly on the persons registered with them. According to their data, there were also more women identified as long term unemployed (unemployed for over a year) than men, accounting for 41.6

per cent of the long term unemployed in contrast to 34.9 per cent for unemployed men. On the basis of the BAEL for 2011, 11.1 per cent of economically active women of working age were unemployed compared to nine per cent of men. Women in Poland experienced difficulties in finding new work after a break. In general, women in 2012 earned 17 per cent less than men. This gender pay gap is found in all occupations, yet to a differing extent, with the biggest differences occurring among industrial workers and craftspeople and in finance and insurance, where women earn only 63 per cent of what men earn. Women earned more than men in two sectors with usually low numbers of female workers: construction, and transport and warehousing (GUS 2014: 12-14).

### 2.3.3 Polish women in the UK labour market

The Polish-born population in England and Wales in 2011 consisted of 51 per cent women and 49 per cent men. Women dominated in the group aged 20-29 years old with 38 per cent, while men had their highest share in the group aged 30-39 years with 35 per cent, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2** Polish-born population by age and sex in England and Wales



Source: Aziz 2015: 92; Aziz 2018: 127; Census 2011 for England and Wales.

In relation to UK economic activity, the data in Table 2 shows that Polish-born women were mostly full-time employed, their rate of full-time employment at 47 per cent was the same as that of men in general. It was not, however, as high as Polish-born men’s full-time employment at 64 per cent; but significantly more than that of women in general at 31 per cent. The part-time employment rate of

Polish-born women, at 16 per cent, was closer to that of women in general (21 per cent) than to the rate of Polish-born men or all male residents. This shows that Polish migrants if men or women were first and foremost migrant workers; but that Polish women also exhibited female employment patterns. The differences in self-employment and even more so in the gendered category of ‘looking after home or family’ between Polish-born women and their male counterparts, as well as the closeness of these rates to their female comparators, show that a gendered structure of their economic activity was observable. This gendered dynamic was conspicuous despite other markers characterising them as migrant workers such as their higher full-time employment and lower retirement, student and other economic inactivity rates in contrast to women in general. These markers of migrant worker status could have, however, also been influenced and thereby relativised by age, and since, as Figure 2 shows, young cohorts dominated in the group of Polish-born women, it is necessary to conduct a differentiation along the line of age as in Table 3.

**Table 2** Polish-born population and all residents by economic activity and sex aged 16 to 74 years in England and Wales

	<b>Polish-born female</b>	<b>Polish-born male</b>	<b>All residents female</b>	<b>All residents male</b>
Part-time employees	16%	4%	21%	6%
Full-time employees	47%	64%	31%	47%
Self-employed	9%	16%	6%	14%
Unemployed	4%	3%	4%	5%
Students	7%	6%	9%	9%
Retired	5%	3%	16%	12%
Looking after home or family	9%	1%	8%	1%
Other economically inactive	4%	2%	6%	6%

Source: Aziz 2015: 93; Census 2011 for England and Wales.

The largest group in the female Polish-born population was aged 20 to 29 years and had the highest full-time employment at 55 per cent. The older age groups still had high full-time employment but also higher part-time employment rates than the biggest age group. This suggests that when family and caring responsibilities increase, women combine their reproductive work more and

more with part-time employment. While self-employment was, in the gender comparison in Table 2, more relevant for men, Polish-born women were more likely to be engaged in self-employment the older they were. This could be conceptualised as a way of confronting structural constraints in the labour market (Cook *et al.* 2011). The lower full-time and higher part-time employment and the higher share of ‘looking after home or family’ for women in the age group of 30 to 39 years suggest that this group carried the most caring responsibilities. The markers of studying and retirement were, as expected, age-biased, and had therefore little effect on the main characterisation of the female Polish-born population as active migrant workers who also exhibited gendered economic activity.

**Table 3** Economic activity of female Polish-born population by age in England and Wales

	16-19 y	20-29 y	30-39 y	40-49 y	50-59 y	60-74 y	> 74 y
Part-time employees	4%	15%	19%	18%	18%	10%	2%
Full-time employees	9%	55%	47%	50%	47%	12%	2%
Self-employed	1%	7%	11%	13%	13%	8%	1%
Unemployed	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	1%	0%
Students	76%	8%	3%	2%	1%	1%	0%
Retired	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	60%	89%
Looking after home or family	3%	9%	11%	7%	7%	3%	1%
Other economically inactive	3%	3%	3%	4%	8%	6%	5%

Source: Aziz 2018: 128; Census 2011 for England and Wales.

The heterogeneity of the Polish-born population in the UK labour market is reflected in the sectors in which they work in Table 4 and occupations in Table 5. The main industries for Polish-born women were manufacturing, wholesale and trade, and accommodation and food service at 15 per cent for each of the industries. These sectors were also relevant for Polish-born men as they were

typical employment fields of migrant workers. The construction sector as an employment space for male and migrant workers appears to have been important for Polish-born men, while the female Polish-born population was employed in feminised work such as in health and social work, administrative and support services, and education. The data on industry in Table 4 brings together information on both Polish-born residents and all residents, in order to enable a comparison of Polish women with their counterparts among UK residents in general. However, because of limits to available data, this includes Polish-born residents from ages 16 and above and all residents from 16 to 74 years old. Table 4 shows both the significance of migrant sectors and the gendered segmentation of the UK labour market. For example, many Polish-born employees worked in manufacturing, and Polish women were much more represented than women in general. While Polish-born women worked more often than Polish men in industries with a higher share of female employees – such as administration, health and education – female workers, in general, still outnumbered them in these areas of work.

**Table 4** Polish-born aged 16 and over and all residents aged 16 to 74 by industry by sex in England and Wales

	<b>Polish-born female</b>	<b>Polish-born male</b>	<b>All residents female</b>	<b>All residents male</b>
Manufacturing	15%	22%	5%	13%
Wholesale and retail trade	15%	15%	16%	16%
Accommodation and food service	15%	10%	6%	5%
Administrative and support service	14%	8%	5%	5%
Human health and social work	12%	3%	21%	5%
Education	6%	2%	15%	5%
Transportation and storage	5%	11%	7%	2%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	4%	3%	6%	7%
Construction	2%	17%	2%	13%
Other	13%	11%	17%	29%

Source: Aziz 2015: 94; Census 2011 for England and Wales.

While the Polish-born population was represented at all occupational levels, there are differences between the genders observable in Table 5. Elementary occupations were, for both Polish-born women and men, the most frequently reported; however, 37 per cent of Polish-born women worked in these, compared to only 27 per cent of men. Skilled trade occupations were on the same level as elementary occupations for men, which was not the case for women. Polish-born women's second most important occupation was within feminised areas of the labour market – caring, leisure and other services, which were insignificant for Polish-born men, comparable to the dynamic shown in the administrative and secretarial occupations. Like their share in manufacturing, the relevance of the female Polish-born population in process, plant and machine operative jobs is noteworthy for female workers. However, this was still less than their male counterparts, and not surprising for migrant workers.

**Table 5** Polish-born population aged 16 to 64 years by occupation and sex in England and Wales

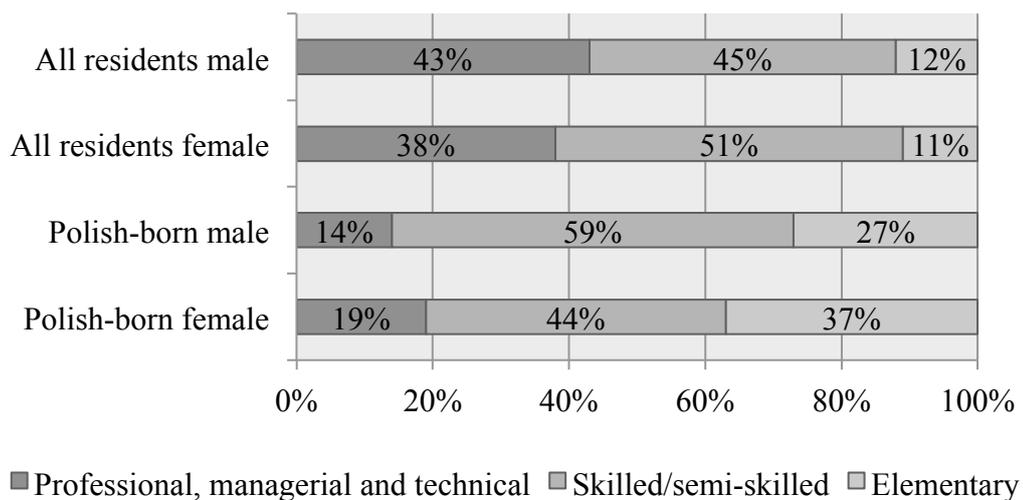
	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Managers, directors and senior officials	5 %	4 %
Professional occupations	8 %	5 %
Associate professional and technical occupations	6 %	5 %
Administrative and secretarial occupations	9 %	2 %
Skilled trades occupations	4 %	27 %
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	14 %	3 %
Sales and customer service occupations	7 %	3 %
Process, plant and machine operatives	11 %	25 %
Elementary occupations	37 %	27 %

Source: Census 2011 for England and Wales.

It is also relevant to compare the occupational level of Polish migrants to the general population. Due to the limits of the available data, however, this is investigated in a broader age range, with 16 to 74 years of age for all residents

and 16 and over for Polish-born residents. Polish migrants dominated with 52 per cent in skilled and semi-skilled work. They were twice as often employed in elementary occupations, at 31 per cent, than in positions as managers, professionals or technical employees, with 16 per cent. As Figure 3 shows, however – in contrast to the general population – it appears that Polish migrants were less often in managerial and professional occupations and more likely to be in elementary employment. While Polish men showed 59 per cent and women in general showed 51 per cent in skilled and semi-skilled professions, only 44 per cent of Polish women worked in these positions. Female Polish migrants were also, at 37 per cent, more frequently working in elementary occupations compared to just eleven per cent of their female counterparts.

**Figure 3** Polish-born residents aged 16 and above and all residents aged 16 to 74 by occupation and sex in England and Wales



Source: Aziz 2015: 94; Census 2011 for England and Wales.

The data discussed in this section provides an insight into the position of Polish women as migrant workers in the UK following the accession of Poland to the EU, and builds the context for the experiences of the informants. While regularisation has enabled migrant women to take part in the formal labour market, the dynamics of a gendered segmentation of the UK labour market

(Anderson 2000) as well as existing gender roles shape their participation and labour market opportunities.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has set out the context for the research on the experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK labour market. A contextualisation of a research subject is necessary in order to locate the phenomenon in its broader circumstances and thereby understand how the findings refer to their context. This chapter, however, has not only provided the background for the research, but has also promoted the development of the research focus. Without understanding the long history of Polish emigration, it would be impossible to understand the culture of migration or migration system that has emerged today (Favell 2008). It is not uncommon in Poland to know people and have family members who migrated, which makes it a more accessible pathway than for people from other countries which lack this migration culture and also provides networks, information and access to employment. This culture of migration also finds its expression in return and double return migration, which exemplify that moving, staying and returning are different sides of the same migratory agency (de Haas 2014). Therefore, another important element of this research is the inclusion of female return migrants in the interview sample. Furthermore, the findings on return migrants – the relevance of family reasons for return as well as their economic activity – raise questions for the qualitative analysis. For this migration, the long-term effects of the economic transformation are also crucial; as these not only instigated irregular and circular migration in the 1990s, but also led to the characteristics of the labour market in Poland and its status as a push factor at the time. The changed politico-institutional context of the EU accelerated the movement even further.

A discussion of these historical, social and institutional aspects is necessary to understand the experiences of female Polish migrants. Women experience these structures in a specific way, and find themselves in both countries – Poland and the UK – in a gendered segmentation of the labour market. The analysed data

points to Polish female migrant workers being somewhat younger than Polish male migrants and more economically active than women overall. Age has also been shown to be a contributing factor to labour market participation, which must also be taken into account when analysing the interviews. This picture is also represented in the information on industry and occupations, where female Polish migrants are more often found in sectors that reflect their status as migrant workers; but as women also tended to be employed in feminised sectors. From this contextualisation one can derive two further elements for the focus of the research: an emphasis on the female experience and on the most relevant sectors for Polish migrants. The focus is not necessarily on the industry sectors most relevant for women, but rather for all Polish migrants, in order to better observe the different effects specific gendered sectors and migrant sectors might have on the experience. For this research, the four most significant areas of work for Polish migrants were selected for the sample of interviewees. These were manufacturing; distribution, hotels and restaurants; local government, education and health; and banking and finance. For the returned informants the informal sector in the UK was additionally relevant. This focus enables an analysis of gender roles in both the private and the public or work sphere through the qualitative data.

## **CHAPTER 3: Literature Review**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Polish migration to the UK has attracted a significant body of research. This research is embedded in the more general body of work on globalisation, migration and employment and constitutes a central element of the debate on East-West migration. Following an initial finding from research on Polish migration, that there is a knowledge gap concerning female Polish migrant workers, the topic of female migration became central to this thesis. What follows is a critical literature review (Creswell 2009), which systematises the field and its existing knowledge, identifies gaps in the literature, and informs the development of theoretical sensitivity in order to clarify the focus for this thesis.

When researching migration and posing questions about how migration aspirations and experiences are constructed, in what conditions they are shaped, and through which factors they are influenced, the need to explore migration theories is evident. This literature review investigates discussions on globalisation, migration and work; migration theories and gendered work; female migration, and intersectionality as they relate to the research topic. Furthermore, theories of constructions of Polish women and existing knowledge on work trajectories of female Polish migrants are interrogated. These approaches help to contextualise migration experiences and identify the structures and conditions which shape them, as well as elaborating how migrants make meaning of their experiences. Polish migration to the UK is a specific movement within the broader framework of East-West migration. In relation to Polish migration, certain demographic statistics and migrant typologies, the employment structure and trade union activities concerning Polish migrants are addressed and concluded upon with an insight into migrant experiences and the gap past literature has left open, which this thesis seeks to contribute to filling in.

### 3.2 Globalisation, migration and work

Migration takes place as part of broader societal developments that need to be examined in order to locate migration experiences within their framework and understand the structures and conditions which shape them.

Contemporary discussions on globalisation mostly refer to the

‘widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of social life’ (Held *et al.* 1999: 2).

This means that social, political and economic activities in any one part of the world have an increasing effect on other parts of the world. Global interconnectedness is growing, largely because of developments in travel and information and communication technologies (Held *et al.* 1999). While globalisation is a contested concept, the main continuity of its described phenomena is the movement of people, goods and ideas across the world; wherein the spatial-temporal processes of change in supra-territorial relations such as the EU are distinctive features of its contemporary form (Edgell 2006: 183). Globalisation is not, therefore, a new phenomenon, and Marx and Engels discussed the global character and tendencies of capitalism and understood globalisation as a capitalist imperative over a century ago.

‘The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere’ (Marx and Engels 1848: 12).

Harvey (2001) illustrates this by characterising capitalism as a system addicted to geographical expansion and technological change through economic growth, therefore globalisation today

‘is the contemporary version of capitalism’s long-standing and never-ending search for a spatial fix to its crisis tendencies’ (Harvey 2001: 25).

The result of the free market of contemporary capitalist globalisation is the changing relationship between stronger capital and weaker labour (Edgell 2006: 191). The competitive pressure of globalisation has led to increased deregulation, sectoral change, informalisation and the flexibilisation of work (Beck 2000: 93). Edgell (2006) describes the growth of non-standard paid work through the de-

standardisation of work within a neo-liberal ideology paradigm as contemporary features of change of work in terms of contract such as self-employment; spatiality such as homeworking; temporal and total such as paid informal work. The experience of women workers during this period of globalisation has changed profoundly. While on the one hand there is a greater female participation in paid work, on the other, women tend to be over-represented in part-time, low-paid and other forms of non-standard work (Castells 1997).

While cross-border migration and transnational networks between sending and receiving countries occurred before contemporary globalisation, their characteristics have changed (Sassen 2007: 129). The IOM International Migration Report 2010 identifies, besides the unprecedented number of international migrants in the world, new qualities of migration flows such as high ethnic and cultural diversity, a feminisation of migration and a growth in irregular, temporary and circular migration (IOM 2010: 3). In conceptualising 'the age of migration', Castles and Miller (1998: 8-9) highlight trends towards the globalisation, acceleration, differentiation, feminisation and politicisation of migration. While the authors recognise migration as a constant in human history, 'the hallmark of the age of migration is the global character of international migration: the way it affects more and more countries and regions, and its linkages with complex processes affecting the entire world' (Castles and Miller 1998: 283).

Bommes and Morawska (2005) describe international population flows as an integral or constitutive component of

'globalization processes connecting different regions of the world through trade and labor exchange, international law and organisations, and rapidly advancing transportation and communication technologies' (Bommes and Morawska 2005: 1).

While the relationship between globalisation and migration is complex and intertwined, Sassen (2007: 134) identifies three major issues: the geo-economics of migration in relation to the broad structural conditions of economic globalisation; the building of bridges between emigration and immigration countries through direct recruitment by employers, governments and immigrant networks; and the organised legal and illegal export of workers. The interplay

between the global and the local characterises global cities, transnational communities and commodity supply chains (Sassen 2007: 134).

The discussion around transnationalism and transnational processes has led to new ideas about the relationship between globalisation and international migration (Chinchilla 2005). In conceptualising globalisation as a social and economic process, we can understand it as facilitating an increase in cross-border flows and transnational social networks, which connect migrants across transnational space. These transnational social spaces, in which migrants move, are both preconditions and products of the globalisation process (Faist 2000; Vertovec 2001).

While stressing the importance of the politico-legal system, Czaika and de Haas (2013) also describe a threefold process of how technological change has facilitated migration in general. Technological advancement has lowered resource constraints on mobility through cheaper travel and communication, strengthened migrant networks and transnational ties, and provided improved access to information, which has accelerated migration aspirations. These processes have increased both people's capabilities and their aspirations to migrate (de Haas 2009).

In researching globalisation and migration, one discovers that the complexity of both phenomena and their interplay lead to complicated synergies. While Kahanec and Zimmermann (2008) argue for stronger international cooperation in data collection methodologies in order to tackle this difficulty, the necessity of studying each migration phenomenon against the background of globalisation processes and capitalist economies is clear.

In order to understand the structures and conditions that influence migration experiences, it is necessary to examine the different economic systems of the countries concerned – Poland and the UK. When dealing with Poland, it is necessary to look particularly at the literature that examines economies following the transformation from socialism. Bohle and Greskovits (2007) identify for Poland a form of capitalism, which they call embedded neoliberalism,

characterised by the implementation of social policy packages to soften the effects of the transition to neoliberalism. In the UK, MacKinnon *et al.* (2011) describe the Anglo-Saxon system as one with low levels of employment regulation and worker support, and in which globalisation is part of the market-based economic policy; this has led to a strategy of competitiveness characterised by flexible labour markets (Wills *et al.* 2010). While both the highest and lowest paid jobs have grown, the very lowest paid jobs in the UK have been devalued to the extent that they have become difficult to fill (Wills *et al.* 2010). This labour gap was, to a certain degree, filled by migrants from the accession countries. Kurekova (2011) argues for the need to study post-accession East-West migration within broader global processes and social change in addition to discussing it as a part of the transition from socialism.

### **3.3 Migration theories**

The question of how migration experiences are shaped by structures and conditions and mediated by the individuals concerned has been discussed extensively in migration theories. Within migration research, there has been an important focus on the origins, directions and continuation of migration; migrant labour; and the socio-cultural integration of migrants (Portes 1999). Since migration is a multifaceted research field on multiple levels, there is still no single theory explaining all the above-mentioned questions, and such a theory may indeed be impossible to develop (Massey 1999). The search for an explanation of migration determinants has led to a variety of concepts, which in modern migration literature are used as complementary approaches rather than as exclusive ideas (Kurekova 2011: 3; Haug 2000). A possible classification of current migration theories follows their level of analysis – while some focus on the micro level of individual decisions, others take into account the meso level of households and communities or the macro level of migration trends (Hagen-Zanker 2008: 5). In the following sub-sections, migration theories are discussed along these different dimensions, and the debates in migration theories are questioned in regards to their relevance for this research.

While this literature review will not be able to explore all existing migration theories, this section tries to show that migration theories at the macro level have described the importance of globalisation, economic development, labour demand, and migration regulation in influencing both migration decisions in general and the choice of the destination country for the migrant. Furthermore, migration theories on all analytical levels have led to theoretical debates which call for contextualised research characterised by theoretical sensitivity as sought in this thesis.

### **3.3.1 Macro level migration theories**

The neoclassical theory of migration, which can be found at both the micro and macro level, occupies a prominent position in current academic and policy-related research, as well as in the research preceding the EU enlargement which tried to predict the extent of post-accession East-West migration (Kurekova 2011: 4). On the macro level, the neoclassical theory (Lewis 1954) was first used to explain internal migration from the rural agricultural sector to the urban manufacturing sector. This theory explains migration as part of economic development, identifying wage differentials and geographic differences, in the supply of and demand for labour, as crucial factors. Adding to this conceptualisation, Todaro (1969) accounts for risks of unemployment by establishing a model that includes expected income as a result of wages and employment rates as well as migration costs. Since there are costs associated with migration, it will not be the poorest individuals who choose to migrate, or the poorest countries, which send migrants (Kurekova 2011: 5). The inherent expectation of the neoclassical theory of migration – that migration occurs until an equilibrium of wages has been reached – cannot be verified by empirical testing (Hagen-Zanker 2008: 7). Kurekova (2011: 6) points out that in order for the benefits of migration to override the costs, the wage differentials have to be more than 30 per cent; which measured as GDP per capita was the case between the A8 and EU-15 countries<sup>1</sup>. The average income per person in the Central and

---

<sup>1</sup> The A8 countries include the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, which all besides Cyprus and Malta joined the EU in 2004. EU-15 include countries which were EU member states before 2004 such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark,

Eastern European accession states was 45 per cent of the average EU-15 level in 2001 (Krings *et al.* 2009: 52). But in the extended version of this model, the relevant factor is the expected not the actual earnings (Kurekova 2011: 5). Neoclassical theory has been criticised for mechanically reducing migration determinants to costs and benefits; ignoring politics, policies and market imperfections; homogenising migrants and migrant societies; and for being a-historical (Kurekova 2011: 7).

Piore (1979) argues with the dual labour market theory that migration is caused by a strong labour demand in developed countries. This theory describes a dual pattern of occupations and economic organisation in advanced economies, where a capital-intensive structuring of the job market which uses skilled and unskilled labour is seen alongside a labour-intensive, unskilled pattern. While the primary sector is characterised by rising wages and high social status and prestige, the secondary sector for unskilled work leads to a demand for temporary migrant labour. While the theory of the dual labour market reflects the emergence of losers and winners of labour market segmentation, it does not account for migrant decision-making or agency.

In world systems theory (Wallerstein 1974), migration is rooted in capitalist expansion, which disrupts and dislocates society. In this theory, a differentiation is made between countries according to their degree of dependence upon capitalist 'core' countries, grouping them into 'semi-peripheral', 'peripheral' and 'external' areas. The theory takes a historical structural perspective, explaining a more socially uprooted population with less attachment to their homes and higher probability to migrate as a consequence of capitalist expansion affecting production modes, culture and communication, on top of a strong demand for migrant labour. This concept can help clarify the role of the transition from socialism in Central and Eastern European countries by explaining how migration may follow the dynamics of market creation and the global economy; but again, it fails to consider individual motivations and meaning-making

---

Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

practices necessary for understanding social actions. Building on world systems theory (Wallerstein 1974), various migration scholars (Portes 2001; Castells 1997; Sassen 2007; Bommers and Morawska 2005) have alluded to the structure of the world market when explaining international migration. These researchers have used economic structures, increasingly, as a background for other approaches, since historical-structural approaches erase the role of individual choice in migration decisions and instead depict movement as the outcome of broader structural processes (de Haas 2008).

The model of migration as a dynamic system draws on the idea that there is a sub-system on the side of the sending community controlling outflows, and one on the side of the receiving community controlling inflows; while the background of social and economic structures, policies and infrastructure also affect the migration system (Mabogunje 1980). International migration can be understood as a dynamic system of interlinked sending and receiving migration regimes, adjusted by experiences of the migration process itself through information (Hagen-Zanker 2008). Migratory regimes specify the different yet changing national models of migration such as the colonial regime in the UK, where migrants from the Commonwealth dominated for a long time; or the guest worker regime in Germany and Austria (Kofman *et al.* 2000). In this context, migration laws restricting or providing the right to cross borders can also influence migration flows. As globalisation and supra-national institutions weaken governments' control over border entries, nation states try to implement policies depending on the relative power of different interests, economic forecasting, national identity, and security (Hagen-Zanker 2008).

### **3.3.2 Micro and meso level migration theories**

On the micro level of individual decision-making, Lee (1966) has proposed the push-pull framework of positive and negative factors for migration decisions. The neoclassical theory, on this level, is referred to as the human capital approach in which individual migrants seemingly make a rational cost-benefit calculation determined by demographic characteristics such as age, gender, skills, marital status and occupation, as well as by individual preferences and

expectations (Sjaastad 1962). While this concept can help us understand individual decision-making, it ignores more structural factors and assumes rational decision-making. In order to address the question why certain people migrate and others do not, one must go beyond push and pull factors, which do matter but are not sufficient as explanations, and recognise that

‘each migration flow is produced by specific conditions in time and place’  
(Sassen 2007: 132).

Moving beyond individual decision-making to the meso level, the new economics of migration theory describes migration as the decision of a household or family to improve their common situation by maximising common income and status and minimising risks (Stark and Bloom 1985). In this context, it has been pointed out that the household cannot be seen as a homogenous decision making body, but one influenced by internal power structures. The family structure and power relations within families can therefore be decisive for women’s migration decisions in particular (Morokvasić 1984; Kofman *et al.* 2000).

The perpetuation of migration (Massey 1990) is shaped by other aspects – such as social capital, social networks, migration institutions, cumulative causation, and circular migration. Addressing the meso level of migration, Faist (2000) points to the importance of social capital (Bourdieu 1984). Migrant networks make access to information easier for those following pioneer migrants. These networks develop institutionalised rules and norms that reduce migration costs and organise practical help, but can also pose a threat of limitation to potential migrants, possibly keeping them in a separate social setting or limiting them to specific areas and work sectors (Goss and Lindquist 1995; Guilmoto and Sandron 2001). In researching the influence of non-migrant networks on migrant labour market opportunities, Raghuram *et al.* (2010) illustrate that it is not only migrant networks that have an impact on the migration experience. Network theory helps to understand why migration patterns are uneven between countries and can form migration regimes, and illustrates the importance of an already existing diaspora or network for the migration decision (Faist 2000; Vertovec 2001). Related to network theory, migration systems theory goes beyond

personal relations and suggests that migration restructures the social, cultural, economic and institutional conditions in sending and receiving countries (see above; Mabogunje 1980). Cumulative causation of migration explains, on the meso level, how migration has sustained itself and become more common by changing the socio-economic context (Massey 1990). Factors such as networks, a culture of migration, a distorted distribution of human capital, and the stigmatisation of migrant jobs contribute to this dynamic (Massey 1999). Unfortunately, this theory does not offer insights into why migration systems – defined as a set of places linked by flows and counter-flows of people, goods and information facilitating further migration – can decline over time (de Haas 2008). For this thesis, however, the insights provided by network theory, migration systems theory and cumulative causation are promising in helping the analysis of the experiences of Polish migrants in the UK.

These newer concepts of migration have been further developed in the theory of transnational migration, which does not so much try to explain why migration occurs, but rather describes how migrants exist in transnational social spaces, with transnationality constituting a fluid social identity (Pries 2001; Portes 2001; Faist 2000; Bradatan *et al.* 2010). In this context, immigrants are not seen as uprooted, but rather as transmigrants who are becoming rooted in the receiving country while maintaining multiple linkages to their home countries. In consequence of the transnational approach, the nation-state perspective can be overcome, supporting an understanding of migration in the enlarged EU (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995).

This précis has aimed at delivering the central ideas of migration theories on the micro and meso levels. Relevant variables here are income differentials, risks, power, and prestige, as well as personal goals and values. Individual and household characteristics can also help explain why certain people migrate and others do not. In countries with high levels of inequality, relative deprivation can increase the migration likelihood, and this deprivation can also be understood in the context of the EU, which consists of countries with different standards of living. Other factors on the meso level that encourage migration are migration networks and established migration institutions.

### **3.3.3 Theoretical and methodological debates in migration research**

The main differences between migration theories arise in their various approaches to agency and contextualisation (de Haas 2008). These frameworks have been criticised – the neoclassical theory of individual decision-making for its tendency to make unrealistic assumptions, such as full employment in the case of unconstrained free market mechanisms, and for being a-historical and de-contextualised; and those which focus on structural factors for picturing individuals as passively affected by structural conditions without a will or an agency of their own (Kurekova 2011: 12). In order to do justice to the complexity of migration, all levels of analysis – micro, meso and macro – have to be taken into account. Research on migration tends to apply established theoretical approaches, while theory development has been neglected (Kurekova 2011: 13). In recent years, migration scholars have sought to overcome weaknesses in migration theories via interdisciplinary cooperation and the bringing together of different migration theories (Massey 1999):

‘...[A]cross all theories I conclude that a satisfactory theoretical account of international migration must contain at least four elements: a treatment of the structural forces that promote emigration from developing countries, a characterization of the structural forces that attract immigrants into developed nations, a consideration of the motivations, goals and aspirations of the people who respond to these structural forces by becoming international migrants; and a treatment of the social and economic structures that arise to connect areas of out- and in-migration.’ (Massey 1999: 50)

In order to bring together the various socio-spatial levels while incorporating agency and structure and remaining historical and dynamic, Collinson (2009) suggested combining the approach of livelihoods – also used by White (2011) in her research on Polish families in the UK – with a political economy approach. In relation to post-accession East-West migration, Kurekova (2011: 18) points out that most research has approached the phenomenon with a neoclassical framework, neglecting newer theoretical approaches:

‘the specificities of Central and Eastern Europe have been overlooked. Yet the experience of political, economic and social change brought about by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the accession of CEE countries to the EU are contextual factors that make the analysis of migration in the region a fruitful area for research’ (Kurekova 2011: 18).

An oversimplified neoclassical approach can neither explain the migration dynamics of Central and Eastern European countries with similar standards of living; nor does it account for geographical proximity, a network effect, or the influence of recruitment and temporary employment agencies.

As Castles (2012) states in discussing the tasks of social sciences, this:

‘is particularly important for migration research: it is indeed important to carry out micro-level studies of specific migratory experiences, but they should always be embedded in an understanding of the macro-level structural factors that shape human mobility in a specific historical situation’ (Castles 2012: 8).

The opposition between positivists and constructivists has influenced past methods of researching migration: while positivists searched for objective truths through collecting statistical data sets, constructivists would stress the complexity of social situations, looking for the social meaning through interviews, case studies and observations. These positions can sometimes seem as one-sided as the migration theories discussed above, focusing only on micro or macro levels; therefore Castles (2012) argues that

‘the social scientist needs to find out both what actually happens in society – that is, what are the forms of social behaviour, practices, customs and institutions – and why and how it happens.’ (Castles 2012: 13)

Castles (2012) argues for migration theory to be historically and culturally situated as well as related to structure and action, instead of trying to formulate a general theory of migration, which would be too abstract to support any understanding of migratory processes. Regarding methodology, he argues for a holistic approach, including specific migration experiences and broader societal changes.

‘It is in any case vital to investigate the ‘human agency’ of migrants and of sending and receiving communities, and the way this agency interacts with macro-social organizations and institutions.’ (Castles 2012: 22)

A similar weakness in conceptualising agency and structure has also been detected in research on post-socialist workers (Mrozowicki 2010). While the sociology of post-socialism pictures workers as victims of systemic change (Meardi 2000), and culturalist working-class studies focus on the class habitus (Savage 2001), there is also an effort to analyse the relation between the structured dimension of action (Bourdieu 1984) and its reflexive dimension from a critical realist perspective (Archer 2003). As Lamont (2000) has concluded from researching American and French working-class men, agency is linked to the different structured contexts of people’s lives while, at the same time, a positive life project is present. In migration research, Iosifides (2011) has suggested the value of a critical realist approach to qualitative migration research in order to

‘investigate simultaneously structural causalities and individual responses and meanings and thus to avoid purely objectivist or subjectivist explanations’ (Iosifides 2003: 443).

Iosifides (2011) criticises migration theories on the micro level and meso level – such as neoclassical economics, the dual labour market theory and the new economics of migration – for their assumption of a utility-maximising rationality, their generalisation of the rationality of the economic man, and their positivist negligence of context. He argues for an understanding of migration causes as

‘consisting of powers, liabilities, potentialities and tendencies characterising social agents, entities and emergent social/cultural properties’ (Iosifides 2011: 98).

A consolidation of the paradigmatic divide in migration theories was suggested by de Haas (2014) with the migration aspirations and capabilities framework, in which migration is conceptualised as an intrinsic part of broader processes which can still be understood with macro level theories without being top-down deterministic. This helps to conceptualise voluntary and involuntary moving and staying as sides of the same migratory agency (de Haas 2014). For this thesis, the

insights of migration theories on all analytical levels become relevant to the task of investigating the experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK. However, the call for contextualised research which takes into account the migrants' perspectives described here builds the foundation for this thesis' approach of combining a grounded theory methodology with biographical narrative interviews. This will be discussed in depth in the next chapter on methodology.

### **3.4 The feminisation of migration**

The debate on how to conceptualise the relationship of structure and agency can also be found in research on gender and migration and the discussions around the feminisation of migration (Moch 2005). Whereas gender studies are situated in an interdisciplinary research context, there have been

‘sociological studies of gender and migration, which include analyses of national data sets on country of origin, global studies linking micro and macro causes of migration, national-level studies of immigrant groups, and refined case studies of immigrant groups in a single locale’ (Moch 2005: 95).

Structuralist approaches concentrate on immigrant women in the workforce; generally in the informal and secondary sector, where they are the ‘underdog in the world capitalist system’ (Moch 2005: 97) and find themselves forced by patriarchy into the most disadvantaged positions (Anderson 2000; Morokvasić 1984). Other studies have investigated immigrant women as actors with different forms of agency in families or communities. Although many migration movements exhibit women not just as the followers of men as wives or sweethearts, Kofman *et al.* (2000) found the diversity of the female experience to have been neglected. Mobility has the potential to impact on the position of women in society (Morokvasić 1984). The dichotomy of the structuralist perspective of gendered workings of the migration process and a post-structuralist focus on subjective experiences is still dominant (Moch 2005: 100). In applying the structuration theory by Giddens (1984) to this problem, Moch (2005: 100) proposes that post-structural insights into the construction of

immigrant women, as well as an awareness of the immigrant position in economic and social structures, can be achieved; thereby collapsing the distinction between agency and structure. Incorporating a gendered perspective in migration research enhances and intensifies the analysis of movement and its consequences (Moch 2005). In order to fully comprehend migration experiences, a gendered approach is necessary; as migration is experienced differently by men and women, potentially altering gender relations or strengthening traditional inequalities.

Adapting a transnational approach, women were conceptualised as agents of change in their countries of origin; having stronger ties than men to their home countries leading to high remittances, but also a higher level of participation in receiving communities (Kofman 2004). Research on mobility has found that migration has become a life-style and a strategy for gaining social status for some women in Europe (Ignatowicz 2012). This appears to be overly optimistic, however, when looking at the development of transnational care chains (Lutz 2007) and the main sectors in which immigrant women find employment, since these often reproduce traditional gender relations, with the intersection of class and ethnicity. Various forms of intersecting inequalities related to being a migrant, a woman and an ethnic minority have been detected (McCall 2005). The concept of intersectionality is originally rooted in criticism of white middle-class feminism and was first framed by Crenshaw in 1989, introducing the concept of multiple inequalities at a crossroads where gender, race and class intersect (Crenshaw 2004). There are different approaches on categories of oppression: the anti-categorical perspective aims at deconstructing differences, the intra-categorical view examines differences within one category of inequality, and the inter-categorical standpoint looks at the relationship between categories (McCall 2005). Researching intersectionality is a complex and methodologically difficult matter. Winker and Degele (2009) propose an analysis on multiple levels, differentiating between the macro and meso level of social structures including organisations and institutions and the micro level of identity construction and representation through cultural symbols. Intersectionality provides crucial insights into the development of complex and overlapping experiences of inequalities pertinent to this research. However, the chosen approach of combining a grounded theory

methodology and biographical narrative interviews has led to a different way of investigating the research questions. In its implementation this was not combined with an intersectional approach due to its complexity and the perceived necessity to, if chosen, follow it as the main guiding concept. Therefore, the research project benefits from the intersectional perspective on inequalities through analysing experiences shaped by gender, class and migration, while not pursuing the analysis of intersectionality as a research aim.

### **3.4.1 The feminisation of the labour market**

The feminisation of the labour market is the context within which migrant women seek work and combine their reproductive and gainful work (Standing 1989; Aufhauser 2000). The continued segmentation of the labour market and the occupational segregation between men and women in the UK were discussed by Bradley and Healy (2008), who connected them to ethnic minorities and migrants. Holloway (2005) looks at women's work since the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Britain, which remains relevant for women's position in the labour market today. While throughout history women were understood to carry domestic responsibilities in reproductive work, this societal position has always been affected by class, race and ethnicity. While the extent to which women carry the double burden of domestic and paid work has changed over time, it has inspired protective legislation. The introduction of part-time employment impacted on women's already subordinate status in the workplace with regards to income and promotion opportunities. This development was challenged during the 1970s with calls for wages for housework, demands for nurseries and the movement for equal pay; but these still accepted the implicit responsibility of women for this work. Holloway (2005) describes how, with traditional male structures of employment eroding, some younger couples are pursuing equal domestic responsibilities.

Since the 1840s, women's participation in the workforce has been changing, promoting the initiation of public debates on women's work and leading to legislation on the subject (Roberts 1988). Women of this period, however, were still generally engaged in reproductive work, which was perceived as having no

economic value. This ultimately transferred into the labour market, where 'women's work' was socially and economically less rewarded; this resulted in a gender hierarchy of the labour market. While women had always worked, the appearance of wage-earning working women caused controversy, and led to the defamation, particularly of wives and mothers, as immoral and inadequate, in the context of the ideal of a family wage earned by the male breadwinner. These objections were often related to the location of the work undertaken; when paid work was undertaken in the female, private sphere, it caused less concern (Roberts 1988).

The ideology of separate spheres contributed to occupational segregation. The previous assumption that women do not have to earn as much as male family breadwinners and that their occupational activity is temporary has led to the existence of specifically female low-paid jobs with a lack of career structure. While it is now apparent that women do not give up on employment when they marry, they still earn less. Specific feminised features, such as caring and empathy, were attributed to female workers and thereby enabled occupational segregation. The idea of having to invest and show feelings at work and trying to evoke feelings in others was termed emotional labour (Hochschild 2003) – a phenomenon largely experienced by women. While in the UK women during the two World Wars took over many formerly male spheres, they were expected to return to their responsibilities after the war. Despite the Equal Pay Act of 1970, employers found it easy to argue that women did not have to earn the same as men when they were carrying out different forms of work. Holloway (2005) refers to male domination as present in the various social structures that lead to gendered work:

'patriarchal production relations in the household; patriarchal relations in paid labour; the state; male violence against women; patriarchal sexual relations and patriarchal cultural institutions.' (Holloway 2005: 222)

The rise in women's employment has various possible explanations, such as the growing service sector and declining manufacturing sector since the 1960s, or the potential impact of new legislation. Following the Equal Pay Act of 1970, the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act promoted equality of opportunities for men and women, and in the same years the Employment Protection Act prohibited the

firing of women because of pregnancy and introduced maternity provisions (ONS 2013).

King Dejardin (2009) also outlines the necessity of considering the interdependence of paid work and unpaid reproductive work in the research on globalisation and governance. The contemporary international division of labour, as described in the context of globalisation, is shaped by gendered ideologies. The global model of 'feminine labour' is defined by the specificities of femininity, such as passivity, dependency and malleability (Taylor 2011).

### **3.4.2 Social construction of Polish women**

In order to understand the specific social construction of Polish women, it is crucial to recognise the interconnectedness of gender relations and the history of Poland (Aziz 2015). Emerging from the tragic experiences of the Second World War, the new socialist rule was seen as externally imposed by groups of Polish society, which continued the dichotomy of 'us' against 'them' and blocked the internalisation of the socialist ideal of gender equality. Progressive legislation on work, safety, family, health care and maternity supporting women was implemented, yet the application in practice of this 'revolution from the top' was limited, especially in the countryside (Pine 1993). In its place, traditional convictions of gender roles persevered, merging the archetype of the self-sacrificing Mother Pole *Matka Polka* with behaviours of the Polish aristocratic times which portrayed men as knights and women as ladies. In the aristocratic 'soft patriarchy' women were appreciated and treated in a 'gentlemanly' manner, while simultaneously subordinated and assigned to the private, female domain; away from the public, male domain. In the times of the partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793 and 1795, during which an independent Polish state did not exist until 1918, the family and the church remained the sole spaces for creating and upholding a Polish national consciousness despite foreign rule, which led to the function of the self-sacrificing *Matka Polka* as also political. This meant that women on the one hand maintained the national identity within the household and on the other hand efficiently resumed all other necessary duties so that the men were free to fight for national independence (Janion 1996). As a

consequence of Polish independence in 1918 such gender solidarity in a struggle against the ‘other’ resulted in the recognition of the women’s role through affording them the right to vote without them having to struggle for it; through this interwar phase, women furthermore partook actively in higher education. During Polish national independence, it appeared that the progression of the emancipation of women continued and the archetype of the *Matka Polka* was less potent than in later periods, when Polish men and women were again confronted with a shared enemy (Pickhan 2006). At the time of socialist rule, gender equality was propagated and the discrimination of women formally was refuted. The system afforded the care-work for children and consequently proclaimed women to be free to work ignoring reproductive work in the household. In many families both parents needed to work in order to sustain a household, resulting in co-dependency; which, in combination with additional economic difficulties such as shortages in housing, shortfalls in supplies, and poverty, aggravated the situation of women (Petrowa-Wasilewicz 2006). The promoted emancipation of women ‘from above’ throughout socialist times crumpled alongside the collapse of the socialist regime in face of a lack of effective, powerful organisations able to prevent the closing of kindergartens and the introduction of a law restricting abortions. In collective memory, women’s roles during the uprisings and demonstrations of *Solidarność* were merely supportive. Although they were even publicly asked not to disturb the men during their struggle, research established that women were able to irritate the authorities even more than the oppositional male actors (Graff 2006; Penn 2005). Following transformation in 1989/1990, the unemployment rate of women rose, their wages decreased, and it took them longer to find new positions, routinely fielding questions about their personal life plans during job interviews (Petrowa-Wasilewicz 2006). Alongside and connected to the changing nature of work the transition period also changed gender constructions and inequality (Pine 2002). It has been suggested that the backlash against women’s equality after 1989 was connected to the perception that economic and workplace rights were not specifically women’s rights. The idea of women’s rights being rooted in socialist ideology led to their rejection, but the extreme economic liberalisation and the focus on fiscal arguments also weakened them. The closing of kindergartens and the referral of care duties back to women aimed at saving money and besides

unemployment resulted in women exiting the labour market. The discontent of women with these developments led to the foundation of various NGOs. In recent years, the women's movement was confronted with media debates and public attacks by Polish priests and some politicians, who argued against the proclaimed dangers of gender ideology (Fuszara 2014).

### **3.5 East-West migration**

When researching Polish migration to the UK, the broader context of East-West migration needs to be taken into account. In this section the main literature and concepts on this migration and its recent history, as well as the EU enlargement and its consequences are reviewed in order to situate the specific research topic in this setting. While the number of migrants expected in the UK was overestimated after 1989, it was underestimated after 2004, mainly because the estimations were made with the presumption that Germany would also open up its labour market and experience the largest inflow (Engbersen *et al.* 2010). The debates prior to enlargement were fearful of the effect of East-West migration on national labour markets and economies, Favell (2008) argues that Europe has likely benefited from this mobility. Rising mobility interacts with economic and social processes and debates on inequality, demography, unemployment and globalisation (Galgóczy *et al.* 2009).

While post-enlargement 'intra-EU migration or cross-border labour mobility' (Galgóczy *et al.* 2009: 2) describes the phenomenon of movement within the EU after the accession of the A8 countries in 2004 (Treaty of Accession to the European Union, Official Journal L 236 of 23.09.2003), there had been labour flows prior to the enlargement such as East-West migration as well as South-North migration within the EU following the Schengen treaty and irregular or regular labour flows from outside the EU. In this temporal context, Biswas and McHardy (2004) conclude that the opening of labour markets through the Schengen treaty for EU 15 nationals has led to a balanced intra-European migration from 1995 onwards, and they suggest that, under the precondition of rapid development in the A8 countries, the intra-European migration from 2004

onwards might be balanced as well after an initial sharp rise. Other research on intra-European migration (Verwiebe 2008) before enlargement has shown that these migration patterns vary greatly in terms of class, education and work experience, and that it has become more of a middle-class phenomenon. Applying the neoclassical theory of migration, high numbers of migrants were expected following the transition of 1989 because of the differences in affluence in Eastern and Western Europe (Engbersen *et al.* 2010). This movement proved to be overestimated, mainly because of the restrictive immigration policies that were implemented in Western Europe to protect local labour markets (Engbersen *et al.* 2010: 8). Therefore, there were limited opportunities for regular labour migration in the 1990s, but an uncertain yet significant amount of irregular migration occurred (Galgóczy *et al.* 2009; Engbersen *et al.* 2010). This irregular migration in the early 1990s was not homogenous, but rather influenced by economic differences and political conditions in Central and Eastern European countries. The major change for these countries in the post-socialist transition period was described by Engbersen *et al.* (2010: 8) as

‘the increased intensity and continuity of population movements, accompanied by increasing diversity of the form of these movements and their geographical directions, as well as a greater complexity of factors underlying migration.’

Some Western countries started to apply specific programmes that legalised temporary migration or seasonal work. Over time migrant networks grew, transnational communities expanded, and migrants collected experiences which informed them in finding opportunities, as Engbersen *et al.* (2010) point out. In the context of Polish migration to the UK, a more liberal mobility regime was implemented, as discussed in chapter two (Düvell and Garapich 2011). The accession was preceded by political and academic debates in the EU-15 countries

‘about likely immigration flows and whether countries should immediately open up their labour markets fully, permitting unhindered labour mobility, or whether existing restrictions should be maintained for the foreseen transitional periods. These debates took place against the background of a discussion about the role of migrant labour in advanced economies and societies, in some cases rising populism and xenophobia, and, at least in some countries, still high unemployment. Dire warnings were issued

concerning a possible influx of job-seekers – and so-called ‘welfare scroungers’ – and there was considerable uncertainty among large sections of the population already worried about the impact of globalisation and the relocation of workplaces abroad.’ (Galgóczy *et al.* 2009: 1-2).

Following these controversial debates about enlargement, the EU-15 implemented different transitional systems for opening up their labour markets to citizens of the new member states. The different systems had various consequences for the concerned states, which did not always reflect the country’s intended strategy. While seven member states implemented restrictive immigration policies in order to block access to the labour market, four countries used restrictive transitional measures that allowed a certain quota of migrants. The UK and Ireland opened up their markets with certain requirements, such as a registration for work and residence or work permits. Sweden was the only EU member state to open its labour market fully to the new EU citizens. For this research, the transitional measures of the UK are of special interest: while citizens of Malta and Cyprus were granted full free movement rights as well as the right to work, citizens from the A8 countries were required to register with the WRS and had restricted access to welfare benefits. While these measures were mainly set up for new immigrants, the enlargement provided a de-facto amnesty for workers from Central and Eastern European countries who had been working in the UK prior to enlargement (Drinkwater *et al.* 2006: 5). In the view of Anderson *et al.* (2006) this change of status of migrant workers, who as prior undocumented workers received an amnesty as well as the freedom to change employer and sector, was an important change for East-West migration through enlargement. In exploring this relation between immigration status and employment, Anderson *et al.* (2006) introduce the notion of compliance, which defined Polish migrants in the UK as transforming from formerly either non-compliant or semi-compliant to compliant through the accession of Poland and the opening up of the UK labour market.

The new migration system in Europe encouraged research on the ‘human face’ of migration (Keeley 2009); which in Favell’s (2008) perception cannot be conceptualised by the post-colonial, guest worker, and asylum models used to explain migration in the past, but should be framed because of its transnational

character by the largest body of migration theory and research, which emerged from the Mexico-to-USA migration scenario. The notion of a culture of migration, which means a growing participation in migratory movements in a society, drawn from this research context suits the current phenomenon of post-accession East-West migration. Furthermore, the strong sense of exclusion and exploitation is paralleled, with Favell (2008) describing the ‘new Europeans’ as being

‘in danger of becoming a new Victorian servant class for a West European aristocracy of creative-class professionals and university-educated working mums.’ (Favell 2008: 711)

European citizenship offers female Polish migrant workers in the UK significant opportunities in some spheres, but it also exhibits some shortcomings. The following analysis of empirical data shows how European citizenship was supportive in the context of regularisation, access to legal employment, professional progression and mobility. At the same time, it could not facilitate occupational mobility, with most female Polish migrants starting out in low-paid employment and not being able to have their Polish educational qualifications recognised in practice. While mobility in the context of European citizenship liberated some women, others were unable to make full use of their opportunities due to their familial obligations. The main benefit offered by European citizenship is the freedom of movement; however, this concept has an implicit inclusion-exclusion dynamic on the basis of the gendered division of work (Askola 2012).

Ciupijus (2011) also acknowledges the shortcomings of post-national citizenship in capitalist societies in Europe, demonstrated, for example, by the downward occupational mobility of Central and Eastern European migrants. Freedom of movement is understood by Ciupijus (2011) to be democratic and egalitarian, but excluding of third-country nationals and further restricting their access. This difference in legal status also seems to be crucial to the performance of migrants. While EU nationals reach high levels of employment and exhibit low unemployment, the opposite is to be found in the case of third country nationals (Münz 2008). The change in the nature of the labour migration process which

results from EU citizenship is described by Ciupijus (2011) as de-nationalisation, in which the control over mobility is transferred from nation states to the EU, and citizens benefit from civil, political and social rights in other EU member states. Labour migration, in this context, is viewed by Ciupijus (2011) as an exercise of the right of freedom of movement. In analysing the mobility-enclosure dialectic in the context of intra-European migration from the UK to Spain, which describes the contradictions between the freedom of movement and the reassertion of the nation state, an ambiguous status in the host society and migrant's ambivalent attitudes, O'Reilly (2007) detects the danger of constrained adaptation leading to marginalisation.

