



**- The Dutch Eldorado -**  
Experiences of Polish migrants in the Netherlands

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**Bachelor Thesis**  
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# “The Dutch Eldorado”

*Experiences of Polish migrants in the Netherlands*

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## **PREFACE**

This thesis is a product both of fieldwork carried out in the Netherlands among Polish migrants and knowledge gathered over three years of studying Anthropology at Utrecht University in The Netherlands.

This work is dedicated to all Polish migrants in the Netherlands, as I aimed to give them a chance to present their stories and bring the ‘faceless’ migrants alive. Their accounts provide insight in the lives of Polish migrants in the Netherlands.

The adventures of conducting fieldwork, collecting data and encountering my informants have been an incredible experience for me. At this point I want to thank all of the Polish migrants that participated in my research, for accepting me as a researcher and teaching me valuable lessons.

Furthermore I want to thank my supervisor, Miriam Geerse, for her patience, understanding, incredible support and inspiration during this past year.

Finally, I want to thank my family for helping me to achieve so much in my life. A special thanks to: Michael, Pela, Monika, Toha, Katarzyna and Paweł for listening, inspiring conversations, help and endless support.

## INTRODUCTION

Since 2004 Polish migrants have become representative of and synonymous with all recent migrants from Central and Eastern Europe that have moved to Western European countries. Poland is a country with a population of 38 million people with a long history of migration. The total number of Polish migrants in Western Europe is estimated at two million which amounts to the largest group amongst new migrants from Central and Eastern Europe (Central Statistical Office of Poland 2010).

Although the Netherlands was never a top destination among Poles in the past, since Poland's accession to the EU in 2004 and the opening of the Dutch labour market, the Netherlands has become an attractive place for many Poles to settle. Currently in the Netherlands, Polish migrants make up a community of 150,000 (TNS Nipo 2009) and constitute 80 percent of all immigrants from Central and Eastern European countries in The Netherlands (Sabina Torunczyk-Ruiz 2008).

The arrival of Polish migrants continues to cause commotion within Dutch society. Dutch media headlines express concerns of the Dutch government with respect to Polish migrants e.g.: ‘The flow of Poles is bigger than expected’,<sup>1</sup> ‘PVV wants unemployed Poles out of the country’,<sup>2</sup> ‘Why not Polish on the matrixbord on the highway?’.<sup>3</sup> The written press and TV are informing Dutch society about difficulties concerning Polish migrants and have created a negative image of Poles. The Polish migrants that are visible in the media are people that live in dangerous housing conditions, are loud at night, cause many car accidents, or settle in cheap city districts. To many Dutch citizens, Polish migrants (and other newcomers) are intruders that steal jobs, houses and threaten the Dutch economy and social cohesion (Oudenhoven, Ward and Masgoret 2006). These stereotypes about Polish migrants on the one hand and the curiosity of Polish newcomers on the other hand are perfectly illustrated

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Toestrom Polen veel groter dan verwacht’ NU Economie <http://www.nu.nl/economie/2579548/toestroom-polen-veel-groter-dan-verwacht.html> (Accessed 3 August 2011)

<sup>2</sup> ‘PVV wil werkloze Polen het land uit’ NU Algemeen, Politiek <http://www.nu.nl/politiek/2437056/pvv-wil-werkloze-polen-land.html> (Accessed 03 August 2011)

<sup>3</sup> ‘Waarom geen Pools op matrixbord boven snelweg’ NRC [http://vorige.nrc.nl/binnenland/article2597811.ece/Waarom\\_geen\\_Pools\\_op\\_matrixbord\\_boven\\_snelweg](http://vorige.nrc.nl/binnenland/article2597811.ece/Waarom_geen_Pools_op_matrixbord_boven_snelweg) (Accessed 10 August 2011)

in the lyrics of a song from the Dutch carnival in 2008. The title of the song is “A van full of Poles” (Een Busje vol met Polen):

*“A van full of Poles  
A van, a van  
Go, go, go!  
In the morning, in the evening, late at night  
A van drives through our street, a van full of Poles  
Look at them driving, where are they coming from?  
Where are they hiding?  
On the land, in construction, they don't make such a fuss.  
They're coming together  
For a few bucks and a can of beer,  
They come to help, that's why they are here  
One spots them everywhere, they are a border case  
Yet, they are my idols  
Wherever I see them I give them a wave  
A van full of Poles  
They have hired a house in our neighbourhood  
Cosy together  
And in the evening, when the job is done  
They turn their polka music loudly on.”<sup>4</sup>*