The economic crisis further transformed the context of East-West migration, as receiving and sending countries were differently affected. In the context of research on Polish migration to the UK, it is important to note that the emigration numbers from Poland to the UK declined from 2008 to 2009 by a considerable 47 per cent (Kaczmarczyk 2011: 22). Although there has been return, particularly of Polish migrants from the UK and Ireland, in addition to fewer immigrants after the economic crisis (Galgóczy *et al.* 2012), this can neither be taken as end of East-West migration nor of the mobility of these persons. Restrictions in other EU member states ceased around the same time, and research suggests on-going mobility. The consequences of the financial and economic crisis have been different throughout the EU as well as as their effects on migration (Fix *et al.* 2009). The simplistic assumption that migrants would return when experiencing difficult times was found to be misleading in research on Polish migrants in Ireland (Krings *et al.* 2009). The situation concerning the large influx of Central and Eastern European migrants, as well as the extent of the economic crisis is comparable in Ireland and the UK. While freedom of movement and the operational temporary and circular migration systems provided opportunities for individuals to move on, Krings *et al.* (2009) discovered that many Polish migrants intended to stay, explaining this decision with the fact that the majority had stayed in employment, that there were welfare state measures for those who lost their jobs, and that existing social networks could maintain the migration practice fairly independent from the economic decline. This again illustrates that it is not only economic considerations that play a role in migration decisions. As

Engbersen *et al.* (2010) put it, it is almost impossible to predict anything in this context, due to migration patterns such as circulation, incomplete or liquid migration, mobility, and a ‘lasting temporariness’. Favell (2008) also prefers to label the new Europeans as free movers rather than as immigrants, parallel to the policy approach of the EU promoting the notion of the European citizen.

Through studying the migration in the enlarged EU, Kahanec and Zimmermann (2009) conclude

‘that (i) EU enlargement had a significant impact on migration flows from new to old member states, (ii) restrictions applied in some of the countries did not stop migrants from coming but changed the composition of the immigrants, (iii) any negative effects in the labour market on wages or employment are hard to detect, (iv) post-enlargement migration contributes to growth prospects of the EU, (v) these immigrants are strongly attached to the labour market, and (vi) they are quite unlikely to be among welfare recipients.’ (Kahanec and Zimmermann 2009: 1)

Although the context of the EU and its legal consequences have a major impact on East-West migration, Ciupijus (2011) describes it as a privatised migration regime shaped mainly by market forces and by migrants’ agency. Favell (2008) also points out how little control governments and the EU have over migration and the globalising international labour market.

When addressing post-accession East-West migration, it should not be conceptualised as a homogenous movement: while there are commonalities, certain country differences are noticeable (Kurekova 2011). In researching the motivations and experiences of A8 migrants in England, Cook *et al.* (2011) summarise three major differences in this group:

‘first, the motivations and forms of movement undertaken; second, their experiences of work within the UK paid labour market; and third, the extent to which the act and experience of migration offers new individual and collective opportunities and potentially opens up spaces for people to negotiate structural constraints and reconfigure aspects of their identity’ (Cook *et al.* 2011: 54).

Concerning the migration of Central and Eastern Europeans, scholars have ascertained that there is a noticeable waste of human capital, since highly educated migrants often work in low-pay, low-status jobs (Galgóczy *et al.* 2012: 7). While the majority of A8 migrants worked in low-paid, low-skilled jobs, some Polish migrants benefited from their English language abilities and in the early stages of their migration might have used the supporting network of Poles established after the Second World War or achieved better conditions through their own agency (Cook *et al.* 2011). Furthermore, Cook *et al.* (2011) illustrate additional advantages of migration to the UK.

‘For some Polish women their new life abroad had opened up the space for them to critically review their own attitudes and beliefs. [...] Gender and ethnicity remain important factors in the lives of A8 migrants. The act and experience of migration offers new individual and collective opportunities and potentially opens up spaces for people to negotiate structural constraints and reconfigure aspects of their identity’ (Cook *et al.* 2011: 73).

Therefore, the context of East-West migration and the new migration system in Europe characterised by free moving European citizens provides insightful conditions for research on the female migrant experience.

### **3.6 Polish migration to the UK**

As outlined above, the context of East-West migration is important to understanding the background and specificities of Polish migration to the UK. This section of the literature review now analyses findings on Polish migrants following accession; their demographic characteristics, migrant typologies, and motivations for migration; their employment structure and trade union activities; as well as their migration experiences. Migration from Poland to the UK

‘has proved to be of interest across a wide range of academic disciplines, has been a topic of great concern to local authorities across the UK and has loomed large in general public and media debates about immigration’ (Burrell 2010: 297).

Recent studies<sup>2</sup> revolve around key themes of academic migration research such as staying, returning, working and living (Burrell 2010), which are also central interests of this thesis alongside its focus on women.

As outlined in the section of the literature review on migration theories, migration networks and transnational practices and identities have been identified as important for Polish migrants in the UK (Düvell and Garapich 2011). The relevance of migration networks has also been researched on a quantitative level while trying to characterise Polish migration to the UK. Sumption (2009) studied the social networks that channelled workers into jobs, can make access to work faster and more efficient for migrants. Her hypothesis expected social stratification from migrants' use of networks, which would lead to poor integration and the 'locking in' (Sumption 2009: 5) of Polish migrant workers to low-skilled jobs despite high education levels experiencing a downward social mobility that may make them more vulnerable to changes in employment levels and wages. By analysing LFS data, although this data set is likely to under-represent migrant workers, especially for those that lived in public or non-profit communal or business accommodation, an increase in the use of informal networks in job searches between 2004 and 2007 was detected (Sumption 2009: 13). While differences based on gender, length of stay in the UK, education, age and marital status, and the year the job was obtained were described by Sumption (2009), it was not possible to draw a direct connection between Polish migrant workers using informal networks to obtain jobs and their social stratification.

When addressing the question of migration motivations, migration scholars try to categorise different motivational structures. Düvell and Garapich (2011) identify five different types of Polish migrants: 'storks' or 'people on the swing', who engage in temporary migration, are return oriented and make up around 12-15 per cent; 'hamsters' or 'target earners', who accumulate money for a certain

---

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Anne White has established the 'Polish Migration Website,' bringing together scholars who are currently or have been recently researching Polish migration. This website links research undertaken in the UK and some other Western European countries with relevant research and information on the academic discourse in Poland. (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/people/anne-white/ssees/research/polish-migration>; accessed 17 January 2018).

reason and then return, and make up roughly 12-20 per cent of migrants; ‘stayers’ who make up around a fifth of contemporary Polish migrants; ‘on-migrants’ have come to the UK as their first migration destination but intend to go on to another country; and ‘nomads,’ would have already been abroad prior to their stay in the UK and also plan on moving on. Around 40 per cent of arrivals surveyed in Düvell and Garapich’s research intended to stay for a short period of time and indeed return rates were around 40-50 per cent (Düvell and Garapich 2011). A substantial proportion, around 27-43 per cent, deliberately did not try to make up their minds about a possible return and simply stated that they did not know, a phenomenon that has been framed as ‘intentional unpredictability’ by Eade *et al.* (2006: 9). Düvell and Garapich (2011) conclude that while the Polish migrants’ perception of their migration situation tends to be positive, they have mostly adapted to the modern capitalist world, which has negative consequences such as an inability to progress professionally, a lack of long-term financial and social stability, and in the worst cases family breakdowns, homelessness, low pay, and a lack of employment rights. After the economic downturn it might have made more sense for ‘storks’ and ‘hamsters’ to choose other locations, and there was indeed a notable decrease in inflow and increase in outflow; yet family circumstances and children’s education were crucial considerations in the decision to stay in the UK (White 2011). Eade *et al.* (2006: 8-9) researched Polish migrants in London in 2006 and established different migrant typologies, drawing up four types in contrast to Düvell and Garapich (2011): the ‘storks’, the ‘hamsters’, the ‘stayers’ and the ‘searchers’. The ‘searchers’ are characterised by ‘intentional unpredictability,’ and were the biggest group in their research – making up 42 per cent of respondents. Half of the researched migrants stated that their migration has led to a social promotion, while about 14 per cent perceived their status to be the same, and another 14 per cent reported downward social mobility. In the Polish version of the research paper, the ‘stayers’ are translated as *lososie*, which means salmon. The difference between the terminologies used in the two languages can lead to a misperception of their concept. In the Polish context, the *lososie* are understood as migrants who want to climb the social ladder; they either do this within British society or accumulate human capital in the UK in order to obtain a higher social status when they return. In the English paper the ‘stayers’ are described as wanting to reside in the UK, because they

saw the possibility to heighten their status; they still kept the return decision open, but as an option for when they were older. In the description of the group there are, of course, no distinctions; but labelling this migrant type with an alternative name may lead to a different focus of understanding.

In order to understand the experiences of Polish migrants shortly after the accession of Poland to the EU, the data established by other studies are of interest. Some studies concerning the employment structure of Polish migrants in the UK have found dissatisfaction among migrants with the nature of their work (Eade *et al.* 2006; Anderson *et al.* 2006). Polish migrants had mainly found employment in low-paid jobs and had not been able to utilise their higher education and experience (Eade *et al.* 2007). Despite this, Polish migrants had the highest overall employment rate of all post-accession migrants in the UK (Drinkwater *et al.* 2006). Information from the WRS in 2006 showed that post-accession Polish migrants worked mostly in the hospitality sector; including retail, hotels and catering (Drinkwater *et al.* 2006). Around three-quarters of Polish migrants were working in semi-routine and routine jobs, and they were less represented in professional/managerial jobs than other European migrants. The research of Anderson *et al.* (2006) has also found that

‘a significant share – but not all – of the respondents were working in occupations defined as requiring a relatively low level of skill. In hospitality, two-thirds of respondents were working in elementary occupations and about 12 per cent in skilled trades occupations including especially kitchen chefs. In agriculture, the corresponding shares were 62 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively. The highest proportion of skilled trades respondents was in construction where almost two-thirds were employed in skilled trades occupations (including carpenters as the biggest group), and a quarter of the respondents worked in elementary occupations’ (Anderson *et al.* 2006: 27).

Class distinctions can have an ambivalent role in the outlook of Polish migrants. On the one hand it determines how migrants value the quality of their work, manifesting in an experienced downward mobility; on the other hand, however, many Polish migrants view their jobs as a temporary means for earning a living

(Eade *et al.* 2007). Therefore, they might belong to the working class in terms of their employment and social status, but perceive themselves as belonging to the middle class on the basis of their education and human capital. Eade *et al.* (2006) term this an economic trade off – in which lower-status but more profitable work in the UK is willingly taken on instead of higher-status, low-earning jobs in Poland. The idea of a class heterogeneity of Polish migrants in the UK, who are divided by class but connected by work, inspired Trevena (2011) to investigate how prestigious university graduates from Poland cope with the assigned class position of their work in the UK, which is below their level of qualification. Herein, lifestyle orientations and shared values became the defining point of class belonging, and migrants identify either with the intelligentsia of the Polish social stratification system or with the ‘impoverished’ or ‘prospective’ middle class of the UK. As Anderson *et al.* (2006) point out, low-paid jobs were often the only choice for migrants experiencing language barriers.

‘The mismatch between some respondents’ qualifications and the skills required to carry out their jobs in the UK is, at least in part, likely to be a reflection of their immigration status’ (Anderson *et al.* 2006: 37).

Relevant aspects of this migration phenomenon included the characteristics, attitudes, and policy responses of governments and ‘social partners’ – employers and trade unions – to this mobility. The European Trade Union Confederation called on the European Commission to develop an EU-wide supportive legal framework, with minimum standards, clear principles of equal treatment in wages and working conditions, and control of working conditions and labour standards maintained through cross-border monitoring (Galgóczi *et al.* 2009: 7). Due to the high number of migrants the UK’s government and social partners have put in place services for migrant workers; and the government has strengthened control mechanisms to prevent illegal employment and exploitation of workers. Cooperation between social partners and the government is rare in the UK, but in the case of post-accession migration, the government, unions, and employers worked together in formal consultations for common solutions (Galgóczi *et al.* 2009: 22). Trade unions sometimes cooperated with partners in Poland or with employers, and set up advisory services, providing advocacy beyond working conditions and training measures for language, in a bid to win

members. In recent research, it was established that there are specific difficulties in organising transnational migrants, as the experiences of the European Migrant Workers Union have shown (Greer *et al.* 2013).

‘That’s a problem they face ... they cannot express themselves very well and other workers just whinge and whine and complain about them and sometimes you look and you think what are they actually complaining about, there isn’t anything?’ (Moore 2011: 127)

This statement was given to Moore (2011) by a trade union activist who was concerned about the unfair treatment faced by her Eastern European colleagues, which was partly based on language barriers. Trade unions face the challenges of changing employment throughout Europe against the background of a general downward trend in union membership (McKay 2008: 3). Mobile Central and Eastern Europeans now have a greater freedom of movement, but are generally met with worse working conditions (Ciupijus 2011: 547). These developments pose a major challenge to trade union organising (Ryan 2005). Some research has been undertaken on the approaches to and difficulties of organising the biggest group of Polish migrant workers within this migration (Fitzgerald and Hardy 2010; Fitzgerald 2012; Hardy and Clark 2007). Besides the broader employment situation of low-pay, poorly organised workplaces (Hardy and Clark 2007: 125) and short-term contracts, other difficulties occur in organising this group, such as the legacy of trade unions in the home country (Moore and Watson 2009: 7) and the time it takes to build trust (Fitzgerald and Hardy 2010: 139) as well as troubles sustaining their engagement (Fitzgerald 2012: 3). As Moore and Watson (2009) point out, new knowledge regarding effective methods has been gained through the Unison migrant workers participation project. This combined a stronger community approach with the union learning agenda, which had the potential for promoting the inclusion of Polish migrant workers. While the overall approach to Polish migrants in UK trade unions is inclusionary, the trade unions are entangled in the decision between equal and special treatment (Wrench 2004). Anderson *et al.* (2007) found a basic willingness to join trade unions amongst Polish and Lithuanian workers,

‘which could be seen as a collective manifestation of the social dimension of citizenship’ (Ciupijus 2011: 543).

A migrant workers' branch of a trade union which mainly consisted of Polish members was one of the access points to Polish migrant workers for this thesis. This branch's establishment can be understood as more of a special-treatment or equal-opportunity approach by the trade union, in which a specific project or institution tailored to Polish migrants was created (Aziz 2015a); in contrast to the approach of some other trade unions in the UK that might engage in equal treatment subsuming Polish migrant workers into their vulnerable workers' strategies but risking an exclusion of migrant workers (Wrench 2004). This migrants' branch had also set up its own women's forum.

### **3.7 Migrants' attitudes and women's experiences**

This part of the literature review examines studies that focus on migrants' perspectives and their experiences. This helps to locate a relevant gap for studying women's experiences of living and working in the UK within this already advanced field of research.

Economic reasons, such as high unemployment in Poland, have been identified by pivotal studies as the main migration driver; characterising this movement as economic migration (Drinkwater *et al.* 2006). The opening up of the UK labour market and a variety of other variables have been significant factors for explaining the magnitude of the inflow; thereby economic factors have been marked as crucial (Pollard *et al.* 2008). Researchers such as Galasińska and Kozłowska (2009), Rabikowska (2010) and Lopez Rodriguez (2010) have established that Polish migrants do not argue that their move was to search for a 'better' life, but for a 'normal' life. 'Normal' refers to the perceived standard of living of Europeans; Kaźmierska *et al.* (2011: 143) illustrate this desire with the image introduced by Morawska (1985) of migrating 'for bread with butter'. Other studies have questioned the nature of this migration and the predictability of staying and returning (Fihel *et al.* 2006). While different types of migrants have been identified, there has been some agreement reached

'that post-accession migrants are a diverse, not entirely predictable, population, all existing within the same economic framework but

formulating different strategies of migration and return' (Burrell 2010: 299).

Certain demographic characteristics have been ascribed to the new Polish migration to the UK, characterising it as consisting of young (White 2010), highly-educated people, who Eade *et al.* (2006) describe as 'searchers' looking to meet new people and improve their English language skills. Datta (2009) identifies these new Polish migrants as upcoming 'cosmopolitans', while Irek (2012) calls them 'Cosmo-Poles'. Hence, life strategies have not just been conceptualised in economic terms, but also taking into account the social and cultural capital of migrants (Burrell 2009: 298). Attention has not only been paid to standards of living and to mobile young people (Cieślík 2011), but also to family strategies and migrant workers. Anne White (2011) has collected information through 115 interviews with Polish families in the UK and Poland and via opinion polls on the migration of Polish families, their decisions to migrate with or without the core family and their thoughts on return. This research provides a keen insight into motivations and contributes to migration theories such as transnationalism. She conceptualises family strategies alongside the notion of livelihood as decisive for the migration decision. White (2011), Lopez Rodriguez (2010) and Ryan (2010) also focus on family life, thereby presenting a rebuttal to the image of exclusively young, single migrants and showing how women, especially with children, integrate into their local areas more easily because of their children going to school. Most gendered research on Polish migration to the UK focused on women's roles as mothers and wives (Cieślińska 2012). Another gendered conceptualisation is found in Siara's (2009) research on online gendered and racialised discourse on relationships. Burrell (2008; 2008a) has examined the construction of female and male 'Polishness' in the post-war refugee community and the migration experience of Polish women during the time of the socialist regime. Polish women in the UK have mostly been conceptualised in their traditional gender role. Research going beyond this focuses either on former migration movements or on less work related issues, such as social interactions and relationships (Burrell 2008; Burrell 2008a; Siara 2009).

Parallel to the description of Polish migration to the UK as economic migration, Polish migrants have generally been defined as workers pursuing work migration (Burrell 2010). Much of the research undertaken has studied the perspective of migrants on their work experience, looking at wage levels, the discrepancies between their educational level and the work done, and the nature of work (Drinkwater *et al.* 2006; Anderson *et al.* 2006). Anderson *et al.* (2006) found some improvement in working conditions and ability to secure employment compared to the situation before EU enlargement; but at the same time, migrants were met with less protection of working rights than UK citizens and more temporary work. The hospitality sector as the biggest employment sector of Polish migrants in the UK has been studied by Janta *et al.* (2011), who highlights the exploitation within these industries and the coping strategies utilised by Polish migrants.

‘Whether about opportunity, vulnerability or integration, most reports and studies acknowledge work as central’ (Burrell 2010: 301).

While there has been some attention paid to work only a few studies focus on gendered work. Datta (2009a) looked into the construction of masculinity in the construction sector, which was a dominant employment sector for Polish migrants in the UK. Coyle (2007) has pursued one of the few gendered approaches to studying the status of female Polish migrant workers, with an exploration of gender inequality in the ‘new’ Europe. Some research has been undertaken concerning female Polish migrant workers in other EU member states, such as Germany (Lutz 2007), as well as in Southern Europe (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000), focusing mainly on care work. There have also been studies focusing on female migrants from different Eastern European countries to Western European countries undertaken describing women as active subjects, who take decisions and create possibilities in the context of new forms of subjectivity (Passerini *et al.* 2010). However, there is a limited amount of research on Polish women as migrant workers in the UK. While looking at key themes in academic discourse on migration from Eastern Europe, Burrell (2010) also identifies a ‘scope for a more consciously gendered approach to researching this migration’ (Burrell 2010: 304).

In relation to Polish migration statistical data suggests that in most European regions the ratio of female to male migration is 56 per cent to 44 per cent, illustrating the feminisation of this particular migration movement (Ignatowicz 2012: 36). While the transition phase following 1989 has triggered mobility including women (Morokvasić *et al.* 2008) employed in low-paid jobs in the service sector, female emigration from Poland has a long global history, which dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century and was associated with economic and family factors (Ignatowicz 2012: 36). Past research (Coyle 2007; Cyrus 2008) shows that mobility plays an important role in enhancing opportunities relating to paid and unpaid work (Morokvasić *et al.* 2008) and at the same time the hybrid existence in receiving and origin countries (Cyrus 2008). Recent female Polish migration to the UK is nevertheless dominated by young women often migrating alone and thereby mobile female workers characterised by reliability, efficiency, cheapness and commitment (Slany 2008). This can challenge or reinforce the Polish national version of femininity represented by the Mother Pole *Matka Polka* limited to procreation and domesticity (Ignatowicz 2012: 125). The perception of female work as non-productive and low-skilled can cause less protection by legislation and institutions (Ignatowicz 2012: 37).

‘Female emigration from Poland has not been fully investigated. Much of the previous research on gender and migration concentrated on females with families, neglecting the young, single and childless migrants.’  
(Ignatowicz 2012: 37)

Many female migrants work in gendered employment in the UK, such as domestics, caregivers and nurses (Anderson 2000), performing the three C’s of gendered work – cooking, caring and cleaning (Lutz 2007). In analysing migrant workers in service sector occupations in Greater London, McDowell (2008) points out that

‘[t]hese gendered patterns are also connected to social class, nationality and stereotypical national attributes, both ‘here’ and ‘there’, that become institutionalized in the labour market through segregation and segmentation. As a consequence, immigrants are differently received and socialized depending on their position within racial hierarchies, gender, class background and income/consumption patterns both in their own country and in the country of immigration.’ (McDowell 2008: 496)

Little research has been undertaken on the employment trajectories of female Polish migrant workers (Aziz 2015). Analyses concerning the topic either emphasise certain sectors and incorporate different migratory backgrounds or tend to study the female experience as mothers and wives. Nonetheless, some research has been conducted investigating the employment trajectories of Polish migrants, and herein the authors included a gendered analysis – for example, in the implications of migration for careers (Grabowska-Lusińska and Jąźwińska-Motyłska 2013). Here women were discovered to have greater determination and to utilise more effectively the opportunities that came with living abroad following migration. The experience of movement supports women in achieving fundamental changes in their employment trajectories. Migration, hence, represents a stage in their careers independent of their position or family situation. In contrast to this, migration became more of an intermission for men used to reach different objectives instead of a step in their career. The authors rationalise these distinctions on the basis of the bigger challenge migration represents for women, because of their disadvantaged position in the labour markets of both their origin and host societies, their circumstances require more determination. Whereas men were ascribed as adopting a conformist attitude subjecting themselves to institutional conditions, women in comparison appeared to be innovative in taking advantage of their opportunities for professional improvement and responding rapidly to the change of circumstances (Grabowska-Lusińska and Jąźwińska-Motyłska 2013). Alongside these insights, the researchers created a typology representing employment trajectories of migrants. Grabowska-Lusińska (2012) described four different types of migrant work trajectories, characterised by a fundamental differentiation amid stable and changing careers as well as an evaluation of the impact of structure and agency. She conceptualises the ‘fixative’ and the ‘project’ trajectories as stable paths, while the ‘project’ is marked by a higher level of agency. The ‘coincidence’ and the ‘exploration’ constitute changing types, with the second requiring more individual agency. This thesis makes use of two insights provided by these studies: the possible need for more determination on the part of female migrant workers, and the relevance of individual agency for Polish women’s performance in the UK labour market.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

Research on staying, returning, working, and living has been extensive; other studies have focused on certain groups of Polish migrants, certain theoretical approaches towards migration, and the everyday life of Polish migrants (Burrell 2010).

This literature review has tried to locate Polish migration to the UK within the broader framework of globalisation and migration, as well as the feminisation of migration and the labour market, in order to both outline the background in which this phenomenon is taking place and enable reflection on the research on Polish migration in the context of changing employment. The focus of the research questions was conceptualised via elaboration on migration theories and with a mind to the debate on agency and structure in relation to migration, as well as that regarding the feminisation of migration and the labour market. By setting Polish migration to the UK in the broader frame of East-West migration, the new politico-legal system of the EU providing EU citizenship resulting in a new system of migration in Europe, contextualise influential conditions for migrant experiences (Favell 2008). A central theoretical approach which provides theoretical sensitivity for this thesis is that of the new system of migration in Europe as described by Favell (2008) characterised by transnationality and social networks as well as a culture of migration, similar to the earlier migration systems theory (Mabogunje 1980). These dynamics result in the specificities of this movement including migrants constructing mobility as opportunity in the context of freedom of movement; and concepts of joining, staying, and returning as parts of the same migratory motivation (de Haas 2014). Work is also fundamental to these patterns, with expectations being more relevant to the decision to migrate than the actual labour market situation (Kurekova 2011). The new economics of migration theory provides insights into how migration can be constructed as the decision of a household or family, which is of particular interest for the case of female Polish migrant workers (Stark and Bloom 1985). Furthermore, in the context of the feminisation of migration and the labour market, women have been either conceptualised as subjected to structures or as active agents; this thesis will try to overcome this

dichotomy by investigating the narratives of female migrants. This thesis takes up the call for migration research to be undertaken contextually (Castles 2012) as well as provided with insights from various theories as in cumulative causation (Massey 1990).

Through the elaboration of this literature review there has been on the one hand gaps in existing literature as well as possible contributions to knowledge identified and on the other, the theoretical sensitivity informing this thesis established. In face of most research conceptualising Polish women in their traditional gender role (Cieślińska 2012), a contribution to knowledge through focusing on life stories of women in different age groups and at various life stages as well as characterised as migrant workers was recognised. Furthermore, there was found to be gaps in existing literature in relation to employment trajectories of female Polish migrants as well as Polish women as migrant workers in the UK, which this thesis strives to contribute to. While theoretical sensitivity is derived from all revised literature, some key concepts inform this thesis in particular: the approach deriving from debates in migration research of contextually investigating specific migration phenomena on the macro, meso and micro levels (Castles 2012; Massey 1990); the notion of a culture of migration in the new system of migration in Europe (Favell 2008); gender in the context of the feminisation of migration, of the labour market and the construction of Polish women (Moch 2005; Holloway 2005; Aziz 2015); and the relevance of structure and agency for migration experiences, specifically for work trajectories of female migrants (de Haas 2014; Grabowska-Lusińska 2012; Grabowska-Lusińska and Jaźwińska-Motyłska 2013).

The theoretical debates, as well as the lack of existing research specifically dealing with the experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK, motivate the methodological and theoretical approach of this thesis: grounded theory methodology informed by theoretical sensitivity and combined with the analysis of biographical narrative interviews, semi-structured expert interviews, and secondary quantitative data.

## **CHAPTER 4: Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter elaborates the methodology applied in this research on the experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK. In order to address the methodological foundation of the thesis, epistemological approaches in migration research are discussed and the thesis is situated within these. Following this methodological outline, the research design will be described, including reflections on the form of grounded theory methodology applied in the research project and the theoretical sensitivity informing the research. In order to understand how the tools of data collection were applied, the methods of biographical narrative interviews, semi-structured expert interviews, and secondary quantitative data analysis are discussed, and their appropriateness for this research highlighted. Following this discussion of methods, experiences from the implementation in sampling, fieldwork, and data analysis are presented. The research on the experiences of female Polish migrant workers is conducted by implementing a grounded theory methodology approach combined with biographical narrative interviews and semi-structured expert interviews. The overall structure of the research process, its stages, and the methods applied is illustrated in Figure 5, which concludes the outline of the methodology used in this research.

### **4.2 Methodological and theoretical approach**

Following the elaboration of existing knowledge and theories on female Polish migrant workers in the UK in chapter three, this chapter seeks to convey the methodological and theoretical approach chosen for this research. Methodology and methods are closely interconnected and often used synonymously, although they refer to different issues within academic research. Whereas methodology relates to the ontological understanding of what reality is and the epistemological

question of what and how we can know about the world, methods are specific techniques utilised to collect and analyse data (Castles 2012). In the following section, the methodological basis is set out in the form of grounded theory methodology informed by theoretical sensitivity.

#### **4.2.1 Epistemological debates in migration research**

Methodology relates to the epistemological debate on what can be known about the world and how this knowledge can be acquired, the conclusion of which would constitute a theory of knowledge. In the social sciences, and more specifically in migration research, a central debate exists between positivist understandings of the world – in which reality is constituted by objective facts which can be observed – and social constructivist ideas of meanings constructed and interpreted through perceptions and social interactions (Castles 2012). Besides these two often-contrasted positions, post-positivist realist ideas are based on the assumption that reality exists independently of our interpretation, but at the same time is not always empirically observable (Archer 2003). The epistemological position of research is strongly shaped by the ontological understanding of reality. This theory of ‘being’ questions whether there is an objective reality independent from our knowledge or perception of it. While the essentialist or foundationalist ontological position claims that there is an essential reality, which provides the basis for social life, social constructivism or the anti-foundationalist ontological position criticises this essentialist understanding of the world (Berger and Luckmann 1966). For example, in relation to gender, the essentialist position perceives persistent differences between men and women over time and across cultures; which is contested by feminists in stressing the social construction of differences (Marsh and Furlong 2002).

‘As such, they are not essential differences but particular to a given culture and time. They are the product of patriarchy, in which male dominance shapes the culture and the values of society, affects patterns of socialisation and perpetuates gender inequality.’ (Marsh and Furlong 2002: 18)

In the concept of a world, which does not ‘exist independently of the meaning which actors attach to their action’ (Marsh and Furlong 2002: 19) a researcher can only strive to be reflexive. The interpretation of the world by actors

alongside its interpretation by a researcher is known as the double hermeneutic. Social structures are not independent, nor are they unchangeable; but rather, they are subject to the agent's actions over time and space. People, therefore, are reflexive, and the lived experiences of agents and their reflection on those experiences influence their understandings and can change social structures. Realist epistemology shares the ontological foundationalist position with positivism, but does not state that reality is observable; rather, it asserts that there are deep structures, which cause a dichotomy between reality and appearance. The realist stance, therefore, agrees with the relativist approach that there are no social structures independent of social action, and strives to understand the reality as well as the social construction of that reality (Marsh and Furlong 2002).

In migration research, the critical realist position also attempts to examine structural conditions and individual reactions in an effort to overcome solely objectivist or subjectivist perspectives (Iosifides 2003). The critical realist stance is portrayed as able to overcome the social constructivist's trap of constant scepticism (Cruickshank 2011). Iosifides (2011) and Bakewell (2010) criticise, for example, the way Giddens' structuration theory (1984) has been applied in migration research for failing to offer new insights; they propose that in contrast to the duality of structure and agency in structuration, the notion of dualism of structure and agency, analysed separately (Archer 2003), offers an answer to the question of the relation between structure and agency. While structuration theory proposes a duality of structure and agency, thereby presenting them as inseparable, critical realist thinking applies the notion of dualism of structure and agency and demands that these are analysed separately by both examining structural frameworks and the action taken within these conditions (Archer 2003). Morawska (2001), on the other hand, argues for migration to be conceptualised as a structuration process. As outlined in the literature review on methodological and ontological debates in migration research, the structure/agency debate, and various theories' tendency to lean more towards one than the other, has caused friction amongst migration scholars.

Besides the critical realist and the social constructivist contributions to this debate, Castles (2012) highlights the importance of micro level analysis embedded in macro level structures in a specific historical context. This approach falls in line with Massey's (1999) appeal to avoid attempts to formulate a general theory of migration by applying cumulative causation and including perspectives on structural forces in the sending and the receiving countries, migrants' motivations and aspirations, and transnational social spaces. While an anti-foundationalist, social constructivist position characterises the underlying ontological approach of this research, the methodological benefits of a critical realist perspective in migration research are also acknowledged. Following the logic of the influence of the ontological position on the epistemological approach, this research does not claim that what is being produced by the analysis represents an independent reality, but rather a socially constructed idea of reality. The research thus has a multifaceted approach, combining perspectives on the micro level from the individual experiences of female Polish migrants; the meso level of networks, local and/or migrant communities and trade union activities; and the macro level of changing employment in Europe. The research does not try to resolve epistemological debates in migration research, but takes a more pragmatic approach to methodology by applying a holistic paradigm, which includes both specific migration experiences and broader societal changes (Castles 2012).

#### **4.2.2 Grounded theory methodology**

The theoretical and empirical debates in the field of migration research (Massey 1999; Castles 2012), as discussed in the literature review chapter, illustrate the need for theoretical rethinking – which can be achieved with a grounded theory methodology approach. Grounded theory is a contested concept, and has many variations (Glaser and Strauss 1968; Glaser 1992; Strauss and Corbin 1999; Charmaz 2006).

Grounded theory aims at the generation or discovery of a theory from data (Glaser and Strauss 1968), and represents an inquiry into social processes where data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously and inform one another. The

analysis follows an inductive logic – a pre-existing theoretical concept is not tested but rather a new theory discovered or developed. While Glaser and Strauss (1968) formulated the grounded theory approach together as a reaction to the extreme positivism of their time (Suddaby 2006), their subsequent elaborations followed different paths. The assumptions that theory is only effective if grounded in data and that it must be complex and account for a great deal of variation due to the complexity of social phenomena underlie this approach to qualitative analysis (Strauss 1987). Influenced by pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, Glaser and Strauss (1968) criticised the idea that natural and social sciences deal with the same subject matter. They also denied the notion of trying to uncover universal explanations for social behaviour through a grand theory (Suddaby 2006). Instead, scientific truth was understood to result from observation and sense making.

‘In this pragmatic approach to social science research, empirical “reality” is seen as the ongoing interpretation of meaning produced by individuals engaged in a common project of observation.’ (Suddaby 2006: 633)

Grounded theory methodology is characterised by the two main concepts of constant comparison and theoretical sampling, posing an alternative to the classic positivist research practice of hypothesis building and the clear separation of data collection and analysis. The two founders of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1968), gradually developed their own versions due to the debate which arose from an ostensible contradiction of the concepts of emergence of a theory and theoretical sensitivity; as well as a conflict around forcing and emerging categories. Glaser (1992) felt that theory should only emerge through constant comparison, using coding families of theoretical codes alongside substantive codes, which derived from open coding, and not be forced. Strauss and Corbin (1999) take a more structured approach, including the description of contexts, phenomena and so on and then developing categories through the application of a coding paradigm. This paradigm consists of the four elements of conditions, interaction among the actors, strategies and tactics, consequences and axial coding around these (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1999; Kelle 2005).

Some criticism towards grounded theory has been directed at the empiricist presumption of an external reality (Charmaz 2006). While the data on reality was understood as perceived by respondents, because of the influence of symbolic interactionism on the development of the concept, the perception of the researcher and their role in constructing categories has been developed by the constructivist approach. A constructivist grounded theory arises from the interaction between researcher and respondents, therefore emphasising meaning without assuming the existence of an external reality (Charmaz 2006). Herein grounded theory employs key strategies in working with data: the inductive-abductive, comparative, interactive and iterative strategies. By deriving concepts from data inductively and formulating ideas about the relationships of these concepts abductively, the theorising of a grounded theory model leads to an integrated framework, which is comprised of developed concepts and their relationships.

Other critics of grounded theory have warned that a dominant focus on the method and its procedures could lead to a neglect of the relevance of other forms of thinking and understanding. This criticism affirms the relevance of every kind of knowledge, and argues against the method's fragmenting procedures, which could lead to the loss of narration. Furthermore, the added value of a constructed grounded theory is questioned (Thomas and James 2006). For this research, however, the steps of grounded theory methodology are applied while the process remains dynamic and open. On the other hand, knowledge derived from other sources can be referred to, such as the position and influence of a researcher in choosing the topic and conducting and analysing the interviews. While keeping close to the narration is a difficult task in the analysis process, the fragmenting procedures help systematise the rich data from interviews. Furthermore, the choice of conducting and analysing biographical narrative interviews enables maintaining closeness to the narration.

In the context of researching women's experiences a strand of feminist grounded theory has also emerged (Wuest and Merritt-Gray 2001). Here, the principles of feminist research, such as reflexivity, diversity and transformation, are emphasised. This method highlights feminism by naming it as its core focus, but

argues that, through constant comparison, it includes diversity in the construction of theory and therefore is not fundamentally different from grounded theory. In another paper on feminist research and grounded theory, Olesen (2007) outlines the necessity of being clear about which grounded theory and which form or stage of feminist research is being chosen (Olesen 2011), which suggests that feminist research has used grounded theory in a variety of ways. Feminist critiques of grounded theory have also, however, tackled positivist elements, reflexivity, and ethical issues. The main route by which Olesen (2007) reconciles feminist research and grounded theory is through the influence of symbolic interactionism in grounded theory, where the researcher and participant are both embedded in the social context and the data is co-created and knowledge co-produced. This principle is used as a basis for this research, which shares aspects of feminist social constructivist research principles such as reflexivity, ethical considerations, and the ideas of co-production and co-creation of knowledge.

Existing literature, theory, and knowledge inform the analysis, but do not direct it in terms of theoretical sensitivity. While some forms of grounded theory methodology have called for a literature review to be conducted after the analysis of a research project (Glaser 1992), this is often impossible in a PhD project and was not feasible for this research, especially since the benefit and appropriateness of grounded theory was discovered in the process of undertaking the literature review itself. It has been argued that theory can never be set aside and that neutral observations are impossible (Kuhn 1970). The grounded theory methodology applied in this research aims to create analytic codes and categories developed from the data while also providing theoretical sensitivity. Features of the grounded theory methodology include theoretical sampling, open coding and theoretical or axial coding, constant comparative method, memo writing, and the saturation of concepts. Theoretical sampling is supposed to emerge from simultaneous data collection and analysis, where explanations are developed and help refine further cases to sample. The constant comparisons of the cases and their individuals, places, conditions, and so on, help to refine a theoretical sample. A rigorous form of theoretical sampling is difficult to implement however as it can require a large amount of time; therefore, only initial theoretical ideas guided the sampling, which was further refined during the pilot

phase of this research. Following this, the circle of qualitative research starts at theoretical sensitivity – leading to the construction of research tools, the fieldwork, and theoretical sampling simultaneously, and followed by the data analysis and a refined ‘grounded theory’ model.

### **4.2.3 Theoretical sensitivity**

The concept of theoretical sensitivity refers to literature, theory and knowledge informing, but not directing, the data analysis. Nevertheless, there is relevance in pointing out which main sources for theoretical sensitivity informed this research. A grounded theory methodology approach is no excuse for not engaging with the literature, because it is neither possible to completely ignore one’s prior knowledge, nor would it necessarily enable the discovery of something new (Suddaby 2006). The first steps of the research project – exploring the literature and writing up a literature review, conducting pilot interviews, and consolidating prior knowledge on research into Polish migration – led to a certain form of theoretical sensitivity, which was able to remain dynamic throughout the research process. Theoretical sensitivity accompanies the whole research process, and is not only applied in the data analysis but also in the methodology.

The literature review attempted to locate the present research within broader academic discussions, which inform the analysis of the data. Approaches and understandings of globalisation; international migration and changing employment; economic systems of sending and receiving countries; the feminisation of migration and of the labour market; and post-accession East-West migration helped to inform conditions referred to in the research questions, which were located on the macro and meso level and affect the micro level of individual experiences. In this elaboration, a recurring discussion was that of the relation between structures and agency, the relevance of which is also reflected in the research questions. The search for a grand theory of migration was dismissed because of the complexity of migratory phenomena and the concepts of cumulative causation (Massey 1999), and a policy of studying specific migration experiences in their broader context (Castles 2012) was adopted.

Another concept relevant for the analysis is the idea of the social construction of gender and the specific form it takes in the context of Polish gender roles and their manifestation during migration experiences, which could potentially challenge or reinforce the Polish stereotype of femininity as represented by Mother Pole *Matka Polka* (Ignatowicz 2012: 125). Another more specific body of knowledge is derived from research on the meaning of migration for careers, in which Grabowska-Lusińska and Jąźwińska-Motyłska (2013) detect differences between men's and women's approaches to migration. This research makes use of two insights provided by these studies: that greater determination is required on the part of female migrant workers; and that the ways in which different Polish women perform in and experience the UK labour market exhibit different degrees of subjection to structures or individual agency.

Despite engaging with insights from existing research and building a multifaceted approach which combines perspectives on the micro level of individual experiences; the meso level of networks, local and/or migrant communities and trade union activities; and the macro level of changing employment in Europe, the analysis nevertheless is not directed by these ideas but rather informed by them, as explained in the section below on the process of data analysis. This prior knowledge helps to understand the data and is not used as a preconceived model or for verifying deducted hypotheses; instead, the analysis stays open for emerging theory.

### **4.3 Discussion of methods of data collection**

This research follows an overall qualitative approach, which has been shown to benefit the study of specific migratory phenomena. This perspective also embraces the logic of the epistemological and methodological positioning discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. While quantitative methods in migration research are widely used, they emanate from the idea that an external reality can be described. Quantitative data is crucial for the contextualisation of a migration research project, the complexities of social groups, relationships and behaviour however are difficult to describe with quantifiable data and can cause

oversimplification and limitations on what information is able to be provided (Castles 2012).

In contrast to hypotheses in quantitative research, a qualitative approach asks research questions which can be examined by applying a theoretical lens – such as feminist perspectives, racialised discourses, and critical theory amongst others – or by implementing a more inductive process of building a theory from data. Creswell (2009) describes the inductive logic of research in a qualitative study as starting with the researcher gathering information, followed by the researcher asking open-ended questions and recording field notes, and then analysing the data to formulate themes and categories while looking for patterns, generalisations and theories. Besides inductive data analysis, which establishes themes ‘bottom up’, there are various other characteristics, which comprise qualitative research. Qualitative research tends to be conducted in a natural setting in the field, and this crucial stage of fieldwork helps gather data via face-to-face interaction. The researcher represents a key instrument in the inquiry, collecting data by examining documents, observing, and interviewing. Qualitative researchers gather information from various sources and focus on understanding the meaning the participants ascribe to the issues. Besides the literature review and conducting interviews, engaging with the current political and media discourse, attending events on the topic, and listening to what people said in various settings about the area of interest were also undertaken.

A qualitative inquiry is a dynamic process in which research questions might change, methods might be adapted, and the sample might be re-defined; that is to say, it is characterised by an emergent design. In qualitative research the researcher interprets the data, but this interpretation is connected to the background of the researcher, who tries to provide a holistic account by developing a complex picture of the studied issue (Creswell 2009).

These characteristics are found in this research, where an inductive logic guided the beginning of the research process – starting out with the exploration of existing knowledge on Polish migration to the UK and semi-structured pilot interviews with trade union organisers active in engaging with Polish migrants as

well as Polish trade union members. The focus on trade unions during the pilot phase emerged from the interest in work experiences of Polish migrants and the potential for collective agency. There has been a discrepancy observed in how migrants and unions exercise agency. While unions find it difficult to overcome the differing small-scale, oppositional and invisible practices of migrants and include them in unions' overt and organised activities, there remains a potential pathway for representing and organising this fragmented and mobile workforce, which appeared interesting for this research (Berntsen 2015). Following this phase, the focus of the research was narrowed down to the experiences of female Polish migrant workers. The primary data was collected in the field through face-to-face interaction, in which the position as interviewer was crucial. The data analysis is informed by the researcher's interest and understandings of structures, agency and gender roles as derived from the literature review. Because of the limitations of quantitative data in examining the research questions and because of the inductive process of thinking around the research subject, an overall qualitative approach with secondary quantitative data analysis has been chosen.

Before going into the field and conducting face-to-face interviews, the form of these encounters had to be established. This research makes use of the method of biographical narrative interviews (Schütze 1983) as primary sources, and semi-structured expert interviews with experienced researchers, early stage researchers, community organisers, trade union organisers, and representatives of public institutions.

#### **4.3.1 Biographical narrative interview**

Migration scholars have made use of biographical narrative interviews in their quest to study migrants' experiences. More specifically, in the context of researching Polish post-accession migration to the UK, the method of biographical narrative interviewing – either adjusted to the researcher's focus or following the original elaboration of Schütze (1983) – has proven to be useful (McGhee *et al.* 2012; Kaźmierska *et al.* 2011; Ignatowicz 2012). For Iosifides (2011), biographies can be used as empirical data of life trajectories, which also accounts for underlying social structures. Apitzsch and Siouti (2007) suggest

how this framework can be useful when combining a transnational approach with biographical research perspectives:

‘for investigating processes of change and the mingling of individual and societal positionings and identity constructions in migration processes. The embeddedness of gender and migration as well as generational relations become visible through the biographical perspective.’ (Apitzsch and Siouti 2007: 19)

Nevertheless, there were some problematic points to using this method experienced. These include the large amount of data collected from biographical narrative interviews and the intensive interpretation work required, and the possible problem that specific questions developed later on may remain unanswered in earlier interviews. Although a more structured interview following the logic of pre-designed hypotheses or research questions, such as the semi-structured interview, would avoid these problems, the questions posed already set out the topic and leave less room for the researcher to gain unexpected information. For a structured interview the researcher needs to be even more certain about the hypothesis underlying the research and can only pose the same limited questions to all respondents (Gillham 2005). For the underlying research questions, with their dynamic and open-ended nature, this method would not be suitable. While other types of data collection, such as participant observations, can provide a first-hand experience and information as it occurs, the interview enables informants to give historical information (Creswell 2009). A more similar method to the chosen approach is that of the problem-centred interview (Witzel 2000), where the interviewer is stimulating narration but also allowed to re-connect the narration to a posed problem at any time. This method is more semi-structured than the biographical narrative interview, where the narration and question phases are more strictly separated. This separation helps to avoid interrupting the flow of thought of the interviewee and thereby prevents the possibility of interfering at crucial moments. The biographical narrative interpretative method or BNIM (Wengraf 2001), on the other hand, is even more restrictive for the researcher, prohibiting any interruption during the main narration. This method is more intensive in the interpretative stage, requiring panels of peers to come together for interpretation, which would have been difficult in terms of resources for this PhD project.

Through the biographical narrative interviews, however, it is possible to gain an insight into individual experiences rather than events. The narration of a life story represents experience and helps the researcher to understand the context in which those experiences are made. They are not isolated events or decontextualised reflections, which could occur with the usage of prepared questions.

The biographical narrative interview method used is that propounded by German sociologist Fritz Schütze (1983). With this approach (Schütze 1983), the complex dimensions of migrants' aspirations and experiences can be analysed. The method also helps to ensure theoretical sensitivity during the data collection, avoiding the imposition of theoretical ideas through the formulation of interview questions. Another argument for biographical narrative interviews in the context of a grounded theory methodology approach is that, as observed in the semi-structured pilot interviews, some interviewees are aware of the issues and know what a researcher might want to hear; becoming arguably too interview ready. Because the phenomenon of Polish migration to the UK has attracted much public, political and media debate, interviewees were aware of the discourse, and it may have influenced their responses.

The biography is of interest for this research because it allows the examination of migration aspirations and experiences in the context of a life story. This provides an understanding of the phenomenon that goes beyond conceptualising migration as a single, separate event, interrupting a life and career course and following its own rules uninfluenced by prior experiences. The main interest of the narrative interview is the interviewee's biography, which the interviewee has already interpreted in the narration and which is analysed by the researcher. This is achieved via the sequential order of the questions and simultaneous sense making. The biographical narrative interview has three stages, starting with the spontaneous main narration following the researcher's question for the whole life story, which the researcher does not interrupt and rather waits for its independent completion by the interviewee. The second phase of questioning follows, with supplementary, internal narrative questions derived from what the informant has

just talked about in the main narration. The third stage is finalised through theoretical, external narrative questions about ideas constructed beforehand and the request to abstract the experiences by reflection (Schütze 1983; Rosenthal 2004).

In his understanding of a life story as a sequence of biographical processes, Schütze (1983) describes sequences, which are mainly influenced by negative and positive external conditions. The resulting analytical possibilities can include the elaboration of central process structures, the study of the consequences of certain life processes, or biographical guidance. Schütze (1983) himself described a specific model of analysis, which consists of a text analysis followed by a structural content description, analytic abstraction and knowledge analysis. These steps are completed via minimal and maximal comparisons of interviews leading to the construction of generalisations, central categories, and a theoretical model of the relation between biographical processes and theoretical concepts. The present research does not apply these steps of analysis because of the chosen combination of the biographical narrative interview with a grounded theory methodology – it follows the data analysis steps of grounded theory methodology. The applied model of a grounded theory methodology approach, however, resembles many of these steps and does not contradict the basic ideas of the biographical narrative interview method.

The basis for biographical research relies on theoretical assumptions that questions of social science are related to people's experiences, which have a biographical meaning to them; therefore the social phenomena can be analysed in the context of the biography.

‘1. In order to understand and explain social and psychological phenomena we have to reconstruct their *genesis* – the process of their creation, reproduction and transformation. 2. In order to understand and explain people's actions it is necessary to find out about both the subjective perspective of the actors and the *courses of action*. We want to find out what they experienced, what meaning they gave their actions at the time, what meaning they assign today, and in what biographically constituted context they place their experiences. 3. In order to be able to understand

and explain the statements of an interviewee/biographer about particular topics and experiences in his/her past it is necessary to interpret them as part of the *overall context of his/her current life* and his/her present and future perspective.’ (Rosenthal 2004: 49-50)

Relating back to this research, these elements are crucial to understanding migration experiences. In order to analyse these migration experiences, their origin and development needs to be reconstructed in the context of the individual life story. The study seeks to understand both the events that took place and the meaning the interviewee gives them. If the researcher wants to understand the interviewee’s testimonials, there is a need to investigate them in the setting of the overall life story.

Narrations can be understood as accounts in which informants perform their biography and self-presentation. Narratives are shaped by collective and cultural conventions, and the experiences and memories narrated are constructed through shared narrative formats. These accounts represent social performances within their specific context. Atkinson (2005) argues, on the background of this logic, for the use of grounded theory methodology to preserve the forms of the narrative structure of these social actions – in multiple layers of codes, conventions and structures, avoiding plainly homogenised categories. Riessman (2008) argues for the possibility of combining category-centered models of research – such as grounded theory methodology – with a close analysis of individual cases, in order to take into account agency as well as intention. Herein, the narration can have an intention even if the interviewee is not conscious of one; for example, engaging, persuading, arguing, entertaining, misleading, and / or mobilising. Through narration, individuals can construct, who they are and how they want to be perceived, while identities remain fluid in being, becoming, belonging and longing to belong. Narration can constitute past experiences and make sense of them in the present context and interaction; this is mixed with life structures connecting biography and society. Consistent with the, in feminist and constructivist grounded theory, conceptualised co-creation of data, Squire (2013) also understands narration as constructed and co-constructed, thereby representing one of many possible truths; which implies a sociocultural embedding that includes representations of class and gender.

Riessman (2008) describes the narrative turn as a challenge to realism and positivism, which were introduced by the Chicago school and the research on Polish peasants by Thomas and Znaniecki in 1918 (Thomas and Znaniecki 1996). It later found its expression in a memoir boom, observable in literature and popular culture as well as in new identity movements such as the feminist movement or LGBTIQ groups, as well as the exploration of life stories in therapy. The narrative turn was aided by technical support in recording, and furthermore promoted by the feminist slogan that the personal is political – steering away from a realist representation of a female subject to a narrator-interpreter relation incorporating context, aspects of power relations, reflexivity, intersubjectivity, and interdisciplinary understandings.

In section 4.4.2.3 the form of biographical narrative interviews undertaken in this research is specified and in appendix III, the aide-mémoire used during interviews can be found.

### **4.3.2 Semi-structured expert interviews**

Besides the biographical narrative interviews, semi-structured expert interviews were also conducted in order to gain insights, reflections, and additional information. These expert interviews did not include biographical aspects, and focused instead on expert knowledge in the field of the research (Gillham 2005).

While the expert interview can be seen as a standard part of the repertoire for qualitative research and is used extensively, the method lacks elaboration such as a specific set of steps or prescribed way of constructing questionnaires and choosing informants. Against this criticism, Deeke (1995) offers plausible reasons for the non-standardisation of the method. In the expert interview, the form of the interview is not as pivotal as the interviewee's expert status. Kassner and Wassermann (2005) highlight this relevance of the research context, and argue against the attempt to find the one best way of conducting expert interviews.

Despite these complications, some forms for conducting this type of interview for data collection have been established. Expert interviews, as in the present research, are mainly conducted qualitatively with the support of a schedule for the interview. The interview outline supports the researcher in starting and continuing the interview, as well as keeping track of what has been talked about and what questions still need to be addressed. In contrast to a structured interview, the form of semi-structured interview as applied in this research makes it possible to stay open to different ideas and responses the expert might have. In advance of every expert interview, a specific outline characterised by groupings of themes and topics and ways in which questions would be formulated was prepared. This outline reflected the specific knowledge and expertise expected from the interviewee, and was adapted for each specific interview.

### **4.3.3 Secondary quantitative data analysis**

Quantitative data is crucial for describing the context of a migration research project; locating the research in this context helps to analyse economic and social structures (Castles 2012). As such, the overall qualitative approach of this research is enriched by a secondary quantitative data analysis. In this context, secondary refers to the fact that the researcher did not retrieve the data directly; as well as to its usage as secondary source information, which supports the analysis but does not constitute an analysis in itself.

While looking at available data in relation to migration research, certain limitations have to be taken into account. First, freedom of movement and the development of circular migratory patterns have led to a dynamic picture in which data can only provide an idea of the situation at a certain point in time. The definition of a migrant is challenging, and is always accompanied by constraints. For example, in most studies Polish migrants are understood as persons with Poland as country of birth, but in other migration research migrants are defined by the country of citizenship or the intended length of stay (Anderson and Blinder 2012). The only reliable big-scale data set for the present research interests is the most recent British Census, undertaken in 2011; this, however,

does not show what has happened in the years since it was conducted. The other available information of this kind is in the UK Labour Force Survey, but the sample size is often too small to be reliable. In relation to Poland the information from the Polish LFS and census can be helpful.

Data on the demographic characteristics of female Polish migrant workers in the UK, as well as on female return migrants to Poland, from Polish datasets – as well as more general information on the economic developments and labour market situations of the sending and the receiving country – are used in the elaboration of chapter two on contextualisation, as well as in the analysis of the qualitative data.

## **4.4 Implementation of methods of data collection and analysis**

Following the discussion of the chosen methods of data collection and argumentation for their suitability for this research, the present section reflects upon the decisions made and the experience of applying these methods. The sampling of cases is discussed before the experiences from the field, and the way in which the methods were applied is presented. The section concludes with the process of data analysis.

### **4.4.1 Sampling**

Fieldwork in the UK consisted of thirty-one biographical narrative interviews with female Polish migrant workers and eleven semi-structured expert interviews, which were gathered from October 2013 to May 2014. In Poland, twenty-two biographical narrative interviews with female Polish return migrants from the UK and seven expert interviews were collected. This number of interviews was chosen because it facilitated the collection of information with a diversified sample while still allowing for an in-depth analysis of each interview. The interviews in the UK outnumber those in Poland because the focus of this

research lies on migration experiences and not on return migration; however, this perspective adds a valuable insight into migration aspirations and experiences, and why some continue their stay abroad while others decide to return. Therefore all biographical narrative interviews were utilised for the empirical analysis.

In the concept of grounded theory methodology, sampling follows the principle of theoretical ideals. Theoretical sampling proceeds on theoretical grounds or ideal types, and consists of identifying units of analysis that will lead to new units in the quest for maximum variation. Sampling and data collection are intertwined so that representativeness of concepts and consistency are achieved. Theoretical sampling is supposed to emerge from simultaneous data collection and analysis, where explanations are emerging and help to refine further cases to sample. The constant comparisons of the cases and their individuals, places, conditions, and so on help refine a theoretical sample evolving around a core category (Charmaz 2006). While a rigid system of theoretical sampling is very difficult to implement in most research projects due to the limited amount of time available, here a more pragmatic approach to this ideal was applied.

Informants for both the pilot phase of the research and the semi-structured expert interviews were identified by building contacts during a placement at the UK trade union Unison from October to December 2013. The first pilot interviews were conducted with trade union staff, mainly engaged in community organising and work with Polish migrant workers from two different trade unions as well as the TUC. These were relevant entry points for this research, because of on the one hand the aim of a half-half sampling with trade union membership in order to include a perspective on collective agency, and on the other hand the interest in this institutional, meso level integration of Polish migrants. Semi-structured pilot interviews with Polish members and activists were also conducted. The research focus was established following steps of data analysis within these semi-structured pilot interviews, an intensive literature review and an exploration of quantitative data. The emphasis on female Polish migrant workers subsequently emerged, as opposed to a more general topic researching both Polish male and female migrant workers' experiences. A certain lack of existing research into the experiences of Polish women in the UK as migrant workers, a

recurring presentation of Polish women as pro-active agents in pilot interviews and the literature (Grabowska-Lusińska and Jaźwińska-Motyłska 2013), and an interest in the social position of Polish women have encouraged this first step of theoretical sampling.

The sample in the UK consisted of women working in the main sectors of employment for Polish migrants, as shown and grouped by the LFS; which are manufacturing, public administration, health and education, distribution, hotels and restaurants, and banking and finances. As Table 6 shows, the sample includes women working in these sectors with and without trade union membership enabling the detection of possible differences between individual and collective agency and the meaning of community engagement. This can also support reflection on the motivation for membership – by coincidence, because of experience or a specific incident, or based on a history of collective representation. Those interviewed in Poland were also represented in the informal sector in the UK, mostly working as nannies, au pairs and waitresses. The return migrants interviewed had not been trade union members when working in the UK as this was difficult to find during fieldwork. The sample in Poland, consisting of return migrants sometimes with and sometimes without ideas of further migration, helps to overcome the boundaries of a one-way understanding of migration and expands the experiences of the interrelation between gender, work, and agency – exploring where this dynamic can lead to return or further mobility. The analysis of interviews with female migrant workers, as well as female return migrants, supports the understanding of moving, staying, and returning as different sides of the same migratory agency (de Haas 2014). Alongside the sector focus and a nearly half-and-half sampling with regards to trade union membership of the informants in the UK, the overall sample is diverse in terms of educational background, age, length of stay, one-time and multiple mobility, occupation level, family status and geography in both Poland and the UK. For migrants (still) in the UK, Table 6 shows where in the UK they lived at the time of the interview: a third of the interviewees lived in London, a further three lived in other large cities in England, five lived in the formerly industrial region of West Yorkshire, and eleven lived in villages and towns around England. The interviewees in the industrial region and the villages

and towns were usually assigned these locations by the work agencies that they first got in contact with when moving to the UK. The informants in Poland lived, after return, mainly in cities such as Wrocław, Poznań or Kraków, while five of them lived in the villages and towns they or their partners came from. As far as their geographical location in Poland before migration, it appears that the interviewees would, after return, often move to bigger cities that offered more employment possibilities, especially in those cases where return was connected to family strategies. When direct quotes from the interviews are used in the analysis, the interviewee's changed name, age at the time of the interview and main profession in the UK are pointed out in the reference. In those cases where quotations are from interviews with return migrants, their profession in Poland following return is added.

The basic idea behind compiling this number of interviews was to maximise the number of different profiles of informants due to the inductive research process, while at the same time still being able to analyse the amount of data collected. There is no claim of statistical representativeness underlying the present sample.

**Table 6** Summary of demographic characteristics of sample of interviewees

	<b>Interviewees in the UK (n=31)</b>	<b>Interviewees in Poland (n=22)</b>
<b>Age</b>		
20-29 y	7	10
30-39 y	17	11
40-49 y	4	1
50-59 y	3	-
<b>Education</b>		
Interrupted education in Poland and GCSE in UK	1	-
Secondary education in Poland	2	-
Secondary education in Poland and college in UK	1	1
Vocational training in Poland	2	-
Interrupted University in Poland	4	-
Interrupted University in Poland and college in UK	2	-
University degree in Poland	17	20
University degree in UK	2	1
<b>Length of Stay</b>		
< 1y	1 (in UK before for	9

	2 y)	
1-2 y	-	5
2-5 y	4	3
5-9 y	21	4
> 9 y	5	1
<b>Mobility</b>		
One-time	17	8
Multiple-times (UK)	3	5
Multiple-times (various destinations)	11	9
<b>Industry in UK</b>		
Manufacturing	4	3
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	7	10
Public administration, education and health	15	3
Financial, real estate, professional and administrative activities	5	-
Informal	-	5
Other	-	1
<b>Trade Union Membership in UK</b>		
Yes	13	-
No	18	22
<b>Relationship Status</b>		
Single	10	9
In relationship	9	5
Married	12	8
<b>Family Situation</b>		
No partner, dependants in UK	2	-
No partner, dependant half y in Poland half y in UK	1	-
Partner in UK, dependants in Poland	3	-
Partner and dependants in UK	8	-
Partner and dependants in Poland	-	7
Partner, no dependants	9	6 (of which 2 partners abroad elsewhere)
No partner, no dependants	8	9
<b>Background of Partner (Ethnicity &amp; Citizenship)</b>		
Polish	11	9
White-British	8	2
Other	2	2
<b>Geographical Location in UK</b>		
Village/town	12	3
Industrial region	5	4
City	14	15
<b>Geographical Location in Poland</b>		
Village/town	11	5 (after return)
Industrial region	7	-

City	13	17 (after return)
<b>Work in Poland</b>		
Yes	19	9 (before); 16 (after)
No	12	13 (before); 6 (after)

The aim of the empirical chapters is to highlight the interviewees' meaning-making processes and to give them a voice to construct their own life stories. Out of 53 conducted interviews narratives in direct quotes of 37 women were used as well as indirect references to the narratives on experiences of others during analysis. Individual demographic characteristics of interviewees, which were summarised in Table 6, can be found in appendix I. While providing a synopsis of each life story of the interviewees would be interesting and fruitful in the context of biographical narrative interviews, this would have used up too much space in this thesis in face of its word count limit. Therefore, for the migration experiences, crucial life story backgrounds are summarised and analysed when introducing cases in the empirical chapters. The life stories of some central interviewees have been chosen for the following compendium, which is ordered according to the date of the interview. These are a selection of central cases, which are referred to often during the empirical analysis and at the same time follow a different logic of narration, show diverse educational resources, occupational positions and age and family situations as well as represent the breadth of migration experiences in the sample.

**Kinga, 35 y, food packing**

At the date of the interview Kinga was 35 years old, working in a food-packing factory, she had been living in the UK for six years and was an active trade union member. Previously she had been working in different jobs through agencies in one industrial region in the UK and found that her current work was marked by low-pay, shift work, heavy lifting and low temperatures. Before her migration she had worked for six years as a gardener since the opening of a home improvement store with a large garden section. She was married and had a son, whom she had given birth to when she was 19 years old. In Poland she had grown up in an industrial region during the period of martial law and the

subsequent economic and political transformation. She had attended technical college and had later dropped out of university. She and her son had come to the UK, joining her husband, who had left to work there two years earlier.

**Ania, 43 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory**

At the date of the interview Ania was 43 years old, and after having been in precarious work obtained through agencies she was now working in her own profession as a craftswoman in a clothing factory and had been living in the UK for six years. Before her migration she had closed down her own small business, which she had opened with the support of EU funding for small enterprises. Prior to that she had worked for ten years in a clothing factory, which had also shut down due to bankruptcy. Her two children were attending university in Poland, and she had been their sole provider for some years. She had divorced their father due to his alcoholism and both he and a subsequent partner in Poland had passed away. Three years prior to the interview she had married a Tunisian man. Ania had grown up in a rural area in Poland during the socialist period and, had worked a lot in their farming household and had later attended a three-year technical college in a nearby town. When she moved to the UK in order to support her children financially, they were aged 15 and 18 and had stayed with her retired mother in Poland.

**Kaja, 34 y, care worker and building up own business**

At the date of the interview Kaja was 34 years old, working as a care worker and building up her own business. She had been living in the UK for two years, but had worked and lived there before. Kaja had grown up in a Polish village during the period of martial law and the subsequent economic and political transformation and had later attended university. She had travelled to work in different European countries such as Greece, Spain and Cyprus during the university holidays and later on, after finishing university, went first to the UK, and then to another country with her then partner in order to support him in his pursuit of opening up a hostel. After three years she returned to the UK in order to fulfil her own aspirations and started to work in care again and at the date of the interview was in the process of opening up her own care business together with a colleague.

**Basia, 30 y, office worker in finance department**

At the date of the interview Basia was 30 years old, an office worker in a finance department and had been living in the UK for ten years. Prior to what she had seen as her short-term intended migration together with her then partner to the UK, she had completed her *matura*, the Polish equivalent of A-Levels, after having attended one of the first private schools post transition. She had grown up in a big city in central Poland characterised as an industrial hub during the period of martial law and the economic and political transformation and her family had expected her to go on to university. In the UK she had first worked in various service professions, before pursuing further education and later finding work in her newly attained profession.

**Bożena, 28 y, waitress; journalist following return**

At the date of the interview Bożena was 28 years old, working as a freelance journalist in Poland having returned three years earlier. Prior to this she had been living in the UK for seven years working as a waitress and studying psychology. After growing up in a Silesian city during the period of economic and political transformation she had commuted to a bigger city in her later school years. She had then moved to the UK right after her *matura*, the Polish equivalent of A-Levels. At some point of time in the UK she realised that she wanted to become a journalist and wanted to pursue this profession in her first language. At the time of the interview she was actively publishing articles, getting paid per article, and had developed a niche topic.

**Kasia, 34 y, warehouse worker; postgraduate student following return**

At the date of the interview Kasia was 34 years old, and was undertaking postgraduate studies in speech therapy while taking care of her young son. She had returned to Poland a year and a half earlier. In the UK where she had lived for five years, she had been working in a warehouse, where she had also met her husband. She had grown up in a Polish city known as a spa resort during the period of martial law and the economic and political transformation. Her father had left the family and her mother had another daughter, who was born disabled. Kasia had been working and studying in Poland and had also worked in Germany

to support her studies. After having lived and worked in the UK following university, she had returned to Poland to take care of her sister when her mother fell ill and later died. Her sister then moved into an assisted living facility and Kasia returned to the UK to work in the same warehouse as before. After meeting her husband and having a child, they moved back to Poland, because her husband owned a house in a Polish village in a different region than her home region.

The sampling for the semi-structured expert interviews followed their special expertise on the phenomenon of female Polish migrant workers in the UK, as well as the assumption that they had something to contribute to the subject matter that had not yet been made publicly available. During the fieldwork in the UK, eleven expert interviews were conducted in English; these were recorded and notes were taken during the interviews. Five interviews were collected with trade union officers from different UK trade unions who had experience in organising Polish migrant workers. One expert interview was conducted with a community activist working in the area of Polish local communities and female migrant workers. Another two expert interviews were held with early stage researchers undertaking their PhD who were also researching the experiences of female Polish migrants and of Central and Eastern European migrants. Three semi-structured expert interviews were implemented with experienced, established researchers in the field of Polish migration to the UK. In Poland, seven semi-structured expert interviews were conducted in Polish; one was conducted in English, in the same fashion as in the UK. Three of these were with experienced researchers on Polish migration and one with a trade union organiser trying to implement new organising techniques in Poland. Additionally, interviews with representatives of the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS), the social insurance institution (ZUS), and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy provided insights into the subject matter and prompted further reflection upon observed developments. The possible contribution to this research and interest in the work of the experts guided the collection of expert interviews, as well as the number of interviews conducted.

## **4.4.2 Fieldwork**

Following the pilot phase and initial expert interviews in late 2013, the fieldwork was undertaken in the UK from January to May 2014, and then in Poland from September 2014 to January 2015.

### **4.4.2.1 Access to the field**

Access to interviewees was initially, during the pilot phase, supported through the contacts provided by the secondment at the UK trade union Unison; but also, for the later stages of the research, by research via relevant articles and the internet regarding active stakeholders. Following the pilot phase the focus on female Polish migrants was continuously communicated during the search for interviewees enabling the sampling of only women. The stakeholders later provided contacts to trade union members as well as friends they had within the Polish community allowing the theoretical sampling of women with and without trade union membership. For example, there was a migrant workers' branch of a trade union mainly consisting of Polish members. This migrants' branch had its own women's forum, which provided the very first set of contacts. These interviews have themselves led, through snowballing, to various other contacts in the UK, and later to interviews with return migrants in Poland. In using snowballing, a researcher needs to be mindful of the risk of accessing mainly interviewees with a similar profile; however, snowballing also facilitates contact with persons who are not organised in other ways (for example, online or in community groups). In the case of this research, these further contacts have enabled a diverse set of informants who would have been difficult to reach otherwise. For example, another trade union organiser facilitated access to a care home where two further interviewees were contacted. Another interviewee was accessed via the participation in a training for migrant trade union members. In regards to the theoretical sampling of Polish women working in the main sectors of employment for Polish migrants in the UK, there was no need to exclude anyone as all willing interviewees in the UK were working in these sectors, because of their prevalence. In relation to the interviewees in Poland, however,

the sector of informal work was added to the four main sectors as many, especially highly mobile interviewees worked previously in the informal sector in the UK. Thus the sampling including trade union membership was set aside for the interviewees in Poland as there were no willing interviewees encountered who had been members, possibly because of their pre-existing return plans.

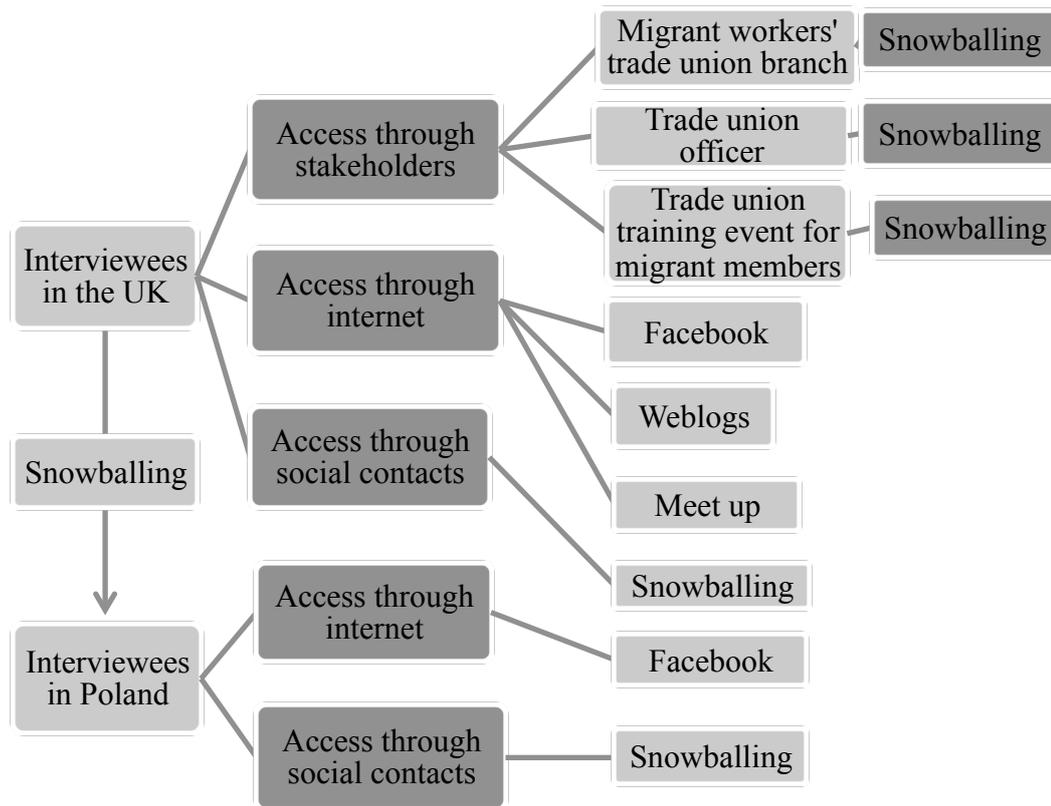
Other ways of accessing interviewees were through social contacts with people from Poland, such as friends, language tandem partners, and the website 'Meet Up,' which facilitates networking for groups with shared interests. When this approach of accessing interviewees through stakeholders, social contacts, and via snowballing decelerated, other means of finding informants were pursued. An advertisement was put online on two blogs used by female Polish migrants. One was a site solely aimed at Polish women, the other was a women's group within a broader blog for Polish migrants. Some interviewees were also contacted directly via personal messages on facebook. These were persons who were found to be engaged in a facebook group for Polish migrants and whose profile was made open to the public and showed their workplace. By knowing the workplace the theoretical sampling of the four main employment sectors for Polish migrants was maintained. While in certain research projects these means of accessing informants can be very successful, especially in more specialised topics with active, smaller groups, in the present case the groups were very big and a risk existed that the anonymity of the internet led to a lot of people not feeling addressed directly. This approach, in the end, provided contacts to only four further interviewees despite the large number of members.

Another method used to access informants in the UK consisted of producing small paper advertisements and visiting London neighbourhoods with high levels of Polish households. Polish cafes, clubs, restaurants and churches in areas such as Hammersmith, Ealing and Tooting in London were targeted. Because of the already substantial number of interviews, this engagement was started at a later stage of the fieldwork. While this way of accessing informants can be very fruitful, the researcher needs to be aware of the times these venues are most visited and get into contact with the persons responsible for the venues. In the case of this research, the efficacy of this method was hindered because getting

into a conversation with people and being open and pro-active in this pursuit was difficult possibly because people were pursuing their daily routines, on their way somewhere and not as open to communication, but also because of a restraint in talking to people that appeared to be busy. A different method, which was more fruitful in this research, consisted of going into other open general workplaces – such as hotels and cafés – and asking if there might be female Polish workers employed there who would be willing to talk.

The target group in the UK was numerous and in certain contexts well organised, and therefore the most successful access to them was through personal contacts and gatekeepers. The situation was quite different in Poland, where there was no community group of female return migrants encountered. Therefore, for the Polish fieldwork, access was facilitated through snowballing from the UK fieldwork and from initial Polish interviews, as well as contacts from friends. The internet as point of access proved to be more effective in the Polish context than in the UK setting, where informants were found through facebook groups of migrants in Poland, in which Poles that have migrant partners, are interested in practicing English, or would like to help migrants in Poland with information are active. This path might have been more fruitful in Poland because the groups are smaller and not as anonymous, and every appeal for help gets some responses. Figure 4 shows the successful ways of accessing the sample of interviewees for the present research.

**Figure 4** Utilised and successful means of accessing interviewees



As for the expert interviews in the UK and in Poland – through reading relevant newspaper articles and academic literature the persons from whose insights the research would benefit, were identified and then contacted directly using details found on the internet. Once introduced to the research project, most experts were willing to contribute to the research. As professionals and academics, these informants were busy – meeting them at a conference or being referred to them by someone they know helped in receiving faster responses.

#### 4.4.2.2 Ethical considerations

Before accessing the field the researcher must take into consideration ethical principles of research, such as informed consent and anonymity. The research proposal was institutionally ethically cleared through the home institution as complying with the code of research practice. The research proposal must show a contribution to new knowledge, reflect principles of integrity and quality, and respect intellectual property rights through appropriate referencing and secure data storage. The researcher must also show their competence to conduct the

study. In the case of the use of transcribers or translators, these individuals must also understand the principles of anonymity and confidentiality supported by the signing of a confidentiality agreement. However, while these documents were prepared there were no such services used in undertaking the research. In conducting the research and in all interviews, it was made sure that participants were fully informed about the topic, purpose and uses of the research and further dissemination purposes. Explanation and the handing out of an information sheet to all interviewees enabled this. All participants in the study also signed a letter of informed consent. The participants are assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the research, especially in regards to the biographical narrative interviews. Since these may contain sensitive, personal information, the participants were anonymised as is usual practice. The interviews were conducted in an appropriate, considerate manner, and potential participants were informed about the research without putting pressure on them to participate – leaving it up to them to take part and allowing them to drop out in the process if they wished to do so. It was also made clear that the access point – whether trade union, social contact or employer – would not receive any information about the interview nor would it have in the conduct of the research any involvement with the participants. The settings of the expert interviews followed the same logic – in order to implement the same treatment of data for all experts, the data were anonymised and interviewees were identified in the research project by generic job titles.

The sensitivity of biographical narrative interviews suggested that there could be a problem in getting signatures from interviewees. Since they would be talking about their very personal life stories, to present them with a form to sign might be problematic. Also, in Polish research practice it is not common to get a signature showing informed consent (Kajta and Mrozowicki 2014). Nevertheless, the information sheet and consent form were translated into Polish and actually did not appear to cause any concerns for interviewees. In one case the question of the signature, its purpose, and anonymity appeared to be an issue because the interviewee had a very sensitive life story with traumatic experiences of domestic violence. Through explanation and the reassurance of anonymity, however, it

became something that was simply talked about in more depth than with other interviewees.

#### **4.4.2.3 Interviewing female Polish migrant workers**

The biographical narrative interviews, following the method worked out by Schütze (1983), began with the spontaneous main narration by the interviewee in response to the request to narrate their whole life story. Following the autonomous close of the narration by the interviewee (through saying, for example, ‘that’s it’, ‘that was my life’ or the like) the next phase of questioning was marked by supplementary, internal narrative questions and then finalised with theoretical, external narrative questions. The biographical narrative interviews were conducted in Polish in order to reduce language barriers while expressing sensitive biographies, with the exception of one interview in which the informant felt more comfortable talking in English. Polish and English are second languages to the interviewer, however for both the level of knowledge was adequate to conduct the interviews and translation was only undertaken for the purpose of direct quotes in the empirical chapters and otherwise analysed in the respective language. The approach to translation interpretation is specified in the section on data analysis. During the interviews the whole interview was recorded and field notes were taken as memos during and afterwards, which supported reflection and attention.

For interviewees, starting to tell their life story sometimes appeared to be a difficult task, they were at times overwhelmed by the request for their whole life story. The exchange would begin with the information sheet and consent form alongside an explanation that the interview would be recorded and notes would also be taken. When asked for ‘their whole life story from their earliest memories to today’ informants usually either laughed out loud or expressed a ‘puh,’ with some asking further ‘like about when I came here or the whole life story, everything?’. After this first reaction, however, interviewees would very quickly start to talk. Some informants found it easier to talk longer and with more details, resulting in an initial 20 to 40 minute narration which needed few follow up questions. But most tended to talk for 10 to 15 minutes, which required more

details in follow up questions. The biographical narrative interviews lasted between one and three hours.

‘Telling stories about times in our lives creates order and contains emotions, allowing a search for meaning and enabling connection with others.’ (Riessman 2008: 10)

Storytelling can, in this context, also be a way of making sense of different or even traumatic experiences. This could have an influence on the extent of reflection necessary during the narration, causing the differences in the length of the interviews.

The researcher-interviewee interaction can be influenced by what has been described as the 'symbolic violence' perceived in the unequal social positions of the interviewer and the informant, which can affect the interview situation and the content of the interview (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Gender, class and migrant status have the capability, in the context of researching female Polish migrant workers in the UK, of exercising symbolic violence. This broadly discussed relevance of the researcher's presence and impact on the data (Creswell 2009) is one of the reasons why it was experienced to be beneficial to conduct research as a woman with women. The interviewees talked about very intimate or difficult things – stories of pregnancy and birth, domestic violence, miscarriage and the like – and female informants might have reacted differently to a male researcher. In the interrelation with the interviewees it was also beneficial that they perceived the researcher as a young female student, who was also from another country and studied Polish, and could understand references to being new in the UK or to Poland – in other words, an insider to a certain degree. At the same time, the informants would clarify common Polish conceptions and meaning-making, since to this extent the researcher was an outsider as an Austrian. The relevance of age was apparent as well, since for interviewees above the age of 45 the researcher represented someone that needed to be taken care of and supported and for younger interviewees someone in their peer-group that they could talk to as a friend. As half-Austrian, half-Egyptian the ethnic background of the researcher was not always apparent to all interviewees despite the Arabic name, which also led to some interviewees sharing openly prejudiced views on people with different ethnic backgrounds. Others might have

recognised this mixed background and potentially held back such opinions. The apparent dichotomy of the insider and outsider status in research has been challenged by the discussion of multiple positionalities based on the idea that categories such as ethnicity, nationality and gender are constructed and multi-layered concepts (Nowicka and Cieřlik 2013; Nowicka and Ryan 2015). In order to overcome the assumption that a common characteristic, such as nationality or gender, can group the researcher and the participant together and automatically creates commonalities, the idea of a position of uncertainty was proposed, enabling the reflection on a wide array of possibilities in the fieldwork interactions (Nowicka and Ryan 2015). Therefore, the stated experience, of being perceived as a young female scholar with some insight into Poland and Polish experiences, is a general impression that in every single interaction has had multiple variations, as well as differing impacts on the interview. Furthermore the researcher's age, ethnic background, gender, and class position – younger, half-Austrian and half-Egyptian, female, and academic scholar – influence the co-creation of knowledge through interviews and the reflexivity of the researcher while undertaking the analysis.

In conducting biographical research, there might occur various difficult situations for the interviewees, but also for the interviewer. An important feature of the interviews was that only the informant and the researcher were present, providing an intimate setting. There was one exception when the interviewee brought along her three-year old son, who during the interview played close by but still away from the conversation. The interviews were mostly conducted at interviewees' homes, and sometimes in public spaces where privacy was still available, such as cafés or an office. Preparation has proven to be very important: organising the meeting, sending out reminders, having water or tea ready, and sufficient batteries in the recorder as well as a notebook for field notes and the information sheet and consent form to sign.

Some interviews turned very emotional at crucial points in their life stories, but the impression was that situations where an interviewee was crying would occur in relation to things they have overcome and dealt with successfully. In research on the coping strategies of victims of abuse, it was found that the ability to

reflect and then speak about an experience is often realised following the individual's processing of it.

‘After gaining enough control over the story to be able to tell it, perhaps one has to give it up, in order to retell it, without having to ‘get it right,’ without fear of betraying it, to be able to rewrite the past in different ways, leading up to an infinite variety of unforeseeable futures.’ (Brison 2002: 103)

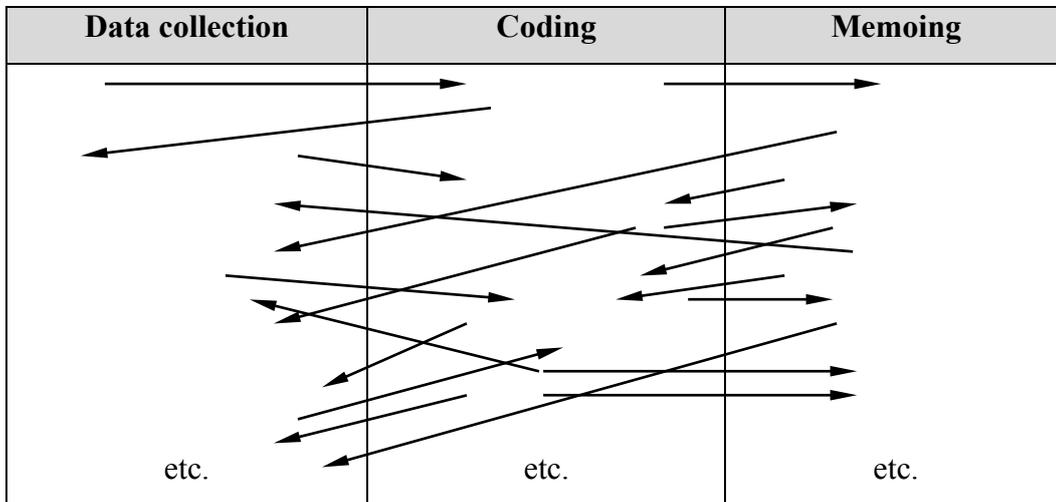
Some of these emotional moments would be, for example, a situation where the interviewee missed her parents, but was in general happy in the UK, where she lived with her husband and children. In relation to traumatic experiences and memories such as, for example, alcoholic and/or violent ex-partners, or recent issues and traumas such as a miscarriage, which happened in one case only two months before the interview, interviewees would restrain themselves in so as not to cry and continue talking. As in the applied method, it is advised to let the informant carry on the narration without interrupting, and this approach actually seemed to support the interviewees in reflecting on these experiences and looking beyond them to what had later on happened in their lives. Nevertheless, it would have been difficult in these situations, as in other methods, for the interviewer to refrain from nodding or demonstrating sympathy. A number of interviewees stated afterwards that they enjoyed their interview and got a great deal from it themselves. One interviewee said that she had never reflected so much about her life before or had someone to listen to her for so long. The experience of being listened to, being able to express one's life story in one's first language, and revisiting one's life through reflection can be an enriching experience for the interviewees (Reinharz and Chase 2001).

#### **4.4.3 Data analysis**

The data analysis process involves preparing raw data as transcripts for analysis, reading through all data, coding the data, and developing themes and descriptions, which are then synthesised and their meanings interpreted (Creswell 2009). Data analysis is an on-going process in which the researcher continually reflects on the data, asks analytic questions and writes memos. As

Strauss (1987) illustrated in Table 7, the phases of research are fluid, with constant going back and forth between data collection, coding and memoing.

**Table 7** Phases of research (Strauss 1987: 19)



The basic elements of grounded theory methodology include categories, which emerge in the process of coding data; properties or aspects of these categories; and statements about the relationship between categories. In this research, the steps of data analysis started with open coding by generating categories of information. Following this, categories were selected and axial and selective coding, informed by theoretical sensitivity and a logical linking of categories enabled the development of a model of the experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK (Strauss and Corbin 1999).

Coding refers to the process of logically ordering data by fracturing and regrouping it into codes, which in the grounded theory methodology approach begins openly and inductively. The process of coding for this research was realised by developing themes directly from the data, including a variety of 'in vivo' codes, which used the informants' own words as labels. In open coding the question of what is being talked about guides the inquiry. Besides 'in vivo' codes, sociological codes such as migration, employment, etc. were applied where they fit the data. Constant comparison was continuously applied during the data collection and analysis through comparing cases, experiences, places and so forth. The categories developed through open coding are placed into axial coding by examining the relations between categories as conditions, contexts, strategies,

and consequences in the coding paradigm (Strauss and Corbin 1999). The biographical narrative interviews conducted in the UK as well as in Poland were the basis for this coding, constant comparison and axial coding. Based on the idea of migration as a dynamic process the experiences of migrants and return migrants combined delivered the basis for the data analysis.

A specific problem when analysing biographical narrative interviews is the richness the data provides and the effort the researcher must undertake to reflect the source's context. With the amount of collected biographical narrative interviews, various research projects on different topics could be undertaken. Generating codes and developing central categories posed a very difficult task in the face of this data richness and was therefore a dynamic, continuous process. The interviews were transcribed and analysed mostly in Polish, and only translated if used as direct quotations. Here, the tendency to attempt to clean up narration in transcription and translation to make quotes more understandable presented a challenge. While a narrative becomes understandable through contingency, the chaos of narration is also valid, as it is spontaneously and collaboratively constructed (Riessman 2008; Salmon and Riessman 2013). Therefore, the quotes were made understandable while staying close to the original narration, which demands that the reader views them as part of a spontaneous conversation.

The data analysis in this research was facilitated by the use of the computer assisted qualitative data analysis software Caqdas, along with the software NVivo 10. NVivo software supports the analysis of qualitative data by increasing the effectiveness and efficiency with which the researcher can learn from it, though it cannot supplant intensive engagement with the data by the researcher. The capacity of the software to record, sort and link data without losing the sources' context enabled the examination of research questions. The main principles of NVivo helped in the applied qualitative data analysis. The software's ability to manage data by organising and keeping track of it was utilised in the inclusion of interview transcripts and field notes as memos and information on the data sources. Management of ideas by organising and providing easy access to categories generated in the analysis and their sources'

context has been implemented. In order to examine questions of the data, the program can retrieve relevant information, which has been coded before. In using the contents of the data as well as their source information, reporting from the data is facilitated (Bazeley 2007).

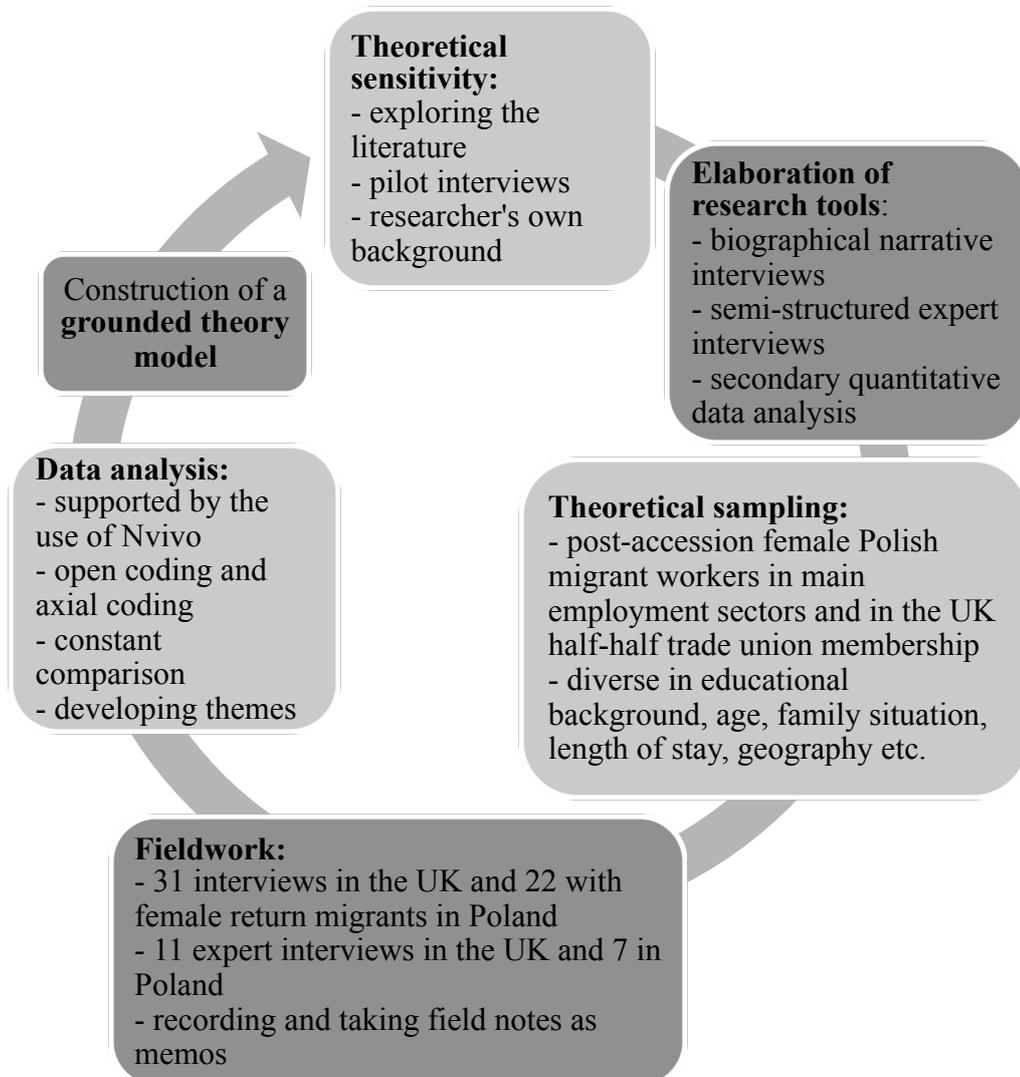
While the use of the computer can enable the researcher to work more thoroughly, human factors can still be restrictive, and the software cannot compensate for limited interpretative capabilities. It is not able to perform qualitative data analysis itself, but rather facilitates it while depending on the researcher's choices. Nevertheless, concerns have been raised about the impact the use of software may have on the method of data analysis and its outcomes (Gilbert 2002). These critiques have evolved around the ideas that computers can distance the researcher from their data, that the dominating code and retrieve methods exclude other analytic activities, and fears that qualitative analysis will be transformed to resemble quantitative and positivist approaches because the analysis will be more mechanised. Closeness to the data, however, is still provided by easy access to codes as well as to source data. The software does not make intensive viewing of the whole of the data obsolete. Instead, extensive memo-ing, linking ideas, and holistic viewing of the data are still possible; and are facilitated by the software's features (Bazeley 2007).

In this research, the software NVivo is basically used as an alternative to manual analysis, helping to organise, code and retrieve data. The same tools, which would have been applied in analysing on paper, were simply transferred to the computer-based application and thereby eased the process of qualitative data analysis. Open coding and the development of categories was implemented within NVivo, and constant comparison of the cases, experiences and places were enabled by extensive working through the data before coding in Nvivo and, later on, within the software, which enabled fast referral to the source data.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter elaborates the concepts and appropriateness of the methods of data collection and the implementation of these methods in sampling, fieldwork and data analysis for this PhD research; and reports on the experiences during fieldwork and with data analysis. Figure 5 illustrates the applied research design and steps of the research process.

**Figure 5** Applied form of grounded theory methodology for the PhD research project on experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK



The grounded theory methodology guides the overall research process, while methods of data collection were chosen and implemented in this design. The research project was characterised as having an overall qualitative approach enriched by secondary data analysis. Theoretical sensitivity was a first step, derived by exploring the literature, conducting pilot interviews, and determining the research interests. The discussion of the methods used for data collection – the biographical narrative interview, the semi-structured expert interview and secondary quantitative data analysis – as well as their appropriateness for this research formed the next step in the research process. The basis of theoretical sampling, which is interconnected with the fieldwork stage, and the sample of interviewees for this research were specified in the next phase. The fieldwork experiences made while interviewing informants were reflected upon, and the practice of accessing interviewees as well as the ethical considerations of the project were discussed. In discussing the methods of data analysis, the knowledge, which fuelled theoretical sensitivity without directing the analysis, was referred to; the process of data analysis of coding, constant comparison and axial or selective coding were outlined; and the use of the software NVivo in facilitating this process was described. All these steps of the research process ultimately led to the construction of a grounded theory model. The stages of research illustrated in Figure 5 are dynamic and continuously require revisiting. They are often intertwined, and while the process is directional, it nevertheless is a continuous circle.

## **CHAPTER 5: The construction of migration aspirations in the context of life experiences in Poland**

‘So seeing everyone else emigrating it was kind of a natural decision.’

(Lidia, 27 y, office worker for local government)

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter sets out to investigate the construction of migration aspirations in the context of work and life experiences in Poland prior to emigration. Herein the underlying assumption is not that mobility and migration are necessarily an exception to the norm, but that the development of migration motivations needs to be understood in its specific context. These motives develop in the context of post-transformation life experiences in Poland and a prevalent culture of migration (Favell 2008). Hence these aspirations are influenced by structural dynamics, but also constructed through the individual meaning-making of the interviewees and shaped by their actions. In their narratives, they reflect upon their lives in Poland and how their decisions to migrate, and the aspirations associated with emigration, were constructed in this context. This analysis reveals how life experiences interact with the construction of migration aspirations, and how different structures and individual agency influence these decisions and meaning-making processes. Therefore, the following draws on the main patterns of migration aspirations found in the narratives of female Polish migrant workers. The women moved around and in between these sometimes overlapping patterns. It needs to be highlighted that the interviews were conducted after emigration, or return, had already taken place, and are therefore constructed in the context of already experienced migration. Their understanding of their emigration motivations will have changed throughout these trajectories and through reflection. However, the interviewees referred to what they understood as the initial plan or rationale behind their decisions, and how they

reflected in retrospect upon this process and their previous life experiences in Poland.

The patterns of migration aspirations are formed around three different constructions: migration as a solution, migration as a family strategy, and migration as an opportunity. While some interviewees understood migration as the solution to or as a refuge from certain problems, such as economic difficulties and problematic relationships, other women experienced migration in the context of a family strategy. Of course these patterns overlap strongly at times, but family strategies can also take on a dynamic that goes against the preferences of individual women. Migration as an opportunity on the other hand was constructed by the informants as something that presented itself to them in the context of a culture of migration and the enlarged EU. This opportunity was seen as an adventure not to be missed, from which the migrant could always return if something did not work out as expected.

## **5.2 Migration as a solution...**

The investigation of the consequences of the political and economic transformation in chapter two highlighted the difficulties Polish women can face in sustaining a livelihood for themselves and their families. Migration for these women can represent a possible solution to their problems in life, or an end to a trajectory of suffering (Schütze 1983). This can also be framed as migration as hope (Pine 2014). The sample of informants was very diverse in terms of their work experiences in Poland prior to their journey to the UK. These range from younger informants, who often migrated to the UK right after graduation or as a work break from University and did not have significant work experience in Poland as will be the case for many interviewees in section 5.4, to those with problematic work experiences or established careers in Poland prior to emigration. Those who had worked in Poland prior to migration to the UK had either had problems sustaining their livelihoods with their work in Poland, had changed work a couple of times, or had recently lost their employment owing to

structural changes, such as the closing of places of work or staff reductions. Highly educated interviewees had found it especially difficult to find employment within their professions in Poland. Thus migration often provided a way of sustaining livelihoods and in some cases realising career ambitions and can therefore be seen as a form of rational decision-making (Massey 1999). In the context of financial struggles and a lack of opportunity, some women constructed migration as their pathway to resolving their predicaments, and aspired to an economically less problematic life. In addition to these economic hardships, migration was also seen as a solution to or a refuge from difficult personal experiences, such as problematic relationships or tragic losses.

### **5.2.1 ... to economic difficulties in the context of transformation**

The consequences of economic transformation had an impact on the working lives of many of the interviewees, who often directly referred to their perceptions of these changes. The experiences of the changing economic system together with their labour market situation in Poland were manifold, and were mainly determined by their age. While older women had direct experiences of the transformation in Poland, as adults before and after the change, the younger informants had experienced this time while still growing up or were brought up during its aftermath. Jadwiga saw the root of her income problems in the systemic change as well as in nepotism. After her studies she had worked as an accountant for nine and a half years in the hospital in which her mother also worked as a nurse, but believed that her low income, despite her appropriate higher qualifications (a BA in trade and services and a MA in HR), was due to the lack of public funding for health care, as well as her lack of access to persons in powerful positions to raise her salary. Although she was already in possession of a sufficient level of education, she went on to obtain a degree in business management while working; this, however, also failed to lead to a higher income.

‘Life became more and more difficult, because Poland transformed from communism to democracy – those were very difficult years for Poland and Polish people after 1990 – so it became harder to get another job or change work. The salary in public [institutions] was still better, but the hospital started to transition to private [funding] and that's when the problems

started. The hospitals stopped paying wages; they were lacking in urgent necessities, purchase of drugs and food. Sometimes people waited for two to three months for their salaries. That wasn't an easy time. In order to survive it was necessary to borrow money. (...) In the meantime the salaries improved a little, although people who came because they had contacts received higher salaries than those who just had experience; even without finishing their studies, so it was a bit unfair. Yes, and I fell into financial debts and came to England.' (Jadwiga, 38 y, cleaner in care home)

Jadwiga's frustration over her low salary and unfair employment practices, as well as the lack of public funding, led her to become active in the trade union *OPZZ*, as well as in the social-democratic political party *SLD*.

'In the meantime I enrolled in the trade union – because I decided that maybe it could make my life easier, but not necessarily only because of that. I also like to fight for justice. I don't like it when people are treated differently, for example. I also belonged to the political party, where I was an active member. (...) It didn't help me with anything, but it was an interesting experience. (...) All in all, I joined the trade union after new employees came to work, without higher education, and they had higher salaries than me only because they were the daughter of the boss or the daughter of some boss from another department. Yes, and the trade unions were able to fight for pay raises, because the hospital didn't always provide that.' (Jadwiga, 38 y, cleaner in care home)

Jadwiga constructed migration as the route to solving her financial problems and paying back the debt, which she had accumulated in order to study, and also at times when her salary had not been paid. However, in retrospect, working in the UK as a cleaner in a care home, she regretted having given up the job which, while low-paid, was still a white-collar job in the hospital; she pondered whether she should have persevered with her work in Poland during the difficult times of transition.

'Now I regret it a bit, that I resigned from that hospital. Although I don't know how the situation is now. Surely there are fewer people, but if they have a higher salary – I don't know. But I did white-collar work there, which I miss.' (Jadwiga, 38 y, cleaner in care home)

Katarzyna's negative work experience in Poland was also closely related to the change in the political system. After having studied economics and following an offer for employment in a new private college set up by her former lecturers from university, she changed her initial plans to work in the management of a company. She enjoyed teaching and the prestige associated with her position; however, because of later increases in competition in the private education sector, her college closed down after 12 years.

'I was very happy and felt that I was a woman of success. They knew me everywhere – this is that Ms. *magister*, who taught us accounting and finance, right? – I felt really good then. I could even help my mother. Help my brother (...). In that moment I understood – I was 25 years old then – I understood that I don't want to get married. I want to do something more, and my time will come for me. As I say, maybe I didn't sacrifice myself. (...) I was happy that I was a teacher for 12 years in the school. (...) I could do a lot of things just for myself. (...) And I already didn't go on to become a graduate teacher, because the school got closed in 2003. It was because there were many of these schools opened. (...) So this school got closed. And my mum died in 2004 and I lost my work.' (Katarzyna, 45 y, care worker)

In contrast to Jadwiga's case, Katarzyna was initially able to profit from the ongoing transformations that also led to liberalisation in the Polish educational sector. However, under the rules of a highly competitive market her institution, established at an early stage in the transformation, had not been able to sustain itself. Following the loss of her work Katarzyna decided to change her career direction and looked for possibilities abroad. Led by her personal experiences of taking care of her brother, who was suffering from a disability caused by the toxins their mother had inhaled during pregnancy while working in a factory producing pots; and of her mother, who, in her later years had suffered from diabetes and limited mobility, Katarzyna acquired a diploma in care home management in the USA, as an additional vocational education. There she had lived with acquaintances and worked informally for them as a housekeeper while undertaking her care diploma. Initially she wanted to stay in the USA, but went back in order to support her father in taking care of her brother. She also felt glad to be back in Poland, but did not see future work prospects there and decided to

make use of her language skills and diploma to find work in the UK care sector, since employers from that sector were actively recruiting in Poland at the time. The strain of her family life and the social stigma associated with having a disabled brother made her search for a partner difficult in her early 20s, and she had already decided by the age of 25 to remain single and focus on supporting herself and her family. Growing up with a disabled brother, she had experienced deprivation and bullying as a child, and when thinking back to this time, was very emotional during the interview. However, as pointed out in chapter four on methodology, she seemed to have overcome these traumatic experiences, and although they had determined some of her life choices, she was now happy about her brother's situation as he was living on his own with his partner. She was therefore able to be emotionally affected yet move past this stage during the interview. In contrast to her emotional narration in relation to her brother, the passing of her mother was mentioned in this quote like a side-note, seemingly detached from grief, suggesting on-going biographical work relating to this life experience.

### **5.2.2 ... to economic dependence and problematic partnerships**

Katarzyna's story shows that the different patterns emerging in complex life stories led to the construction of diverse migration aspirations. While many interviewees referred to the transformation and its consequences, further factors and life experiences, as well as their readiness to act, interacted with each other to construct aspirations for migration. For the informants, difficult relationships and negative experiences with partners were factors that often intersected with a problematic economic situation.