Previous studies focused on migration investigated causes and motivations for migration, seeking common evidence and recurrent patterns of why and how migrants enter the host country. However, the migration movements of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe after 2004 opened a new chapter in recent migration history and have influenced migration studies. According to Favell and Elrick (2008) older theories on migration are no longer valid and are not sufficient to explain the contemporary post-accession migration and the huge flow of people from Central and Eastern Europe to Western Europe. Some contemporary studies focus on the macro-scale effects of migration after 2004. Much attention has been paid to Great Britain, which became the main destination for new migrants from Central and Eastern Europe. Research on migration to the Netherlands on the micro-scale is very limited. Knowledge about Polish migration to the Netherlands is scarce. Although Polish migrants have become a visible part of Dutch society, as demonstrated above, and Dutch opinions about them are very well known, little is heard

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<sup>4</sup> The English translation comes from the paper by Godfried Engbersen, Eriks Snel and Jan de Boom ‘Van full of Poles’: Liquid Migration from Central and Eastern Europe’ presented on April 28, 2008 at the UvA.

from the Polish side. Moreover, it is challenging to find accounts of Polish people about their life in the Netherlands, their expectations, plans or problems etc.

The European literature about Polish migrants concentrates mainly on the economic reasons for migration, without taking into account societal factors and the perspectives of the migrants themselves. Some research projects for example in the Netherlands or Great Britain focus on the issues regarding Polish migrants like problems with housing or working conditions, exploitations of Polish workers by their employers or integration of Poles in the host countries. However, very few really investigate the perspectives of those migrants.

I found it highly interesting to explore the perspectives of the Polish migrants themselves. Hence, I chose to focus my research on recent Polish migrants in the Netherlands with respect to their motives for migration, work experiences, the composition of social networks, their attitudes towards the Netherlands and ways for maintaining a connection with Poland.

The central question I pose for the purpose of this research is, *How do Polish migrants in the Netherlands perceive their (im)migration to the Netherlands, what is the impact of the migrants' participation in social networks on the migration process and experience, and how does gender affect people's migration experiences and vice versa?* In this thesis, I focus on the stories of eight Polish migrants. In my opinion, their experiences represent the accounts of Polish migrants in the Netherlands. The aim is to give Polish migrants a voice, as well as to decrease the informational gap between Dutch and Polish people. Moreover, this research contributes to the debate on recent Polish migration in the academic world and focuses on the understanding of matters related to Polish migrants in the Netherlands, along with their own perspectives and experiences. By giving immigrants a voice, I provide a chance for them to speak up and present their positions.

Through two and a half months of anthropological research in the Netherlands, during the period of April, May and June 2011, I met many Polish migrants. I found my respondents through the method of *snowballing*. Starting out with Poles from my close surrounding I was brought into contact with their friends, which in turn contacted me with their friends. I held many in-depth interviews with my informants, during which we

discussed their experiences, stories, opinions and plans. During these in-depth interviews we talked about their reasons for migrating to the Netherlands, how they organize their life here, their private and professional life, their emotions, dreams, and their future plans.

In order to broaden my perspective on the situation of Polish migrants in the Netherlands, I attended two conferences: ‘Migration from Poland to the Netherlands’ in Nijmegen (15.04.11) and ‘Polish Migrants in the Netherlands’ in Breda (12.05.11). I also held interviews with the founder of the ‘Migrada’ foundation that provides help and support for migrants in the Netherlands, the founder of the Euro-Polonia foundation that organizes activities in order to collect money for charitable activities in Poland, the director of the Polish school in Utrecht and a Polish priest. Furthermore, in the course of my fieldwork I visited many locations in The Hague, Amsterdam, Scheveningen, Nijmegen, Breda and Utrecht. These included churches, stores, community houses and bars, and gave me the opportunity to both participate and observe.

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. In the first chapter I present the context of my research, namely a brief history of Polish migration and the recent Polish migration to the Netherlands. Here, it becomes clear why many Poles decided to migrate. In chapter two I set out the theories employed to gain a deeper understanding of Polish migration to the Netherlands. I will start by explaining different approaches to international migration. Then, I will present a theoretical insight in the migration strategies that provide a better understanding of the migrants’ plans and orientation, the duration of their migration and how they maintain contacts with their ‘homeland’ and the ‘host country’. Next, I will focus on how migrants develop and sustain social networks. For the purpose of this research, a distinction was made between formal and informal networks. Networks facilitate migration and supply migrants with information and support. In the last paragraph of the theoretical framework, I discuss a gender-based perspective on migration. First I explore the definition of gender. Next, I will emphasize the role and importance of the gender component in migration studies. Finally, I will examine the changes in and reinforcement of gender roles in the migration process.