Hanna experienced difficulties in finding work after the company she had worked for closed down shortly after transformation. She had married at 19 years old and had two sons. Until the mid-2000s she was able to work occasionally and care for her children. However, when she started having problems in her marriage and could not find stable employment, she started thinking about going to the UK, even more so because her son had already worked in the UK two years prior during his holidays from university. She was excited about the

possibilities people nowadays had with open EU borders and wanted to take advantage of this for herself.

‘Later, in 1989, I think, when the whole reality changed I lost my work. My company fell apart, for some years I couldn't find the next job. (...) So I said if he [my son] went then I could go as well. (...) When I decided to leave, it already wasn't working out in my marriage, so I thought that this is a time of rest from one another and to be independent again, as I say – I try. But in the first year or two or three you don't have anything to return with, and after that nothing to return to. The marriage broke down, and I found a fantastic man here and got married.’ (Hanna, 50 y, waitress)

Hanna's marital problems in combination with her difficulty in finding stable employment posed a threat to her livelihood, since she had been economically dependent on her husband. She constructed her migration aspiration as a solution not only to finding work, but also to pursuing independence. This desire for economic independence from their partners by mothers experiencing problems in the Polish labour market such as a lack of stable employment as well as low pay during and after the years of child care, also led to Danuta's predicament. She had never been married to her partner of many years (whom she also called her ruler), with whom she had two sons. In her working life in Poland she had always pursued her passions, such as in culture, social work and journalism, and had gone through a long period of changing jobs, low pay, and precarious work while also pursuing further educational goals. Despite her partner's disappointment at her inability to pursue a financially successful career, while he was a successful and well-known lawyer, she enjoyed all her different professions.

‘It came to the situation in 2009 that my man and ruler decided that I'm not fit for anything. That he has had enough of me, that he is not gaining anything from me. And Sebastian – my sons – the one was 14 years old, the second Patryk was 23 years old. My man and ruler decided that we will not live together and that I would have to move out of his home. He had already thrown me out of his home a couple of times. He threw me out, but when I left – once my younger son left too – so he apologised and we returned home again. But he threw me out often. And then in 2009, there

was already a limit reached that was enough. I thought to myself, ‘Rats! In this city there is no work, I will not drive around Poland and look for work, so I need to do something.’ So I already started looking around, because England had opened its borders and I knew that there they needed people in care homes.’ (Danuta, 50 y, care worker)

Initially Danuta did not want to leave Poland, mainly because of her younger son, so she moved in with her mother, but that was not a sustainable arrangement. Among the many courses and the further educational options she had pursued, she had also earlier been trained as a care worker, which she had undertaken because of the job prospects abroad, and was able to make use of this when emigrating.

For younger women, who have not yet had children in Poland, difficult relationships with their families could also become a powerful motivation to emigrate and to construct migration as the solution to their problems or a refuge from them. Ewa remembered her childhood in Poland as full of deprivation, and saw the explanation for all of her family’s problems in her father’s behaviour. She experienced bullying in school and started skipping classes in her teenage years. After she found out that her father had a secret second family, she dropped out of school and went to the UK, still a minor, on her own to join her partner, whom she had met on an online dating website.

‘So I was here without my parents, still a minor. It was before my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. But in Poland it was like for nothing, only school, and because of my dad we didn't even have enough to buy the books for school, so I had to copy the books. I was a bit ashamed about that, because I had to go to that school and everybody was looking at me weirdly, you understand. But my dad had a lover, and later it turned out I had [a sister]. (...) During that whole situation my granddad died, the situation with my grandmum got worse; we really didn't even speak to each other. Yes, and then I left for England.’ (Ewa, 20 y, agency worker)

In Poland Ewa and her parents had lived with her paternal grandparents, sharing a house. After the affair was discovered, her father left and the relationship between Ewa and her mother with her grandmother deteriorated, because she still

supported her son. Her mother later joined Ewa in the UK, and the latter also found out that her father, with whom she was not in contact anymore, had come to the UK and started a new family.

Mariola's life and work experiences in Poland showed the dynamic that economic interdependence and low wages can create. When Mariola was 19 years old, her beloved grandmother died and she decided to move in with her partner to get away from her parents, with whom she had always had a problematic relationship, feeling abandoned in childhood. Her father, in Mariola's eyes a patriarchal man, convinced her and her partner that if they were already moving in together it was worth buying a flat of their own so as not to waste money renting, and also to get married right away. While Mariola was in love with her partner, she would not have planned to marry so soon, nor to buy a flat, but felt pressured and dominated by her father into this decision. Her husband started drinking alcohol on a more regular basis and was only able to find occasional jobs here and there, so Mariola most of the time had to carry the burden of the whole mortgage. In order to do so, she worked three jobs at the same time, and also went to Germany at some point to work, which in retrospect she thought she also did to get away from her problematic relationship. After six years of marriage, she came home one night to find her husband drinking yet again, and decided that she had had enough and moved out. Initially she moved in with her parents, but their frequent fighting led her to move in with her aunt. In return for helping her elderly aunt to take care of herself and her household, Mariola was allowed to live with her at a very low rent. Her husband, during this time and during the divorce proceedings, did not move out of their home. As a food analyst in a laboratory, Mariola did not earn enough money to be able to live on her own, and her living arrangements with her aunt became more problematic, because of her new habit of going out more and her newfound freedom.

'So maybe it was hard for her to accept, especially that I felt free after that divorce, and not right away but after some time started coming to myself and decided that there is still some life ahead of me, I was only 28 years old. (...) And really I started going to parties, because when I was with my husband he never allowed me that, he didn't even allow inviting people to

our home. (...) Because the salary in that place wasn't the best, I didn't really have anywhere to live, the situation with my parents also started to depress me. I decided that I no longer had the strength to live in Poland and there was no chance, I had sent my CV to different companies, because I had finished my studies, had done a MA, and I didn't find anything in my profession so I decided you know to go to Great Britain. (...) It was rather firstly to start a new life. That was the main goal of my move, to free myself from my family, as you might say, to disassociate from the world I had in Poland.' (Mariola, 33 y, care worker)

When the divorce was finalised and the home finally sold, Mariola decided to go to the UK and utilise her experiences of caring for her grandmother as a care worker. However, she found the physical and mental burden of care work too much, but had not yet been successful in finding work in her profession. Mariola's story again shows how complex the construction of migration aspirations can be; while she also had financial reasons to emigrate, she emphasised that her main goal was refuge from her problematic family situation, giving her the chance to start over again. This pattern of a migration motive referring to an oppression and leaving intolerable conditions behind was conceptualised as 'escape from...' by Kaźmierska *et al.* (2011). It was also characterised, as in Mariola's case, by remaining alienated from both places until reconciliation, which would demand intensive biographical identity work.

### **5.2.3 ... for sole providers for one's children**

Hanna and Danuta found themselves in economic dependence and with their own livelihoods under threat. However, other women in the sample, as the result of negative relationship experiences or traumatic losses, also had to care for their dependants as sole providers or single mothers. Ania grew up in a rural area in Poland and had become pregnant while attending a technical college, and felt socially pressured to then get married aged 20 years. She finished her education while pregnant and later worked for ten years in a clothing factory in Poland, which then closed down owing to bankruptcy. Following the loss of this job she had, with the support of some EU funding, opened her own little business as a craftswoman. Another interviewee, who used to be a journalist in Poland,

criticised EU support for small businesses, because of the lack of successful prospects for small businesses in the growing competitive market.

‘I was working as a journalist and I knew it was transfers of money for nothing. Because the EU gave money, the Polish jobcentre organised different courses, but they were stupid courses. For example, opening up your own business. People were opening up their own business, they received money for that and had to close it again soon.’ (Danuta, 50 y, care worker)

Ania’s own small business also did not succeed in providing enough income. Since she ended up being the only person supporting the family, because the children’s father died from the consequences of his alcohol dependency while the children were in their teens, and her next partner also passed away, the business was not successful enough to provide for her and her children.

‘That marriage didn’t work out because we divorced after 13 years. My husband – that first one, wasn’t a good man and even, if I may say so, absolutely difficult, it even came to violent arguments. And that’s how the marriage fell apart and also it didn’t end that nicely, because my son stayed with him and my daughter stayed with me. (...) My first husband, when we divorced and, I guess, he wasn’t able to cope with it all, he became an alcoholic. Later he died (...) Later I met a man much older than me, whom I didn’t marry, but we lived together for eight years, and he also died unfortunately. So that life wasn’t really successful, but well. You have to take what you get. And later it was also difficult with work in Poland, obviously, also because I was left alone with two children so that wasn’t easy. I also had tried my own business, a small tailoring shop, but in the long run it simply didn’t work. It started well but later unfortunately, after all it’s just sewing, there isn’t a lot of money there. And so in that moment I decided to simply leave for England; which was about six years ago.’  
(Ania, 43 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory)

When she left her son was close to school leaving age and her daughter was around 15 years old. Her daughter first joined her for two weeks in the UK, but then decided to return in order to complete her school education in Poland, so both her children stayed with Ania’s mother in Poland. At the time of the interview her son was studying veterinary medicine while her daughter was

studying psychology. After covering her own living costs Ania sent whatever money she had left to her children in Poland to enable them to study. In Ania's narration she set apart the life experiences she had in Poland from her current life situation. In this quote, as in her whole interview, she presented herself as someone dealing with the circumstances she faced in life without having much influence on them, although the measures she utilised were resourceful and courageous.

Other interviewees were also forced to take on the full caring responsibilities for their families, as in Kamila's case, where a violent relationship with her husband, and his alcohol dependency, left her as the sole provider for their children. In this context, while it also came with many risks such as giving up her job in a bank, leaving her children behind initially, and letting her husband stay in their property, emigration provided a rational possibility to ensure the family's livelihood.

'But in Poland it is very hard. If you are a mum who raises two children alone it is very difficult, because the government does not help you. In Poland to get some allowance you have to practically starve in the literal sense of the word. Also, I thought to myself, I cannot do it with my salary even though I worked in a bank. I cannot sustain two children and myself. I decided, well, I started to think about leaving.' (Kamila, 48 y, office worker in accountancy and Pilates trainer)

When Kamila left, her daughter stayed with Kamila's mother and her son with his father. However, she regretted this arrangement, since she learned that he had also attacked her son after she was gone. Despite everything that had happened, she still had always thought of him as a good father. Kamila found it difficult to imagine sustaining herself and her children in Poland, although she was working with an appropriate university education in a skilled job. She left for the UK and found low-paid employment in a fast food restaurant, and her children followed her soon after.

### **5.3 Migration as a family strategy and the role of femininity and masculinity**

Migration aspirations are often shaped by the situation of the family as a whole, where migration is constructed as a family strategy for achieving the livelihood of the core family (White 2011). In contrast to migration as a solution or refuge, as discussed in the previous section, the family's staying together in one or the other country and sustaining their livelihood together can become a higher priority than the wishes and careers of individual women. In these dynamics, conceptions of femininity and masculinity can come into play. In these cases, the pattern of women following their partners and husbands to the UK occurs, as was a widespread assumption about female migrants before the debate around the feminisation of migration (Morokvasić 1984). While other patterns of female migration can be observed and are discussed in the other sections of this chapter, this motivation, where women sacrifice their own preferences for the benefit of the family, existed as well. However, migration as a family strategy could be initiated by both partners, and can either lead to women following their partners and husbands or to women's migration being followed by the rest of the family, despite their initial intention to return and possible further dissatisfaction with life and work in the UK. Migration as a family strategy, however, was not always in opposition to other preferences of the interviewees, and could also overlap with the patterns of migration as a solution or as an opportunity as shown in the previous and the following sections (White 2011; Duda-Mikulin 2013).

Kinga had a very positive experience of work and employment in Poland, and this made migration to the UK for her especially problematic. However, because her husband was already working and living in the UK and had left her to care for their son with the help of family members, she then decided, following an ultimatum by her husband, to join him.

'I never planned to leave Poland. It all started with my husband saying he would go to England for a year, maybe half a year, so he would earn some money and we would pay the mortgage for our flat in Poland. And that's what happened, I stayed in Poland with our son and went to work as usual,

he came here [to the UK] and worked. My husband said that it's so nice for him here; such a nice life, that he will not return. That he doesn't want to return. So what way out did I have? I had to pack the suitcases and come to him.' (Kinga, 35 y, food packing)

Kinga sacrificed her career and her closeness to her wider family in Poland in order to keep her core family together. In her quote above it becomes evident that she felt that staying in Poland was not an option for her, since that meant becoming a single mother.

As in Kinga's case, Jolanta's husband also experienced difficulties in the Polish labour market and in providing a livelihood for his family, which, according to his wife, threatened his masculinity as a provider for his family.

'My husband couldn't find work. In the second year of my studies I found work in two schools, where I taught English to children. During that time they opened the borders and my husband together with my brother decided to go and look for work abroad, since they weren't able to find it here [in Poland], and as a young man the role of sitting at home and raising a little child didn't suit him. (...) He was always a discontented man, who had the problem that he couldn't find work, and had to sit at home with the kid. It was a bit like a depression. Always sad, irritated, something always wasn't right, but when he left for England he was revived. He became as he used to be and that was great, only that we were apart, right. (...) You know, a young man who doesn't have work, that's not good.' (Jolanta, 37 y, catering staff in hospital)

The narrative of men going to the UK in order to provide for their families and fulfil their gendered expectations was the subject of some of the interviews, where their unemployment in Poland was seen as detrimental to their wellbeing.

Joasia also joined her husband with her children and left her work and family behind. The separation from her parents was an emotional subject for her, which caused her to cry during the interview. Her husband had been working in Belgium for three years before going to the UK and Joasia had cared for their daughters on her own during that time.

‘After half a year I came [to the UK] to see how it was with the girls, because it depends on the kids, if they can adapt. My younger daughter was nine years old and Patrycja was 11. In Poland I finished work at 3 pm, then did homework on two desks, on the one side a desk, on the other a desk. In Poland I was working in a textile mill. I was also content with that work. So I risked something, it’s a risk to leave your country. I was scared, but it worked out, at least for us. We bought the first house for our daughter. We hope that our second daughter will stay here [in the second house] with us.’  
(Joasia, 42 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory)

The pattern of women taking over the caring responsibilities, with the support of other female relatives (Lutz 2007), during their partner’s absence was prevalent among interviewees who constructed migration as a family strategy.

The family strategy, as in Kinga’s story, was sometimes not a long-term strategy of settling in the UK, but was intended as a short-term move in order to save money for specific expenses, as was also found in earlier research on Polish migration in general (Okólski 2000).

‘At the end of 2006, my husband said he could go for a certain time to England, to his sister, because she already lived here; she had left a little earlier. That he would come here to his sister, work, save for a car, so life would be better for us and come back. But this did not happen; he left in 2007 and after three months he decided to suggest to me to come to him, so I came here in order to work together for a while and go back to Poland. And I liked my studies, which I had just started; I was in the first semester, I was doing well in exams, I had changed my job there, I was in a new job. He said that I would not lose this and that I could always take a gap year from studies in Poland.’ (Agata, 29 y, visual shop design in retail)

Agata stayed in the UK and she and her husband became parents. While she sometimes regretted that she did not finish her studies, she has accommodated herself to her new life, which, despite the rather low income the family made, was still far more independent than the couple’s life was in Poland, where because of their low wages they had to live with parents and grandparents.

In contrast to the above-mentioned examples of women following their partners and husbands, migration as a family strategy could also be initiated by the short-term intended move of the women, who were then followed by their family despite their wish to return. Beata reflected upon her work as a teacher in a very positive way, but explained how she came to stay in the UK in a job in the food packing industry, which had already taken a toll on her health.

‘I was a demanding teacher, but well-liked by the kids, and I always explained to them that if I demand it of you and check your homework, I check myself or the way I taught you well. I liked this work as a teacher; I worked 27 years in my profession.’ (Beata, 54 y, food packing and own small business)

Beata’s husband followed her and enjoyed life and work in the UK much more than she did; later on their children also joined them. They had all intended to stay short-term: Beata wanted to go back after ten months, her husband after two months, and their son only wanted to save money for his wedding and then return. However, when their daughter and, as the last family member, their dog joined them, their move became permanent.

‘I came to England more than six years ago. I came only for ten months. I took leave from work for that period, the headmaster had consented and after I had been here four months, my husband came for two months. He took unpaid leave for a month and one month paid leave for the two months he was here in England. We worked together [in food packing] and he liked it here in England, not me. I’m still not too thrilled about England, I do not know, maybe out of habit, it was such that I came to England at the age of 47, so some of these things in Poland, considering my age, I was not accustomed to a lot of other things, right? (...) And at that moment, if I wanted to go back to Poland I would no longer be able to, because I could not leave my family here.’ (Beata, 54 y, food packing and own small business; Aziz 2018: 141)

While Beata did not follow her husband, her move turning permanent was nevertheless a decision guided by the family’s livelihood. She highlighted her age, which she perceived as making her unable to reintegrate into the Polish

labour market, and her individual preference of returning to Poland was overruled by the family strategy.

## **5.4 Migration as an opportunity...**

In the context of life experiences in Poland, many interviewees constructed migration as an opportunity to make use of the freedom of movement provided by EU citizenship. Chapter two has already highlighted how, in the face of new possibilities following EU enlargement in 2004 and the opening up of the UK labour market for citizens of the new member states, the number of Polish migrants in the UK has risen significantly, and a new form of what Favell (2008) identified as a culture of migration has emerged, in which growing numbers of Poles migrated to the UK and the dynamic public discourse around the issue made information about the possibility of moving easily available. In this context, many of the interviewees framed migration as an opportunity that presented itself to them.

Lidia, for example, explained her migration decision as influenced by the new European context and her colleagues from school choosing to migrate.

‘We joined the EU just before my *matura* [Polish equivalent of A-levels], I think it was 2004, that Poland joined and the border was open. So seeing everyone else emigrating it was kind of a natural decision, because a lot of my school friends were emigrating as well at the time. (...) I knew that I would be Ok in the UK. I knew the language well enough to be able to cope with moving there. To be honest with you, I was very naive, I was 18, I honestly thought it would be smooth. (...) It was just a complete accident that I ended up where I ended up. I wasn’t keen on London really. Because London is crowded as it is, private houses and so on. I wasn’t thinking Scotland, Wales or whatever, it just happened.’ (Lidia, 27 y, office worker for local government)

In this context Lidia's choice of work and of geographical location in the UK was associated with her perception of migration being 'a natural decision', as described by Schütze (1983) in the institutional pattern of the life course, where an individual fulfills a culturally embedded expectation.

Besides seeing colleagues and friends emigrate, some interviewees also reported how family members' migration, as well as the development of a culture of migration, enforced the perception of migration as a possible life trajectory (Favell 2008).

'It was one after the other that someone emigrated, half of my mother's family is in Canada and my dad went there when I was still little. Dad probably left Poland when I was about eight years old. From elementary school until I was 14 years old my dad was there and then he came back to Poland for good, but we had the chance for the whole family to go to Canada, but my grandmother didn't want to emigrate at the time and later dad had already had enough of Canada, so that was how we didn't emigrate.' (Aga, 30 y, store manager)

Aga grew up in a rural area in Poland and remembered showing the packages she received from her father in Canada to her classmates to impress them. Following the family decision not to emigrate, Aga finished school and studied for three years before deciding to go abroad for some time, initially planned for a year, to earn money and not have to keep taking advantage of her parents' money. She first went to a friend in Germany, but soon after joined her sister in the UK, which represents a common pattern of social networks leading to chain migration (Faist 2000).

#### **5.4.1 ... for an intended short-term gap year or an open-ended adventure**

Many informants planned their move as short-term or open-ended, actively making use of their citizenship rights. This migration pattern reflects the findings of the research undertaken by Eade *et al.* (2006) that a substantial proportion of around 42 % of Polish migrants deliberately do not try to make up their mind about a possible return and simply do not know; this phenomenon has been

called 'intentional unpredictability' (Eade *et al.* 2006: 9). In this concept, the decision to migrate, as well as the path taken during migration, is associated with the idea of trying this new opportunity and seeing where it leads, or as Kaźmierska *et al.* (2011) frame it, 'embarking on a journey'. This was often the case in the sample for young women who left Poland right after taking their *matura*, the Polish equivalent of A-levels; during an *urlop dziekański*, a gap year or a dean's break from university; or after receiving their academic degree in order to get their first work experience abroad. While many of these women had no plans as to whether or not they would return, others understood this as a gap year strategy to earn some money and learn some English; especially, those on an *urlop dziekański* intended to come back to finish their studies. However, this was not always realised, as in Agata's case from section 5.3, and the issue will be investigated in greater depth in chapter eight on return aspirations and experiences. While all of the informants framing their migration aspiration in this way referred to the possibility of finding work and earning money in the UK, they were not, as in section 5.2, facing existential needs that were met with an instrumental emigration, but rather viewing their move as an adventure. This opportunity-approach to migration was sometimes combined with individual arguments of looking for independence or emotional distancing.

Most of these young women said that they did not worry a lot about their emigration beforehand, since they would always be able to come back. Bożena, however, who had left for the UK right after her *matura*, in retrospect found it surprising that her parents allowed her to leave on her own, and remembers the difficult early stages of her migration experiences.

'The one day I picked up my results and left right afterwards on the same day. (...) Because why not, why not? I liked to set myself high bars. (...) I am surprised that my parents allowed me to go alone. I was 18 years old and I wasn't a very resourceful kid either. I didn't really have anyone to lean on there. I didn't have anyone who could have helped me. I left alone and didn't know how to pull myself together and how to look for work. So I relied on my parents' money, but I also learned English. I went to an English course and there I met people and I found work, but it seems to me

that that was a bit too stressful and too much of a challenge for an 18 year old, because I wasn't all that self-sufficient myself.' (Bożena, 28 y, waitress in the UK; journalist following return)

While Bożena encountered some difficulties after her move, her construction of migration aspirations exemplified by the question 'why not?' is parallel to the approach and explanation most of the younger women referred to. However, her perception of emigration as challenging needs to be understood in the context of her return as well. While common in some aspects, her case was different to most of the women who emigrated at the end of their schooling. These usually did not go to the UK on their own, but either joined family or friends abroad or emigrated with their partners at the time. In Lidia's case above, for example, her mother accompanied her in her migration.

For many interviewees, especially those women who had been in the UK since their early twenties and who had now reached their late twenties or early thirties, migration aspirations were at times associated with the possibility of living independently or of distancing themselves from their previous life experiences. Liliana for example only planned to work in the UK for two months to earn some money after she finished her university studies, and to achieve some distance from an emotional break-up. However, she worked through an agency, which often only provided work for a week or two. This forced her to extend her stay several times before return in order to be able to pay for her living expenses in the UK. She rationalised her migration as a means of overcoming the separation from her partner and acquiring work and life experience. While her work and financial difficulties made her time in the UK stressful, she did not perceive it as a personal, financial or professional risk, but as an opportunity to be embraced for a young, independent European woman. Olga, in contrast, even gave up a beneficial position as an English teacher after she won flight tickets to the UK in a competition at a work party, explaining this decision alongside her newfound independence after divorcing her husband.

'There I was the didactic consultant, I maybe worked in that English school for a year and was even promoted to a head consultant. (...) I already spoke English quite well and when one of my friends left for England I also decided to go to England, because a lot was changing at that time in

my personal life. Because I had married in 1999 and a couple of years later, when I was 30 years old, six years later in 2005 I divorced my husband and there was already nothing keeping me in Poland. (...) I asked my parents if I should go or not go, they encouraged me to go. They said to go for a month and if it works out, it works out, and if not I should come back, I'll have an adventure.' (Olga, 38 y, Catering staff, hospitality supervisor in higher education institution)

In Olga's story the combination of adventure with her independence after divorce, but also with the need for emotional distancing, led her to make use of the freedom of movement and the flight ticket she had won. If other colleagues in different life situations had won the tickets, they might have seen it as an opportunity for a holiday trip, not for emigration.

In many of these patterns, the move occurred during the university holiday period or after a year of studying and taking a gap year. Since most interviewees who studied also had to work while in Poland and usually lived with their parents or other family members, they did not feel independent as adults. Living arrangements in Poland were very often a matter of discontent for these young women, as we have already seen in Agata's case in section 5.3. Most could not afford to live alone; others wished to resist family expectations that they would settle down and have children and they associated living in the UK with the freedom not to comply with these expectations.

'So the plan was for me to come here only with him for three months, and also to earn money for myself and be independent for a while. Living independently in Poland, I really wanted it, after already being accepted to study in Poznań and Gdańsk and also in various other cities. I really wanted to get out of the house, but not because the house was not nice, but because I just wanted to be independent. Like in American movies, to live in a dorm, and so on; well, it did not work out. Well, it was the plan to go to England, to earn money and come back after the holidays.' (Basia, 30 y, office worker in finance department)

While Basia came to the UK with her partner at the time, she quickly became independent economically, lived on her own, pursued further education, and highly valued her independence.

Some interviewees framed a lack of opportunities in Poland as encouraging short-term circular migration patterns. These were often short-term trips to earn money for specific expenses or study costs, which later on in some cases turned to permanent settlement. Maja found herself challenged with a lack of finances in her family to study, and decided to work abroad as an au pair in Belgium for some time in order to save up money for her studies. She was one of three children growing up in a rural area, and her family did not have the means for her higher education after they had supported her older brother to study. When her relationship with her partner became more serious their plans changed, and her savings from abroad and his income served as the basis for their wedding expenses. Her partner's professional football career was threatened by some injuries and his club at times not being able to pay out the players' salaries. They decided to seek their opportunities abroad to support their couple's life.

'In general I did well in school even at the *matura* [Polish equivalent to A-levels]. I thought about studying; the only problem was that, well, I had an older and a younger brother. And when my older brother went to study, we had the situation at home that there was a lack of money, you know, for two people to study, and somehow, I don't hold a grudge against anyone, but that's how it was. So I knew I wouldn't go to study, and a friend of mine from school worked in Belgium and offered me work. It was supposed to only be for the holidays, you know, to earn some money, and then go to study. I already had a boyfriend then and it had already gotten serious between us. I went to Belgium during the holidays and it went very well there, I had a great family (...) Later it was like I already felt that I had my own money a bit, that I didn't have to beg for it. And that's when my boyfriend and I started talking about the wedding and I said OK, I'll stay a bit longer in Belgium to work, we'll save up money for the wedding.'

(Maja, 32 y, kitchen staff in care home)

Maja ended up never financing her studies with the money she earned abroad, but first having her wedding and later on migrating with her husband to the UK, where her parents joined them. Patrycja also had to give up her educational aspirations, after her parents had spent most of their money on the debt caused by her brother. Her family's expectation still led her to study what was available locally and she performed very well. However, due to her frustration with the subject of her studies, she decided to join her boyfriend at the time in the UK.

'After I had to give up my dreams of acting and journalism, because it would have meant having to go to Warsaw or Kraków, where I could have done this, I was accepted to the study of libraries and their history and academic-technical information. A very boring subject, very boring things, but my parents wanted me to study something, so I studied for four years, I had good results, even higher than the average, so I received money from the government. Everything went well; however, I wasn't happy. I met my former boyfriend and decided to leave, first to go to friends and then to him. I tried to carry on with those studies for a bit.' (Patrycja, 30 y, manager for security staff in a higher education institution)

Although Patrycja came back for a short time in an attempt to continue her studies, in the end she gave them up and regretted that she had registered for a MA program, which is a four- to five-year curriculum directly leading to an academic degree, instead of a three-year *licencjat* or BA. This choice was a common regret amongst the interviewees who left Poland during their studies. Most of them discontinued their studies in Poland at some point, while a few started different weekend courses in Poland at a later stage in their migration experience.

#### **5.4.2 ... to be mobile**

The typology of Polish migrants in the UK consisting of young, highly-educated people, looking for new experiences, were framed as 'searchers' (Eade *et al.* 2006), upcoming 'cosmopolitans' (Datta 2009), or 'Cosmo-Poles' (Irek 2012). These patterns of migration aspirations in the present sample also intersected with an appreciation of an intrinsic value of mobility, where migration was circular, not back and forth, but including various multiple steps on the way. The

informants showing this highly fluid paradigm were interesting for the conceptualisation of the female Polish migrant making use of her EU citizenship rights as a mobile citizen, not as a migrant in the classic sense. Some of the women had already been in the UK before and in the meantime they had gone somewhere else; one went back to Poland and managed a shop and then a restaurant, but came back after its closure, the other had managed a hostel in a different country, and came back to fulfil her professional career goals. These cases, after their return to the UK, started out again at a lower level of employment than they had been in previously, but had an individual goal of progressing within a few years. It seems that these interviewees valued travelling and having new experiences more than continuous professional progress, and took into account that a new move was likely to lead to downward social mobility at first.

For some women, the circular migratory pattern was also an experience of challenging prevalent gender roles.

‘When I graduated, I started to travel abroad. I was in Greece and worked as a waitress, Spain, Cyprus as well. I’ve always had the need to explore other places and my parents always wanted me to get married, have a child, so for my parents if I would get married and have children they would not have to worry about anything. But I was never that way and after graduation I decided to go to England just to learn English, and then I stayed here.’ (Kaja, 34 y, care worker and building up own business)

This highly mobile pattern of Kaja’s work migration experiences made it possible for her to challenge her family’s expectations. In this pattern many moves were encouraged by friends and partners the women had at the time, as was the case for Kaja, and also for Hania. Hania was guided by the need to earn and save money and the personal relations formed during the process.

‘I went for half a year to Cyprus; after half a year in Cyprus I met a guy, who was from [a town in Poland], so we returned to Poland after half a year and moved to this town. And later, he came here from the town to [a city in the UK].’ (Hania, 30 y, food analyst)

This moving in the context of social relationships on the one hand enabled the women to minimise their risk, and on the other hand was also seen as a main reason for mobility.

Irena showed an extremely high level of mobility, moving here and there, back and forth, sometimes within a matter of months, sometimes two years. She explained this pattern in terms of her need to explore the world, serving her personal fulfilment while at the same time accepting changes in her social status.

'During my studies I went to the USA for four months in a work and travel program, where I spent the holidays. That was the first experience abroad and then I already knew that I would probably travel more often. (...) This has also formed me a lot, in a sense it showed me that I could manage being abroad by myself. (...) In Poland I always felt this depression syndrome after having been abroad. Not really a depression, but this difference in Poland. (...) And then, when the work in the company stopped I came to the UK. My friend has been here before, so OK, why not.' (Irena, 28 y, receptionist at a restaurant)

Irena had been a shop manager in Poland before going to the UK, and after staying for five months and having found a job and a place of her own, she received a new job offer in Poland to manage a restaurant and went back for one and a half years, before she came to the UK again for her current stay to work in low-skilled jobs again.

#### **5.4.3 ... for professional fulfilment or higher education**

Migration was, as discussed above, often used or intended as a means to finance one's studies. It was rarely the case that the interviewees went to the UK in order to fulfil their professional aspirations, since most of them did not expect to find employment in their profession or passion. However, in the present sample there were cases in which migration aspirations were constructed as a pathway to professional fulfilment. Justyna reflected upon her interests during school and further education in Poland as lying within working with people from different backgrounds, which she actively pursued in her migration to the UK and her determination in following this career path, in which she started out as a

volunteer and later in administration. After her Polish diploma in pedagogy she had stayed with relatives in Germany, but decided that the UK would offer more diversity and the chance for her to fulfill her professional aspirations.

‘Somehow I decided that Germany was too similar to Poland. I wanted to go to an English-speaking country, I wanted to work in a place which would offer me the possibility to meet people from different cultural backgrounds, because I felt that everyone was white, everyone was Catholic, and I wanted to meet people from different countries and be in an area that would give me the possibility to work in such an environment.’

(Justyna, 33 y, education project worker)

Justyna appeared to have known exactly what she expected from her work and where her interests lay, and followed the opportunity to fulfil this ambition. Pharmacist Jola was one of the rare cases where the employer came into her university, while she was still studying in Poland, presenting the benefits of employment in the UK.

‘While studying I was looking for work abroad in England; it was still the time when agencies would come to the universities and recruited students, so you could either go for an internship for a couple of months first during the holidays or you could leave for the employer straight after finishing your diploma.’ (Jola, 30 y, pharmacist)

This employer offered the choice of various locations around the UK and the students were able to pick from these, but Jola did not know a lot about the UK and just picked a place to go on the map, since it looked nice with its location close to the sea. In the months after her diploma and before leaving for the UK Jola had worked in a similar position as a pharmacist close to her home town in Poland, but did not engage in any reflection on whether to stay. Rather she felt that this was an opportunity, which she responded to because it seemed the thing to do.

While many interviewees developed educational aspirations following emigration and pursued further qualifications in the UK following their move, their initial main motivation for migration was rarely higher education. This was only the case for Grażyna and Klaudia, who both came to the UK supported by

their families in Poland to take up university studies abroad. This educational aspiration of studying in the UK was, in both life stories, already encouraged by their families while they were growing up. They were sent to private English tutoring and on trips to the UK before finishing school, as an exchange program or for summer schools. The value of UK education was promoted by their families, who were able to finance these courses and trips as well as to support the later study costs owing to their greater affluence, in contrast to the families of most of the other informants.

‘Later when I was 12 or 13 years old I suddenly had the feeling that I wanted to go to England, I learned English from a young age in private sessions. And when I was 12 or 13 years old I went to the English embassy in Warsaw and left for school. For a whole year in 1991, there were visas, and I had a Polish and a German passport, I used the German one, because I knew it would be easier with the German than with the Polish. And the school was in [Southwest England]. The English school was nice; it was much easier to learn, because I didn't speak any Polish with anyone at that time.’ (Grażyna, 33 y, insurance and finance market analyst)

Grażyna's experiences abroad started early on and looking back she did not see herself as a migrant, because in her view she never made the active decision to leave Poland. Her case is also interesting in relation to the proactive use of citizenship so early in her life (Cook *et al.* 2012).

‘It was different with me, because I never really decided to emigrate as such. I came here to study first and didn't know what I would do afterwards. I was supposed to be here for studying and then somewhere else. I thought I would stay in Japan because I was there, later I had an internship in New York in the meantime and thought maybe I'll stay in New York, but not that much. Later suddenly I finished my studies here and got my first job and stayed. And later you know I met my husband, who is Polish, I met him when I was in Poland for holidays once. We had our first child, I was 30 years old, a couple of years later the second and somehow suddenly I was here for some 20 years. But I'm telling you I never decided to leave.’ (Grażyna, 33 y, insurance and finance market analyst)

Klaudia had spent an exchange year at a high school in the USA and later decided to undertake an *International Bacchalaureate* back in Poland, after which she studied at a prestigious UK university and finished her doctorate.

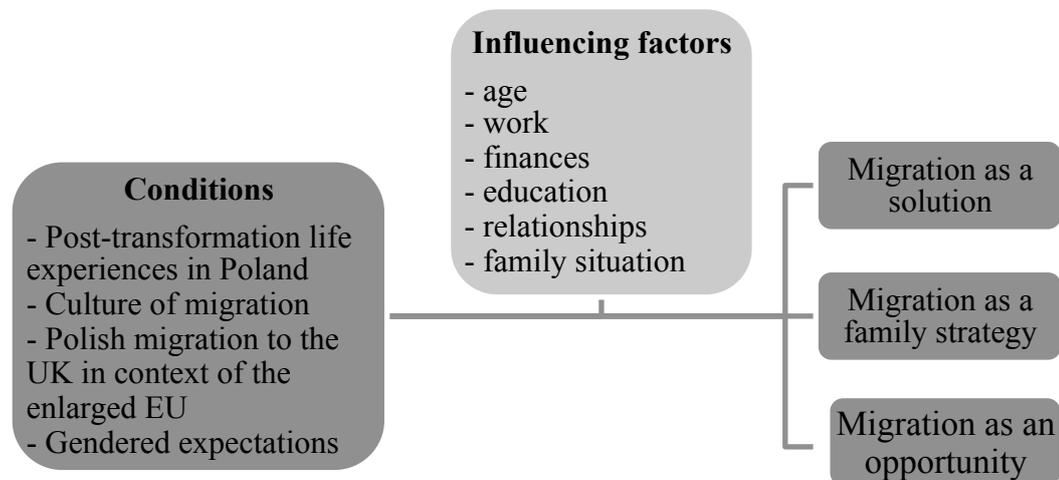
‘Together with my brother we learned English and German in and outside school, and we went to these summer schools in London or in England. And that trip to the States was a bit like an adventure, and a bit to learn English, to see the world a bit. (...) My parents have higher education qualifications. My mum has a postgraduate diploma, and my dad did his doctorate in chemistry. In general, education was always very important.’  
(Klaudia, 28 y, market analyst)

Both these women referred to the high value education had in their families and to the high level of education their parents had. Since Polish migration to the UK was such an established phenomenon, they might also did not want to be seen as Polish migrants, because of its association with work migration.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The construction of migration aspirations, in the context of work and life experiences in Poland prior to emigration, can follow different, sometimes overlapping patterns as represented in Figure 6. These aspirations are influenced by the politico-institutional structure of the enlarged EU with its freedom to move granted to EU citizens; by the social structure of gender regimes with certain gendered expectations, which can be challenged or followed by the women; and by the economic structure of the post-transformation labour market. In these structures of opportunities, the interviewees reflected upon their situation and decided to act. The act of migration was then constructed as a solution, a family strategy, or an opportunity. However, these women moved between these motives and their sub-motives and combined many aspirations in their individual migration.

**Figure 6** Construction of migration aspirations



Some interviewees constructed migration as a form of rational decision-making (Massey 1999) when for them it offered a solution following a trajectory of suffering (Schütze 1983) or they pursued more sustainable livelihoods through migration. In this pattern the dynamic that economic interdependence, problematic partnerships and low wages could take was crucial, comparable to ‘escape from...’ as conceptualised by Kaźmierska *et al.* (2011). While for all patterns of migration aspirations the family situation came into play, in some cases the family strategy to stay together and sustain their livelihood in one or the other country overrode the individual preferences of women. In this context the concepts of femininity and masculinity appeared to be critical, as this pattern could lead to women following their husbands and men striving to be the family’s provider. In face of a developed culture of migration and the enlarged EU, migration has also been constructed as an opportunity. Interviewees constructing this aspiration in their narration were guided by the question: ‘why not?’ In their perception they were ‘embarking on a journey’ (Kaźmierska *et al.* 2011) to see what would happen, as in the concept of ‘intentional unpredictability’ (Eade *et al.* 2006: 9). Herein adventure was often combined with the aspiration for independence, for example when the living arrangements in Poland did not provide for a self-determined way of life. Additionally, a

certain lack of opportunities in Poland contributed to migration being constructed as an opportunity for migration patterns that were often intended to be short-term and circular. Research on Polish migration to the UK has analysed this pattern of young, often highly-educated migrants looking for new experiences and termed them as 'searchers' (Eade *et al.* 2006), 'cosmopolitans' (Datta 2009), or 'Cosmo-Poles' (Irek 2012). In the pattern of migration being constructed as an opportunity, the pro-active use of EU citizenship by mobile citizens brings in a distinct aspect of the new migration system in Europe (Favell 2008).

These findings provide crucial insights into the influence of the pre-migration context on women's meaning-making and migration aspirations. In the context of the post-transformation labour market in Poland and gendered economic interdependence, migration to the UK was constructed as a solution. This could be the solution to different problematic situations suggesting the relevance of agency in the pursuit to overcome these difficulties through migration, contributing further to research on female migration (Lutz 2007). Another contribution to knowledge is derived from the finding on the role of masculinity and femininity in the context of migration as a family strategy at times overruling individual women's preferences, which adds to literature on family's livelihood strategies and gender regimes (White 2011; McCall 2005). Furthermore, the prevalent culture of migration found its expression in the interviewees' conceptualisation of migration as opportunity (Favell 2008). This finding supports the approach of investigating migration aspirations in the context of post-accession East-West migration, especially relevant for young, highly educated women with no dependants prepared to take risks.

## **CHAPTER 6: Experiences of work in the UK**

‘I worked a lot of hours as a waitress, then I decided (...) I want something more, so I started to study, work, study, work.’  
(Patrycja, 29 y, manager for security staff in a higher education institution)

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores work in the UK, as experienced by female Polish migrant workers. The focus of the thesis on female migrants, who at the time of the interviews were working in the UK or had worked in the UK before their return to Poland, is reflected in the sections of this chapter on routes into work and employment, experiences of working lives, and different patterns of migrant work trajectories. Beyond a descriptive approach, these sections aim at uncovering the perceptions of migrant life and opportunities held by interviewees, and how they understand the routes available to them and the experiences made by them. This includes the evolution and transformation of aspirations related to work and education. Other areas of everyday life will be the subjects of the next chapter.

Experiences of migrant and feminised work took place in the context of the enlarged EU, rendering female Polish migrant workers at the crossroads of these areas, being a migrant and a woman (McCall 2005). While gender roles were often perpetuated in the public sphere or work context, migration and work could also lead to challenging gender expectations in the private sphere. Furthermore, experiences of occupational stagnation or mobility took place in the context of the migration experience, often influenced by the length of stay, the family situation and where qualifications were obtained. All of these dynamics connected to the work experiences of the interviewees contribute to an understanding of how the conditions and influencing factors shape aspirations and experiences, and how women make meaning of them.

## **6.2 Routes into work**

The interviewees reflected upon the different routes into work and employment which they had utilised in the UK and which have influenced the potential precariousness of their work and their success in finding work. As the routes into work have characterised their work experiences, in this section these pathways will be scrutinised in relation to their impact on working lives and the interplay of opportunity structures and agency. These routes into work spring from the dynamics brought about by the institutional change of European citizenship, offering the possibility of accessing legal employment and relieving the pressure of being forced into the informal sector. Furthermore, in many cases work agencies have taken advantage of this new need for intermediation, and were accompanied by their own risks and precarious arrangements in the experiences of the interviewees. Besides the routes into work through the developing structures offered by work agencies recruiting directly in Poland to work in the UK, and by UK work agencies tailoring their services to Polish migrant workers, pro-active migrants also used alternative ways of accessing work such as door-to-door enquiring and online advertisements. These means of accessing work have also entailed the potential of vulnerability for the interviewees because of their informality. While initial downward occupational mobility was widespread among the interviewed Polish women and finding work in one's own Polish profession was difficult, the following section will show that it is not impossible.

### **6.2.1 Informal work, regularisation and access to legal employment**

While the focus of this thesis lies in post-accession migration, some of the interviewees had experiences with migration to the UK prior to enlargement. They had rarely taken advantage of formal entrance and employment schemes for specific sectors, but rather had worked in the informal sector, for example as waitresses, nannies and au pairs, after entering the UK on a tourist visa. With time, migrant networks grew, transnational communities expanded, and migrants collected experiences and became better informed in finding opportunities, as Engbersen *et al.* (2010) also point out. In most cases in the sample, this was a separate, short-term movement prior to another one following enlargement, in

which either formal employment was taken up or the previous social networks from the earlier, more informal migration to the UK were re-activated in order to find similar informal work for a short time before returning back to Poland. This route into work, despite the availability of more formal arrangements, presented itself as a faster track to work for these second-time migrants. Dagmara for example came to the UK twice, once before and once after 2004. In the late 1990s she had left as a refuge from various tragic experiences, such as both of her parents dying from cancer and her boss in Poland committing suicide. She had studied journalism, but changed her full-time studies to part-time in order to be able to live in the same city as her parents when they fell ill. In this time of crisis she had also joined the Pentecostal Church as it offered her refuge at the time. In the UK she enrolled in a journalism course but had difficulty finding employment and worked as a waitress, during which time she wrote seminar papers for other students in exchange for money. She saw this first year in the UK as wasted time, and referred to missing Poland and being upset about giving up on her studies as reasons for her first return.

‘In the meantime I was accepted in a journalism school, so it was maybe a zero year. Why do I even say maybe? The studies were very expensive, back then we weren’t in the EU, it was 1997 and I was maybe there for longer, or 1998. In any case I didn’t make any money, I worked a bit as a waitress, I worked there illegally. So you know. I met a lot of nice people and I started writing papers for care workers. There were these German women and I wrote papers for example on gynaecology in English for them and that’s where I made a bit of money. (...) Well, because I had paused the journalism, my parents died, my boss shot himself – I fled my problems basically.’ (Dagmara, 44 y, waitress/nanny in the informal sector; English teacher, screenplay writer and leading a children’s theatre group following return)

However, the stay abroad influenced her further educational pathway, as she perceived her extra job of writing papers for others in exchange for money as a testimony of her proficient English knowledge, not as an ethically dubious activity, and studied English and American studies after return. She always had a passion for languages, referring back to learning Russian in her childhood in a Polish city that had a military base for Russian soldiers until the early 1990s. She

was successful in her studies in Poland and felt motivated to try her luck again when Poland joined the EU, constructing emigration as an opportunity.

‘And then we joined the EU maybe in 2004 or 2005, and I decided to continue my studies in London. (...) I thought I’d give myself another chance, maybe it will be nice.’ (Dagmara, 44 y, waitress/nanny in the informal sector; English teacher, screenplay writer and leading a children’s theatre group following return)

With a group of six people, she went to the UK again, and while her plan was to continue her studies in the UK and stay there permanently, her friends had planned to return back to Poland after some time. However, the opposite happened: while her friends stayed, she returned, because she again found it difficult to find stable, legal employment that would cover her costs of living and studying. This group had been in London during the terrorist attacks of July 2005, which also motivated Dagmara to return to, in her view, ‘quiet, Catholic, unimportant Poland’. While informal work for some interviewees was a pathway into employment, for others such as Dagmara it was a short-term, fast track solution and often did not suffice for a permanent stay.

Freedom of movement eased the pressure to engage in informal work, and the interviewees started to construct informal work only as a fast, yet short-term solution before return or as an entrance point into the labour market. Enlargement also provided a de-facto amnesty for workers from Central and Eastern European countries, who had been working in the UK prior to enlargement and had stayed there (Drinkwater *et al.* 2006: 5). For Anderson *et al.* (2006) an important change for East-West migration through enlargement was this change of status of migrant workers, who as prior undocumented workers received an amnesty, as well as the freedom to change employers and sectors.

An example of this change in status was Edyta’s story; at the time of the interview she had already been living in the UK for 14 years. She had met her former partner on a four months’ work and travel stay in the USA during her study years. At first they decided to go to Poland, since it was not possible for her to reside legally in the USA, but because of her partner’s English-speaking background they later on decided it would be easier for them to go to the UK and

for Edyta to enter the country as a tourist. In 1999 she went to the UK and started working in the informal sector; she was constantly scared of being detected and tried to find ways to legalise her work. Later on she applied for a self-employed visa, a method of legalising one's stay that was used by some Polish migrant workers at that time (Anderson *et al.* 2006). In essence this often meant a form of 'bogus' self-employment, since they were in practice working for and dependent on only one employer.

'The owner [of the sandwich shop] exploited the fact that he didn't pay taxes and paid me cash in hand. (...) Yes, but obviously it was a risk for him and for me. I had a couple of situations when I was returning home and saw a police car in front of the house, and I was so scared. I was convinced that someone had informed them about me. I was scared to go back, I thought that... oh well, it was of course [there because] of an accident. But you live in such fear. (...) Now obviously I think about it with some sentimentality but back then it was very stressful.' (Edyta, 38 y, office worker for immigration advice company)

Following EU enlargement Edyta immediately took advantage of being able to become officially employed. Earlier as a self-employed migrant she had to ensure having sufficient funds for her registered business and prove that she did not have to rely on welfare support. Her change of status enabled her to obtain a mortgage in order to buy a flat in the UK. With years of personal experience as a migrant, after working mostly in sandwich shops and taxi call centres, Edyta built her expertise in the field of visa and travel arrangements and has been working in this area for over ten years. Her expert status in this specialised field led to her receiving promotion offers from competing employers in the same field every couple of years. Edyta's case also shows how European citizenship supported her ability to progress professionally, she was able to capitalise on her own experiences as a migrant and had in fact built a successful career on this insider knowledge. As these cases show the EU enlargement has led to reduced pressure from the informal migrant labour market and advanced capabilities (Lutz 2007; de Haas 2014).

## 6.2.2 Work agencies: risk assessment, precariousness and the role of social networks

Poland's EU membership also offered new ways of recruiting for UK-based companies. Employers made use of Polish work agencies and organised direct recruitment from Poland into their UK workplaces (Cook *et al.* 2011). Some of the interviewees took advantage of these new opportunities, applying to Polish-based agencies, which often offered work in the UK care sector. The interviewees were conscious of the risks such recruitment might entail and often made arrangements for their return to Poland, such as agreed short-term leave of absence from work or studies, in case it did not work out. Maja, for example, has made use of this opportunity while being aware of the potential risks.

'The company that sent us here, proved to be honest – because at that time in Poland there were many companies that promised work abroad, and later it turned out that they collected the passports and money and the people stayed without work and means to live. (...) The employer came to Poland, and when we were at the three-day training offered by the employer, who paid for accommodation, food and the training, probably on the third day they gave us the contracts and then the agency only agreed with us the date when we would leave. That was very soon, in two months. So there wasn't a lot of time to think, and the risk was high. But I had that guarantee for two months in Poland that if something didn't work out I could still return. (...) So since the British or English company needed employees and didn't do interviews in their own country, that means that they need workers. (...) So we were really needed. It wasn't two or five people but a thousand people at least. And I know that this recruitment went on for another couple of years.' (Maja, 32 y, kitchen staff in care home)

Besides Polish agencies offering direct recruitment into employment in the UK, UK-based work agencies also served as routes into work. However, these two pathways are characterised by crucial differences affecting the precariousness of working lives. Contracts with agencies based in Poland usually only entailed the recruitment period and at times covered the first couple of months up to a year of employment, requiring workers to stay in their job for a minimum amount of

time or otherwise they would have to pay back the agency's commission that the employer had paid beforehand. Therefore these workers had a permanent contract of employment directly with the UK companies, in addition to a short-term contract with the Polish agency. The UK-based agencies the interviewees had utilised, were working in a different manner, where workers would usually sign up with them and receive their appointments of work on the basis of short-term notices and with no guarantee of hours of work or income. While some interviewees were later on directly employed by the employer to which they had been sent through these agencies, others stayed attached to the agency, which sent them to different employers depending on the employers' seasonal needs. Liliana accessed work through an agency in the context of her short-term intended stay in the UK.

‘It varied – there were days when I worked 12 hours, and there were days – towards the end – when I worked only four hours a day, because it turned out that there was no work. I worked through an agency, which a friend of mine had organised. She said from one day to the other, that I will be going to work. From the day after my arrival I already went to work because she had organised it. We worked together but in different departments. It was an English agency that only cared about its profit, surely not about the people that worked there. Many people saw what happened there in the warehouse; lawyers would really have a shock.’ (Liliana, 25 y, warehouse; looking for a job following return)

Liliana did not perceive her stay and work in the UK in terms of its precariousness, but as a short-term opportunity. Her story nevertheless shows the uncertainty these work arrangements could cause, leading, in her case, for her to extend her stay several times in order to be able to cover her expenses.

The role of social networks in migration, providing secure living and work arrangements, was highlighted in the previous chapter, and Liliana's quote also showed the relevance of such social contacts to access work. Ania was, in contrast to Liliana, more vulnerable to the precariousness of agency work, as she was a single parent to her children in Poland. After experiencing the instability of agency work in the UK, her social contacts proved to be significant in finding stable employment.

‘She worked back then with her husband in the factory and her husband said, ‘let’s see what we can do’ and he went to his boss and at some point they called me; at that moment I had already been sitting at home for three weeks, and they called me and said ‘come here to work’. Generally I rather quickly got the contract, after a week. Because there they don't have agencies, they don't have work through agencies, only people with contracts work there, it’s not such a big company that they need an agency.’(Ania, 43 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory)

Most interviewees who stayed in the UK for a longer period had managed to receive a direct contract of employment with their employer, thereby transcending agency-commissioned, precarious work. While for Ania migration had been constructed as a solution to fulfil her sole provider role for her children, social networks were relevant in most patterns of migration aspirations. Also, in the context of mobility and opportunities, networks would enhance the apparent ease of moving, as in Irena’s case.

‘My friend had been working here earlier. She came back to Poland. So when I was looking for work, I simply asked friends who had contacts. I asked her to let me know, she just asked them if they were looking for someone. She sent my CV and they invited me for an interview with the manager. And I got it, so that somehow also easily worked out.’ (Irena, 28y, receptionist at a restaurant)

In this quote Irena, by narrating it with few details and in an anecdotal fashion, created the impression that finding work was easy when you had contacts. This enabled high mobility, but with no regards towards the type of work that was accessed. The analysis of the interviews therefore provides insights into the role of social and transnational networks in migrant work experiences (Sassen 2007; Favell 2008).

### **6.2.3 Alternative ways of accessing work: door-to-door enquiry and online advertisements**

Besides work agencies and social contacts, a common way of finding work for the interviewees was to walk around busy areas to look for ‘help wanted’ signs, or walk into restaurants and shops to enquire about employment. This experience

was often aggravated by a lack of language skills and confidence in a new environment. In Poland, Kamila was forced to take on the role of sole provider for her children, but her income did not suffice. When she came to the UK, she found a small room in a house owned by a Polish woman who had come to the UK following the Second World War. She reported that this woman, like many of the post Second World War Polish migrants in the UK, seemed distrustful of the new Polish migrants, and critical of their socialisation during socialist times and of their decision to leave Poland during economically difficult times, rather than during politically oppressive times (Düvell and Garapich 2011). From Kamila's perspective, the woman had a lack of understanding as to why she, Kamila, would choose to come to the UK to look for work, when in her perception 'in England not even the English have work'.

'I came here with no knowledge of the language, I didn't know any English so where should I work and I can already give up the hope of ever bringing my kids here. I remember, I cried horribly back then, because I wanted to hear that I will make it and that there is a lot of work, that surely I will find something. That was the first day when I had just arrived and sat down and she tells me all those news. But I thought, I will not give in, I will look for work and back then I couldn't say 'I'm looking for a job' – I didn't know how to say that. So I looked up in the dictionary different words and when I went to the bars, restaurants, pubs I said 'I want to find work'. And one time when I was in a pub a waitress looked at me and said 'What do you mean? What do you want? Are you looking for a job?' And I was like ding, ding, ding – that's how I'm supposed to say it, that's how I should ask.'

(Kamila, 48 y, office worker in accountancy and Pilates trainer)

While for Kamila language was a barrier, for many of the younger interviewees who came to the UK immediately following their A-levels or during or after their studies, their lack of confidence and work experience made this way of accessing work a challenging experience. Bożena referred to her surprise, in retrospect, that her parents let her go to the UK on her own despite her young age and immaturity.

'At first when I was looking for work, I remember that I was scared to go into these places. I was scared to ask, I was a bit shy. I didn't have the boldness to just walk into a place and ask for a job. Until I found this

restaurant, where this guy said yes I could come in the evening and someone will take me to the city. And it was a bit dramatic – after a while I realised what it was about. He surely thought it's obvious what kind of work I was looking for. That was a real shock for me. It was obviously a completely different unknown world to me. (...) There comes a young Polish woman, in short shorts, and that's what he thought.' (Bożena, 28 y, waitress; journalist following return)

Besides having to overcome her lack of self-confidence, this negative experience made it even more difficult for her to look for work in this informal and potentially vulnerable manner.

Using websites with job advertisements such as gumtree was another alternative, and because of its informality a potentially risky method of accessing work. When Lidia went to the UK with her mother, encouraged by migration as an opportunity in the enlarged EU, she organised a live-in job, because they did not have any social contacts in the UK or saved-up money.

'And therefore I made the decision that I want to move to the UK when I have done my A-levels. Because my mum is a very protective person, she wasn't prepared to let me go on my own, so we moved together. And it was tough to start off with, because we didn't know anyone. I found a job on gumtree and it was a job in a private house, which is also sort of like a bed and breakfast and wedding sort of venue. And basically when we actually turned up in the UK, we only stayed there for two weeks, because we realised that the person that was running the place, was basically expecting slave labour. (...) I just sort of looked up basically a job that could give us accommodation as well at the same time, because obviously when I moved, I didn't know anyone here in the UK and I had no money to start renting right away, so I needed somewhere to stay and work at the same place.' (Lidia, 27 y, office worker for local government)

Following this exploitative experience Lidia found two more live-in jobs on gumtree, which both also turned out to be highly precarious. Only when Lidia and her mother had met new friends, who later offered them work in their care home, were they able to find stable employment. However, social contacts in the

country of destination, while often providing safety, do not always offer routes into employment. Zosia also went door-to-door seeking employment in local businesses when she came to the UK following her brother's emigration. Her brother and his wife with their two young children wanted to take advantage of the, as she framed it, 'boom' of emigration at the time and suggested that Zosia join them. Zosia had worked in a regional courthouse in Poland alongside her studies, but earned less than the tuition fees she had to pay for her part-time studies. Although she was offered a higher-paid position before she left, she chose to leave because the post offered would only have been for a fixed term, and even with double of what she had earned before, the income would still not have been enough to sustain herself independently in Poland.

'I came and I couldn't find work anywhere. Although they said that there is a lot of work, and that you can really find nice work and earn good money. When I came I went to all the restaurants, all companies, different production sites, factories, in order to ask for work. Well and there was no response. And where we lived in that house it wasn't far away to the city, so every morning I went by foot and knocked, from door to door, and said that I am Polish, I came here, and maybe there is some work. I registered in order to get my national insurance number and then in one restaurant, the owner of the restaurant said that no, no, no we don't need anyone to work, but maybe you can leave your telephone number and if I need someone I can call you. I told him, that I worked a lot in restaurants and that I am able to do that, I can engage with it, because I know what it's all about. He said Ok, Ok so I'll call you. I left and after ten minutes he called me.' (Zosia, 28 y, food packing; office worker in court following return)

While Zosia's brother and his family offered her accommodation and took care of her financially in the first couple of weeks after her arrival, these contacts did not help her to find work.

#### **6.2.4 Finding work in one's own Polish profession: *w swoim zawodzie***

Despite the opportunities offered by European citizenship, a widely acknowledged tension is the tendency for the downward occupational mobility of Polish post-accession migrants (Ciupijus 2011; Galgóczi *et al.* 2012). The level

of female educational attainment in Poland is high and Polish migrants to the UK are often highly educated; also in the present sample, 37 out of 53 interviewees had a university degree from Poland. However, Polish degrees are rarely recognised in practice in the UK and this issue creates class ambiguities for female Polish migrants (Coyle 2007; Ciupijus 2011). Whilst they might be considered working-class on the basis of their employment and social status, they view themselves as middle-class on account of their education and social status in Poland (Eade *et al.* 2007). However, 39 per cent of young people entering the labour market in Poland did not work in their acquired profession either, of which 67 per cent were in this position because they were unable to find employment in their profession (GUS 2014). An acquired profession or academic degree therefore did not guarantee compatible employment in Poland either, rendering young people ‘overeducated’ for the needs of the labour market. Hence prior employment in Poland is a more insightful indicator of potential downward occupational mobility. In this sample 25 out of 53 interviewees had no employment experience in Poland besides weekend or summer jobs as pupils or students before migrating to the UK.

The economic trade-off of a low-status, more financially lucrative position in the UK against a higher-status, less profitable employment in Poland (Trevena 2011) was accepted by most of the interviewees, as demonstrated in Zosia’s case above. However, some women also tried to find employment in their own profession in the UK labour market, particularly when migration to the UK was part of a family strategy and where they had enjoyed their professional lives in Poland. Often, however, they were unable to access work aligned to their previous professional lives. Kinga reflected upon her yearning for her former profession as a gardener, which she could not fulfil in the UK.

‘I looked for work in a garden, but here they prefer men for that work. Well, I’m not a man, so I don’t work for them.’ (Kinga, 35 y, food packing)

Jolanta came to the UK because of her husband’s difficulty in finding stable employment in Poland. In Poland Jolanta had a successful career as an English teacher and tried to at least find an office job, as she had been used to.

‘At first I tried to find work in what I used to do, like in an office and I sent out a lot of my CVs. I don't know to what that is attributable, but I didn't receive any answers. In the end I just wanted to find any kind of work, because I wanted to buy a flat with my husband in England, so I went to work in the hospital.’ (Jolanta, 37 y, catering staff in hospital)

It seems that in these two cases there are different reasons why Kinga and Jolanta were not able to find work in their profession. The different structure of the UK labour market may have played a role, but also a tendency to employ migrants for labouring jobs.

Many of the interviewees tried hard to find employment in the field of their Polish profession after starting out in low-paid, often physical work; some were more and some were less successful. Only a few women immediately started working in their higher-status profession in the UK, such as Jola, who was directly recruited from her university by a recruitment agency into a pharmacy in the UK. In contrast to Jola, Mariola worked in a care home even though she had a qualification as a food analyst. Mariola had to contend with work conditions such as night shifts, low pay and the emotional burden of care work and has been trying for years so far unsuccessfully to find work in her profession. Most interviewees were not able and often also did not try to find work in their profession, either on the basis of their lack of English language skills or of thinking that work agencies were the only route into employment for them. For most interviewees, European citizenship was therefore not able to facilitate occupational mobility, since most worked in low-paid jobs and were unable to get their Polish qualification recognised in practice. This affected Polish migrants in the UK labour market practically, but also discursively, since many interviewees would not even try to apply for work in their profession because they believed that as migrants they should not ask for too much and had to be thankful for what they got. Return migrants in particular tended not to have sought employment in their profession, since they had viewed their stay as temporary, and many interviewees still living in the UK likewise did not try this path, assuming that the type of employment agencies offer – low-paid and physical work – was the only pathway for them to find jobs in the UK.

Despite the difficulties of finding work in one's Polish profession, the case of Hania showed that over time, some migrants could be successful in this endeavour. Hania had used migration to the UK as an opportunity to be mobile, and although this move was initially motivated by her personal relationships, later on she decided to pursue employment in the area of her Polish studies. Although she liked her work in a warehouse and was offered a supervising position, it was more important for her to pursue her personal fulfilment with a job in her profession.

‘Great, I very dearly remember [my former job]; I still have contact with the majority of the people. [...] But there came the moment that I knew what I came here for and that I wanted to look for work in my profession. They offered me a position as a supervisor [...] During this time I started to look for a new job and in fact in my profession, I sent out my CV and got a call from one company, but it turned out that I lived too far away and there work began at six a.m., I don't have a car, so I would not be able to make it. I later found on gumtree an advert searching for quality assurance in a company and I sent a CV.’ (Hania, 30 y, food analyst)

Joasia and Ania, in contrast to the examples already discussed, did not necessarily look and aspire to work in their own profession as they were mainly looking for paid employment with or without a requirement for vocational qualifications. However, because the industrial region in the UK to which they had migrated offered work in their previous Polish vocations, they found themselves working as craftswomen in a clothing factory. Joasia had followed her husband to the UK and they both helped Ania to find employment in this factory as well.

‘The whole time, for the last seven years, I have been in one workplace. That's embroidering logos of companies onto blouses, jackets, caps, on whatever you can put them on. I actually work in my profession, because I am a dressmaker.’ (Joasia, 42 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory)

While their vocational background supported them in accessing this work, they also reported that their other Polish colleagues did not always have this kind of education and they would both also have been prepared to work in other areas. In these two cases the local labour market and the vocational background of the interviewees were a convenient match.

### **6.3 Experiences of migrant and feminised work**

Polish migrants in the UK find themselves in a country with different migrant groups and histories, all with their different inequalities. They will not only have been confronted with and affected by the anti-migration rhetoric, as will be discussed in the next chapter, but also in their daily life they will have met migrants from other ethnic backgrounds as colleagues, friends, partners and family. As migrant workers their performance in terms of employment rate was much higher than some of the other migrant groups, but Polish migrants also still earned less than locals (Rienzo 2012). While it differed greatly amongst different migrant groups, on average the employment rate was lower and the unemployment rate higher than those of the UK-born population. These rates vary between countries of origin, with migrants from the new EU member states having higher employment rates. At 89 per cent employment rate, male and female migrants from the EU accession countries have a higher rate than the UK-born workers (Rienzo 2012).

A mismatch between educational attainment and skill-levels of occupations has been found for some migrants, frequently also affecting migrants from the EU enlargement countries; post-accession migrants were also more educated than their UK-born counterparts (Rienzo 2012). In comparison to UK-born persons a greater percentage of migrants was employed in professional and the two lowest paid occupations of elementary and processing occupations; therefore migrants appeared to be clustered at the top and bottom ends of the labour market. There was a certain gendered segmentation detected amongst migrant workers:

‘Male migrants are concentrated in the lowest-paid occupational category (elementary occupations) and in the two highest-paid occupational categories (managerial and professional) while female migrants are more concentrated in the associate professional (e.g. nurses, financial and investment analysts and advisers), elementary (e.g. cleaners, kitchen and catering assistants), and professional occupations.’ (Rienzo 2012: 2)

While migrants were employed in a wide range of jobs, the highest growth in employment shares were in lower-skilled occupations, which suggests a certain degree of employment segregation, where relatively skilled migrants have taken up less-skilled occupations (Rienzo 2012a). While the numbers of migrant workers have increased, the growth has slowed down in the quarters before the time the fieldwork was undertaken (CIPD 2013).

When looking at the wages earned by migrant workers, it was observed that they have come closer to those of UK-born workers over time, with migrants from the EU accession countries however still having lower wages (Rienzo 2012). While women over-all earned less than men, female migrants had a higher hourly pay than UK-born women. In contrast, UK-born men earned more on average than their migrant counterparts. Migrants from the A8 countries earned the lowest average wages, and migrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh were also poorly paid. While there were more migrant men working part-time than UK-born men, migrant women were more likely to work full-time than were UK-born women; however, the share of all women in part-time jobs was overall higher than that of men (Rienzo 2012).

The effects of immigration on the labour market have proven to be dependent on the specific context of time and place and on the characteristics of migrants. For the UK it was found that while there was a small impact on average wages from migration, the effect on wage distribution was more significant, with losses for low-wage workers and gains for medium and high-paid workers. Resident migrants were more strongly affected by these changes through immigration than other workers. There was no impact found of immigration on the rates of unemployment in the UK (Ruhs and Vargas-Silva 2012). The UK labour market has taken advantage of the cheap and flexible migrant labour force in its pursuit of further flexibilisation and liberalisation; these migrant workers kept global cities such as London running (Wills *et al.* 2010). Research on gender and migration has found that migrant women often work in gendered employment characterised by the three C's of cooking, caring and cleaning thereby upholding the gender construction of the destination society (Anderson 2000; Lutz 2007).

In this temporal context the interviewees engaged in the UK labour market and experienced their working lives, often in the field of typical migrant and feminised employment. Many interviewees (18 out of 53) were working in the sector of public administration, education and health. Especially in the health industry, many female migrants found employment, as did those interviewed for this thesis. In sum, 10 persons were working in this area, seven of whom were employed as care workers, two more in care homes as cleaning and kitchen staff and one in catering services in a hospital. The lack of staff and active recruitment by agencies and UK-based employers into this field was set out in the section on routes into employment. Because of the need for care workers, previous education and qualification was not relevant in all cases. Most informants who were working as care workers, especially the younger ones, either framed their suitability for care work in terms of experiences in taking care of family members in Poland or were simply motivated by the opportunities offered in this area. However, some interviewees, especially older informants with an eventful occupational path characterised by different work areas, had at some point in their past acquired qualifications in this field, for example, as did Danuta.

‘They said I had very good references, since I had always worked with people; also, in the mean time, I did a course for care workers through the Polish jobcentre. I had times when I was unemployed, so I went to all the courses which they organised, because the EU was sending money.’  
(Danuta, 50 y, care worker)

Those interviewees who had undertaken training in care work had often done so at a more distant time in the past, when they conceptualised this as an employment area in which, when they struggled to find work, they could always work in abroad. Care work is constructed as feminised work in the context of the proclaimed need to invest feelings in this supposedly emotional labour (Hochschild 2003). The transnational care chain discussed in the literature review has led to migrant women taking on care work while their own gendered ascriptions in their countries of origin would be taken care of often by other female family members (Lutz 2007). This was also the case for Jadwiga, as discussed earlier. Gender therefore, in the experiences of the interviewees, was often a paradox, sometimes leading to them challenging gendered expectations in

the private sphere, as will be, discussed in the following chapter, while at the same time often perpetuating gendered roles in the public or work sphere.

Besides feminised work often representing the experiences the interviewees collected as women, they were also clustered in typical migrant work areas. For example, the second biggest group in the sample worked in the service sector, in distribution, hotels and restaurants. In these industries many migrants from different backgrounds found employment, at times creating tensions between different groups of migrants and also leading to the building of friendships. The latter was often the case in the context of interviewees constructing their migration as an opportunity, with some of them showing interest and openness to different cultures, appreciating new experiences. In this context patterns of identifying with, and distancing from, ‘Polishness’ and other Polish migrants also came into play, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The conflicts at work, however, were sometimes ascribed to racism and the different treatment of Polish workers. These struggles usually took place in the context of low-paid, typical migrant employment, with some interviewees also seeking help from their trade union.

‘I also don’t have a nice manager. I would say he is a racist; he is not nice, if he is able to say something like that. When I asked him why I had to do that, he said because I was Polish, well then he is already a racist.’ (Ania, 43 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory)

In the context of framing experiences of discrimination, Ania then turned her narration into an argument that could also be viewed as stereotypical or discriminatory against other groups. Defending one’s own position was then connected to undermining the position of others through othering, contrasting ‘us’ and ‘them’.

‘Polish people work rather hard and they don’t say no to work, they don’t say no to *overtime*, and that is why we work there, because they need us. English people surely don’t want to do what we do, and they don’t want to work as many hours as we do. (...) Even a young girl who worked with us, when she heard overtime she fled, and we don’t say no because they need us.’ (Ania, 43 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory)

In this quote Ania also related to Polish migrant workers being needed, thus legitimising their presence in the UK labour market. In the clothing factory, in which she worked, the workload depended on incoming orders. Despite experiencing her supervisor as a problematic person, she felt he was not responsible for excessive demands, but rather that he needed her and her Polish colleagues in busy times and they were happy to help him out.

This tendency to justify their presence in the UK labour market was observable in many narrations of informants that have had racist experiences. Jadwiga for example talked about her comeback when she was faced with negative comments.

‘I worked for an English woman once through the agency. She was horrible. (...) She asked me every week when I would finally go back to Poland, because her grandson couldn't find work. So I once asked her if her grandson after graduating from Cambridge would like to work as a *cleaner* or a care worker – there is a job in every house for that work.’ (Jadwiga, 38 y, cleaner in care home)

At this point of the interview Jadwiga appeared to be proud of the smart response she had given to this person. However, in the context of her unpredictability concerning staying and returning and her difficult family situation with her daughter spending half of the year in Poland with her parents, throughout the interview she tended to appear disappointed with her work experiences in the UK.

Perceived discrimination motivated Jolanta and her colleagues to become active, also involving their trade union. Since they were working in a hospital, although for a private employer organising the catering, they were mostly members of a trade union, as the trade union membership in the public services was higher in the UK than in the private sector. Following the privatisation of many public services and fragmentation of the workforce, the formerly mainly public-sector union had to deal with a growing number of private employers (Fulton 2013). While only 26 per cent of employees were trade union members in the UK, the public sector has had a much higher density with 56 per cent compared to the private sector with 14 per cent (LMS 2013).

‘In that company there were 50 or 60 per cent of Polish workers and whenever there was the worst place to clean, you know, something really hard to do then they always send Poles. (...) It went so far as them trying to fire me from work. Now they try to come up with something, to find something, why they could fire me. Only because I said they did something inappropriately. (...) So I called them [the trade union] and asked. But they said they couldn’t help me with that and I have to take care of it myself. You know, that kind of punishment. (...) Now it will be like this every week. I will go to work and they will send me to do some strange jobs.’ (Jolanta, 37 y, catering staff in hospital)

Jolanta was scared of losing her job, because she felt that she had taken over the responsibility of the trade union to a certain extent.

‘Because not only I had problems with the company – my colleagues too. And because not all were able to write or say it properly (in English), they wanted me to go with them to talk to the manager, so they would understand what the supervisor or our manager was saying.’ (Jolanta, 37 y, catering staff in hospital)

Jolanta and her colleagues decided to write a letter to the head office reporting discrimination and harassment. However, with the lack of support from their trade union, the outcome was enhanced pressure from her manager, causing her to have a nervous breakdown at work. The reason for her negative experience with the trade union remained unclear. However, in this sample interviewees rarely got in contact with their trade unions because of work related issues, but more often in the context of offers such as language courses or social events, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **6.4 Migrant work trajectories between occupational stagnation and mobility**

The majority of the sample found their first employment in the UK in low-paid work, often below their level of education; some women stayed in those jobs, feeling stuck. However, some of the women were able to either follow a straight-

forward career path within the sector they had started out in, or managed to pursue additional UK education and found work in the areas of their UK studies afterwards. Only a few interviewees could make use of their Polish education and professional qualifications in the UK, as discussed above. Amongst the return migrants, some had pursued low-paid jobs in the UK and were looking for employment more suited to their educational level in Poland, or had also left higher positions in the UK for non-work related motives or professional fulfilment that had been difficult to achieve in the UK. In this section these different patterns of work trajectories are scrutinised. Therefore, this section aims at offering an overview of possible work trajectories between occupational stagnation and mobility, including the subjective perspective on the interviewees' pathways.

The perception of feeling stuck, apparently influenced by the gendered role of the interviewees within their families and the expectations of them, at times parallel to age and geographical location, was discussed during an expert interview by a Polish community organiser.

‘Yes, there were women, probably younger ones, who were very ambitious and went to English classes and they really treated this job [cleaners in hotels] as only something temporary, knowing that they, they have a plan. They have a plan that they will move on, but then I also met a lot of women in their late 30s, 40s, who were stuck in this job. I think they initially thought the same, that it would only be a temporary thing, but they actually stay in the same place and there is not much movement going on in their lives and they feel a bit stuck.’ (Expert interview with community organiser; Aziz 2015: 98)

This Polish community organiser was working with an initiative, which was cooperating with trade unions, trying to organise low-paid migrant workers in the hotel industry. In the context of this community organising project most employees she encountered were Polish women, whose work trajectories corresponded to the tendency for downward social mobility. People caring for a family were less able to risk becoming unemployed or to move somewhere else to look for a better job, as observed in Kinga's case, who was looking for a new position and going for interviews at the same time as working in a physically

demanding job. In her case the local geography of an industrial region in the UK was relevant, since it imposed limits on opportunities which she could not overcome by moving, owing to her family's permanent settlement there and a lack of mobility within the UK.

Beata, who came to the UK in the context of a family strategy initiating the move for her whole family, reflected on her 27 years of work as a teacher in Poland in a very positive way. For Beata, the family situation, and especially her gendered role, the expectations placed on her, and her familial obligations, prevented her from going back to Poland even though she disliked life in the UK and suffered health problems due to the physical nature of her employment.

'I am a very caring mother maybe too much, I have to know everything, to control everything, but absolutely not such a control that limits any activities of the children, but I like to do a lot. I like to help and probably take on a little too much, like the care of the grandchildren and I started my small business with home-made dinner delivery since nearly three months now.' (Beata, 54 y, food packing and own small business)

While Beata felt stuck in her work and in the UK, she pursued other endeavours in order to fulfil herself personally.

'And I tell him, listen, it's not clear how long we can stay here and work so hard. My husband is always suffering from backpain, his legs hurt, his hands hurt. I also have health issues. (...) At that age, I'm already 54 years old. (...) You know we work hard with those cartons. I don't know how long we can stay here in England; I have no idea, because physical labour is very straining for the organism. That's also why I started to cook the dinners. (...) And I'm thinking maybe I'll write something like that, maybe I can find people who support my dreams, maybe I'll set up an account, maybe I could open a coffee house.' (Beata, 54 y, food packing and own small business)

She had co-created a women's forum for Polish trade union members, but has taken a back seat since starting her own small business preparing and delivering home-made Polish dinners for the Polish community in her area. She also dreamed about opening her own coffee shop with the support of others. This type

of entrepreneurial project, on a sometimes formal, sometimes informal level, could represent an alternative or supplement to formal employment.

Kinga also had a very positive experience with work in Poland, which made starting off in the UK especially problematic for her. However, her husband was already working and living in the UK and they have a son, whom she cared for on her own during the time of geographical separation. Following an ultimatum from her husband she joined him, and felt that giving up her job in Poland was like a punishment.

‘I missed my work very badly. I am trained as, and really for the love of it, a gardener, garden designer. I love it; I worked for six years in horticulture. So for me it was at night [in the UK] that I really missed it, because the biggest punishment for me was just coming here and losing my job.’

(Kinga, 35 y, food packing)

Added to this experience of sacrificing her professional career for the sake of the family, her work in the UK has not been satisfactory, starting with work for an agency, and then working in the food packing industry. She tried to have a more active social life through involvement in her trade union branch, but she did not necessarily connect this to her working life, as will be discussed in the next chapter. This arena was devoted more to socialisation with other Polish women than to efforts at collective organisation. Kinga was trying to find a new job, ideally in her profession.

‘In September it will be seven years [working in food packing] including the time with the agency. (...) It is true that I am looking for a new job. I started last year, I do not want just another job immediately, because I have this job, I’m looking just for something better’ (Kinga, 35 y, food packing)

This narration showed Kinga’s aspirations for a better job that suited her abilities and interest; however, as discussed, it was difficult for the present sample to find employment in their previous professions.

Grabowska-Lusińska (2012) describes in the typology of the stable ‘fixative’ career path, feelings of occupational stagnation develop when confronted with structural constraints, specifically the gender role as impacted by age, family

situation and geography. In this position, some female Polish migrants relate to the archetype of the *Matka Polka* by forfeiting their opportunities so as to take care of their families (Janion 1996).

In contrast to interviewees with caring responsibilities, some women who migrated to the UK as an intended short-term gap year or an open-ended adventure were highly mobile within the UK and between jobs during their first months in the UK. Basia had come to the UK, with her partner at the time, a couple of months after her A-levels, and had changed jobs quickly in the first couple of months. She associated this with her lack of work experience and indifference to the place of work, as it only served as a means to earn money.

‘I had different kinds of work. I changed quickly, well, during the first half a year I changed often, either I didn't like it or someone didn't pay me, so I left. I probably had a bad approach to work. I had never worked before like that, so really I didn't know how to work with people, maybe that was a reason why I didn't like it. (...) At that first work, something for just a couple of hours, my attitude was maybe not appropriate to that, a lot of unnecessary rules, it really riled me up those stupidities like people telling me what to do, or when I mixed up something then the boss got really angry, some crazy guy.’ (Basia, 30 y, office worker in finance department)

Basia did not only leave her jobs, because she was unable to accept being given orders, but was also fired from a couple of her earlier jobs in the UK. While this early phase of collecting experiences and learning how workplaces function was common to many of the younger interviewees, they were able to pass beyond this phase and either stayed in low-paid work before return or progressed professionally.

While discourses around downward social mobility and brain waste have dominated the debate in relation to post-accession Polish migration to the UK for some time, newer findings suggest migrants are able to move up the occupational ladder (Frattoni 2014). Female Polish migrant workers in this sample showed a high likelihood of progressing within their sector, even when they had started out in low-paid positions within it. Gosia, for example, had migrated to the UK with her partner, and some friends, right after school. Following a phase of being

mobile throughout the UK in the first year in pursuit of more promising job opportunities, she settled in a large city and in the retail sector, in which little by little she worked her way up from sales assistant to store manager, changing stores frequently.

‘I started as a sales assistant, and then went on to be a cashier. Then I moved up to head cashier and then there I was already head cashier. And then I moved to another store as supervisor and then moved up to assistant manager. And then I moved to another store in the same position, but only due to the fact that I wanted to go back to fashion. (...) That’s why I decided to move into the same position and then I moved up to store manager here.’(Gosia, 28 y, store manager; Aziz 2015: 99)

Gosia was talking about achieving some form of stability in her working life. In the position of a store manager she had fewer prospects for progression; her more current life plans included purchasing a flat together with her new partner. She had progressed by taking risks and frequently changing places and jobs, while she continued within the realm of the opportunities available to her in this sector. These sectors and occupations were characterised by low-paid jobs often carried out by migrant workers, and the interviewees also started out in these positions; nevertheless, they managed to find ways to advance within these fields, which to some extent might have been connected to their status as European citizens in contrast to other migrant workers’ statuses in these sectors. Olga had managed to progress from a catering job in a higher education institution to the hospitality supervisor for five connected institutions within three years. Neither Gosia nor Olga had primary family responsibilities or referred to the expectations they might have had to satisfy as women. The appearance that they could disregard their gendered expectations affirms the idea of migration and upward employment trajectories as changing these traditional roles. Nevertheless, they were working in jobs that were characterised by the gendered segmentation of the UK labour market, reassuring the gender construction of the destination society (Anderson 2000).

A pathway of moving into a different sector and then progressing was followed by Olga; who did not want to have to prove herself again after a change of management. The feeling of being required to start all over again was frequently

referred to by interviewees; this was not always connected to the migration experience, but often related to a new job. Instead of conceptualising this as freedom to start over and get away from difficulties in the past, it was rather associated with again having to build a career and reputation from zero. Transferring into a different sector and progressing therein typically entailed a high level of agency and the capability to take risks. While in these cases the former workplace would have been easy to remain in and would have afforded the workers with a livelihood, their fulfilment, personal or professional, was more critical, which suggested an aversion to conformity and a willingness to negotiate structural constraints (Cook *et al.* 2011; Aziz 2015).

Many interviewees who had managed to progress professionally and move beyond the initial low-paid employment and out of these sectors did so by acquiring new educational qualifications in the UK. Those who did so were generally able to find work in their profession, such as Patrycja, who had come to the UK because of a lack of finances to continue her studies in Poland, and had later on quit her Polish studies and pursued a new education in the UK.

‘But in 2007 I began my studies in England in hospitality management, where I finished with a degree with distinction, then I decided to stay here a little longer, so I decided that I'm going to buy an apartment. Of course, in the meantime, I worked as a waitress, cleaner, all the work that you can imagine when you are coming to London and work for a pitiful salary. I worked a lot of hours as a waitress, then I decided that in addition to the fact that I work, I want something more, so I started to study, work, study, work - studies, it was just a few years, well, and in 2009 I already had the first managerial position.’ (Patrycja, 30 y, manager for security staff in a higher education institution)

Patrycja had to work long hours and study at the same time in order to be able to finance her life and her studies. Besides potential language issues, another difficult aspect of pursuing additional education in the UK was its costs. Therefore the women would usually have saved up money beforehand, and worked full-time besides studying in order to be able to finance this, which for most of the interviewees was not possible, especially not for those with caring responsibilities. After Basia's phase of unstable jobs, she also managed to

progress professionally after working and studying at the same time for a few years. Most interviewees, who undertook additional education in the UK, needed to work simultaneously to provide for themselves, which was also necessary for many women while studying in Poland.

‘And during these four years and until graduation I worked in the same place. (...) And then I graduated, which went very well. And immediately after graduation that company which I worked for closed, I found a temporary job but generally I was in the mindset that I would like to do something in the field of my studies.’ (Basia, 30 y, office worker in finance department; Aziz 2015: 101)

Basia later on found employment in her recently attained profession; so did all interviewees who acquired further education in the UK, showing the significance of education acquired in the UK in this labour market. This observation suggests that female Polish migrants are primarily perceived as ‘low-skilled’ migrant workers, in spite of them potentially having Polish academic degrees. Some of the women who managed to work and study and then achieved higher positions, were at times doing so in spite of their families’ and origin communities’ expectations for them to settle down and start a family. They contested the ideal construction of the Polish woman by choosing not to have children or by postponing this in favour of fulfilling their professional aspirations (Cook *et al.* 2011; Aziz 2015).

Most interviewees experienced some kind of occupational movement, often connected with their length of stay. While the present sample was diverse in length of stay, most had, at the time of the interview, already lived for two to seven years in the UK. In the sample, those women who had been in the UK for less than two years had lived there before, but had gone somewhere else in the meantime. One went back to Poland and managed a shop and then a restaurant, but returned to the UK after its closure; the other managed a hostel in a different country and came back to fulfil her professional career goals. Both interviewees, after their return to the UK, started out again at lower levels of employment than they had previously worked in. The majority of interviewees who had been in the UK longer than two years had either progressed within their sector, or moved to

and often progressed in a different sector. In some cases, they had pursued additional informal or formal entrepreneurial endeavours.

Alongside regular employment, some informants were actively undertaking informal small businesses (Aziz 2015): Beata prepared and delivered Polish home-made dinners and Ewa provided translation services. In spite of the low revenue from these activities, both interviewees perceived their businesses as potentially prosperous endeavours for the future. Beata did not have the financial capital to launch her own Polish restaurant, however, her effort was a means for self-fulfilment and establishing a customer base; Ewa saw her translation ventures more as a service to the community potentially supporting her in achieving her objective of working for a trade union. Informal businesses can provide further income in a form that is compatible with family responsibilities, underpinning the gendered role of women. Structural constraints represented the cause for some women to undertake these activities (Ciupijus 2011), however, others engaged in such entrepreneurial endeavours because of different reasons, as for example greater autonomy and personal fulfilment. Kaja's venture was the most formalised; following her return to the UK, she started to build up her own care business with a colleague. She had left the UK before to help her then partner realise his dream to run a hostel in another country, but then returned so as to pursue her own professional goal. She actively reflected upon her gendered role and the expectations of Polish society and her family that she should get married and have children, but chose to build up her business and live her own life.

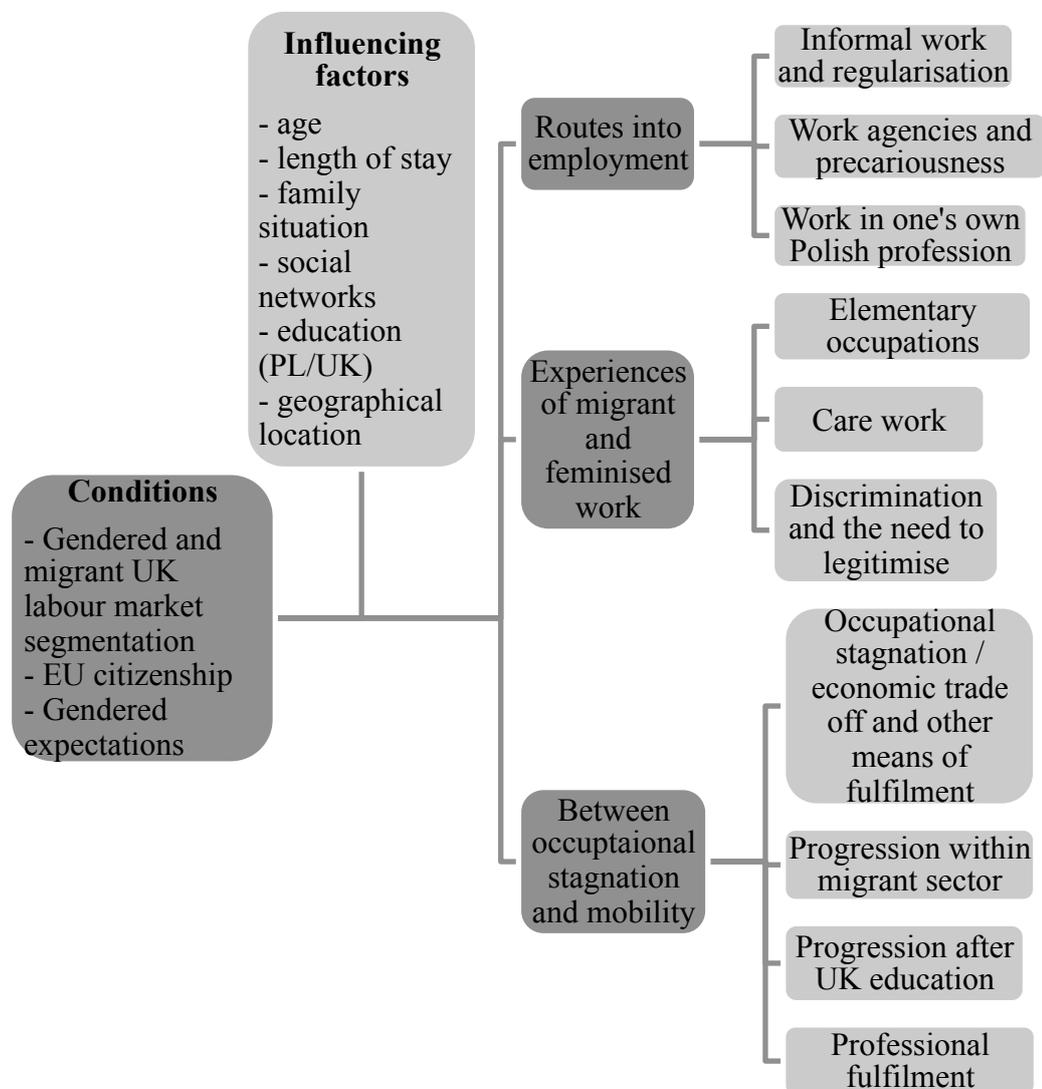
‘My parents always wanted me to marry, to have children, that's why they said: marry early, have children and then we don't need to worry about you anymore. But I never had plans like that.’ (Kaja, 34 y, care worker and building up own business)

Kaja thereby challenged the established Polish gender roles with her migrant employment trajectory (Ignatowicz 2012).

## 6.5 Conclusion

The experiences of work in the UK were manifold for the interviewees. The conditions in which they were seeking work, experienced working lives and pursued their pathways were characterised by the UK labour market and its gendered and migrant segmentation. Furthermore, their rights as EU citizens as well as other factors made their position amongst migrants in general in the UK a unique one. This was also experienced by the interviewees in the context of migrant and feminised work.

**Figure 7** Experiences of work in the UK



Influencing factors on their experiences of work were, for example, age as well as the family situation. Motherhood corresponded with a lack of mobility,

rendering the geographical location in the UK crucial, in contrast to women with no dependants who were often mobile throughout the UK. The length of stay influenced the employment pattern significantly, with most female Polish migrant workers starting out in low-paid employment, often followed by occupational mobility. This change in work was sometimes possible with time and active effort from the informants; more often, however, it was connected to further UK education. Not only the women who had experienced professional progression exemplified agency; women who felt stuck in their work often pursued other means of fulfilling their aspirations such as local community activism, as will be discussed in the following chapter, or building up their own informal businesses.

These findings contribute knowledge on migration and migrant work pathways, gendered structures and segmented labour markets as well as women's meaning making. The interviewees found themselves, as conceptualised through intersectionality, at a crossroads of being a migrant and a woman (McCall 2005). The context of European enlargement and freedom of movement lifted the pressure of an informal migrant labour market and opened up new recruitment pathways (Drinkwater *et al.* 2006; Anderson *et al.* 2006; Cook *et al.* 2011). However, the interviewees were still faced with the tendency for downward occupational mobility and Polish degrees rarely led to appropriate 'degree-level' employment (Coyle 2007; Ciupijus 2011). The experienced UK labour market's gendered and migrant segmentation fuelled class ambiguities and the conceptualisation of 'us' and 'them' (Anderson 2000; Wills *et al.* 2010; Trevena 2011). Furthermore the findings suggest the relevance of gender in constructing working lives as well as in the private sphere, at times challenging gender roles in the private domain while also reproducing them in the workplace (Hochschild 2003; Lutz 2007; Cook *et al.* 2011). However, the interviewees at times also challenged their ascribed roles through their aspirations and actively confronted structural constraints (Cook *et al.* 2011; Ciupijus 2011).

## **CHAPTER 7: Social networks, transnational lives and the experiences of women and family life**

‘If someone asks me where I am from, I think and then say:  
from Poland, but I don’t take benefits, I only work hard.’  
(Maja, 32 y, kitchen staff in care home)

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter investigates the dynamics of social networks, transnational lives, and the experiences of women and family life in the context of living and working in the UK. The female Polish migrants who have shared their experiences through biographical narrative interviews have reflected on various aspects of their lives. While the previous chapter focused on work experiences in the UK, the present chapter scrutinises further features that help shape the perception of migration aspirations and experiences.

Different patterns of social networks such as community engagement or trade union activity as well as processes of identification and distancing oneself are investigated. The widely debated transnational aspects of migrant lives, which take on various forms of picking and mixing rights and services in origin and host societies (Duda-Mikulin 2013), are scrutinised as women travelled back and forth, utilising social networks here and there. The different forms of transnational lives could hinder migration from becoming a one-way, completed movement and promote the development of multiple, liquid migration trajectories (Pries 2001); but they could also ease the pressures of orientation and coping in a new environment. Another crucial feature of migrant lives were their experiences of family life, as well as the dynamics of challenging or reinforcing gender roles through migration and work. While the initial migration aspiration has, in some cases, been constructed as a family strategy, the ways in which

migrant family life was experienced differed widely and also became relevant to those who emigrated on their own. In the context of family life, gender dynamics came into play, and could, in combination with experiences of working lives, reinforce or challenge conventional conceptions. While the social construction of gender is an all-encompassing concept in this thesis, gender aspects of migrant women's lives are the focus of the analysis. Gender dynamics were relevant to married women with dependents, but were also evident in the reflective work of the narratives and meaning-making processes of female Polish migrants at large. They were faced with different societal expectations and understandings of gender in their origin and host communities and engaged in biographical work through reflection and meaning-making to locate and construct their own approach.

## **7.2 Social networks**

The ways in which the interviewees engaged with both their local communities and Polish communities while in the UK differed widely. While 22 of the 53 interviewees had returned to Poland, they, as well as the informants that stayed, had specific experiences of social networks that shaped both their migration experience and their return motivations. Some women showed a pattern focused on partnership and social life, especially in bigger cities in the UK; others were active in their local community through trade union activism, community groups such as volunteering in police work, or in the Polish community such as at Polish Saturday schools. Living with one's family and children could, in this context, act as a stimulant, when it involved for example engaging with activities at the children's schools, but it could also because of a lack of time caused by the difficulties of combining family and working lives build a barrier to establishing and maintaining social networks. Furthermore, a dynamic was observed in which informants either identified with and felt close to the Polish community or distanced themselves from this group, which was often connected to the 'stereotypical' ideas of Polish migrants prevalent in public discourse. While some women mainly spent their spare time with other Polish people on top of

contacts at work, explaining this as a cultural closeness, some disassociated from Poles, highlighting either their own uniqueness and independence from Polish influences or the negatively perceived features of the Polish migrant group. Earlier research has also pointed to this rhetoric in the narrative of Polish migrants, which can possibly be explained by the perceived differences in class belonging (Trevena 2011). Public opinion on Polish migrants in the receiving community also came into play when interviewees referenced political agitation and public discourses. While the analysis of the perception of the receiving community in its full breadth would call for its own analysis, the public discourse outlined in section 7.2.3 became relevant in the narrative of the interviewees.

### **7.2.1 Polish community-oriented**

In the UK there has been, parallel to the history of Polish immigration, the development of an active Polonia, which is the name for the Polish diaspora and its organisations. The interviewees, however, rarely referred to organisations such as the Federation of Poles, Polish cultural clubs or Polish newspapers in the UK. Their social orientation towards the Polish community happened on a much more local level, such as in a local migrant workers' trade union branch, Polish Saturday school, or simply in relation to colleagues and friends. This could mirror the discontinuities and continuities between earlier Polish migrants, who set up these associations, and the newly arrived migrants (Düvell and Garapich 2011). Furthermore, this orientation towards local activities instead of macro level organisations parallels the prevalent discourse among the interviewees of constructing their migration as an opportunity and characterised by unpredictability, in which they then also took advantage of the local offerings with a direct benefit for their lives instead of identifying with the wider Polonia as a social group.

Trade union activism was, in some cases, focused on a specific work-related issue or motivated by work and being a worker, as was shown in chapter six. However, many women saw this engagement as an opportunity to socialise and connect within their community. The social aspect of engaging in a trade union

was even more observable with those informants whose activism was connected to the unique migrant workers' branch in the North of England with mainly Polish members (Aziz 2015a). While work-related issues in individual cases were tackled as well, the interviewees also highlighted the leisure activities of the branch.

'The first time, I went to the Christmas party, which was very nice. It's also something outside the grey everyday life, besides work, besides home. You can meet, chat, different people come with different problems, you can find out about interesting things at those meetings. Obviously some picnics are organised, where you can go to, so I would say it's really a nice idea. You can simply meet and chat in Polish with people. It's sort of an integration.' (Ania, 43 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory)

While Ania's main motivation for joining the migrant worker's branch was to take part in the free-of-charge English language course, she then started to enjoy engaging with the local Polish community. Beata also highlighted this aspect of focusing on the Polish community.

'So we want to do something for that community, for those Poles and the people that engage and are interested.' (Beata, 54 y, food packing and own small business)

In her narration, she did not refer to work or the trade union's activity being focused on workers, but on the social and leisure activities undertaken by the branch and the women's forum which was established therein. This perception of the trade unions as social or community focused rather than economic or political organisations was both connected to the specific branch consisting of mainly Polish workers and could also relate to the aspiration of improving opportunities for their lives in a direct manner because of the way they constructed their migration aspirations. Beata used to be a teacher in Poland and was now working in a low-paid, manual job. While she was discontented with her work situation, she referred to engaging with the Polish community in multiple ways. Her own small business of preparing Polish homemade dishes and delivering them to Polish people in the area was also presented from a Polish community centred perspective rather than a profit oriented one. Due, however, to her difficulty in combining low paid employment with her caring responsibilities as a grandmother, there were limits to her engagement in the local Polonia.

‘Also, to be honest maybe because I do not like it in the UK, that somehow I cannot fulfill myself professionally. I finished the course, but I do not feel well enough here that – I'd like something else, I would like to be someone else. It is for me, food packing and work with food, absolutely not enough for me. Also, if I had the opportunity to develop, go somewhere else to do this job willingly. I like to help, I even thought about going somewhere as a volunteer to do something, but at this moment in time I am not able to do such a thing. Now there are these Polish Saturday schools everywhere, even if I would want to, I would not be able to, because I work on Saturday and Sunday, that is the shift I have in part-time, so I could not help.’  
(Beata, 54 y, food packing and own small business)

While, as a former teacher, Beata was qualified as well as motivated to engage in a Polish Saturday school, she felt that her situation as a migrant worker with working hours on the weekend and caring responsibilities during the week as a grandmother prevented her from seeking this fulfilment. Her narration also showed the close association between her discontentment in the UK and her aspiration to be active in the Polish community. This could be seen as a trade-off process of accepting her position as a low-paid migrant worker in exchange for maintaining her social status as an active member of the community.

Similar to Beata, who appeared to seek Polish community-oriented activities as a balance to her working life, Kinga also referred to this activity as something besides work and home and as time for herself apart from her family.

‘I do not have any responsibilities as such. I have a big kid, who does not require anything, he does not cry anymore, so all in all I have time for myself. Later I met with the branch secretary and he asked me if I would write the branch’s website. I can try. I started to write and enjoyed it all and still write today reports, articles and so on. It was then that he asked if I knew that there was such a forum of women. (...) He asked if I could help in the organisation of the women's forum. Why not? I like it.’ (Kinga, 35 y, food packing)

Kinga also felt stuck in her working life and had followed her husband to the UK. Once her son no longer needed her to the same extent, she started to engage in this Polish trade union branch.

Another aspect of engaging with the Polish community is the activity in Polish Saturday schools, in which Grażyna started to be involved after she had children in the UK.

‘For some time I for example was engaged at the local Polish school, which I managed. Later the ladies that organised it didn’t want to manage it anymore, so I managed it for two years and then didn’t have the strength for it anymore. Because it is a lot of work, also volunteering. It’s only so the school can exist, this Saturday school.’ (Grażyna, 33 y, insurance and finance market analyst)

Grażyna has experienced multiple migration movements, mainly connected to her education. Her work in the UK was in a high-paid field, which followed her pursuit of university studies in the UK. Earlier she was active in the broader civil society in the UK as a volunteer, which aided the development of social contacts. After having children she became motivated to engage in the Polish community in order to provide her children with a link to Polish culture.

‘I was very engaged already at the very beginning before I had a child, when I got pregnant I had already gotten involved in a health organisation. Later, as a volunteer I accepted this role to be the main editor and I did a lot of those volunteering locally. Through this I met an awful lot of people and as I worked full-time before I had children, I did not have a lot of chances to meet people.’ (Grażyna, 33 y, insurance and finance market analyst)

This earlier volunteering in the UK provided her with the motivation to engage with local communities and, through the birth of her children, Grażyna was motivated to start working with the Polish community.

### **7.2.2 Local community-oriented**

As in Grażyna’s earlier activism, other interviewees also reported a similar pattern of focusing on the broader local community without ties to the Polish community. In contrast to Grażyna, however, community engagement in these cases was often connected to difficult early experiences of migration, and this was seen as a means to find one’s place in the local community and as an

opportunity to help others who might find themselves in the same difficult situations. The former was the case for Kamila, who had lived through hardships in her early migration, having to take care of her two children while all living together in one room and working in restaurants. Later on, when she had managed to find a better work situation and was able to take care of her family financially, she started to engage in the local volunteer police force.

‘You know what, I passed the exam in January 2012 and since then I am a volunteer. I tell my son to also do something like that for him. This is great, because you learn about the law. You see how many strange things are happening on the streets and what strange things people can do. So ... it's great, I like it.’ (Kamila, 48 y, office worker in accountancy and Pilates trainer)

Kamila saw the volunteer police force as something which would enhance her ability to build social contacts and feel useful in the local community. As in the Polish community-oriented engagements in section 7.2.1, local community-oriented activities could serve as a means to finding fulfilment in contrast to dissatisfaction experienced with typical ‘migrant’ work. Civic participation or engagement can be conceptualised as a form of active citizenship, especially when faced with constraints in other life areas (Pajnik and Bajt 2013). In regards to a different group of migrant workers, that of Colombians in London, it was found that men were active in formal and transnational activities more often than women, while women tended to be active in local migrant community organisations. These patterns overlapped with class positions and the current life stage. Furthermore, the engagement in local community activities enabled these women to challenge hegemonic gender regimes (McIlwaine and Bermúdez 2011).