I will present my research findings in the subsequent (four) empirical chapters, starting with the stories of: Olek, Justyna, Agnieszka, Dorota and Monika. Their stories will accompany us in the following chapters in order to illustrate the migration journey experience of many Polish migrants in the Netherlands. In chapter three, I explain how the migration of Poles to the Netherlands actually started. I first examine the reasons that motivated Polish migrants to leave Poland. Then, I will analyse how the decision to leave Poland came about. In chapter four I present the first steps of Polish migrants in the Netherlands through the stories of Olek, Justyna, Agnieszka, Dorota and Monika. I distinguish two patterns explaining how migrants enter the host country, how they set their first steps after the arrival in the Netherlands and who helps them with finding job, accommodation and other formalities. Here, it becomes obvious how formal and informal networks facilitate and enhance the migration. Later in this chapter I will illustrate how and with whom Polish migrants organize their lives in the Netherlands, their attitudes toward Poland and the Netherlands and how they maintain connections to Poland. In chapter five I explore the broader issues illustrated by Olek’s experiences: problems of many Polish migrants with respect to the job agencies that recruit Polish workers. Based on his account, I will demonstrate the problems and issues that Polish migrants experience while working for these agencies. In chapter six the focus shifts to the stories of Beata, Andrzej and Krystyna. By examining their stories I will show how gender roles are altered but sometimes reinforced in the process of migration. Finally, in chapter seven I pose the conclusion of my research. Here I will demonstrate that Polish migrants are not ‘faceless’ marionettes in their migration journey, but rather that they all have their stories, motivations, dreams and future plans. I will also discuss the different types of migrants and networks they use to migrate to the Netherlands. In addition I will emphasize the problems migrants experience with the job agencies and suggest a recommendation for further development of this situation.

## **1. BACKGROUND OF POLISH MIGRATION: HISTORY AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS**

Although in recent years, unprecedented numbers of Poles have migrated out of Poland, Polish out-migration is not a new phenomenon. Over the past two centuries, many Poles have migrated for political or economic reasons, or a combination of both. Forced migrations have occurred. However, there have also been times when people wanted to migrate but were prevented from doing so. In some cases, the experiences and choices of earlier migrants affected later migrations. For example, the current trends in Polish migration are closely intertwined with the flow of Polish migrants with German nationality that occurred right after the fall of communism in 1989. These Poles lived mainly in Poland's Upper Silesia region, but worked seasonally in the Netherlands and/or in Germany. They formed migration networks that influenced the recent migration movement from Poland. Therefore, for Poles, the Netherlands is one of the preferred countries of migration, and the country still attracts many newcomers from Poland today.

In the first section of this chapter a brief history of Polish migration is presented, taking into account relevant events in Polish history. The second section focuses on the roots of Polish migration to the Netherlands and the recent situation of Polish migrants in the Netherlands.

### **1.1 A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF POLISH EMIGRATION HISTORY**

This account of Polish out-migration starts in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when Polish territory was divided among the three superpowers of Prussia, Russia and Austria. In 1772 the country had become part of the Austrian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Russian Empire with Poland vanishing from European maps and remaining occupied for 123 years till 1918. During this period Polish people suffered from political, economic and social repression as well as other destructive occupational policies. The occupation ensued in three uprisings of Poles who wanted to create an independent Polish state. All three uprisings were effectively crushed by the three superpowers and their political leaders and participants were forced out of the country. They mainly went to France and Belgium

(Cyrus 2006:31 in Triandafyllidou 2006). In the following paragraphs, I will first focus on emigration before the Second World War, then on emigration from the Polish People’s Republic, and finally on emigration from Poland after the fall of the communist regime in 1989.

### 1.1.1 EMIGRATION HISTORY UNTIL THE 1940s

Along with the political emigration of Poles came a flow of economic migrants. This emigration became possible when companies shipping goods overseas appeared in Poland in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. These companies offered Poles attractive opportunities to emigrate and even offered support with travel arrangements (Morawska 1989). Polish peasants and workers were fascinated by the vision of a new and better life and many decided to emigrate to the United States. In the period between 1871 and 1913, 3.5 million people left Poland, around 10 percent of the whole population. Many of them, an estimated 2.25 million people, went to the United States of America (USA). In addition, a large number of Polish peasants went to Germany and worked there mainly as seasonal workers in the agricultural sector (Okólski 1998:10).