This was the case for Jolanta, who started volunteering at the local Citizens Advice Bureau.

‘Someone once offered me work as a volunteer in the Citizens Advice Bureau. Back then I didn't really know if I wanted that or not – if I could help. But I said – ok, I have to try. And from then on, from May last year, I go to the Citizens Advice Bureau as a volunteer and work for them. You know that work gives me everything that my actual work took away – self

esteem, belief in the possibility, that I can do something. That which they took away from me, the CAB gives me back in some sense. And that's so nice, motivating. I know that what I do is not as bad as they told me. That it's not my imagination, but how it really goes unfortunately. (...) I really wanted to do something, help our Poles – colleagues, friends – (...) that it's not that Poles don't understand anything and don't know their rights. We are also able to know the rights and they are supposed to respect those rights.' (Jolanta, 37 y, catering staff in hospital)

Jolanta has had negative experiences at work: for example, she was threatened with losing her job when she had to take care of her sick daughter. She had tried to seek support from the local trade union branch, but was disappointed by their lack of efforts and started to inform herself about her rights, which led her to the volunteering at the Citizens Advice Bureau. Research amongst fundraisers and sanitation employees has found a compensating effect for negative work experiences from a perceived favourable social impact and the experience of helping others (Grant and Sonnentag 2010).

In this quote she brought in her own difficult experiences as a motivation for this engagement, equating herself with 'our Poles', who were able to know about their rights. However, this volunteering was not only focused on the Polish community as such and she did not have a lot of Polish associates.

'Here in this city, you know, we live on the outskirts and everybody knows, that we are the Poles. Our kids are the only Polish kids in school. The people who live here – our neighbours – they are like family to us. (...) Like one big family. At New Year's Eve we all went out on the street together and drank champagne. That's how it is. I couldn't make my way if I was to move now, because we are all very close to each other here.' (Jolanta, 37 y, catering staff in hospital)

Jolanta referred to her next-door British neighbour as sort of a replacement for her mother; another neighbour acted as a grandfather for her children and yet another one as her sister. The closeness to British neighbours and the rhetoric of equating them to family members was a pattern observable in some cases, where the interviewees referred to a lack of social contacts to other Poles. Such was the case for Jadwiga.

‘I have a great landlady and I met great people here. Most of them are English, where I wasn’t anticipating to become integrated that friendly and be treated like a daughter. For example, my landlady treats me like her own daughter. She also allowed me to have my daughter here.’ (Jadwiga, 38 y, cleaner in a care home)

Jadwiga talked in her interview about the lack of contact with people from Poland and of her own age and how through her landlady, she started to socialise with British people who were older than her.

### **7.2.3 Identifying with versus distancing from ‘Polishness’**

As the pattern of Polish community-oriented civic engagement and local integration has already shown, some interviewees reflected on their wish to help other Polish migrants. However, many interviewees have also made an effort in their narration to distance themselves from ‘Polishness’ and from features perceived in public discourse as being Polish. These narrations were often connected to the political agitation they had observed, and while some criticised this anti-Polish rhetoric, others adopted anti-migrant sentiment in relation to the discourse on migrants exploiting benefits in the UK or hostility towards a diverse, multicultural society.

Around the time of the fieldwork, given a growing right-wing political power and populist anti-migration rhetoric, as well as the strong opposition to the EU of the minority UK Independence Party, some public and political discourses tended to be negative towards immigration, and anti-migration regulations had become political agitation tools for most political parties fearing the outcomes of local, national and European elections. Although in relation to EU migration there were limited policy possibilities, the general discourse around curbing migration also affected EU migrants, because of the negative image of and rhetoric against migrants overall. There was a dominant discourse over the lack of control over immigration, shown by the amount of immigration from A8 countries, which exceeded politicians’ expectations, and the 70 million debate about limiting the UK’s population by immigration control in the long run. This initiative was enforced by a think-tank called Migration Watch, and the strong

support by the tabloid press led to enough signatures on their petition to trigger a parliamentary debate on this. In the early days of EU enlargement the UK government, then headed by the Labour party, was supportive of immigration and opened up its labour market in the light of low unemployment rates and a labour shortage in the UK. Restrictions for Romanians and Bulgarians were implemented later on by the coalition of the Conservative party and the Liberal Democrats, which came to an end at the end of 2014. The media was initially also more positive and welcoming, cheerfully proclaiming that Polish workers were supporting the UK's early 21<sup>st</sup> century boom. However, this rhetoric changed following the economic crisis, and by 2008 negative headlines became more common (Düvell and Garapich 2011). In early 2013 the UK government announced plans to hold a referendum on staying or leaving in the EU after the next election, which would affect EU citizens in the UK and British migrants in the EU profoundly (Migration Observatory 2013). Other debates revolved around implementing costs for the usage of NHS services for migrants and limiting their access to council homes. EU citizens were required to demonstrate their right to reside and pass a habitual residence test in order to access social benefits. In 2014 the prime minister had revealed plans to curb access to benefits for EU migrants and have unemployed and homeless EU migrants removed, which had caused criticism from the EU, highlighting that the freedom of movement in the context of looking for work is a non-negotiable right for EU citizens. Despite this, from early 2014 the UK required EU job seekers to wait for three months before being able to receive Jobseekers Allowance; after six months they were also denied benefits if they were unemployed and unable to demonstrate a good chance to find employment. Furthermore, they were not entitled to Housing Benefit if they were jobseekers (Costello and Hancox 2014). This dominated public discourse around the time of the fieldwork, and therefore interviewees were aware of opposition to their stay in the UK. While some coped with this opposition by distancing themselves from other Poles, others complained about the misconceptions or appeared to be worried about the developments, seeking British citizenship for themselves and/or their children in case the vote resulted in a Brexit. Since the outcome of the Brexit vote was that the UK would leave the EU, it is unclear what the new circumstances for the interviewees will be. Certainly the pattern of double migration or mobile

movements will have more legal obstacles, although as discussed in the introduction and the literature review, the impact of the politico-legal system on the movement of people can be limited.

The analysis of the interviews suggested that trade union activism contributed to a more critical approach to public discourses than observed in the case of non-affiliated migrants, who often reproduced the same narratives they had heard or read in the media. This is because the context of the trade union and the information material prepared for members, as well as training available for activists, had encouraged discussions on current debates. One example was when Ania joined the migrant workers' branch of a trade union, where they had discussed the debate around Polish migrants abusing the British welfare system.

‘We talked about that topic; obviously Polish people are not content with what Prime Minister Cameron has said, because that hurt us. Most of us work honestly and work hard. We apply ourselves more; we work harder than the English. We work *overtime* when English people don't want to do that. We pay hard taxes so why shouldn't we take advantage like everyone else since we work here and pay taxes, we don't work informally, because Polish children, Polish families not the mother uses that.’ (Ania, 43 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory)

In this quote Ania made an effort to justify Polish migrant workers' rights to UK benefits; her argument, however, was based on othering and constructing a difference from English workers, who were perceived as not being as hard-working as Polish workers. In Ania's understanding the right to support was based on the hard work Polish migrants performed in contrast to British workers. Very often the line of argument in favour of Polish migrant workers receiving benefits or against this were connected to the individual situation of the interviewee and whether they found themselves in need of claiming benefits or not. However, engaging in discussions about the topic from a different perspective than in public discourse had an influence, as was observable with active trade union members. Although Maja for example had a colleague in need of child support, she did not condone her or other Polish migrants receiving benefits, but blamed British politics for this.

‘That doesn’t mean that I didn’t want to clean, because to be honest, I am not that proud. You know, I think, that in any case you have to pay those bills and it seems to me that it’s probably better to work hard than for example as now they attack the Poles because of the benefits. It seems to me, that I would be too proud, you know, to take anything. Although, despite everything for example as now this discussion has come up, that they blame Poles for taking benefits for the children in Poland. I personally think that that is not ok, that they take benefits for children that are in Poland. But on the other side I also think that they shouldn’t blame Poles for their right, which allows them to do that.’ (Maja, 32 y, kitchen staff in care home)

At the beginning of this quote Maja appeared to identify with being a hard-working migrant, not being too proud to clean; however, next she referred to being too proud to receive benefits. This passage appeared to be a balancing act for Maja of both identifying with and distancing herself from ‘Polishness’, incorporating the positive stereotype of the hard working Pole in her identity, while distancing herself from the Polish ‘benefit scrounger’.

In her interview Maja often reflected on being different from other Polish people, enjoying socialising with co-workers from around the world. She was however aggravated by the stereotypes of Poland.

‘They also thought that, you know, we from Poland, that there is still communism, once we sat in a round and someone asked if I eat bananas, because in Poland there are no bananas. Or for example they asked if we still stand in line for ten hours to get sugar. I said, that no, the problem now is, to have enough money; you can get everything, but don’t have money. (...) And sometimes for example like now if someone asks me where I am from, I think and then say: from Poland, but I don’t take benefits, I only work hard. Somehow it is immediately that I say something like that. (...) I’m telling you, we have some sort of bad nature maybe, we Poles. Yes. It seems to me that we are some jealous and envious people. Like that. I don’t know why. I think to myself, you know, I was in Belgium and spent more time with Slovaks, and not with Poles.’ (Maja, 32 y, kitchen staff in care home)

Maja therefore made an effort to argue against stereotypes of Poland, but had already internalised stereotypical perceptions and exhibited self-consciousness in regards to her Polish identity, so much that she felt the need to distance herself from ‘Polishness’. Just as Maja in the first quote blamed the British legal system for perceived misuse, Jadwiga also saw the UK as at fault when it came to the topic of diversity and migration.

‘I know that England made a mistake a lot of years ago allowing (foreigners to come), but that was a lot of years ago, not ten years ago, but 20 or 30 years ago allowing those migrants to come to this country. Back then that was a mistake, because already then they should have cut down on it. Because then a lot of people came as fake students, working in all jobs, everywhere cheating people. And finally they only wanted to have British citizenship and in the meantime do a lot of weird things.’ (Jadwiga, 38 y, cleaner in care home)

Jadwiga did not see any problem with Polish migrants or with herself receiving child support for her daughter, who lived part-time in Poland with her parents, but identified other migrants as problematic. Jadwiga’s ‘othering’ and distancing in contrast to Maja’s, who constructed this towards other Polish people, used it to differentiate herself and other Polish migrants from other migrants in the UK.

‘Lately I didn’t like what Cameron said about the Poles. I don’t plan on taking benefits. Only some years ago, it was a big mistake to invite Polish people to England. I don’t agree with that. That means, if they didn’t want that, they should have had a different policy and it wouldn’t be a problem. But we came being invited by a British company.’ (Jadwiga, 38 y, cleaner in care home)

In this quote Jadwiga referred to Polish migrants and herself being invited to the UK to work as a justification, which implied that she felt a need to justify working and living in another country. While here she said she did not plan on receiving benefits in the UK, at another point in the interview, she shared the difficulty of having to obtain an official statement from her home town in Poland that she was not receiving child support there in order to be eligible for this in the UK. It appeared that Jadwiga was not comfortable receiving support, being aware that her other Polish colleagues in the care home argued against it, and tried to justify her position by ‘othering’ and blaming other migrants.

Whilst Maja had referred to preferring non-Polish friends and social contacts, Bożena found this difficult and saw cultural differences as the reason for her loneliness in the early stages of her migration.

‘After a year it got a bit better. I started to have some new acquaintances with different people. Then I lived in a flat, from which a Bulgarian woman moved out. And we became friends, we did everything together. We felt, that we had a lot in common, maybe because of the same origin from a similar part of Europe in a similar climate and culture. And so I thought about how big of an influence that has, maybe not in every case, but still. A lot of my friends were from Poland. It wasn’t easy to become friends with a person, to have an English acquaintance, a friend. Until today I have two English friends. But to be in a group with them that somehow never clicked. And the more it came to an end, the more I was friends with colleagues. I was engaged in the Polish Society at our university, I lead a Polish radio audition and in general I had a bigger and bigger group of Polish friends – some dinners, going out together. (...) It seems to me that there are big cultural differences between us – I don’t know which. There is nothing negative about that of course. I just feel better in a mixed environment.’ (Bożena, 28 y, waitress in the UK; journalist following return)

Bożena was not able to specify the differences which she perceived, and while because of her situation of studying and working in the UK she had the opportunity to meet many other people, a lot of the other interviewees did not have those options. They worked in environments where most of their colleagues were also from Poland, lived in a shared flat or house with other Polish migrants or their family members, and did not socialise with the local population.

‘I’ll say this: with English it was like that, that very often I was in a Polish environment and I didn’t have any reason to learn that English. As much as you for example have to know at work, there I didn’t have any problems, and when it comes to talking perfectly, I am still not able to do that, because maybe I didn’t have such a will to learn the language that good, that for me England, I think, that England finished me psychologically a bit off and therefore I didn’t have the will to come forward and learn. I spent

maybe three or four years there. I decided that maybe its worth doing something, but on the other hand I had such a dislike towards England, towards the English, towards everything, that I gave up on that.’ (Martyna, 27 y, glass factory in the UK; salesperson in a shop following return)

Martyna had enjoyed her social life in the UK socialising with other Polish migrants, but returned to Poland following a traumatic miscarriage. At the time of the interview she portrayed her experience abroad as negative, justifying her decision to return, while at the same time reminiscing about fun times and great friends she had had in the UK similar to the narration of Bożena.

Some of the interviewees who had returned to Poland, mainly those who returned out of disappointment or as part of a family strategy, had similar experiences of predominantly socialising with other Polish migrants in the UK. This was also connected to their place of work and the area they had lived in, for example when they lived in an industrial region in the UK and had many Polish work colleagues. However, a few interviewees also highlighted their appreciation of the British environment and the diverse society in the UK.

‘Those multicultural people despite everything there is openness here decidedly. Poland, I can’t say, that Poland in general because I have a lot of friends, who are open. But for everyday life it is just easier and more comfortable here.’ (Irena, 28 y, receptionist at a restaurant)

Appreciating diverse, multicultural aspects of British everyday life was often the case for young women, who had constructed their migration aspirations as an opportunity to make new experiences and meet new people.

### **7.3 Transnational lives**

As was discussed in the literature review, migrants can move across transnational social spaces, with transnationality constituting a fluid social identity (Pries 2001; Portes 2001; Faist 2000; Vertovec 2001). These transmigrants develop roots in the receiving countries while maintaining multiple linkages to the home countries (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995). While the formation of a hybrid identity

and the establishment of transnational networks is one focus of research in this context, another approach is to examine the ways in which transnationality is lived in practice and how in the context of the enlarged EU European citizenship practices have developed. Cook *et al.* (2012) describe the way Central and Eastern European migrants minimised risks and costs by combining their national and transnational rights and responsibilities as proactive citizens.

The tendency to use certain services such as dental care or buy certain goods in Poland was also observed by Duda-Mikulin (2013), who framed it as ‘pick and mix’. The interviewees of the present research also referred to this everyday practice; moreover, the combination of national and European citizenship rights meant that some interviewees were able to take advantage of the opportunity to go to the UK or go back to Poland without the pressure of economic necessity, but simply because the possibility existed. This active use of European citizenship following personal and professional aspirations is discussed in chapter five on the construction of migration aspirations as well as in chapter eight on return.

While Polish migrant women actively made use of the national and transnational rights that fit their needs, these needs were often characterised by their gender role and gendered expectations, which in turn could inhibit their active citizenship (Duda-Mikulin 2013). The pressure of the neoliberal, often precarious migrant job market and the lack of family and state support have led some of the interviewees to share their household and caring duties more equally; however, managing the household as well as, if necessary, staying at home full-time for a period of time was still done by women. Furthermore, the usage of their freedom of movement often depended on the family’s situation. Interviewees who were single and had no dependants would also be very mobile within the UK, within Europe and in their return migration, making use of their rights whilst searching for the best employment possibilities available to them. Married women with and without children would, despite precarious or low-paid employment with no perspective for progression, stay in the region and work.

A common motive of transnational identity formation was that of having two places to call home.

'After that period I can say, that I have two homes. I laugh, when I return to England, that here is one of my homes. Although it's rented; when I return to Poland I also say – I go back home. So I don't know where my home is. (...) Hm, when I'm in Poland for a month I really miss it, maybe that month is too long. But when I cross the border and land at the airport its like – oh god, what do I do here again; I want to return to Poland. Maybe those are situations, where I simply react like that. But now I want to laugh, because I have two homes.' (Jadwiga, 38 y, cleaner in care home)

Jadwiga had a three-year-old daughter, who lived half of the year in the UK and half of the year in Poland. Therefore, in contrast to other interviewees, who lived together with their children in the UK, there was a different, potentially closer link to Poland and her family there.

Ania's children, in contrast to Jadwiga's daughter, were already older and led their own lives studying in Poland. Ania married a Tunisian man in the UK. While she travelled to Poland occasionally to see her children, the main purposes of her trips were to get things done and use Polish services, as was the case for most interviewees.

'This year I was two times, I was for Christmas two years ago, but this year I was in Poland in summer, well for spring. So I go also if there is a need to go, to visit all possible doctors, including the dentist, because it's much cheaper in Poland than here. When I go, I also go with something specific, that I have to take care of, because obviously there are matters. For example, when my son needed a mortgage, we had to simply go. So you go for a week, also spending time with the family. I don't have something like missing Poland, I don't know why, maybe I am different, but I don't miss it and I don't feel the need to return, because there is nothing to return to. There obviously when it ended, here something new began.' (Ania, 43 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory)

Transnational lives can have different forms and combinations of here and there. Ania seemed to have left a certain part of her life in Poland, saying it 'ended', and started something new in the UK. However, because she still financially

supported her children studying in Poland and was in contact with family and friends, she incorporated these aspects in her 'new beginning'.

'Of course we talk about everything that goes on in Poland. I watch every day what is happening; most people have Polish television here. Also watching Polish news, after all I want to stay up-to-date about what happens in the country, because after all we are Poles. Despite that we live here. To watch Polish television even more so I don't want to return to the country.' (Ania, 43 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory)

Furthermore, in the UK she worked mostly with Polish colleagues at her workplace and socialised with other Poles in the trade union's migrant workers' branch. Instead of Ania visiting her children often in Poland, her daughter and son came to the UK every summer in order to earn money for their studies. Ania kept many links like these and was interested in the representation of Poles in the UK, as shown in section 7.2.3 and in keeping up to date, *na bieżąco*, about events and politics in Poland.

Transnational lives were not necessarily in between countries or societies or in both at the same time, but could also offer the possibility of dealing with obstacles and constraints in one or the other context in a resourceful manner. Getting a mortgage, undertaking an internationally accepted vocational exam or receiving medical treatment were some of the examples in which the interviewees made use of their links to Poland. This could also be a means of coping with difficult experiences in migration, as was the case for Jolanta. She and her daughter had suffered health issues and she felt that she was not taken seriously by doctors in the UK. At the same time she was at risk of losing her job because of these issues.

'My daughter had health problems, so I had to go to Poland to get all the check-ups for her. Here they didn't detect her pneumonia, although I went to the doctor and asked, that she has a horrible cough, she behaves differently, and she is sluggish. The doctor said that it's a virus and everything is ok. In the end she got such a high temperature, she was already so weak that she sank into the couch. She was already, at some points she was like being unconscious. And we went to the hospital and the doctor couldn't even take her temperature, she had 30 or 40 degrees, and

she said she had 37. I said – look, you can't even take a temperature. I am not leaving until you tell me, what is going on with my child. Only then they did an RTG and said it's pneumonia. But if I hadn't screamed at that doctor, if I hadn't cried, then I don't know what would have happened, if I still had my child. Later the doctor in Poland said, that we need to examine her, because she is tiny, she was three years old, if her lungs developed all right. So I had to go to Poland to get that check-up. (...) I also felt weak, bad. I thought it's because of my nerves. It turned out after a couple of months, when I was on sick leave, that I have problems with my thyroid. I went to Poland to get that thyroid examined. The doctor said it's probably because of stress, but this matter dragged on, because not only I had problems with that company, my colleagues also.' (Jolanta, 37 y, catering staff in hospital)

In Jolanta's narration her and her daughter's health problems were always also connected to her problematic situation at work. Poland then became a safe haven for these matters, especially for medical treatment. However, in Jolanta's case Poland was also a better place for her in terms of employment, as she used to work in a language school and in offices, but had followed her husband to the UK so that the family could stay together.

The development of transnational hybrid identities was especially interesting in the family context, where parents and their children develop different identifications. Jolanta has an older son, who was born in Poland and lived almost half of his life there; her twins, however, were born in the UK.

'He (my son) is 12 years old, which means that now he has lived longer in England than in Poland. I'll tell you something funny. My little son, the one from the twins, is seven years old. When a woman asked him where he is from, you know what he said? That he is from England, because he was born here. He only speaks Polish, because his bigger brother taught him. That's true. My children go to Poland for two to three weeks every year. Their whole life is here. They were born here, they have their friends here, they don't know the real Polish world. They are already more from here. But my older son, he misses it. He wants to pass his A-levels (matura) in Polish, because he wants to go to Poland to study. And he says, that the

prettiest girls are there and he doesn't want to stay here.' (Jolanta, 37 y, catering staff in hospital)

The different members of Jolanta's family have developed diverse transnational identities. This diversity within one family parallels the plurality of transnational lifestyles of Polish migrants in the UK. The findings on the plurality of transnational lives reflect the established knowledge on transnationalism and highlights the relevance of gender roles in its configuration (Pries 2001; Lutz 2007).

## **7.4 Experiences of women and migrant family life**

Migrant women seek to reconcile their paid and unpaid work in the context of the gendered segmentation and feminisation of the labour market and the gendered division of reproductive and salaried work (Aufhauser 2000). Thus, they are confronted with diverse forms of intersecting inequalities as a woman and as a migrant worker with European citizenship (McCall 2005; Lutz 2007). The segregation and segmentation of the labour market institutionalise gendered patterns of work connected to class and nationality; these dynamics socialise migrants differently according to gender, class and ethnicity here and there (McDowell 2008). Mobility can influence the opportunities of salaried and reproductive work (Coyle 2007; Cyrus 2008; Morokvasić *et al.* 2008). Previous research has established that, in the context of European mobility, gender and ethnicity remain relevant factors, however, the experience of migration and life in the UK can open up ways to mediate structural constraints as well as renegotiate or underpin gendered expectations (Cook *et al.* 2011).

The idea of the proactive woman, who is able to deal with difficult circumstances in order to sustain the Polish household, is comparable to the discourse around the Ukrainian *Berehynia*. At first glance these appear to be positive attributes; however, they also serve as a patronising approach, in which compliments to the esteem and beauty of women, supposedly intended to be flattering, uphold the patriarchal ideal (Rubchak 2011). In research on Ukrainian women in Italy it was

shown that the freedom from patriarchal constraints in the origin country combined with more stable work, despite its informal and precarious arrangement, led to the female migrants becoming more independent, building close personal relationships in their destination country and finding it difficult to reintegrate into their home community because of the stigma attached to migrant women as supposedly 'loose' women and bad mothers (Hrycak 2011). While the first insight from this research is parallel to the experiences of the interviewees, the problems of reintegration owing to stigma were not observable because of the different context in which migration from Poland took place. Following EU accession, fewer women from Poland were forced to move abroad without their partners and children, and migration could happen in the family context. In this line, return migration was also often connected to the family situation.

#### **7.4.1 (In)compatibility of work and family**

As for many families, the issue of compatibility or incompatibility of work and family was also a major experience in the family life of the interviewees. This was especially the case for interviewees who had younger children and were working in low-paid employment. In some cases this has perpetuated the ideal, in which women as, mothers and wives, take care of the home and the children. But in other cases has led to a renegotiation of gendered responsibilities because of the need for both parents to work full-time in light of their low earnings and a lack of family support abroad.

'At the moment I still work there, on the weekends, because I take care of the children every day, the children are still little and my husband works from Mondays to Fridays and has the weekends off, so we miss each other a bit, but we are together.' (Jolanta, 37 y, catering staff in hospital)

As Jolanta's narration showed, in her case the difficulty of combining work and family has been resolved by taking over the main caring and household responsibilities. Jolanta had followed her husband to the UK, as mentioned above, and had negative experiences of working life in the UK in contrast to her white-collar employment experiences in Poland. However, the above-mentioned renegotiation of gendered responsibilities could be observed in Agata's division of caring responsibilities. While the 29-year-old came from a conservative

Catholic family background in rural Poland and still reflected these values in her belief system, she and her husband shared the care duties for their three-year-old son because of the necessity for both to work in their jobs in a store and a restaurant to make a living and the absence of close relatives who could help.

The (in)compatibility of work and family could take on different forms for single mothers in low-paid employment. Chapter five on migration aspirations has already shown the motive for migration as a solution for sole providers for children, as was the case for Ania.

‘For me maybe it’s not as easy yet because I have to help my children in Poland, because they still study and don’t work so until now it’s still not as easy as it should be, but I don’t complain. My husband also works so obviously those expenses are split in half, that’s also easier, because then you are not alone already as a person.’ (Ania, 43 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory)

Although Ania’s children did not live with her in the UK, as she migrated when they were teenagers and they stayed with her mother in Poland, she still perceived her life as more difficult than it could have been. In Ania’s case she took over the traditional male role of a financial provider, while her mother in Poland took over the traditional female role of caretaker (Lutz 2007). This pattern of close female relatives becoming involved in the care of children was also observable in the story of Ewa, who was not in contact with her daughter’s father.

‘I don’t have contact with the father of my daughter. (...) Following Christmas he wasn’t with me already, we separated. He left me alone in the world, I already knew I had to do everything by myself, everything for the child I have to buy myself and I worked. It was very difficult for me and my mum. I live the whole time with my mum.’ (Ewa, 20 y, agency worker)

In some cases single mothers were able to live with their children in the UK, but in Jadwiga’s case amongst others, the more feasible way was to send her daughter to Poland to live with her parents.

‘In 2010 I gave birth to my daughter in England. I’m a single mum, I wasn’t able to put together a whole family. I have half a family. And my daughter stays – because I want to work and don’t want to stop – so my

parents proposed to help me, but my daughter has to be in Poland.’  
(Jadwiga, 38 y, cleaner in a care home)

In Jadwiga’s narration the image of having half a family and not a whole family reflects the ideal of the core family consisting of mother, father and children. Jadwiga was, at the time of the interview, trying to work out if she could have her daughter living with her in the UK once she started nursery. However, for this the hours of the nursery and her working hours appeared to be incompatible.

#### **7.4.2 Challenging or reinforcing gender roles**

Mobility can enable Polish women to construct different identities and avoid the gender roles of the conservative discourse (Coyle 2007). Kaja for example was focusing her energies on building up a business of her own. Since she started working as a care worker in the UK, she had become more interested in the quality of care and different care philosophies, and was at the time of the interview working on offering her own care services with a colleague incorporating these insights. In order to fulfill this idea, she separated from her long-term partner, whom she had met in the UK and moved abroad with to open up his hostel business, and came back to the UK. She asserted that her family, coming from a rural area in Poland, did not understand her life choices and wanted her to settle down, get married, have children and not take the risks associated with opening up her own business.

‘So I’m still, I’m not married, I don’t have children, my parents ask: when will you get married, when will you have children, when this, when that?’  
(Kaja, 34 y, care worker)

However, Kaja resisted and did not want to fulfill these expectations.

While some interviewees such as Kaja were able to mediate gendered expectations, especially when they left Poland as young and single women with no dependants, many were also conforming to their gendered responsibilities. For example, Kinga’s migration and work trajectories were determined by her family situation and she constructed her migration as a family strategy. While she enjoyed her profession as a gardener in Poland and appreciated its stability, her partner’s precarious work in Poland urged him to search for better

opportunities in the UK. After two years of working there, during which Kinga took care of their son alone in Poland while working full-time, he could not imagine a future in Poland for him anymore and Kinga had to decide if she wanted to become a single mother in Poland or leave her job and move with her then ten-year-old son to the UK. She chose the latter, and then worked through an agency in various short-term jobs before she found the longer-term employment in a food-packing factory, where the work was characterised by poor conditions such as the coldness of the work environment and heavy lifting, as well as by low pay.

‘The biggest punishment for me was to come here and lose my job. (...) For some years now I have worked in a factory where we were packing bananas. That was physical work, I must admit, hard work.’ (Kinga, 35 y, food packing)

The Polish conception of gender roles together with the social construction of Polish women can impact on female migrants’ lives (Aziz 2018). The ideal of the *Matka Polka* constructs the archetype of the Polish woman as self-sacrificing and highly capable to deal with difficult conditions. She is upholding and reproducing the Polish national consciousness in the private domain despite foreign rule and subordinating her own needs to the family and the Polish state (Janion 1996). In the Polish gender regime this image is joined by the concept of ‘soft patriarchy’ from aristocratic times, characterised by chivalry whilst allocating women their space in the private domain. The framing of the ‘other’, represented by the external enemy at the times of the Polish partitions or during the socialist rule generated a kind of gender solidarity, which has led to improvements towards gender equality after Polish independence in 1918 (Pickhan 2006), but has shifted towards a backlash in women’s rights following the end of the socialist time (Graff 2006; Petrowa-Wasilewicz 2006). The socialist notion of gender roles understood men as strong workers oriented collectively with leadership qualities assuming the position of the head of the household and deserving of respect and obedience from the family, whereas women were promoted as the double role of working mothers, in line with the first characteristic of men but secondly being women (Marcus 2009). Therefore specific gender roles were encouraged while gender inequality was denied

(Rubchak 2011). The socialist narrative on gender inequality framed it as entrenched in the unjust class structure common with men and in the in-class dependency on their men, which resulted in committing to equality and achieving developments in emancipation in the constitution whilst a fraternal patriarchy endured in practice (Marcus 2009). The socialist state resumed the function of a paternalistic caretaker affording welfare, which led to the men's breadwinner role diminishing. Women, however, remained to be ascribed their role in the private domain, but at the same time were supported through relief from care giving and job security in their working lives. The transition to a market economy led to rising inequality, with severe decreases in family and maternity benefits, discontinuation and privatisation of childcare facilities, and discrimination on the grounds of gender in the workplace, and women became more likely to be unemployed and fall below the poverty line. The role of the Catholic Church was also relevant, as an opposition towards women's rights was concealed during the times of supporting the resistance by, for example, not referring to the subject of abortion. However, after 1989 the Church's influence on politics increased and for example abortions were restricted and contraceptive health insurance coverage was abolished (Mishtal 2009).

Some interviewees appreciated the public Polish appreciation of femininity and felt more secure in the gender regime in which they were socialised.

‘Besides that was Women's Day, which is very popular in Poland. Every woman even got a present from the company. There was a lot there. You could get help if there was a difficult situation at home.’ (Jadwiga, 38 y, cleaner in a care home)

Jadwiga reflected on this in her perception of a higher appreciation of women in Poland, and also in the context of her difficult work situation as referenced above. Many interviewees, who had migrated on their own at a younger age, were also challenging the expectation for women to have children, as was the case for Kaja and Maja.

‘We don't have any children. Somehow it just happened like that. I mean, you know what, we probably just made it comfortable, you know? We like that. I like to go for holidays, I like to sleep, I don't know if I want such a responsibility. (...) You know what, my favourite, most beloved – we were

two times in the Maldives. Wow! My god, that's paradise on earth. I'm telling you, I moan so much that we have to go again! But, that's like trying, well we decided, you know, to put money aside. We were in Costa Rica, we were in Mexico, we were at the Cape of Good Hope. So we visited a bit. Where were we? We were in Nicaragua. So, what we saw, that's already ours. Nobody can take that away from us.' (Maja, 32 y, kitchen staff in care home)

While Kaja had challenged gendered responsibilities out of a desire for professional fulfilment, Maja and her husband have resisted the societal expectations for them to have children. They made themselves a comfortable life enjoying travelling to exotic destinations. As with Maja's husband, many men were confronted by their gendered roles as well, trying to negotiate, resist or conform to them. Masculinity in migration could also face challenges, as was discussed in chapter five on migration aspirations.

'When I was in England I lived with my boyfriend, a Pole. Everything was ok, but in the end we separated. It looked like that, that it was good when he had a good job, he lost his job and he couldn't live with less money and was angry at me that he doesn't have this and he doesn't have that, but that wasn't my fault. We started to fight.' (Ewa, 20 y, agency worker)

At the time when Ewa's boyfriend had lost his job, she was still going to school taking her GCSEs and he had taken over the financial responsibility of caring for her. While the dynamics of changing masculinity ideals were also an interesting subject, this would call for its own analysis.

The pattern of challenging or reinforcing femininity ideals could be seen as developing in combination with different life stories. While some women might have reproduced what was expected from them earlier in their life, they might challenge it later on or vice versa.

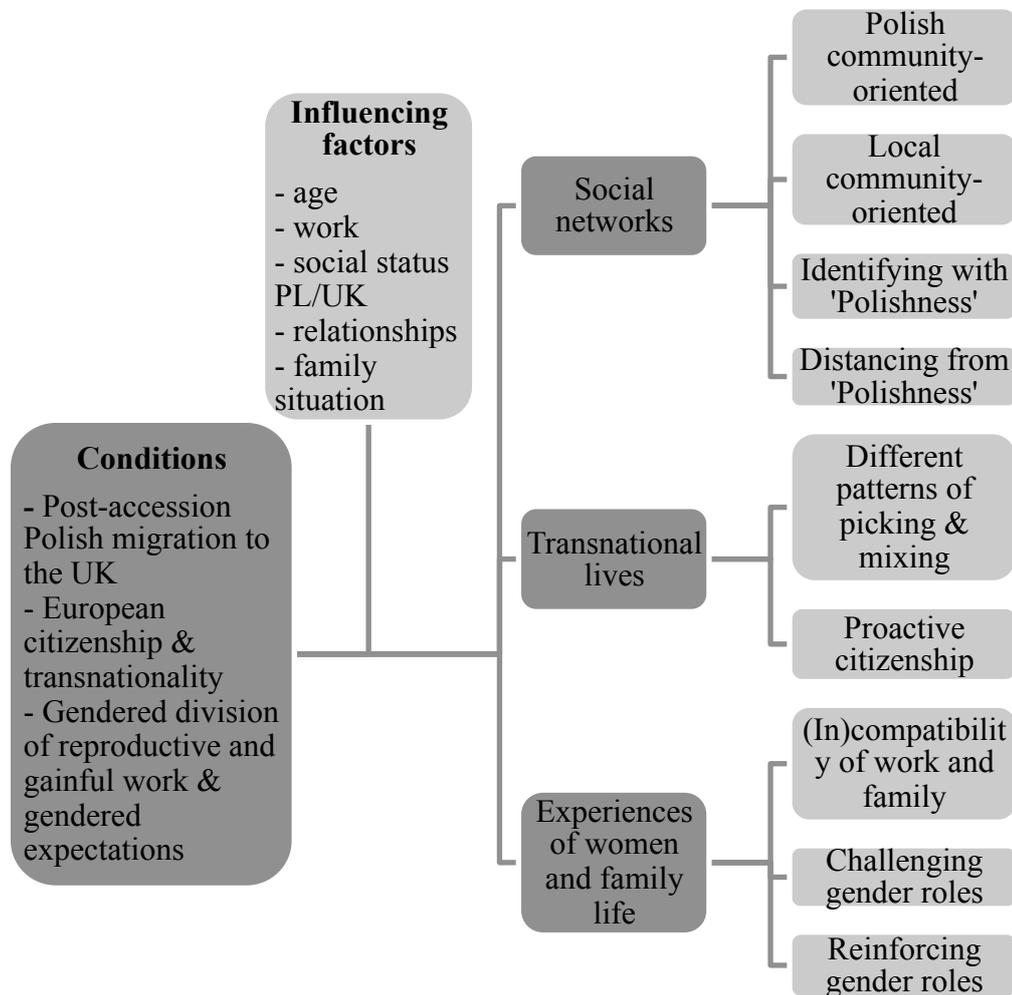
'That was my chance to prove that I am independent. That I don't always have to, just because I met a boyfriend, throw everything away for him and follow him. So although I could have returned then to Poland, I decided that I will not make the same mistake. Although maybe the first time wasn't necessarily a mistake, but I will not proceed the same way just because of a boyfriend.' (Basia, 30 y, office worker in finance department)

Basia had migrated to the UK together with her former boyfriend, and after separating realised that he was the only reason she had left and that she did not want to base future life decisions on partners anymore. These findings contribute to the discussion around migration and gender in terms of a pathway to renegotiate gendered expectations (Cook *et al.* 2011; Coyle 2007).

## **7.5 Conclusion**

The experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK are influenced by different aspects of migrant life. While work and education are major factors that influence the way in which migrant women live their lives and pursue their ambitions, social networks, transnational life forms and experiences of femininity and family life intersect with work and add to the interviewees' experiences.

**Figure 8** Experiences of social networks, of transnational lives and of women and family life



In relation to social life and networks, different patterns were observable that were realised and shaped by the active engagement and motivation of the interviewees. However their civic engagement was shaped, whether towards the Polish or the local community, this intersected with their own experiences and backgrounds as well as with their narrative of identifying and distancing from 'Polishness'; in any case, these social activities called for proactive, interested women. Therefore, they shaped their social life and networks as active agents while at the same time being influenced by the structural opportunities and constraints. The way in which the interviewees formed their transnational lives was diverse and they 'picked and mixed' what suited their lives, but also what met their families needs. While some women might not have been able to make

completely independent decisions, the interviewees did not see themselves as passive victims of the turn their lives had taken. The plurality of transnational lives, as well as the multiplicity of family life and gender roles, showed that while patterns could be observed, there was always the contribution of agency and a structural influence to the way biographies are shaped and develop dynamically.

The analysis of the interviews has generated new insights into the experiences of female migrants and their meaning making processes. While faced with hegemonic gender roles, negative public discourse and labour market segmentation, Polish women in the UK have found different ways of mediating their lives. They were found to construct individual, transnational lives in the context of active citizenship, which contributes to debates on transnationalism, civic participation and community activities of migrants (Duda-Mikulin 2013; Pries 2001; Pajnik and Bajt 2013; McIlwaine and Bermúdez 2011). While the needs fulfilled through active citizenship at times were dominated by the family's situation, at other times interviewees were able to challenge gendered expectations through their migration experience (Cook *et al.* 2012; Duda-Mikulin 2013; Coyle 2007).

## **CHAPTER 8: The construction of return decisions and experiences after return**

‘But in the first year or two or three you don't have anything to return with,  
and after that nothing to return to.’

(Hanna, 50 y, waitress)

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter investigates the construction of return aspirations and experiences after return to Poland. The option of return was an available path in the context of some interviewees constructing their emigration as an opportunity for a short-term or open-ended adventure or to be mobile. In some cases return was planned beforehand, especially in the case of single women with no dependants. Furthermore, all interviewees, irrespective of how they had constructed their move to the UK, had, in the course of the interview, reflected on the possibility of return. In some cases, however, return was not considered a viable pathway. This might have been because of the interviewees' contentment with the current life situation in the UK or because return was not considered attractive compared to life in the UK, with many interviewees asking themselves: ‘return for what?’ or ‘return to what?’ This narrative could also dominate over other return motivations, such as missing one's family and friends or former employment in Poland.

As much as emigration could be part of a family strategy, return could also be decided upon in this context, where the wellbeing of the whole family could overtake individual preferences. Return was also constructed as part of a life project, where this move would help in the pursuit of personal or professional fulfilment or be part of a mobile life with possible further moves. In this sample only a few interviewees constructed their return as a solution to disappointment,

while many others, who had decided to stay in the UK, reflected that return would have meant being a quitter and that emigration would have then been a mistake resulting in wasted time. These different constructions of return were not specific to cases, but were at times combined and overlapped in one or the other form in different cases. The structure of the chapter therefore represents the dominant types of narratives from the interviews. Experiences in Poland after return, such as finding work, pursuing education, family and social life, and possible benefits from human capital acquired abroad, are incorporated in the following.

Polish politicians were concerned with emigration and return migration of Polish citizens (Slany and Solga 2014). They also engaged more and more with immigration to Poland from other countries. While there was an awareness of the relevance of Polish emigration, and in certain situations a political support for their rights, especially when confronted with anti-migrant rhetoric in the UK, the Polish government's stated position was to support their rights to migrate and not actively encourage the return of Poles. However, when Polish migrants wish to return, the political institutions claim to take care of them by supporting re-integration. The political institution in charge of Poles abroad is the Polish Senate, while the Ministries for Foreign Affairs, for the Interior and for Family, Labour and Social Policies all were involved in return migration and immigration. Besides information campaigns such as *powrót*, 'return', and *zielona linia*, 'the green line', designed to assist returnees, there are also programmes and initiatives providing information for emigrants, such as info brochures on safe ways to arrange work abroad, registered work agencies, and Polish embassies in different countries (Slany and Solga 2014).

An analysis of the media discourse on Polish post-accession emigration has found that the expectation and debate on the initially optimistic effects of EU accession grew to be more differentiated in looking at positive and negative effects (Richter 2012). An image was created of migration as an escape from Polish hopelessness and the lack of prospects for education, work, career and life in general. Additionally, success stories were featured in an attempt to disprove the stereotype of *praca na zmywaku*, of Polish migrants doing the dishes. These

careers were often explained in terms of the work ethics and thoroughness of Polish workers abroad. Negative effects of migration were mainly connected to separated families and psychological sufferings (Richter 2012), such as the moral outrage over ‘Euro-orphans’ (Urbańska 2015).

## **8.2 Return ‘to what?’**

The possibility of a return to Poland was a subject of all of the interviews, including those conducted with women who had decided to stay or were still living in the UK. These women reflected on their decision to stay or on any aspirations they might have had to return. If emigration had occurred in the context of a family strategy or a solution to difficulties, the likelihood of a return decision was lower as the preconditions for migration had not changed. Many women had also engaged in social networks in the UK, as discussed in chapter seven, or had for example bought real estate in the UK or were pursuing British citizenship for themselves or their children, which also reduced their probability of return. Nevertheless, they were aware of the possibility of return in the context of the institutionalised structure of the freedom of movement, and reflected on motives that might have encouraged return, but which were overtaken by other factors. Amongst these were reflections on the perception of the Polish labour market in comparison to the UK labour market, societal factors such as more diversity and relative freedom of gendered expectations in the UK, or the family situation, with children being integrated in the British school system, and husbands who had been unable to find work in Poland and might still be unable to after return.

The perception of the Polish labour market was a significant factor preventing return. Jadwiga could only imagine returning to Poland if she was sure to find employment, despite her young daughter staying half of the time with her parents in Poland and her being unhappy with her work situation in the UK.

‘I would only want to return if it turned out that I would have work in Poland (...). I would say if after five years I had the chance to return to the

hospital, where I used to work, I would have returned, because I liked that work in my profession. I miss that here. I would simply like to use my head and my logic not work physically. (...) It's not easy work here; to be honest sometimes I have enough and would like to flee. (...) I think they [my parents] would like me to return, but on the other hand my dad says I should wait two more years. Maybe then it will be better in Poland, because now there is nothing to return to.' (Jadwiga, 38 y, cleaner in care home)

This perception of Poland offering nothing to return to was prevalent amongst the interviewees. This was connected to their former experiences in Poland and to the information they received from their Polish networks in the UK as well as in Poland. However, some, as discussed in chapter 7.3, also followed the Polish media in order to stay up to date, *na bieżąco*. Jadwiga had set herself a deadline in one and a half years to finally decide where to live, as her daughter would then be at the age of starting school and the temporary solution of her daughter staying one half of the year with her mother in the UK and the other half with her grandparents in Poland would no longer be feasible. Other interviewees were also undecided, or set themselves deadlines by which to decide whether to return or to stay. However, it was unclear if these deadlines were critical, as in Jadwiga's case. Maja, for example, apparently spontaneously set herself a deadline to make the return decision, but then in her narration started thinking about buying real estate in the UK instead of using the house she and her husband had bought in Poland.

'I don't know, somehow I feel like I miss out on a lot, but on the other hand I don't see a chance to return to Poland at the moment. Although I bought a house, so maybe I have a conviction somewhere that I will return. (...) I think maybe one more year and then we would have a nice amount of money. I mean... There are these government schemes here that help you to buy.' (Maja, 32 y, kitchen staff in care home)

In cases such as Maja's, emigration and return aspirations were not final decisions, but were located on a broader, more fluid decision-making spectrum. In her narration it also seemed that she was engaged in active biographical work

during the interview, without having developed the way she constructed her life story and aspirations beforehand. While for some women telling their life story was a spontaneous act with continuous reconstructing during the narration, others had already developed the story in advance through reflective work and experiences in narrating it to others. Factors that influenced these differences in the construction of their life story were age, their employment and financial situation, educational background, relationships and their family situation, making it difficult to specify a typology of who had undertaken biographical work previously and who did so mainly during the interview. However, unpredictability was also a prevalent aspect of the meaning-making process of migration experiences, and therefore spontaneity was not always connected to a lack of biographical work, but also to a conscious lack of planning (Düvell and Garapich 2011).

The meaning-making of the interviewees' emigration, especially if it was constructed as a solution to economic difficulties, still determined their idea of work and life in Poland. This did not exclusively relate to the perceived lack of jobs in Poland, but also to the low pay expected by the interviewees in contrast to what they were earning in the UK. Jolanta started calculating the different incomes and expenses you might have in the UK and in Poland during her interview.

'If you compare it and you earn Ok in Poland, you make 1,000 Złoty a month. Here in England you make 1,000 Pounds a month. In Poland you have to pay for a flat, where I live that's about 600 Złoty a month. Here it's 600 Pounds a month for a flat. Food and everything else is much more expensive in Poland, food and clothes. Books for kids, if you want to send them to school, are surely very expensive. For a child in the first class around 200 Złoty. I can't imagine. (...) I know people who returned, and they came back to England again, because they couldn't adjust in Poland. (...) Here we bought a flat, a house. In September it will be five years.'

(Jolanta, 37 y, catering staff in hospital)

While in this quote Jolanta simplified her message by using similar numbers in different currencies, with 1,000 Polish Złoty being approximately 210 Pounds, and not necessarily referring to realistic amounts of salary or costs, she used this narration to illustrate her point. For Jolanta and many others the expected income in Poland would not have been enough to support their family without having to depend on the wider family circle. Buying real estate in the UK also represented a path of long-term commitment, which shaped return motivations.

Return aspirations were less developed in cases in which migration was constructed as a solution, as described in chapter five. When migration was part of a family strategy they were more prevalent, even if they were often overruled by the family's decision. Here age also became a relevant factor, as these interviewees usually had children, were middle-aged and saw even fewer possibilities for work in Poland. Ania combined these arguments of a lack of employment prospects in Poland and her age with the need for her to support her children during their studies in Poland.

'At this moment I even don't want to return to Poland, because there is no possibility to earn something, there are no possibilities to work for someone at my age, because obviously employers prefer younger people. If someone is already at a specific age, older than 35 years then there is already no chance for work. Even if you do find work in Poland for some little money, then even if you work here through an agency, the money is better than in Poland. And you are able here to support yourself and your children like I do.' (Ania, 43 y, craftswoman in a clothing factory)

While for Ania migration as the sole provider for her children was a solution, others who had followed their husbands to the UK also prioritised the ability to provide for the family as an important factor in non-return. Here again it needs to be stressed that the construction of return motivations related to outcomes as expected not as factual and the interviews were undertaken at a certain moment in time, since which the situation in Poland has changed in regards to the labour market. This was also influenced by transnational social networks and the information received through them (Vertovec 2001).

However, the possibility of return was not always rationalised, and in some cases, especially in the context of migration as a solution to and a refuge from problematic family situations, was not aspired to. Ewa, who had experienced difficulties with her family and in school in Poland, did not plan ever to return, although many of her friends in the UK were Polish and had these aspirations.

'Most Polish people here want to return to Poland, but to be honest there is nothing in that country. I like it here, I will never return to Poland.' (Ewa, 20 y, agency worker)

Few interviewees were so determined in their position on not returning to Poland, but rather they kept this decision open for the future. However, when looking back at the problematic family situation and difficult times Ewa had experienced growing up, which were discussed in section 5.2.2, it becomes clear that she was one of the few interviewees with many difficult experiences in Poland and had also emigrated while still a minor. Her trajectory of suffering became associated with the country in which she had made those life experiences (Schütze 1983).

### **8.3 Adapted return plans**

Migration has been a short-term intended move for some of the interviewees, either in order to encounter new experiences or to earn money during a gap year before, during or after their studies. In many of these cases return was and still remained a possibility, although the migration had turned into a longer experience than anticipated. This was at times connected to the precariousness of work in the UK, as in the case of Liliana, who had extended her stay a couple of times in order to pay her bills in the UK, as she depended on short-term job placements provided by an agency. In the end the 25-year-old stayed for almost a year and worked mostly in a warehouse in order to pay her expenses and to try to handle the precariousness and instability of her stay and work. Back in Poland, she therefore could not benefit from sizeable savings from her migrant work and was now struggling to find her first employment in the field of her studies. Other interviewees got used to their life and work in the UK, and despite having

intended to return in order to, for example, finish their studies in Poland, stayed in the UK, as the way of life was perceived to be easier and they had experienced more financial independence.

However, where migration was intended as a short-term gap year, the possibility of return was always present and acted upon by some women. Maria had experienced multiple migrations to various locations earlier in her life, and had migrated to the UK with her partner in order to earn money and be able to have a family once back in Poland. They returned with their savings, studied and started a family life, buying a flat in Poland and having a child.

‘But we returned, because firstly we wanted to start studying and secondly a bit because of missing Poland. We left some time in September; in October we found work and didn't return for the holidays. For the first time we weren't at home [for Christmas], because we didn't get holidays and it was really hard for us. And then [a couple of months later], we already wanted to return and decided to do so, because we had saved as much as we could. I know that if we stayed there longer we would have surely stayed until today.’ (Maria, 28 y, cleaner in a shop; supervisor in a call centre on maternity leave following return)

It is difficult to filter out the differences between the circumstances where intended short-term migration was extended and led to long-term migration and the contexts in which the return was realised as planned beforehand. While precarious employment in the UK could have acted as a motivation for return, it also led to the prolongation of migration in some cases. However, time and unpredictability seem to be important factors, as Maria pointed out that the longer they had stayed the less likely they would have been to return (Cassarino 2004; Düvell and Garapich 2011).

## **8.4 Return as a family strategy**

Parallel to migration being decided in a family context, return was also constructed in the context of a family strategy. In this context the interviewees

were at times content with their life and work in the UK, but other factors that would make family life easier in Poland were prioritised. In a number of cases a child was either born or expected. It was decided to raise the expected child in Poland in order to have the family's support or to live in family-owned property in Poland with the growing family. Sometimes there were also other care responsibilities that the women had to take over in Poland. All of these aspects were found in Kasia's story who at the moment the interview took place was 34 years old. She came back to Poland after having worked in a UK warehouse in order to care for her severely ill mother and her younger, disabled sister. Following her mother's passing she resumed the care and provider role for her sister, as her sister's father was absent from her life. In face of low wages, however, Kasia was unable to support them in Poland and organised for her sister to stay in an assisted living facility, and returned to her prior work in the UK warehouse. There she met her husband and the couple planned to have a child and live in Poland, where her partner had inherited a house. At the time of the interview they were living in his home region, where she felt a lack of social contacts and lived far away from her sister. Kasia would thus have favoured remigrating, but because of her family situation did not do this.

'My boyfriend has a house outside [a big Polish city], which he got from his dad. His dad also doesn't live anymore and he left that house in a rough state. When we were still in England he started to slowly refurbish that house. (...) My boyfriend said, that he spent so much money on that house, that he tried really hard that the house looked nice. He invested quite some money and was annoyed and cancelled the contract with his friend [who had rented the house and not cared for it well], and why should we rent from someone and pay a lot of money if we already have a house with a garden. It is a very nice location, quiet, peace. There were many reasons: that house, my studies. But despite it all I would like to go back [to the UK].' (Kasia, 34 y, warehouse worker; postgraduate student following return; Aziz 2018: 137-138)

Kasia had started post-graduate education in speech therapy in Poland, and before their return she was already occasionally going back to Poland for

modules. However, this would have not been enough reason for her to return to Poland for good. At the time of the interview she was a few days away from her final exam, but did not see this as a promising career in Poland, as their home was too far away from bigger Polish cities and her son was still young. It seemed that she problematised her life in Poland because of her perceived lack of self-determination feeling subjected to the family's livelihood. Additionally Kasia, like other interviewees whose experiences in Poland before migration had been characterised by trajectories of suffering (Schütze 1983), tended to identify the country with the sources of biographical problems and the UK as an apparent solution, even if objectively, and in their narration as well, it was marked by difficult experiences.

Whilst most women who returned to Poland, such as Kasia, had worked in low-paid employment in the UK, others prioritised their family's choices above their high-status occupations in the UK, as did Renata, who was working in a managerial position. Renata and her British husband decided to move to Poland so as to utilise the support of Renata's extended family in bringing up their child. In the UK they had been living in an expensive city, where they worked many hours in their high occupational positions. Furthermore, they could not have relied on family support since her partner's family did not live close by.

'So I feel safer here. In England we worked all the time, he [her son] would have had to go to the nursery for ten hours a day, because of the commuting hours. Eight hours at work really means that you don't work eight hours but more, because you sit there longer and without a family, only friends, who work. If something would have happened you couldn't have counted on anyone.' (Renata, 36 y, store manager; plans to look for work later on following return)

While Renata's husband had found employment in Poland and also attended Polish classes paid for by his employer, she was spending her time with her little son and was planning to look for work once he was a bit older. Although many interviewees who started families in the UK appreciated the security of knowing that they would always be able to find any sort of work there, Renata and her

husband used their high qualifications and experience to find profitable work in Poland while at the same time enjoying the support of her family in raising their child. This caused her to frame her life in Poland as safer, because of the social networks supporting her and her family. In other research it was also found that family reasons were crucial for return decisions (Kostrzewa and Szałtys 2013). This furthermore supports the approach of framing migration, and in this context also return migration, in the family livelihood strategy as was done by White (2011).

## **8.5 Return for personal and professional fulfilment**

Personal and professional aspirations were decisive in two cases of return migrants, but played a role in the overall return decision for other interviewees as well. Bożena was 28 years old at the time of the interview and had emigrated to the UK right after school. In the UK she had worked as a waitress and studied, but one day she decided that she wanted to be a journalist. Since she did not believe she would have been able to do so in a foreign language, she went back to Poland following seven sometimes very difficult years in the UK in order to study journalism, and now worked at a newspaper.

‘So I started applying for journalism studies in Poland, post-graduate ones. And I was accepted and if England or Poland, in the end I decided to go back to Poland, because I also thought, that I want to become a journalist in Polish. That after all Polish is much closer to me than English. (...) That’s why I returned.’ (Bożena, 28 y, waitress; journalist following return)

While Bożena was determined on what her career should be, it had been and still was at the time of the interview a difficult path which she had chosen. After applying for many internships and experiencing difficulties in being accepted by journalist colleagues and editors, she found her niche topic on which she was now an expert. However, she was not employed by the newspaper, but received individual payments for her accepted contributions, similar to a freelance worker. This again showed that the factual situation of the Polish labour market did not

have as much influence on the decision-making of return migrants as did the perception of it, whether more pessimistic or optimistic.

‘Do you know what a junk contract is? That you have to do something and when you are finished you get money? (...) I don’t earn 2000 Złoty a month, I only earn by text and by duty hours. I think this works better for me. Because when I decide to do something, I write more and earn more. They [the employed journalists] make the same. Of course they also have benefits from that, when they go on holidays they still get paid, and I don't. Maybe if I try harder I could get that.’ (Bożena, 28 y, waitress; journalist following return)

This income insecurity and precariousness caused Bożena to also teach English part-time, which she had been doing since her return, making use of her human capital acquired during migration. In this quote she also justified her precarious employment situation, which is a tendency found amongst young people in Poland, who normalise their work-related insecurity while at the same time criticising it (Mrozowicki *et al.* 2015).

Another example of return for professional fulfilment was the case of Ula. She had studied and always worked in the arts and culture industry in Poland; in the UK she enjoyed a profitable position as a supervisor in a store and made use of her higher earnings in her leisure time, going out and enjoying herself. In her work in Poland she had been considered modern and ahead of her time, which made her frustrated and bored and served as her reasoning behind her emigration to the UK. However, in the UK she could not find access to cultural life and did not know the cultural and arts scene, which was why she decided to return to Poland and to a profession in culture and the fine arts.

‘Because I came to the conclusion, that if I wanted to practically be in the theatre then I must be completely decided. Because if in your head you have the possibility of maybe I could be here as a manager of that, or that or somewhere else then it will not work. For that you need complete desperation. I was sure of one thing: that I wanted to work in culture.’ (Ula, 31 y, shop supervisor; organiser of cultural events following return)

Despite her discontent with her former work in Poland, her aspiration for professional fulfilment overruled previous negative experiences and she was able to find employment in a more progressive cultural institution. While there were only a few such cases where specific goals and aspirations were not connected to familial responsibilities, or economic factors, they nevertheless were interesting examples of the 'citizenship in action', which Duda-Mikulin (2013) refers to, and showed these women's determination.

## **8.6 Mobility for opportunities**

Some research has pointed to the phenomenon of double migration or remigration in the context of Polish post-accession migration (White 2014; Krings *et al.* 2009; Karolak 2015). These studies have shown a fluid understanding of migration, where return to Poland could also lead to another move to the UK or further migration to other destinations. As discussed above, some of the interviewees were not able to state that their return had been final, and still held aspirations for further migration or return to the UK.

Many interviewees had experienced multiple migrations to various destinations or more than one migration to the UK. Herein the aspirations for return or remigration were often determined by the available opportunities, which these women felt they should make use of. Irena for example had lived through multiple migration experiences to various destinations and two stays in the UK. At the time of the interview she had returned from Poland to the UK the second time, following the opportunities that were offered to her.

'And when I came here [to the UK] I already received the next offer of employment in Poland. After some time, I thought: 'Ok, here I already have everything, so maybe I could improve myself there', and again there was a decision moment. Because it was a nice offer in a restaurant – I would be responsible for managing that restaurant and to put it together. I could get some experiences, so I returned to Poland after some time in the

UK. And I was in Poland for another one and a half years.' (Irena, 28 y, receptionist at a restaurant)

After managing this vegan restaurant, Irena returned to the UK once more and started working as a receptionist at a restaurant. She followed the opportunities that presented themselves to her, she also valued a mobile lifestyle and accepted working in a low-paid job again. While her two work endeavours in Poland were entrepreneurial and successful at the beginning, after some time they had both failed, so in a way her repeated emigration also resulted from a failure. However, Irena never narrated it in this way; her meaning-making process conceptualised all of her moves and decisions as being guided by the wish to be mobile and experience new things.

## **8.7 Return out of disappointment**

Return can be constructed in the context of a disappointment during the migration experience in the UK. While this kind of 'return of failure' was often described in economic terms of migrants not being able to achieve the anticipated income (Cassarino 2004), in the present cases return was sometimes seen as a solution and a path to get away from negative work experiences or personal problems. While many interviewees who stayed in the UK, but had been faced with such a decision during a difficult period, referred to return as giving up and lost time, in this sample only two cases had directly referred to occupational or personal disappointment as the main motivation to return.

Basia for example had migrated to the UK with her partner and after their separation was contemplating a return to Poland, but decided against it.

'Aha, and then I separated from my boyfriend, so I had to decide if I wanted to go back to Poland which would have been like throwing away these two years, in which I didn't achieve anything and it would have made no sense, those two years would have been completely lost. But if I stay and start doing something more concrete, then these two years don't go to

waste, so I thought about starting to study.' (Basia, 30 y, office worker in finance department)

This perception of migration as being wasted time if you return out of disappointment has potentially kept many migrants abroad. When Basia talked about making use of the years abroad, she hinted at her ensuing educational efforts and her plan to build up human capital during migration. The first years in the UK she had spent focused on earning a living and being together with her boyfriend. In her biographical narration she referred a lot to her educational background and her family's appreciation of education, and since her emigration occurred at a time when she was expected to go to university, she then felt as if those were lost years. However, it seems as though there is a lack of biographical work concerning this time, since when she did reflect on those early years in the UK it became obvious that she benefited from the migration experience in terms of, for example, labour market skills and resources. The counterpart in this meaning-making is the person in Poland at the same age and with the same educational background, who did not migrate and therefore might be at a different place in her life. This comparison was also associated with the societal and family expectations of where one should be in a life course at a certain age.

Zosia was also worried about what people might think if she returned, so she had endured many hardships during her migration. She had joined her brother, his wife and their children in the UK and lived with them. She had found work in a restaurant, where her employer had appreciated her work, but her co-workers started bullying her and talking behind her back. At one point they changed her phone number in the contact list so the employer was unable to reach her to call her into work, while she was waiting next to the phone. She made sense of this bullying by thinking her co-workers were jealous of her hard-working ways or felt she made them look bad, which resonated with the dynamics of stereotypes against Poles as described in chapter seven. Following this, she left the restaurant and found work in the food packing industry, where she developed a medical condition on her hands. However, she kept her condition a secret, hiding her hands during dinner, because she thought treatment would be too much of an inconvenience and she would lose money because of not being able to work.

After some time of hiding this injury, she burnt her leg badly on a machine at work, which someone had forgotten to switch off. Her supervisor sent her home and told her to go to the doctor, but because she had used car sharing with her co-workers to get to and from work she had to walk a long distance home. She was exhausted, in pain and had had enough. When she arrived home she told her sister-in-law about her injuries and that she wanted to return to Poland. Her mother had to console her via skype and told her that it was ok to leave and that she did not have to be ashamed.

'I cried, and she cried and said: 'Come back! You don't even have to tell me what happened. Come back. We will make it work here, don't worry. I'll help you, I'll pay for your studies. Come back, come back.' (...) But mum, I came here to work, what will that look like? So many people came here and didn't go back, and I want to return. Not that I'm ashamed, but (...) I didn't do anything and I lost that job offer in Poland for the courthouse. And that would have been work at the desk, what I always wanted to do, and with papers. (...) [My mum said:] 'Come back, there is no reason to be ashamed!' (...) And I left and was really happy (...) there I was miserable, here I am happy.' (Zosia, 28 y, food packing; office worker in court following return)

Zosia and her family decided to leave as soon as possible, since her sister-in-law was also unhappy staying at home alone with the children, not knowing anyone and with her brother working long hours. When her brother came home from work, she and her sister-in-law told him about their plans. They booked plane tickets the same night. Her supervisor was disappointed that she did not want to come back, as he appreciated her work, but he came to meet her and gave Zosia her last salary, which she had not expected or counted on. A few days later they left the house at night, dropped the keys in the letterbox of their landlord with a letter telling him to use the deposit for the unannounced termination, and while her brother took all the things they had accumulated by car to Poland, Zosia, her sister-in-law and the children flew back to Poland. Although, as Cassarino (2004) describes, such unplanned, spontaneous returns often lead to a more difficult re-integration, and this was the most spontaneous, radical return in this sample,

Zosia was able to return to her work in the Polish courthouse, because they had not yet filled her post, and constructed her return as her salvation.

While Zosia had difficulties at work and health problems, Martyna constructed her return also as a solution to disappointment. Her disappointment, however, lay in personal relationships. She had left Poland right after school in order to be able to support herself financially, because her mother had another child when she was 17 years old and she wanted to alleviate the financial burden on the family. She had planned to stay for six months in the UK, where she worked and lived in an industrial region, and then return to school in Poland. However, she met her partner, spent a lot of time with Polish friends and co-workers, developed a routine of everyday life and decided to stay. When after three years she separated from her partner, she began thinking about leaving the UK.

'I lost a lot, mentally and also financially. Maybe that's a bit materialistic, but on the other side I know that he misused me in such a material way. So I thought about return, but on the other hand I had friends, and I think they had a lot of influence that I didn't break down too much. That maybe I could try; why should I immediately throw everything on one card and return.' (Martyna, 27 y, glass factory worker; salesperson in a shop following return)

While Martyna decided to stay longer, just as Zosia did when she first had thoughts about returning out of disappointment, she suffered another negative personal experience, which led her to finally decide to return.

'And at that point I got pregnant, and he didn't want the child, so I decided to terminate contact with him, but the stress and everything didn't allow me to continue with the pregnancy and I had a miscarriage. And at that moment came the thoughts that after all it's worth it to return home, that I have already experienced too much there.' (Martyna, 27 y, glass factory worker; salesperson in a shop following return)

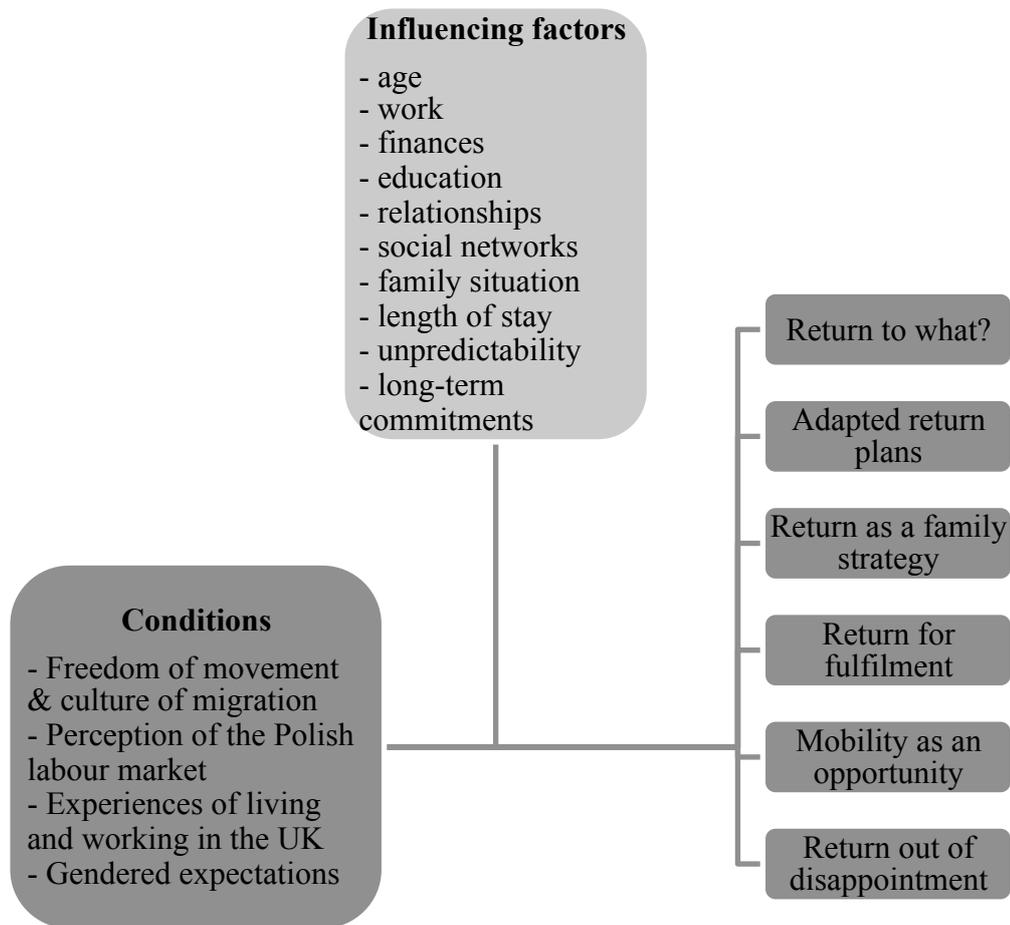
While this return was less spontaneous than Zosia's, Martyna wanted to take a break from work and achieve emotional distance from her traumatic experience, so she did not think about her future work in Poland. She returned to her family

home and later on started working again in the shop in which she had worked besides school as a teenager. This case of personal trauma leading to return was rare in this sample; although some interviewees reported similar difficult times in the UK, those did not lead to return, which might have been because of their own and the community's perception of this form of return as a failure.

## **8.8 Conclusion**

Return as a possibility in the context of the freedom of movement in the enlarged EU and a culture of migration was reflected upon in all conducted interviews. However, the perception of Poland and the Polish labour market, as well the unchanged earlier motivation for emigration, rendered this pathway unattractive for some interviewees. When the migration had been constructed as a family strategy or a solution to difficulties, return was often not appealing.

**Figure 9** The construction of return decisions



Parallel to age causing pessimistic expectations for a re-integration in the Polish labour market, the length of stay also influenced the return decision, with longer stays in the UK making return less likely. In their framing of returning ‘to what?’ the impression they had about Poland as well as earlier experiences in Poland were more relevant than factual information, and therefore the expectations of return were crucial (Cassarino 2004). This condition, however, could not only prevent return decisions but could also encourage them, with return experiences not fulfilling the return aspirations. Further factors preventing the construction of return decisions were established social networks in the UK, or long-term commitments such as real estate and mortgages in the UK or the pursuit of British citizenship. The experience of financial independence and an appreciation of the diverse British society also impeded return. Therefore, even if return had

been planned before emigration, this did not necessarily happen. In some cases, migration was prolonged because of precariousness or getting used to life in the UK, and only led to return if there were different life plans constructed or if disappointment was experienced, although this was only the case for two interviewees. However, for many interviewees unpredictability was a common factor characterising their fluid decision-making and on-going biographical work (Düvell and Garapich 2011). Corresponding to the construction of migration as a family strategy, return was also at times pursued in the context of the family's livelihood, as well as of the gendered caring responsibilities overruling individual aspirations. On the individual level, the different life plans leading to return were mostly connected to aspirations for personal or professional fulfilment in Poland. However, there were specific reasons why these goals could only have been pursued in Poland, such as the educational and occupational background or language. Analogous to migration being constructed as an opportunity, return or for that matter mobility, since return in these cases was often part of multiple movements with various destinations or double migration, was also framed as opportunity. Herein the opportunities were not conceptualised as a continuous life or a career path but as the chance to make new experiences, meet new people and take up offers. For many interviewees who had stayed in the UK the construction of return as a failure was prevalent, where faced with difficult experiences throughout migration they still decided to stay so as not to have wasted time. This perception of being a quitter as a returnee potentially prolonged or led to permanent stay of migrants experiencing hardships.

These findings therefore contribute relevant insights to the literature on return migration in regards to return decisions, the absence or decline of return motivations as well as the experiences after return. While biographical work was a crucial aspect of return decisions and motivations, this had different outcomes influenced by individual factors and perceived realities (Schütze 1983; Düvell and Garapich 2011; Cassarino 2004). The experiences following return were at times difficult such as precarious employment situations and in some cases gendered expectations within social relations prompted a wish to migrate once again (White 2014; Krings *et al.* 2009; Karolak 2015). This contributes to findings from earlier research, which challenges the assumption of voluntary

return to the country of origin being a psychosocial unproblematic process and highlights the breadth of return experiences influenced by temporal and other factors (Vathi and King 2017).

## **CHAPTER 9: Conclusion**

### **9.1 Introduction**

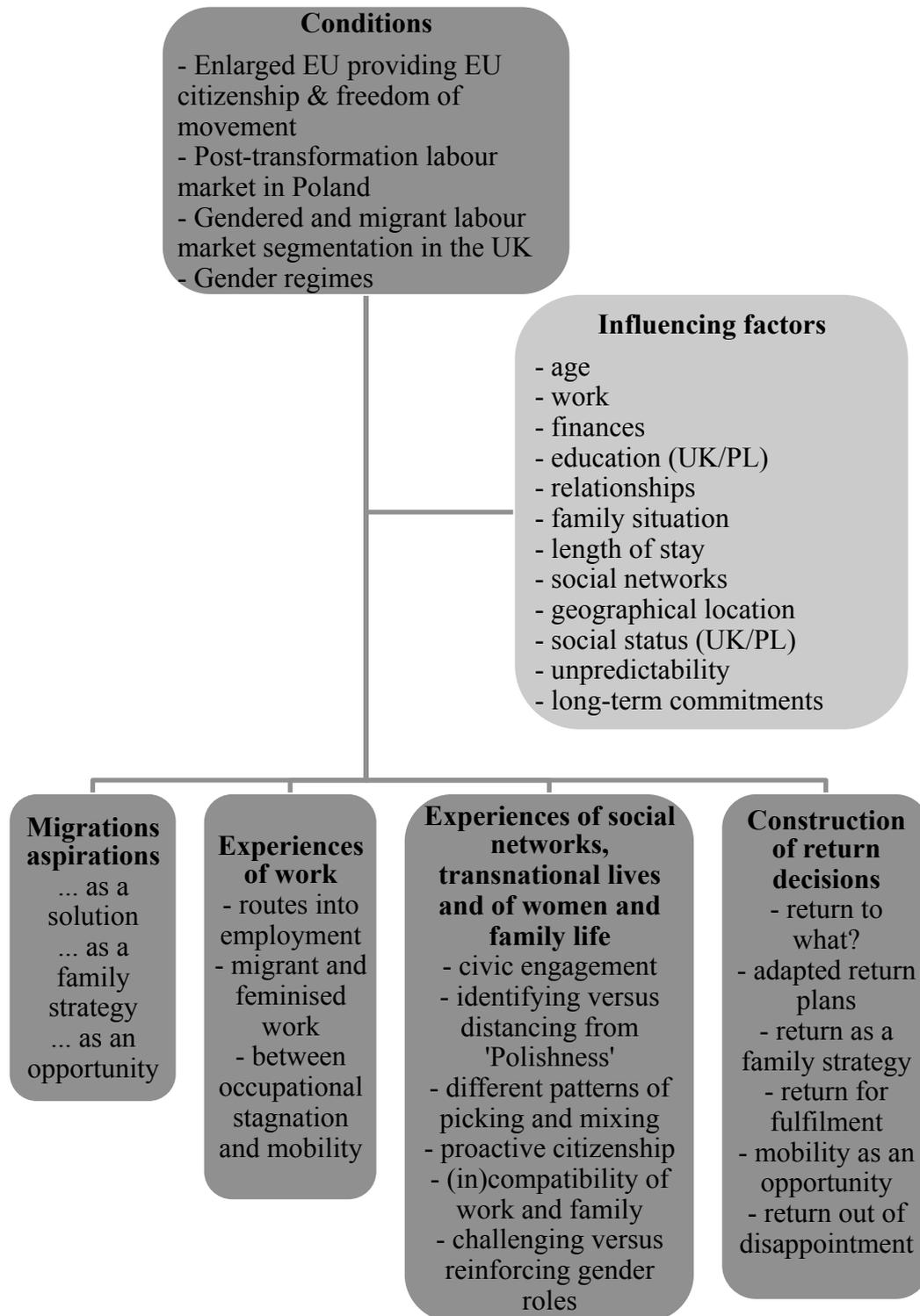
This thesis set out to investigate migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK based on the analysis of biographical narrative interviews in the UK as well as with return migrants in Poland. In order to tackle the research questions on the conditions and influential factors that shape these experiences, as well as how women make meaning of these structures, a contextualised migration study prioritising the interviewees' own narratives and meaning-making of their lives was developed. This contributes new knowledge to research on female migrants' experiences and working lives. The following research questions were conceptualised and investigated throughout the thesis:

- What structural conditions shape the construction of migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers to the UK?
- What individual factors influence the construction of migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers to the UK?
- How do female Polish migrant workers in the UK make meaning of their migration aspirations and experiences?

In order to address these questions a grounded theory model of the research aim was elaborated in Figure 10 based on the theoretical and empirical findings of the study. The conditions shaping migration aspirations and experiences as shown by the analysis are the enlarged EU providing EU citizenship and freedom of movement as well as the post-transformation labour market in Poland, the gendered and migrant labour market segmentation in the UK and gender regimes. Furthermore, manifold factors in the interviewees' life stories influence the construction of migration aspirations and experiences such as: age, work, finances, level and place of education, relationships, family situation, length of stay, social networks, geographical location, social status, unpredictability as well as long-term commitments. The ways in which female Polish migrant workers make meaning of their aspirations and experiences were investigated in

four different aspects of their life stories discussed in depth in section 9.4 on empirical findings followed by a discussion of limitations and outlook.

**Figure 10** Grounded theory model of migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK



## 9.2 Theoretical contributions

Polish post-accession migration to the UK has, because of its new politico-institutional context and significant numbers, attracted a broad range of research on different aspects of this movement (Burrell 2010). This thesis has aimed at developing a contextualised study (Castles 2012; Massey 1999) with the narratives of migrants in the foreground, adding new knowledge on the specific experience of female Polish migrant workers in the UK.

The literature review has provided insights from various theoretical approaches to this research by situating it in the dynamics of globalisation, migration and work, migration theories, the feminisation of migration and the labour market, as well as the specific construction of Polish femininity. Furthermore, the mediation of conditions by the migrant women has provided new insights. The theoretical debates in the field of female migration research, and the identified new contribution to knowledge on Polish women as female migrant workers in the UK, has encouraged the thesis' approach of implementing a grounded theory methodology, influenced by constructivist and feminist conceptualisations (Charmaz 2006; Olesen 2007), and informed by theoretical sensitivity through the analysis of biographical narrative interviews and semi-structured expert interviews as well as secondary data analysis, aiming at establishing a contextualised grounded theory model as shown in Figure 10.

In the framework of East-West migration, the researched migrant group constructed their experiences in this long-standing phenomenon with new characteristics (Favell 2008). Social networks and transnationality, as well as an established culture of migration, have proven significant for this thesis. This culture of migration (Favell 2008) in combination with the freedom of movement through European citizenship (Ciupijus 2011) has led to the development of dynamic constructions of migration aspirations and return decisions framing mobility as an opportunity as was shown by this study. In the context of the gendered and migrant labour market segmentation in the UK (Aufhauser 2000; Bradley and Healy 2008; Cook *et al.* 2011; McDowell 2008) this thesis adds the

insight of female Polish migrants pursuing their employment predominantly as migrant workers yet characterised in their opportunities as women. The empirical analysis has highlighted that this dynamic in some cases led to the perpetuation of the gender regime in the UK at the workplace in the public sphere while reinforcing or challenging dynamics emerged in relation to the Polish gender regime in the private sphere, which contributes to the discussion on the renegotiation of the private and public domain in Poland and the impact of migration on this (Coyle 2007; Lutz 2007; McCall 2005; Pine 2002).

By analysing the interviews conducted with female Polish migrants who at the time of the interview have stayed in the UK and those who have returned to Poland together as one set of informants, this thesis overcomes the conception of migration as a one-way, completed movement and strives to add to the understanding of migration as a process (de Haas 2014; Pries 2001). Thus migrant interviewees who conceptualised their migration as opportunity, as mentioned above, actively pursued personal or professional fulfilment. This finding adds to the discussion on the proactive use of European citizenship. However, there were gendered limitations detected in this picking and mixing of opportunities (Cook *et al.* 2012; Duda-Mikulin 2013).

Besides these theoretical contributions the thesis also established theoretical insights into the relationship between structural conditions and individual factors and meaning making as was aimed at through the research questions. The conditions of the enlarged EU, gender regimes, the post-transformation labour market in Poland and the gendered and migrant labour market segmentation in the UK shape migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK. These experiences are furthermore influenced by various individual factors in the life stories of the interviewees including age, work, education and family situations. While these conditions and factors provide the context for migration, the interviewees make meaning of their experiences. In the context of the post-transformation labour market in Poland influenced by individual factors such as trajectories of suffering migration was then constructed as a solution showing the relevance of agency (Schütze 1983; Kaźmierska *et al.* 2011; Lutz 2007). Influenced by the conditions of gender regimes through

concepts of femininity and masculinity migration was in some cases conceptualised as a family strategy at times overruling individual women's preferences (White 2011; McCall 2005). However, the condition of the enlarged EU and freedom of movement as well as the developed culture of migration provided the possibility to make meaning of migration as an opportunity shaped by factors such as age, education and relationships (Eade et al. 2006; Kaźmierska *et al.* 2011; Favell 2008). This context also lifted the pressure of an informal migrant labour market, while the interviewees still experienced the gendered and migrant labour market segmentation in the UK (Anderson *et al.* 2006; McCall 2005; Coyle 2007; Ciupijus 2011; Cook *et al.* 2011). Herein the gendered expectations correlated with individual factors such as geographical location in the UK, age and education rendering some interviewees feeling stuck in their working lives, while pursuing personal fulfilment in other spheres such as community activities (Grabowska-Lusińska 2012; Duda-Mikulin 2013). In the face of these conditions a dynamic of class ambiguities, a framing of 'us' and 'them' as well as tendencies of distancing or identifying with 'Polishness' were found as ways of meaning making of the interviewees (Trevena 2011). The interviewees' individual meaning making in relation to gender regimes also led to different patterns of challenging or perpetuating gendered expectations in the private and the public sphere (Hochschild 2003; Lutz 2007; Cook *et al.* 2011). Confronting structural constraints as well as actively using transnational social networks and citizenship rights were exemplified in the women's migration experiences (Ciupijus 2011; Pries 2001; Vertovec 2001). This also related to return motivations, in which negative perceptions of the opportunities in Poland as well as experiences made in the UK influenced interviewees to adapt their return plans. The biographical narrative interviews showed that meaning making processes therefore shaped return decisions (Schütze 1983). Furthermore, in the context of return gender regimes again influenced women's meaning making at times conceptualising it as a family strategy. However, influenced by different individual factors return was conceptualised as a route to fulfilment highlighting agency (Cassarino 2004). Further insights established by this thesis are demonstrated in the following sections on methodological contributions as well as on empirical findings.

### **9.3 Methodological contributions**

In conceptualising the methodological approach of this thesis, an applied form of grounded theory methodology on experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK was developed. The grounded theory methodology guided the research process, while appropriate methods were implemented in the design. The research was characterised by a qualitative approach, enriched with secondary data analysis in order to be able to bring forth a contextualised study taking on the perspectives of the interviewees. The combination of a grounded theory methodology, taking into account its constructivist and feminist approaches such as reflexivity, ethical considerations, and the ideas of co-production and co-creation of knowledge, with mainly the analysis of biographical narrative interviews enriched with semi-structured expert interviews and secondary quantitative data analysis, in order to tackle the research question on how female Polish migrant workers make meaning of their aspirations and experiences, what factors influence, and what conditions shape the construction of these aspirations and experiences appears to have been fruitful.

Contributions from the fieldwork experiences can be found in the exploration of accessing interviewees and conducting the interviews. In relation to access to the field, various means have contributed to the sample; however, the internet and social networks have proven to be especially relevant. In relation to finding informants on the internet, such as in facebook groups, the specific theoretical sampling applied becomes relevant, as the experience from this research was that there needs to be a certain bigger scale in order to find groups at all and be able to contact individuals from the group, but that the bigger these groups get the more anonymous they are, leading to queries often remaining unanswered. While the risk with snowballing of accessing new interviewees through other informants is that often a similar sample of interviewees will be the outcome, the fieldwork for this thesis has proven differently. Not only did snowballing in the UK provide a differentiated sample, it also supported access to returnees in Poland, as for this group access through the internet was more difficult because of a lack of groups for female returnees specifically. The researcher-interviewee

interaction in this research also provides methodological contributions as a case of multi-layered positionalities characterised by different profiles of the interviewees, as well as by the specificity of the researcher as a female migrant in the UK with knowledge on Poland and Polish language skills but a different country of origin (Nowicka and Ryan 2015).

## **9.4 Empirical findings**

The analysis of the empirical data consisting predominantly of biographical narrative interviews with female Polish migrant workers, who had lived and worked in the UK, but also of semi-structured expert interviews, and the secondary data analysis of quantitative information has brought forward crucial empirical findings. These add new insights to preceding research from a perspective on Polish women as migrant workers in the UK.

The history of Polish migration, and more specifically of Polish migration to the UK, has contributed to the development of a culture of migration providing new migrants with social networks, information and access to employment (Favell 2008). The developed culture of migration also sets the context of the dynamic development of movements, making the investigation of staying and returning crucial for a contextualised study (de Haas 2014). The secondary data analysis has contributed the image of Polish women as migrant workers, slightly younger than Polish male migrants and more economically active than women overall. Furthermore, age and generational differences have been established to be influential factors in labour market participation, which also became evident in the analysis of the biographical narrative interviews. The characterisation of Polish women in the UK as migrant workers was reflected in their more frequent employment in migrant sectors. Furthermore, the gendered labour market segmentation not only conceptualised them as migrants but also as women working more often than Polish men in feminised work. This investigation has dealt with a sample of women who were working in the main sectors for Polish migrants.

In the conditions of the politico-institutional structure of the enlarged EU enabling freedom of movement, as well as the structure of gender roles and the post-transformation Polish labour market, the interviewees constructed their migration aspirations in various patterns. These were conceptualised as a solution, a family strategy or an opportunity, with aspects of the narratives overlapping and interchanging. When migration aspirations were framed as a solution, this was the consequence of life experiences in Poland that had either led to a trajectory of suffering (Schütze 1983) or to difficulties in sustaining livelihoods. Here the gendered dynamic of economic interdependence in the context of low wages and problematic partnerships was crucial. While family livelihoods were relevant for all interviewees with dependants, they at times also overruled individual preferences of the women concerned, especially in the context of challenged masculinity. By young, highly educated women with no dependants however, mobility, was often seen as an opportunity promoted by European citizenship. This opportunity at times was related to new experiences, but also to the aspiration for independence, expected to be more easily achieved economically in the UK given a perceived lack of opportunities in Poland and low wages. This pattern also exemplifies the proactive use of European citizenship.

The analysis of experiences of working lives in the UK has contributed various empirical insights. Here, additional to the conditions in relation to migration aspirations, the gendered labour market segmentation in the UK, as well as typical migrant sectors, shaped the experiences of the interviewees. While the influencing factors were also parallel to migration aspirations such as age and the family situation, these were marked by different dynamics in the context of work. These factors led to a lack of opportunities for mobility and risk taking within the UK, rendering the geographical location more relevant than for women with no dependants. In the context of work, length of stay was a crucial factor for the path of employment patterns. While most interviewees started out in low-paid employment, many experienced professional progression either in migrant sectors, following UK education, or as part of the pursuit of fulfilment. Other women who were determined by gendered expectations in the private

sphere experienced feelings of being stuck, while mediating their migration experience in different areas, such as through informal entrepreneurial endeavours or local community engagement.

Besides work, the mediation of the migration experience of female Polish migrant workers was also investigated in the context of social networks, transnational lives and family life, as well as in the context of femininity and masculinity. Civic engagement was, for some interviewees, mainly connected to their local community, and for others to the Polish community; these orientations, however, overlapped and were both determined by their own experiences and influenced by a narrative of identifying or distancing from 'Polishness'. The interviewees mediated their social life and networks as active agents, parallel to their active use of European citizenship in constructing their transnational lives of picking and mixing what suited them. These picking and mixing patterns were also determined by the family's livelihood and found their expression in multiple arrangements.

The freedom of movement for European citizenship has not only encouraged migration aspirations but also return motivations to be constructed dynamically. In this context, as in the conceptualisation of migration, the expected outcome and situation, as well as the meaning-making process of staying and returning, were more crucial for decision-making than any factual information. In those cases where migration was constructed as a solution and the problem to which it was presented as answer had not changed, return was not deemed attractive. As with experiences of working and living in the UK, the factors of the length of stay as well as age were relevant, as both caused pessimistic return expectations. Long-term commitments such as the pursuit of British citizenship or the acquisition of real estate also made return unlikely. Furthermore, an experience of financial independence and an appreciation of British diverse society led especially young, highly-educated interviewees to stay in the UK. This argument, as well as other patterns such as precarious employment, also led to the prolongation of migration. Furthermore, unpredictability was a crucial aspect of return decision-making processes. Return motivations were constructed in the context of a family strategy, as with migration aspirations, also at times

overruling the individual women's aspiration. However, some interviewees also returned in order to be able to fulfil their aspirations of personal or professional fulfilment. When investigating return in the context of post-accession Polish migration to the UK, mobility is central, being constructed as an opportunity possibly leading to double migration or multiple movements with various destinations.

## **9.5 Limitations and outlook**

In the context of researching migration aspirations and experiences of female Polish migrant workers in the UK, some limitations have to be acknowledged. While many insights and contributions have been established, as discussed above, some restrictions were not possible to overcome. This first and foremost, in the framework of developing a contextualised study, relates to the possibilities of generalisation. Migration studies need to be specific in the historical and societal circumstances; however, it is unclear how the change of one of the grounded theory model's aspects will affect all others. This specifically relates to current political developments that will change the politico-institutional system that has proven to be so crucial for the establishment of the post-accession migration. The UK's exiting the EU is characterised by a lot of uncertainty, as it remains unclear how the status of Polish migrant workers in the UK will change, but the established new system of migration in Europe could, despite higher restrictions perpetuate itself, as it is also influenced by market mechanisms (Favell 2008; Ciupijus 2011). While limitations concerning the generalisation of the developed grounded theory model on to other migration phenomena are apparent, it nevertheless provides insights that can be beneficial for other research settings. Since the conditions and outcomes of the model have been specified, it could be possibly adapted to changing conditions. In establishing a contextualised study with female migrants' narratives in the forefront, it has proven difficult to incorporate all possibly relevant circumstances, as in narrating their life stories the informants have touched upon many interesting subjects. Therefore the contextualisation mainly took place in chapter two, and, if

especially relevant, in the empirical chapters as well. However, with the amount of data compiled through the biographical narrative interviews, many further studies on various topics could be elaborated.

For the interviewees for this thesis, it remains unclear how the current developments will affect their life stories. While some had already taken precautions in pursuing British citizenship for themselves and/or their children ahead of the upcoming Brexit vote at the time of the interview, most informants were not as worried about the outcome, as it was still further away and did not seem likely to go through. At the time around the completion of this thesis already an estimated number of more than 900,000 Poles were living in the UK and many more EU citizens (Fuksiewicz 2017). While Polish and EU demands for the procedures of the Brexit go hand in hand, it is unclear how the UK's government will proceed at this time. At the beginning of the debates shortly after the vote the wish for continuing rights for EU citizens in the UK as well as UK citizens in the EU was widespread. However, a new system was suggested by the UK government based on immigration law and differentiated into three types: those EU citizens with continued settlement of five years could receive a settled status after application; those living in the UK less than five years could apply for a status with an end date in order to reach the five years and then apply for the settled status; and EU citizens who came after a set date, could stay for a short time with an end date and possibly later on settle. The set date could be at some point between activating the Brexit procedures in March 2017 and the factual date of the Brexit in March 2019, because the UK government wants to prevent higher immigration just before the set date, although there is already much less migration noticeable. The EU, however, demands the set date to be the date of the Brexit. In autumn 2017 the UK government suggested a two-year transition period, though it is unclear if this would count to the five years necessary for the settled status. During the first half of 2017 over 4,000 Poles applied for UK citizenship, which is 270 per cent more than at the same time a year before. Since Polish law allows two citizenships, these applicants do not have to decide between the two, while others such as Lithuanians experience a more difficult situation with having to give back their citizenship when accepting the British one (Fuksiewicz 2017). However, especially the continued five-year

settlement requirement will be difficult to achieve for many in face of developments such as pendular, circular, return and double return migration. In relation to the interviewees for this study, some will have reached the five-year threshold, but still need to apply for their settled status, others will find it more difficult to fulfil the requirements because of their continued mobility.

As was shown, the interviewed female Polish migrant workers were characterised by their determination and agency to pursue fulfilment. Therefore, it is likely that they will continue to construct their life stories and make meaning of them in a way that is shaped by conditions and influenced by different factors, but also mediated by them.

## References

Anderson, B. (2000) *Doing the Dirty Work? The Global Politics of Domestic Labour*, London and New York: Zed Books.

Anderson, B., Ruhs, M., Rogaly, B., and Spencer, S. (2006) *Fair enough? Central and East European migrants in low-wage employment in the UK*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Anderson, B., Clark, N. and Parutis, V. (2007) *New EU Members? Migrant Workers' Challenges and Opportunities to UK Trade Unions: A Polish and Lithuanian Case Study*, London: TUC.

Anderson, B. and Blinder, S. (2012) 'Who Counts as a Migrants? Definitions and their Consequences', *Migration Observatory Briefing*, COMPAS, University of Oxford: UK, pp. 1-9.

Anthias, F., and Lazaridis, G. (eds.) (2000) *Gender and migration in Southern Europe: Women on the move*, Oxford: Berg.

Apitzsch, U. and Siouti, I. (2007) *Biographical analysis as an Interdisciplinary Research Perspective in the Field of Migration Studies*, Frankfurt am Main: Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität.

Archer, M. (2003) *Structure, agency and the internal conversation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Askola, H. (2012) 'Tale of Two Citizenships? Citizenship, Migration and Care in the European Union', *Social & Legal Studies*, Volume 21, Number 3, pp. 341-356.

Atkinson, P. (2005) 'Qualitative Research—Unity and Diversity', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Volume 6, Number 3, Article 26, pp. 1-15.

Aufhauser, E. (2000) 'Migration und Geschlecht: Zur Konstruktion und Rekonstruktion von Weiblichkeit und Männlichkeit in der internationalen Migration', in: Husa, K., Parnreiter, C., and Stacher, I. (eds.) *Internationale Migration: Die globale Herausforderung des 21. Jahrhunderts?*, Frankfurt am Main: Brandes und Apsel, Wien: Südwind, pp. 97-122.

Aziz, K. (2015) 'Female Migrants' Work Trajectories: Polish Women in the UK Labour Market', *Central and Eastern European Migration Review*, Volume 4, Number 2, pp. 87-105.

Aziz, K. (2015a) 'Inclusion through trade unions' community organising and migrant workers' activism: the case of Polish migrants in the UK', *Marie Curie Changing Employment ITN Research Paper Series*, Number 2, pp. 1-28.

- Aziz, K. (2018) 'Female migrants' agency: work trajectories of Polish women in the UK', in: Fedyuk, O. and Stewart, P. (eds.) *Inclusion and exclusion in Europe: migration, work and employment perspectives*, London and New York: ECPR Press, pp. 123-145.
- Bakewell, O. (2010) 'Some Reflections on Structure and Agency in Migration Theory', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Volume 36, Number 10, pp. 1689-1708.
- Bazeley, P. (2007) *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*, London: Sage.
- Beck, U. (2000) *What is globalization?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T. (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- Berntsen, L. E. (2015) *Agency of labour in a flexible pan-European labour market. A qualitative study of migrant practices and trade union strategies in the Netherlands*, PhD thesis: University of Groningen.
- Biswas, T. and McHardy, J. (2004) 'On the intensity and balance of intra-European migration', *International Economic Journal*, Volume 18, Number 4, pp. 505-520.
- Bohle, D. and Greskovits, B. (2007) 'Neoliberalism, embedded neoliberalism and neocorporatism: Towards transnational capitalism in Central-Eastern Europe', *West European Politics*, Volume 30, Number 3, pp. 443-466.
- Bommes, M. and Morawska, E. (2005) 'Introduction', in: Bommes, M. and Morawska, E. (eds.) *International Migration Research. Constructions, Omissions and the Promise of Interdisciplinarity*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 1-16.
- Booth, R. (2013) 'Polish becomes England's second language', *The Guardian*, 30 January.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992) *An invitation to reflexive sociology*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bradatan, C., Popan, A., and Melton, R. (2010) 'Transnationality as a fluid social identity', *Social Identities*, Volume 16, Number 2, pp. 169-178.
- Bradley, H. and Healy, G. (2008) *Ethnicity and gender at work: inequalities, careers and employment relations*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brison, S. J. (2002) *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self*, New Jersey and Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press.

- Burrell, K. (2008) 'Male and Female Polishness in Post-war Leicester: Gender and its Intersections in a Refugee Community', in: Ryan, L. and Webster, W. (eds.) *Gendering Migration: Masculinity, Femininity and Ethnicity in Post-war Britain*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 71-87.
- Burrell, K. (2008a) 'Managing, Learning and Sending: The Material Lives and Journeys of Polish Women in Britain', *Journal of Material Culture*, Volume 13, Number 1, pp. 63-83.
- Burrell, K. (ed.) (2009) *Polish Migration to the UK in the 'New' European Union: After 2004*, Surrey: Ashgate.
- Burrell, K. (2010) 'Staying, returning, working and living: key themes in current academic research undertaken in the UK on migration movements from Eastern Europe', *Social Identities*, Volume 16, Number 3, pp. 297-308.
- Cassarino, J.-P. (2004) 'Theorising Return Migration: The Conceptual Approach to Return Migrants Revisited', *International Journal on Multicultural Societies (IJMS)*, Volume 6, Number 2, pp. 253-279.
- Castells, M. (1997) *The power of identity*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Castles, S. and Miller, M. J. (1998) *The age of migration: international population movements in the modern world*, 2nd edition, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Castles, S. (2012) 'Understanding the relationship between methodology and methods', in: Vargas-Silva, C. (ed.) *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 7-25.
- Charmaz, K. (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory: a practical guide through qualitative analysis*, London: SAGE.
- Chinchilla, N. (2005) 'Globalization, International Migration, and Transnationalism: Some observations based on the Central American Experience', in: Appelbaum, R. P. and Robinson, W. I. (eds.) *Critical Globalization Studies*, New York: Routledge, pp. 167-176.
- CIPD (2013) *The State of Migration: Employing Migrant Workers*, London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Cieślik, A. (2011) 'Where Do You Prefer to Work? How the Work Environment Influences Return Migration Decisions from the United Kingdom to Poland', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Volume 37, Number 9, pp. 1367-1383.
- Cieślińska, B. (2012) 'The Experience of Labour Emigration in the Life of Married Women: The case of Podlasie, Poland', *International Migration*, Volume 52, Number 1, pp. 56-73.

Ciupijus, Z. (2011) 'Mobile central eastern Europeans in Britain: successful European Union citizens and disadvantaged labour migrants?', *Work, Employment & Society*, Volume 25, Number 3, pp. 540-550.

Collinson, S. (2009) 'The political economy of migration processes: An agenda for migration research and analysis', *International Migration Institute Working paper*, Number 12, University of Oxford, pp. 1-42.

Cook, J., Dwyer, P., and Waite, L. (2011) 'The Experiences of Accession 8 Migrants in England: Motivations, Work and Agency', *International Migration*, Volume 49, Number 2, pp. 54-79.

Cook, J., Dwyer, P., and Waite, L. (2012) 'Accession 8 Migration and the Proactive and Defensive Engagement of Social Citizenship', *Journal of Social Policy*, Number 41, pp. 329-347.

Costello, C. and Hancox, E. (2014) 'The UK, EU Citizenship and Free Movement of Persons', *Migration Observatory policy primer*, COMPAS, University of Oxford, pp. 1-11.

Coyle, A. (2007) 'Resistance, Regulation and Rights. The Changing Status of Polish Women's Migration and Work in the „New“ Europe', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Volume 14, Number 1, pp. 37-50.

Crenshaw, K. (2004) 'Intersectionality: The Double Bind of Race and Gender. Kimberlé Crenshaw interviewed by Sheila Thomas', *Perspectives*.

Creswell, J. W. (2009) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, London: Sage.

Cruickshank, J. (2011) 'The positive and the negative. Assessing critical realism and social constructionism as post-positivist approaches to empirical research in the social sciences', *IMI Working Paper Series*, Number 42, pp. 1-20.

Cyrus, N. (2008) 'Managing a mobile life: changing attitudes among illegally employed Polish household workers in Berlin', in: Metz-Göckel, S., Morokvasić, M., and Müntz, A.S. (eds.) *Migration and mobility in an enlarged Europe: A gender perspective*, Opladen: Barbara Budrich, pp. 179-202.

Czaika, M. and de Haas, H. (2013) 'The Globalisation of Migration. Has the world really become more migratory?', *IMI Working Papers Series*, Number 68, pp. 1-49.

Datta, A. (2009) 'Places of everyday cosmopolitanisms: East European construction workers in London', *Environment and Planning A*, Volume 41, Number 2, pp. 353-370.

Datta, A. (2009a) 'This is Special Humour: Visual Narratives of Polish Masculinities in London's Building Sites', in: Burrell, K. (ed.) *Polish Migration*

to the UK in the 'new' European Union: After 2004, Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 189-210.

Davis, N. (1981) *God's Playground. A History of Poland. Vol. 1: The Origins to 1795, Vol. 2: 1795 to the Present*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Deeke, A. (1995) 'Experteninterviews - ein methodologisches und forschungspraktisches Problem', in: Brinkmann, C., Deeke, A., and Völkel, B. (eds.) *Experteninterviews in der Arbeitsmarktforschung. Diskussionsbeiträge zu methodischen Fragen und praktischen Erfahrungen*, Nürnberg: Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung der Bundesanstalt für Arbeit, pp. 7-22.

de Haas, H. (2008) 'Migration and development. A theoretical perspective', *International Migration Institute Working Paper*, Number 9, University of Oxford, pp. 1-57.

de Haas, H. (2009) *Mobility and Human Development*, New York: UNDP.

de Haas, H. (2014) 'Migration Theory – Quo Vadis?', *IMI Working Papers*, Number 100, pp. 1-39.

Detwiler, K. and Snitow, A. (2016) 'Gender Trouble in Poland', *Dissent*, Volume 63, Number 4, pp. 57-66.

Drinkwater, S., Eade, J., and Garapich, M. (2006) 'Poles Apart? EU Enlargement and the Labour Market Outcomes of Immigrants in the UK', *IZA Discussion Paper series*, Number 2410, pp. 1-29.

Drinkwater, S., Eade, J., and Garapich, M. (2010) 'What's behind the figures? An investigation into recent Polish migration to the UK', in: Black, R., Engbersen, G., Okólski, M., and Panțiru, C. (eds.) *A continent moving west? EU enlargement and labour migration from Central and Eastern Europe*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 73-88.

Duda-Mikulin, E. (2013) 'Citizenship in Action? A Case Study of Polish Migrant Women Moving between Poland and the UK', *Kultura i Edukacja*, Volume 6, Number 99, pp. 205-224.

Düvell, F., and Garapich, M. (2011) 'Polish Migration to the UK: Continuities and Discontinuities', *Centre on Migration, Policy and Society Working Paper*, Number 84, pp. 1-19.

Eade, J., Drinkwater, S., and Garapich, M. P. (2006) *Polscy migranci w Londynie – klasa społeczna i etniczność*, Surrey: ESRC.

Eade, J., Drinkwater, S. and Garapich, M. P. (2007) *Class and Ethnicity: Polish Migrant Workers in London: Full Research Report*, Swindon: ESRC.

Edgell, S. (2006) *The sociology of work: continuity and change in paid and unpaid work*, London: SAGE.

Engbersen, G., Okólski, M., Black, R., and Panțîru, C. (2010) 'Introduction: Working out a way from East to West: EU enlargement and labour migration from Central and Eastern Europe', in: Black, R., Engbersen, G., Okólski, M., and Panțîru, C. (eds.) *A continent moving west? EU enlargement and labour migration from Central and Eastern Europe*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 7-22.

Faist, T. (2000) 'Transnationalisation in international migration: implications for the study of citizenship and culture', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Volume 23, Number 2, pp. 189-222.

Favell, A. (2008) 'The new face of East West migration in Europe', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Volume 34, Number 5, pp. 701-716.

Fihel, A., Kaczmarczyk, P., and Okólski, M. (2006) 'Labour Mobility in the Enlarged European Union. International Migration from the EU8 countries', *CMR Working Papers*, Number 14/72, pp. 1-92.

Fitzgerald, I. and Hardy, J. (2010) "Thinking Outside the Box"? Trade Union Organizing Strategies and Polish Migrant Workers in the United Kingdom', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Volume 48, Number 1, pp. 131–150.

Fitzgerald, I. (2012) 'What collaborative lessons can be learnt from the recent Polish migration? The trade union story', in: *9th European Social Science History Conference*, 11 - 14 April 2012, Glasgow, Scotland.

Fix, M., Papademetriou, D. G., Batalova, J., Terrazas, A., Yi-Ying Lin, S., and Mittelstadt M. (2009) *Migration and the Global Recession*, Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute.

Frattini, T. (2014) *Moving Up the Ladder? Labor Market Outcomes in the United Kingdom amid Rising Immigration*, Washington DC and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute and International Labour Organization.

Fulton, L. (2013) *Worker representation in Europe*, Labour Research Department and ETUI.

Fuksiewicz, A. (2017) 'Der Brexit aus polnischer Perspektive', *Polen-Analysen*, Number 207, pp. 1-12.

Fuszara, M. (2014) 'Der Streit um "Gender" und seine polnische Spezifik', *Polen-Analysen*, Number 142, pp. 1-19.

Galasińska, A., and Kozłowska, O. (2009) 'Discourses on a 'normal life' among post-accession migrants from Poland to Britain', in: Burrell, K. (ed.) *Polish migration to the UK in the 'new' European Union: After 2004*, Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 87-105.

Galgóczi, B., Leschke, J., and Watt, A. (2009) 'Intra-EU Labour Migration – Flows and Policy Responses', in: Galgóczi, B., Leschke, J., and Watt, A. (eds.) *EU Labour Migration since Enlargement: Trends, Impacts and Policies*, Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 1-28.

Galgóczi, B., Leschke, J., and Watt, A. (2012) *EU Labour Migration and Labour Markets in Troubled Times*, in: Galgóczi, B., Leschke, J., and Watt, A. (eds.) *EU Labour Migration in Troubled Times: Skills Mismatch, Return and Policy*, Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 1-10.

Giddens, A. (1984) *The constitution of society: outline of the theory of structuration*, Cambridge: Polity.

Gilbert, L. S. (2002) 'Going the distance: 'closeness' in qualitative data analysis software', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, Volume 5, Number 3, pp. 215-228.

Gillham, B. (2005) *Research interviewing: the range of techniques*, Maidenhead and New York: Open University Press.

Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. L. (1968) *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Glaser, B. G. (1992) *Basics of grounded theory analysis: emergence vs forcing*, Mill Valley California: Sociology Press.

Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L., and Szanton Blanc, C. (1995) 'From immigrant to transmigrant: theorizing transnational migration', *Anthropological Quarterly*, Volume 68, Number 1, pp. 48-63.

Goss, J. and Lindquist, B. (1995) 'Conceptualizing International Labour Migration: A Structuration Perspective', *International Migration Review*, Volume 29, Number 2, pp. 317-351.

Grabowska-Lusińska, I. (2012) *Migrantów ścieżki zawodowe bez granic*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Grabowska-Lusińska, I. and Jaźwińska-Motyłska, E. (2013) 'Znaczenie Migracji w Życiu Zawodowym Kobiet i Mężczyzn', *Kultura I społeczeństwo*, Number 3, pp. 85-108.

Graff, A. (2006) 'Warum Frauen in Polen 'nicht stören'', in: *Jahrbuch Polen 2006 Frauen*, Wiesbaden: Deutsches Polen-Institut, Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 34-44.

Grant, A. M., and Sonnentag, S. (2010) 'Doing good buffers against feeling bad: Prosocial impact compensates for negative task and self-evaluations', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Volume 111, Number 1, pp. 13-22.

- Greer, I., Ciupijus, Z., and Lillie, N. (2013) 'The European Migrant Workers Union and the barriers to transnational industrial citizenship', *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, Volume 19, Number 1, pp. 5-20.
- Guilmoto, C. Z. and Sandron, F. (2001) 'The Internal Dynamics of Migration Networks in Developing Countries', *Population: An English Selection*, Volume 13, Number 2, pp. 135-164.
- GUS (2014) *Kobiety i Mężczyźni na Rynku Pracy*, Warszawa: GUS.
- Hagen-Zanker, J. (2008) 'Why do people migrate? A review of the theoretical literature', *Maastricht Graduate School of Governance Working Paper*, Number 28197, pp. 1-25
- Hardy, J. and Clark, N. (2007) 'European Union enlargement, workers and migration: implications for trade unions in the United Kingdom and Poland', in: Schmidt, V. (ed.) *Trade union responses to globalization*, Geneva: ILO, pp. 125-138.
- Harvey, D. (2001) 'Globalisation and the Spatial Fix', *geographische revue*, Number 2, pp. 23-30.
- Haug, S. (2000) 'Klassische und neuere Theorien der Migration', *Arbeitspapiere – Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung*, Number 30, pp. 1-38.
- Held, D., McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D., and Perraton, J. (1999) *Global transformations: politics, economics and culture*, Oxford: Polity.
- Hochschild, A. R. (2003) *The managed heart: commercialisation of human feeling*, London: University of California Press.
- Hoerder, D. and Knauf, D. (eds.) (1992) *Fame, fortune and sweet liberty – the great European emigration*, Bremen: Edition Temmen.
- Holloway, G. (2005) *Women and Work in Britain since 1840*, New York: Routledge.
- Hrycak, A. (2011) 'Women as Migrants on the Margins of the European Union', in: Rubchak, M. J. (ed.) *Mapping Difference: the Many Faces of Women in Contemporary Ukraine*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 47-64.
- Ignatowicz, A. M. (2012) *Migration and mobility of new Polish migrants in England: narratives of lived experience*, PhD in Sociology, Aston University.
- IOM (2010) *World Migration Report 2010*, Geneva: International Organization for Migration.
- Iosifides, T. (2003) 'Qualitative Migration Research: Some New Reflections Six Years Later', *The Qualitative Report*, Volume 8, Number 3, pp. 435-446.

Iosifides, T. (2011) *Qualitative methods in migration studies: a critical realist perspective*, Surrey: Ashgate.

Irek, M. (2012) 'New Wave, Old Ways? Post-accession Migration from Poland Seen from the Perspective of the Social Sciences', *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis Studia Sociologica IV*, Volume 2, pp. 21–30.

Janion, M. (1996) *Kobiety i duch inności*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!.

Janta, H., Ladkin, A., Brown, L., and Lugosi, P. (2011) 'Employment experiences of Polish migrant workers in the UK hospitality sector', *Tourism Management*, Volume 32, Number 5, pp. 1006-1019.

Kaczmarczyk, P. (ed.) (2011) 'Recent Trends in International Migration in Poland. The 2010 SOPEMI report', *CMR Working Paper*, Number 51/109, pp. 1-69.

Kahanec, M. and Zimmermann, K. F. (2008) 'Migration and Globalization: Challenges and Perspectives for the Research Infrastructure', *IZA Discussion Paper*, Number 3890, pp. 1-12.

Kahanec, M. and Zimmermann, K. F. (2009) 'Migration in an Enlarged EU?: A Challenging Solution', *Economic Papers*, Number 363, pp. 1-56.

Kajta, J. and Mrozowicki, A. (2014) 'Strategie życiowe robotników po 1989 roku – praktyczne i etyczne wyzwania archiwizacji kolekcji danych biograficznych', *Studia Socjologiczne*, Volume 214, Number 3, pp. 239-255.

Karolak, M. (2015) 'Migranci powrotni z Wielkiej Brytanii do Polski. Przyczyny powrotów z perspektywy biograficznej', *Opuscula Sociologica*, Number 2, pp. 37-52.

Kassner, K. and Wassermann, P. (2005) 'Nicht überall, wo Methode draufsteht, ist auch Methode drin. Zur Problematik der Fundierung von ExpertInneninterviews', in: Bogner, A., Littig, B., and Menz, W. (eds.) *Das Experteninterview – Theorie, Methode, Anwendung*, Wiesbaden: VS, pp. 95-102.

Kaźmierska, K., Piotrowski, A., and Waniek, K. (2011) 'Biographical Consequences of Working Abroad in the Context of European Mental Space Construction', *Sociological Review*, Volume 60, Number 1, pp. 139-158.

Keeley, B. (2009) *International Migration: The human face of globalisation*, Paris: OECD.

Kelle, U. (2005) '"Emergence" vs. "Forcing" of Empirical Data? A Crucial Problem of "Grounded Theory" Reconsidered', *Qualitative Social Research*, Volume 6, Number 2, Article 27, pp. 1-17.

- King Dejardin, A. (2009) 'Gender (in)equality, globalization and governance', *International Labour Office, Policy Integration and Statistics Department Working Paper*, Number 91, pp. 1-38.
- Kofman, E., Phizacklea, A., Raghuram, P., and Sales, R. (2000) *Gender and international migration in Europe: employment, welfare and politics*, London: Routledge.
- Kofman E. (2004) 'Family-related migration: a critical review of European studies', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Volume 30, Number 2, pp. 243-262.
- Kostrzewa, Z. and Szaltys, D. (2013) *Migracje zagraniczne ludności. Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań 2011*, Warszawa: GUS.
- Krings, T., Bobek, A., Moriarty, E., Salamonska, J., and Wickham, J. (2009) 'Migration and Recession: Polish Migrants in Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland', *Sociological Research Online*, Volume 14, Issue 2, pp. 1-6.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1970) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, International Encyclopedia of Unified Science Volume 2 Number 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Kurekova, L. (2011) 'Theories of migration: Conceptual reviews and empirical testing in the context of the EU East-West flows', *Paper prepared for Interdisciplinary conference on Migration. Economic Change, Social Challenge*, April 6 - 9 2011, University College London.
- Lacroix, T. (2011) 'The Indian and Polish Transnational Organisational Fields', *IMI Working Papers Series 2011*, Number 40, pp. 1-23.
- Lamont, M. (2000) *The dignity of working men. Morality and the boundaries of race, class, and immigration*, New York and London: Russell Sage Foundation and Harvard University Press.
- Lee, E. (1966) 'A Theory of Migration', *Demography*, Volume 3, Number 1, pp. 47-57.
- Lewandowski, P., Magda, I., Baran, J., Fedyuk, O., and Bartha, A. (2013) 'Gender dimension of the labour markets over the past two decades', *Neujobs Working Paper*, Number D16.1, pp. 1-43.
- Lewis, W. A. (1954) 'Economic Development with Unlimited Supply of Labour', *The Manchester School*, Volume 22, Number 2, pp. 139-191.
- LMS (2013) *Labour Market Statistics October 2013*, Office for National Statistics.

- Lopez Rodriguez, M. (2010) 'Migration and a quest for 'normalcy'. Polish migrant mothers and the capitalization of meritocratic opportunities in the UK', *Social Identities*, Volume 16, Number 3, pp. 339-358.
- Lutz, H. (2007) 'Die 24-Stunden-Polin – Eine intersektionelle Analyse transnationaler Dienstleistungen', in: Klinger, C., Knapp, G.-A., and Sauer, B. (eds.) *Achsen der Ungleichheit. Zum Verhältnis von Klasse, Geschlecht und Ethnizität*, Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, pp. 210-234
- MacKinnon, D., Cumbers, A., Featherstone, D., Ince, A., and Strauss, K. (2011) *Globalisation, labour markets and communities in contemporary Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Mabogunje, A. L. (1980) *The development process: a spatial perspective*, London: Hutchinson.
- Marcus, I. (2009) 'Wife Beating: Ideology and Practice under State Socialism in Hungary, Poland, and Romania', in: Penn, S. and Massino, J. (eds.) *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 115-132.
- Marsh, D. and Furlong, P. (2002) 'A Skin, not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science', in: D. Marsh and G. Stoker (eds.) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 17-11.
- Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1848) *The Communist Manifesto*, Reprint based on: Engels, F. (ed.) (1888) *The Communist Manifesto*, translated by S. Moore, Petersfield: Harriman House LTD, 2010.
- Massey, D. S. (1990) 'Social Structure, Household Strategies, and the Cumulative Causation of Migration', *Population Index*, Volume 56, Number 1, pp. 3-26.
- Massey, D. S. (1999) 'Why does immigration occur? A theoretical synthesis', in: Kasinitz, P., DeWind, J. and Hirschman, C. (eds.) *The Handbook of International Migration: the American experience*, New York: The Russell Sage Foundation, pp. 34-52.
- McCall, L. (2005) 'The Complexity of Intersectionality', *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Volume 30, Number 3, pp. 1771-1800.
- McDowell, L. (2008) 'Thinking through work: complex inequalities, constructions of difference and trans-national migrants', *Progress in Human Geography*, Volume 32, Number 4, pp. 491-507.
- McGhee, D., Heath, S., and Trevena, P. (2012) 'Dignity, happiness and being able to live a 'normal life' in the UK – an examination of post-accession Polish migrants' transnational autobiographical fields', *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, Volume 18, Number 6, pp. 711-727.

McIlwaine, C., and Bermúdez, A. (2011) 'The Gendering of Political and Civic Participation among Colombian Migrants in London', *Environment and Planning A*, Volume 43, Number 7, pp. 1499-1513.

McKay, S. (2008) 'Trade unions and recent migration - organising challenges in an enlarged EU', *WLRI Working Paper*, Number 2, pp. 1-16.

Meardi, G. (2000) *Trade union activists, East and West: Comparison in multinational companies*, Aldershot: Gower.

Migration Observatory (2012) 'Pole Position – New Census data shows ten-fold growth of England and Wales' Polish population', *Migration Observatory commentary*, COMPAS, University of Oxford, pp. 1-7.

Migration Observatory (2013) 'Evidence and values: The UK migration debate 2011-2013', *Migration Observatory Commentary*, COMPAS, University of Oxford, pp. 1-7.

Mishtal, J. Z. (2009) 'How the Church became the State: The Catholic Regime and Reproductive Rights in State Socialist Poland', in: Penn, S. and Massino, J. (eds.) *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 133-150.

Moch, L. P. (2005) 'Gender and Migration Research', in: Bommers, M. and Morawska, E. (eds.) *International Migration Research. Constructions, Omissions and the Promise of Interdisciplinarity*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 95–108.

Moore, S., and Watson, M. (2009) *UNISON Migrant Workers Participation Project Evaluation Report*, London: Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University.

Moore, S. (2011) *New Trade Union Activism. Class Consciousness or Social Identity?*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Morawska, E. (1985) *For Bread and Butter: Life-worlds of peasant-immigrants from East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania 1890-1940*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Morawska, E. (2001) 'Structuring Migration: The Case of Polish Income-Seeking Travelers to the West', *Theory and Society*, Volume 30, Number 1, pp. 47-80.

Morokvasić, M. (1984) 'Birds of Passage are also Women', *International Migration Review*, Volume 18, Number 4, pp. 886-907.

Morokvasić, M., Münst, A. S., and Metz-Göckel, S. (eds.) (2008) *Migration and mobility in an enlarged Europe. A gender perspective*, Opladen: Barbara Budrich.

- Mrozowicki, A. (2010) 'The agency of the weak: ethos, reflexivity and life strategies of Polish workers after the end of state socialism', in: Archer, M. (ed.) *Conversations about Reflexivity*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 167-186.
- Mrozowicki, A., Krasowska, A., and Karolak, M. (2015) 'Stop the junk contracts!' Young workers and trade union mobilisation against precarious employment in Poland', in: Hodder, A. and Kretsos, L. (eds.) *Trade Unions and Young People: A Global View*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 123-141.
- Münz, R. (2008) 'Migration, Labor Markets, and Integration of Migrants: An Overview for Europe', *Social Protection Discussion Paper Series*, Number 0807, pp. 1-48.
- Nowicka, M. and Cieřlik, A. (2013) 'Beyond methodological nationalism in insider research with migrants', *Migration Studies*, pp. 1-15.
- Nowicka, M. and Ryan, L. (2015) 'Beyond Insiders and Outsiders in Migration Research: Rejecting A Priori Commonalities. Introduction to the FQS Thematic Section on "Researcher, Migrant, Woman: Methodological Implications of Multiple Positionalities in Migration Studies"', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Research*, Volume 16, Number 2, Article 18, pp. 1-15.
- OECD (2015) 'OECD Better Life Index. Poland', <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/poland/> (accessed 03 February 2015).
- Okólski, M. (2000) 'Polen – Wachsende Vielfalt von Migration', in: Fassmann, H. (ed.) *Ost-West-Wanderung in Europa*, Wien: Böhlau, pp. 141-162.
- Olesen, V. L. (2007) 'Feminist Qualitative Research and Grounded Theory: Complexities, Criticisms, and Opportunities', in: Bryant, A. and Charmaz, K. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*, London: SAGE, pp. 417-435.
- Olesen, V. L. (2011) 'Feminist Qualitative Research in the Millenium's First Decade', in: N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC: Sage, pp. 129-146.
- ONS (2013) *Full report – Women in the labour market*, Office for National Statistics.
- O'Reilly, K. (2007) 'Intra-European Migration and the mobility-enclosure dialectic', *Sociology*, Volume 41, Number 2, pp. 277-293.
- Pajnik, M. and Bajt, V. (2013) 'Civic Participation of Migrant Women: Employing Strategies of Active Citizenship', in: Anthias, F., Kontos, M., and Morokvasic-Müller, M. (eds.) *Paradoxes of Integration: Female Migrants in*

*Europe. International Perspectives on Migration*, Dordrecht, Heidelberg, New York and London: Springer, pp. 97-116.

Passerini, L., Lyon, D., Capussotti, E. and Laliotou, I. (2010) (eds.) *Women Migrants from East to West. Gender, mobility and belonging in contemporary Europe*, New York, Oxford: Berghahn.

Penn, S. (2005) *Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Petrowa-Wasilewicz, A. (2006) 'Denkmal der unbekanntenen Köchin oder braucht Polen den Feminismus?', in: *Jahrbuch Polen 2006 Frauen*, Wiesbaden: Deutsches Polen-Institut, Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 52–59.

Pickhan, G. (2006) 'Frauenrollen, Geschlechterdifferenz und Nation-Building in der Geschichte Polens', in: *Jahrbuch Polen 2006 Frauen*, Wiesbaden: Deutsches Polen-Institut, Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 7–18.

Plomien, A. (2015) 'Transforming or transferring gender inequalities: family policy reforms in Poland', *presentation at the 12th Conference of the European Sociological Association*, 25 - 28 August 2015, Prague.

Pine, F. (1993) '“The cows and pigs are his, the eggs are mine”: women's domestic economy and entrepreneurial activity in rural Poland', in: Hann, C. M. (ed.) *Socialism: ideals, ideologies, and local practice*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 231-248.

Pine, F. (2002) 'Retreat to the household? Gendered domains in postsocialist Poland', in: Hann, C. M. (ed.) *Postsocialism: ideals, ideologies and practices in Eurasia*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 95-113.

Pine, F. (2014) 'Migration as hope: space, time, and imagining the future', *Current Anthropology: Crisis, Value, and Hope: Rethinking the Economy*, Volume 55, Number 29, pp. 95-104.

Piore, M. J. (1979) *Birds of passage: migrant labor and industrial societies*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Pollard, N., Latorre, M., and Sriskandarajah, D. (2008) *Floodgates or turnstiles? Post-EU enlargement migration flows to (and from) the UK*, London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Portes, A. (1999) 'Immigration theory for a new century: Some problems and opportunities', in: Kasinitz, P., DeWind, J. and Hirschman, C. (eds.) *The Handbook of International Migration: the American experience*, New York: The Russell Sage Foundation, pp. 21-33.

Portes, A. (2001) 'Introduction: The debates and significance of immigrant transnationalism', *Global Networks*, Volume 1, Number 3, pp. 181-194.

Pries, L. (2001) 'The approach of transnational social spaces: responding to new configurations of the social and the spatial', in: Pries, L. (ed.) *New Transnational Social Spaces. International migration and transnational companies in the early twenty-first century*, London: Routledge, pp. 3-33.

Rabikowska, M. (2010) 'Negotiation of normality and identity among migrants from Eastern Europe to the United Kingdom after 2004', *Social Identities*, Volume 16, Number 3, pp. 285-296.

Raghuram, P., Henry, L., and Bornat J. (2010) 'Difference and Distinction? : Non-migrant and Migrant Networks', *Sociology*, Volume 44, Number 4, pp. 623-641.

Reinharz, S. and Chase, S. E. (2001) 'Interviewing Women', in: Gubrium, J.F. and Holstein, J. A. (eds.) *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, London: Sage Publications, pp. 221-238.

Richter, O. (2012) 'Medialny obraz migracji Polaków do krajów Unii Europejskiej po 1 maja 2004 roku na podstawie analizy treści tygodników opinii', *CMR Working Papers*, Number 53/111, pp. 1-67.

Rienzo, C. (2012) 'Characteristics and Outcomes of Migrants in the UK Labour Market', *Migration Observatory Briefing*, COMPAS, University of Oxford, pp. 1-10.

Rienzo, C. (2012a) 'Migrant in the UK Labour Market: An Overview', *Migration Observatory Briefing*, COMPAS, University of Oxford, pp. 1-8.

Rienzo, C. and Vargas-Silva, C. (2012) 'Migrants in the UK: An Overview', *Migration Observatory Briefing*, COMPAS, University of Oxford, pp. 1-8.

Riessman, C. K. (2008) *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, London: Sage.

Roberts, E. (1988) *Women's work 1840-1940*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosenthal, G. (2004) 'Biographical Research', in: C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. F. Gubrium, and D. Silverman (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage, pp. 48-64.

Rubchak, M. J. (2011) 'Turning Oppression into Opportunity: An Introduction', in: Rubchak, M. J. (ed.) *Mapping Difference: the Many Faces of Women in Contemporary Ukraine*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 1-22.

Ruhs, M. and Vargas-Silva, C. (2012) 'The Labour Market Effects of Immigration', *Migration Observatory Briefing*, COMPAS, University of Oxford, pp. 1-7.

- Ryan, B. (2005) 'Introduction: perspectives on labour migration', in: Ryan, B. (2005) *Labour migration and employment rights*, London: Institute of Employment Rights, pp. 79-103.
- Ryan, L. (2010) 'Transnational Relations: Family Migration among Recent Polish Migrants in London', *Journal Compilation 2010 IOM International Migration*, Volume 49, Number 2, pp. 80-103.
- Ryan, L., Sales, R., Tilki, M., and Siara, B. (2008) 'Social networks, social support and social capital: the experiences of recent Polish migrants in London', *Sociology*, Volume 42, Number 4, pp. 672-690.
- Salmon, P. and Riessman, C. K. (2013) 'Looking back on narrative research: An exchange', in: Andrews, M., Squire, C., and Tamboukou, M. (eds.) *Doing Narrative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Sage, pp. 197-204.
- Sassen, S. (2007) *A sociology of globalization*, New York: Norton.
- Savage, M. (2001) 'Class identity in contemporary Britain: the demise of collectivism', in: van Gyes, G., de Witte, H., and Pasture, P. (eds.) *Can class still unite? The differentiated work force, class solidarity and trade unions*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 79-100.
- Schütze, F. (1983) 'Biographieforschung und narratives Interview', *Neue Praxis*, Volume 13, Number 3, pp. 283-293.
- Siara, B. (2009) 'UK Poles and the negotiation of gender and ethnic identity in cyberspace', in: Burrell, K. (ed.) *Polish Migration to the UK in the 'new' European Union: After 2004*, Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 167-187.
- Sjaastad, L. (1962) 'The Costs and Returns of Human Migration', *Journal of Political Economy*, Volume 70, Number 5, pp. 80-93.
- Slany, K. (2008) 'Female migration from central-Eastern Europe: demographics and sociological aspects', in: Morokvasić, M., Münst, A. S. and Metz-Göckel (eds.) *Migration and mobility in an enlarged Europe. A gender perspective*, Opladen: Barbara Budrich, pp. 27-51.
- Slany, K. and Solga, B. (2014) *Spoleczne skutki poakcesyjnych migracji ludności Polski*, Warszawa: Komitet Badań nad Migracjami Polskiej Akademii Nauk.
- Squire, C. (2013) 'From experience-centred to socioculturally-oriented approaches to narrative', in: Andrews, M., Squire, C., and Tamboukou, M. (eds.) *Doing Narrative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Sage, pp. 47-71.
- Standing, G. (1989) 'Global Feminisation Through Flexible Labour', *Labour Market Analysis and Employment Planning Working Paper*, Number 31, pp. 1-45.

- Stark, O. and Bloom, D. E. (1985) 'The New Economics of Labour Migration', *The American Economic Review*, Volume 75, Number 2, pp. 173-178.
- Strauss, A. L. (1987) *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1999) *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Sage.
- Suddaby, R. (2006) 'From the editors: what grounded theory is not', *Academy of Management Journal*, Volume 49, Number 4, pp. 633-642.
- Sumption, M. (2009) 'Social Networks and Polish Immigration to the UK', *Economics of Migration Working Paper*, Number 5, pp. 1-27.
- Szymańska, J., Ułasiński, C., And Bieńkowska, D. (2012) *Zaraz wracam... albo nie*, Kraków: Centrum Doradztwa Strategicznego.
- Taylor, M. (2011) 'Who Works for Globalisation? The challenges and possibilities for international labour studies', in: Taylor, M. (ed.) *Renewing International Labour Studies*, New York: Routledge, pp. 1-18.
- Thomas, G. and James, D. (2006) 'Re-inventing grounded theory: some questions about theory, ground and discovery', *British Educational Research Journal*, Volume 32, Number 6, pp. 767-795.
- Thomas, W. I. and Znaniecki, F. (1996) *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: A Classic Work in Immigration History*, edited by Eli Zaretsky, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Todaro, M. P. (1969) 'A model of labor migration and urban unemployment in less developed countries', *American Economic Review*, Volume 59, pp. 138-148.
- Trevena, P. (2011) 'Divided by class, connected by work: Class divisions among the new wave of Polish migrants in the UK', in: Garapich, M. P. (ed.) *Studia Migracyjne - Przegląd Polonijny: Polacy na Wyspach (w Wielkiej Brytanii)*, Number 1, pp. 71-96.
- Urbańska, S. (2015) *Matka Polka na odległość. Z doświadczeń migracyjnych robotnic 1989-2010*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.
- Vathi, Z. and King, R. (2017) (eds.) *Return Migration and Psychosocial Wellbeing. Discourses, Policy-Making and Outcomes for Migrants and Families*, London: Routledge.
- Vertovec, S. (2001) 'Transnationalism and Identity', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Volume 27, Number 4, pp. 573-582.

- Verwiebe, R. (2008) 'Migration to Germany: Is a middle class emerging among intra-European migrants?', *Migration Letters*, Volume 5, Number 1, pp. 1-19.
- Wallerstein, I. (1974) *The Modern World-system, Vol. 1, Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century*, New York and London: Academic Press.
- Wengraf, T. (2001) *Qualitative research interviewing: biographic narrative and semi-structured method*, London: Sage Publications.
- White, A. (2010) 'Young people and migration from contemporary Poland', *Journal of Youth Studies*, Volume 13, Number 5, pp. 565-580.
- White, A. (2011) *Polish Families and Migration since EU Accession*, Bristol: The Policy Press.
- White, A. (2014) 'Double return migration: failed returns to Poland leading to settlement abroad and new transnational strategies', *International Migration*, Volume 52, pp. 72-84.
- Wills, J., Datta, K., Evans, Y., Herbert, J., May, J., and McIlwaine, C. (2010) *Global Cities at Work: New Migrant Divisions of Labour*, London: Pluto Press.
- Winker, G. and Degele, N. (2009) *Intersektionalität. Zur Analyse sozialer Ungleichheiten*, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
- Witzel, T. (2000) 'Das problemzentrierte Interview', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Volume 1, Number 1, Article 22, pp. 1-7.
- Wrench, J. (2004) 'Trade Union Responses to Immigrants and Ethnic Inequality in Denmark and the UK: The Context of Consensus and Conflict', *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, Volume 10, Number 1, pp. 7-30.
- Wuest, J. and Merritt-Gray, M. (2001) 'Feminist Grounded Theory Revisited: Practical Issues and New Understandings', in: Schreiber, R. S. and Stern, P. N. (eds.) *Using Grounded Theory in Nursing*, New York: Springer Publishing Company, pp. 159-175.

## Appendices

Appendix I – List of interviewees with demographic characteristics

Biographical Narrative Interviews in the UK (in order of date of interview)													
Name (changed)	Age	Trade Union membership in UK	Occupation in UK	Sector of work in UK	Education	Length of stay in UK	Mobility	Relationship status	Family situation	Background of Partner (ethnicity & citizenship)	City/region in UK	City/region in PL	Work in PL before emigration
Beata	54	Y	Food packing, own business (home-made dinners)	Manufacturing	University	6 y	One-time	Married	Partner and children in UK	Polish	Industrial region	City	Highschool teacher
Kinga	35	Y	Food packing	Manufacturing	Dropped out of university	6 y	One-time	Married	Partner and children in UK	Polish	Industrial region	Industrial region	Gardener
Joasia	42	Y	Sewing	Manufacturing	Vocational education	7 y	One-time	Married	Partner and children in UK	Polish	Industrial region	City	Seamstress
Ania	43	Y	Sewing	Manufacturing	Vocational education	6 y	One-time	Married	Partner in UK and children in PL	Other	Industrial region	Village	Seamstress

Ewa	20	Y	Agency worker (sales), own business (translations)	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	Dropped out of school	3 y	One-time	Single	Children in UK	-	Industrial region	Industrial region	-
Irena	28	N	Receptionist at a restaurant	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	University	3 m (before 2 y)	Multiple-times, various destinations	Single	No children	-	City	City	Restaurant manager
Maja	32	N	Kitchen staff in care home	Public administration, education and health	Secondary education	9 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	Married	Partner in UK, no children	Polish	Village	Village	-
Jadwiga	38	Y	Cleaner in care home	Public administration, education and health	University	9 y	One-time	Single	Children half a year in UK, half a year in PL	-	Village	Industrial region	Accounting in hospital
Jolanta	37	Y	Catering staff in hospital	Public administration, education and health	University	7 y	Multiple-times, UK	Married	Partner and children in UK	Polish	City	Industrial region	English teacher
Justyna	35	Y	Education project worker	Public administration, education and health	University	13 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	Single	No children	-	City	Village	-

Kaja	34	N	Care worker, building up own business (care)	Public administration, education and health	University	2 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	In relationship	Partner in UK, no children	White-British	City	Village	-
Olga	38	Y	Catering staff, hospital supervisory or in higher education institution	Public administration, education and health	University	9 y	One-time	In relationship	Partner in UK, no children	Polish	City	Industrial region	Statistical office, English school
Lidia	27	Y	Office worker for local government	Public administration, education and health	Secondary education, College in UK	8 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	Single	No children	-	Village	Village	-
Patrycja	30	N	Manager for security staff in higher education institution	Public administration, education and health	Dropped out of University in PL, college in UK	7 y	One-time	In relationship	Partner in UK, no children	White-British	City	Village	-

Katarzyna	45	N	Care worker	Public administration, education and health	University	5 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	Single	No children	-	Village	City	Private college lecturer
Mariola	33	N	Care worker	Public administration, education and health	University	6 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	Married	Partner and children in UK	Polish	Village	Village	Food analyst
Hanna	50	N	Waitress	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	Secondary education	9 y	Multiple-times, UK	Married	Partner in UK and children in PL	White-British	Village	Industrial region	Office worker
Zuzanna	30	Y	Care worker	Public administration, education and health	Dropped out of University	4 y	One-time	In relationship	Partner in UK, no children	White-British	Village	City	Unemployed
Danuta	50	Y	Care worker	Public administration, education and health	University	5 y	One-time	In relationship	Partner in UK and children in PL	White-British	Village	City	Journalist local press
Aga	30	N	Store manager	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	University	7 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	Single	No children	-	Village	Village	-

Ola	29	N	IT Consultant for public administration	Public administration, education and health	University	5 y	One-time	Married	Partner and children in UK	Polish	Village	Village	-
Jola	30	Y	Pharmacist	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	University	6 y	One-time	In relationship	Partner in UK, no children	Polish	City	City	Pharmacy
Edyta	38	N	Office worker for immigration advice company	Financial, real estate, professional and administrative activities	University	14 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	Single	No children	-	City	City	-
Agata	29	N	Visual shop design (Retail)	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	Dropped out of University	7 y	One-time	Married	Partner and children in UK	Polish	City	Village	Salesperson
Kamila	48	N	Office worker in accountancy, Pilates trainer	Financial, real estate, professional and administrative activities	University	10 y	One-time	Single	Children in UK	-	City	City	Bank

Grażyna	33	N	Insurance and finance market analyst	Financial, real estate, professional and administrative activities	University in UK	14 y	Multiple-times, UK	Married	Partner and children in UK	White-British	City	City	-
Klaudia	28	N	Market analyst	Financial, real estate, professional and administrative activities	University in UK	9 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	In relationship	No children	White-British	City	City	-
Hania	30	N	Food analyst	Public administration, education and health	University	4 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	Single	No children	-	City	City	Local health department; warehouse
Halina	31	N	Care worker	Public administration, education and health	University	7 y	One-time	Married	Partner in UK, no children	Polish	Village	Village	Social worker
Gosia	28	N	Store manager	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	Dropped out of University	9 y	One-time	In relationship	Partner in UK, no children	White-British	City	Industrial region	Travel agency, waitress

Basia	30	N	Office worker in finance department	Financial, real estate, professional and administrative activities	Dropped out of University in PL, college in UK	10 y	One-time	In relationship	Partner in UK, no children	Other	City	City	-
-------	----	---	-------------------------------------	--	--	------	----------	-----------------	----------------------------	-------	------	------	---

Biographical Narrative Interviews in Poland (in order of date of interview)													
Name (Changed)	Age	Occupation in UK	Sector of work in UK	Education	length of stay in UK	mobility	relationship status	Family situation	Background of partner (ethnicity and citizenship)	City/region in UK	City/region in PL after return	Work in PL before emigration	Work in PL after return
Bożena	28	Waitress	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	University in UK	7 y	Multiple-times, UK	Single	No children	-	City	City	-	Journalist
Alicja	39	Salesperson, Nanny	Informal	University	2 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	Single	No children	-	City	City	Market analyst	Real estate, own company
Aleksandra	33	Call-center, translator	Other	University	1,5 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	Single	No children	-	City	City	Office worker	Call Center

Zosia	28	Food packing	Manufacturing	University	3 m	Multiple-times, various destinations	Married	Children	Polish	Industrial region	City	City	Office worker in court	Office worker in court
Barbara	25	Waitress	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	University	5 m	One-time	Single	No children	-	City	City	City	-	Magister in Law and administration in army
Maria	28	Cleaning in shop	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	University	8 m	Multiple-times, various destinations	Married	Children	Polish	City	City	City	-	Supervisor call center (maternity leave)
Dagnara	44	Waitress, nanny	Informal	University	1 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	Married	No children	Polish	City	City	City	Office worker	English teacher, screenplay writer, children's theater group
Dorota	24	Waitress	Informal	University	3 m	Multiple-times, various destinations	In relationship	No children	Other (abroad)	City	City	City	-	Law student
Ewelina	30	Teacher for autistic children	Public administration, education and health	University	5,5 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	In relationship	Children	Polish	City	Village	City	Waitress	Maternity leave

Helena	30	Au-pair	Informal	University	2 y		Multiple-times, various destinations	In relationship	No children	Other	Village	City	City	-	Team manager in MNC
Marzena	34	Salesperson	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	University	6 m	One-time	Married	Children	Polish	City	City	City	Office worker	Interior architect	
Karolina	39	Nanny	Informal	University	5 y	Multiple-times, UK	Married	Children	Polish	City	City	Village	-	Psychologist	
Liliana	25	Warehouse	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	University	9 m	One-time	Single	No children	-	City	City	City	-	Looking for a job	
Martyna	27	Glass factory	Manufacturing	University	6,5 y	One-time	Single	No children	-	Industrial region	Village	Village	-	Shop	
Natalia	24	Care worker	Public administration, education and health	University	9 m	One-time	Single	No children	-	Village	Village	Village	-	Student	
Kasia	34	Warehouse	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	University	5 y	Multiple-times, various destinations	Married	Children (dependent sister)	Polish	Industrial region	Village	Village	Hotel	Student (postgraduate)	

Renata	36	Manager in clothes store	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	College in UK	12 y	Multiple-times, UK	Married	Children	White-British	City	City	-	Looking for work
Anna	31	Computer company	Manufacturing	University	3 y	Multiple-times, UK	Married	No children	Polish	Village	City	-	Supervisor Computer Service
Gabrysia	26	Agency worker (warehouse, factories)	Distribution, hotels and restaurants / manufacturing	University	6 m	One-time	Single	No children	-	Industrial region	City	Advertisement agency	Event Manager
Ula	31	Supervisor in shop	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	University	2 y	One-time	Single	No children	-	City	City	Culture (Theatre)	Culture (Philharmony)
Urszula	34	Culture (Philharmony)	Public administration, education and health	University	9 y	Multiple-times, UK	In relationship	No children	White-British	City	City	-	English teacher
Weronika	27	Agency worker (warehouse, shop)	Distribution, hotels and restaurants	University	8 m	One-time	In relationship	No children	Polish	City	City	-	Teacher

#### Semi-Structured Expert Interviews

**UK (11):** Community Organisation (1), Early Stage Researcher (2), Experienced Researcher (3), Trade Union (5)

**PL (7):** Central Statistical Office GUS (1), Experienced Researcher (3), Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (1), Social Insurance Institution ZUS (1), Trade Union (1)

## Appendix II – Research ethics

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

#### **'Migration aspirations & realities:**

#### **Experiences of Polish migrants in the UK and the role of trade unions'**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research on 'Migration aspirations & realities: Experiences of Polish migrants in the UK and the role of trade unions'. This sheet gives you more information about the purpose and conduct of the study.

The interview is part of research that is being conducted for my PhD thesis, which is being undertaken in the context of the Marie Curie Initial Training Network on 'Changing Employment' at the Working Lives Research Institute of London Metropolitan University. The research firstly aims to analyse migration aspirations and realities of Polish migrants in the UK and secondly to explore the role trade unions take in facilitating those experiences.

The interview will be conducted by myself, Karima Aziz. If you would like any further information on the project or you would like to raise any issue with the researcher please contact:

Karima Aziz, k.aziz@londonmet.ac.uk, +44 7928 723319  
Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University  
166-220 Holloway Road, London N7 8DB, United Kingdom

Attached to this sheet is a form that you will need to sign to give your consent to participating in the project. Although you will not be identified by name in any report produced, the interview will be recorded and you are asked to give your consent to this; you are also asked to consent to any direct quotes from yourself being used in the research report, although these will be anonymised. You can use another name, if you wish, when signing the forms to protect your anonymity. Data collected on interviewees will be securely stored, in compliance with relevant national data protection legislation of the United Kingdom and in accordance with European Directive 95/46/CE. Interview and personal material stored electronically will be anonymised using a coding system. Any data held in paper files will also be stored securely, with limited access. Once the project has been completed the recordings and interview notes will be held by the researcher Karima Aziz and will have been anonymised so as to protect the individual interviewee's identity.

**Many thanks for taking time to read this sheet and for agreeing to participate.**

## KARTKA INFORMACYJNA

### **‘Aspiracje i rzeczywistość migracji: doświadczenia Polskich migrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii’**

Dziękuję za zgodę na uczestnictwo w tym badaniu pod tytułem ‘Aspiracje i rzeczywistość migracji: doświadczenia Polskich migrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii’. Niniejsza karta zawiera informacje o celach i organizacji badania.

Niniejszy wywiad jest częścią badań naukowych prowadzonych w ramach mojego doktoratu, który realizuję w ramach Marie Curie Initial Training Network ‘Changing Employment / Przemiany zatrudnienia’ w Working Lives Research Institute w London Metropolitan University. Celem badania jest analiza aspiracji i doświadczeń polskich migrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii.

Wywiad będzie prowadzony przeze mnie, Karimę Aziz. W celu uzyskania dalszych informacji o projekcie lub skontaktowania się w jakiegokolwiek innej sprawie z badaczką, proszę skorzystać z poniższych danych:

Karima Aziz, k.aziz@londonmet.ac.uk, +44 7928 723319  
Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University  
166-220 Holloway Road, London N7 8DB, United Kingdom

Załącznikiem do niniejszej karty jest zgoda na wywiad. Proszę o jej podpisanie, jeśli zgadza się P. na uczestnictwo w projekcie. Wywiad będzie nagrywany, na co również proszę o P. zgodę. Wywiady zostaną poddane anonimizacji, dzięki czemu nie będzie możliwa P. identyfikacja w jakichkolwiek pracach napisanych w związku z projektem. Proszę również o zgodę na wykorzystanie anonimowych, bezpośrednich cytatów z P. wywiadu. Podpisując zgodę, może P. podać także inne imię i nazwisko. Dane będą przechowywane bezpiecznie, zgodnie ze stosowną państwową legislacją o ochronie danych osobowych w Wielkiej Brytanii i zgodnie z dyrektywą unijną 95/46/CE. Wywiad i dane osobowe przechowywane elektronicznie zostaną poddane anonimizacji za pomocą systemu kodowania. Jakiegokolwiek dane na papierze będą również przechowywane bezpiecznie z ograniczonym dostępem. Po zakończeniu projektu, nagrania i notatki z wywiadu zostaną zatrzymane przez badaczkę Karimę Aziz, aby ochronić tożsamość indywidualną rozmówcy.

**Dziękuję bardzo za przeczytanie niniejszej karty informacyjnej i za zgodę na uczestnictwo w badaniach!**

## INTERVIEWEE CONSENT FORM

### **‘Migration aspirations & realities: Experiences of Polish migrants in the UK and the role of trade unions’**

**Please tick below:**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at anytime,without giving any reason.
3. I agree to anonymised quotations being used in reports and other publications.
4. I agree at a recording and transcription of the interview being made.
5. I agree to take part in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## ZGODA NA WYWIAD

### **‘Aspiracje i rzeczywistość migracji: doświadczenia Polskich migrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii’**

**Proszę zaznaczyć:**

1. Potwierdzam, że czytałam/em i zrozumiałam/em kartę informacyjną
2. Rozumiem, że moje uczestnictwo jest dobrowolne i że zawsze mogę się wycofać
3. Zgadzam się na wykorzystanie anonimowych cytatów w pracach i publikacjach naukowych
4. Zgadzam się na nagrywanie i transkrypcję wywiadu
5. Zgadzam się na uczestnictwo w tym badaniu

\_\_\_\_\_  
Imię i nazwisko rozmówcy

\_\_\_\_\_  
Data

\_\_\_\_\_  
Podpis

\_\_\_\_\_  
Badaczka

\_\_\_\_\_  
Data

\_\_\_\_\_  
Podpis

## EXPERT INFORMATION SHEET

### **'Migration aspirations & realities:**

#### **Experiences of Polish migrants in the UK and the role of trade unions'**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research on 'Migration aspirations & realities: Experiences of Polish migrants in the UK and the role of trade unions'. This sheet gives you more information about the purpose and conduct of the study.

The interview is part of research that is being conducted for my PhD thesis, which is being undertaken in the context of the Marie Curie Initial Training Network on 'Changing Employment' at the Working Lives Research Institute of London Metropolitan University. The research firstly aims to analyse migration aspirations and realities of Polish migrants in the UK and secondly to explore the role trade unions take in facilitating those experiences.

The interview will be conducted by myself, Karima Aziz. If you would like any further information on the project or you would like to raise any issue with the researcher please contact:

Karima Aziz, k.aziz@londonmet.ac.uk, +44 7928 723319  
Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University  
166-220 Holloway Road, London N7 8DB, United Kingdom

Attached to this sheet is a form that you will need to sign to give your consent to participating in the project. The interview will be recorded and you are asked to give your consent to this as well as to its transcription. You can choose whether your organisation should be named as participating in the project. You are also asked to consent to any direct quotes from yourself being used in the research report and these will be attributed only to a generic job title that will not identify you directly. You can choose to consent or not consent to each of these questions. Data collected on interviewees will be securely stored, in compliance with relevant national data protection legislation of the United Kingdom and in accordance with European Directive 95/46/CE. Interview and personal material stored electronically will be anonymised using a coding system. Any data held in paper files will also be stored securely, with limited access. Once the project has been completed the recordings and interview notes will be held by the researcher Karima Aziz and will have been.

**Many thanks for taking time to read this sheet and for agreeing to participate.**

## KARTKA INFORMACYJNA

### **‘Aspiracje i rzeczywistość migracji: doświadczenia Polskich migrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii’**

Dziękuję za zgodę na uczestnictwo w tym badaniu pod tytułem ‘Aspiracje i rzeczywistość migracji: doświadczenia Polskich migrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii’. Niniejsza karta zawiera informacje o celach i organizacji badania.

Niniejszy wywiad jest częścią badań naukowych prowadzonych w ramach mojego doktoratu, który realizuję w ramach Marie Curie Initial Training Network ‘Changing Employment / Przemiany zatrudnienia’ w Working Lives Research Institute w London Metropolitan University. Celem badania jest analiza aspiracji i doświadczeń polskich migrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii.

Wywiad będzie prowadzony przeze mnie, Karimę Aziz. W celu uzyskania dalszych informacji o projekcie lub skontaktowania się w jakiegokolwiek innej sprawie z badaczką, proszę skorzystać z poniższych danych:

Karima Aziz, k.aziz@londonmet.ac.uk, +48 881501744 / +44 7928 723319

Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University  
166-220 Holloway Road, London N7 8DB, United Kingdom

Załącznikiem do niniejszej karty jest zgoda na wywiad. Proszę o jej podpisanie, jeśli zgadza się P. na uczestnictwo w projekcie. Wywiad będzie nagrywany, na co również proszę o P. zgodę. Proszę również o zgodę na wykorzystanie bezpośrednich cytatów z P. wywiadu. W badaniu informacje podawane przez P. zostaną zidentyfikować z ogólnym stanowiskiem. Dane będą przechowywane bezpiecznie, zgodnie ze stosowną państwową legislacją o ochronie danych osobowych w Wielkiej Brytanii i zgodnie z dyrektywą unijną 95/46/CE. Wywiad i dane osobowe przechowywane elektronicznie zostaną poddane anonimizacji za pomocą systemu kodowania. Jakiegokolwiek dane na papierze będą również przechowywane bezpiecznie z ograniczonym dostępem. Po zakończeniu projektu, nagrania i notatki z wywiadu zostaną zatrzymane przez badaczkę Karimę Aziz.

**Dziękuję bardzo za przeczytanie niniejszej karty informacyjnej i za zgodę na uczestnictwo w badaniach!**

# Consent Form for Expert Interview

**Research Project:** 'Migration aspirations & realities: Experiences of Polish migrants in the UK and the role of trade unions'

**Name of Interviewer:** Karima Aziz

**Contact Details of Interviewer:** k.aziz@londonmet.ac.uk, +44 7928 723319

Working Lives Research Institute  
London Metropolitan University  
166-220 Holloway Road, London N7 8DB

**Name of Interviewee:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Details of Interviewee:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Generic Job Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organisation:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Research Objectives

To analyse migration aspirations and realities of Polish migrants in the UK;

To explore the role trade unions take in facilitating those experiences.

**Do you consent to...(Please tick)**

**YES NO**

The recording and transcription of the interview?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your organisation being named as participating in the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Direct quotes being attributed to you under a generic job title?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(Other write in) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Signatures

**Interviewee:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Interview:** \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_



### **Appendix III – Aide-mémoire for biographical narrative interviews**

The present aide-mémoire supported the conducting of the biographical narrative interviews undertaken for this research (Schütze 1983; Rosenthal 2004). Every interview, however, was an individual event and had its own shape. While the first stage was the same for all interviews, the second and third stages were adapted individually and fluid depending on the form of the prior main narration. The biographical narrative interviews lasted between one and three hours and were mainly undertaken in Polish.

#### **1. Stage:**

Interviewer:

*Chciałabym poprosić żeby Pani mi opowiadała o całym swoim życiu od najwcześniejszych wspomnień do dzisiaj.*

I would like to ask you to tell me about your whole life from your earliest memories until today.

Interviewee: spontaneous main narration

No interruption, independent completion by the interviewee

#### **2. Stage:**

Interviewer: supplementary, internal narrative questions derived from what the informant has just talked about in the main narration

For example: Did I understand correctly that you... ; Could you please elaborate on... ; As I understood it... ; I would like to know more about... ; etc.

#### **3. Stage**

Interviewer: theoretical, external narrative questions about ideas constructed beforehand and the request to abstract the experiences by reflection

Some of the following questions were asked when the perception of the researcher was that there was a lack of reflection on these points in the prior main narration or supplementary questions. The following were prepared questions:

*Jakie Pani miała oczekiwanie / aspiracje migracji?*

What kind of aspirations did you have for migration?

*Dlaczego Pani się zdecydowała wyemigrować?*

Why did you decide to emigrate?

*Jakie aspiracje się rozwijały tutaj a jakie aspiracje ma Pani teraz?*

What kind of aspirations developed here and what aspirations do you have now?

*Czy migracja spełnia pani oczekiwania czy nie?*

Does Migration fulfil your expectations or not?

*Jak wygląda rzeczywistość migracji?*

How does the reality of migration look like?

*Jakie miała pani doświadczenia migracji?*

What kind of migration experiences did you have?

*Jak pani obchodzi się z doświadczeniami migracji?*

How do you treat your migration experiences?

Besides the above referenced prepared questions, other questions were asked spontaneously when the prior interview sections did not reflect sufficiently on these points. These spontaneous questions related to for example culture of migration (Favell 2008), gender roles and expectations and/or career and life pathways.

For example: When did you first experience someone's migration?; Do you have family or friends who emigrated somewhere?; How do you make meaning of your role as a woman?; What plans for life do you have?