During the Second World War, large numbers of Poles escaped from Poland and went to England. In London, political refugees established the Polish Government in Exile, which played an important role in the history of Polish statehood. Political dissidents and former soldiers who fought in the Western armies during the Second World War stayed abroad. They decided for political reasons, including a real threat of the death penalty for betrayal of the communist regime, to never return (Triandafyllidou 2006: 32). After the Second World War according to the resolution of the Potsdam Conference, held in 1945, the Eastern Provinces of Poland were incorporated into the Soviet Blok and the Polish borders changed, causing another internal population shift. Polish citizens who lived in the former German territory before 1939: The Upper Silesia and territories of East Prussia were displaced from this area and forced to move to the new Polish territory (Koryś 2004). Under the communist regime Polish borders were sealed; mobility and free movement of people was severely restricted. The next paragraph focuses on the consequences of the communist regime on Polish migration and its outcome.

### 1.1.2 EMIGRATION DURING THE POLISH PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC

Migration during the period of the Polish People’s Republic was regulated by the government. The strict border control and passport regulations severely restricted the freedom of movement (Okólski 1998). The only way to travel was with a passport for tourist purposes, which were only awarded to those who met a set of conditions. Those included should be able to afford the trip, as well as to pay an additional fee, should have obtained an invitation to travel, and in the possession of an entry visa from the country of destination. Due to the previous emigration, many Poles had relatives abroad and therefore obtained travel invitations quite easily. Some of them used this opportunity to stay in the West and never returned to Poland. The estimated number of ‘tourists’ who did not return to Poland is 75.000 (Okólski 1999).

After the implementation of martial law in Poland (December 13, 1981) there was a huge increase in migration. Polish migrants who at that time were staying as tourists in Germany, France, Austria, Italy and Greece decided not to return due to restrictions of the authoritarian government. The lives of Polish citizens were controlled by the government. Political opposition was effectively crushed and many political activists were jailed, and even killed. The generous policies of the Western countries accepted Polish migrants and assigned them political-refugee status. During the 1980s about 800.000 ‘tourists’ did not return to Poland. The Polish regime identified them as illegal emigrants (Okólski 1998: 16).

### 1.1.3 EMIGRATION AFTER 1989

The fall of the communist regime and the democratization of Poland after 1989 stopped the wave of political migration. Nevertheless, it allowed the freedom of traveling and hence increased the number of temporary, economic migrants.

The decline of the Polish economy resulted in high unemployment rates, pushing people to seek new ways to make a living. One of the creative options was to set up a small business abroad and thus distance oneself from the formal economy of Poland. This became the only source of income for many Polish households. Therefore, thousands of Poles regularly organized short trips to Western cities, mainly to Berlin and Vienna, to sell small items like cigarettes and vodka. Some of them became part of the cheap labour force in the informal

sector. The discrepancy in the currency exchange rates made these trips extremely profitable, enabling Poles to afford luxury goods and lead better lives (Stola 2001). Nevertheless, the golden era of tourist-workers ended when the government implemented new reforms regarding currency and free trade. As a consequence, the traveling costs went up and many Poles decided to make a living in their home country.

According to Anne Triandafyllidou (2006), the post-socialist Polish migration can be characterized by three general trends. First, official data indicates that the numbers of Polish emigrants declined after 1989. The official figures from the 1990s show that the permanent migration decreased to a level of 22.000 people per year, compared to 26.000 people per year in the 1980s (Triandafyllidou 2006:39). The decrease in the permanent migration was influenced by European Union policies. According to the new rule of the EU, Polish citizens were no longer treated as political refugees and their migration was restricted. The most popular destination country had been Germany, which particularly restricted the admission of Polish migrants. The second trend in post-socialist Polish migration was the increase of temporary migrants among Poles. The data from the population census in 2002 showed that 786.000 Polish citizens stayed abroad seasonally that year. The third trend refers to the changes in destinations and growing diversification of destination countries (Triandafyllidou 2006:41). We can observe a permanent shift from overseas to European countries. The USA and Canada lost their popularity among Polish citizens. Koryś (2004) emphasizes that Europe was and still remains the main destination for about 80 percent of Poles; 90 percent of them choose neighboring Germany as a host country.

As stated before, many Polish people who lived in the former German area were forced to move to the new Polish territory. They had Polish roots but were ‘Germanized’ at the same time. Consequently, in the beginning of the 1990s the German government decided that each person that lived on German territory before 1939 had a right to German nationality. Therefore, many Polish citizens with German ancestors took this opportunity and acquired dual German and Polish nationality. People with this dual nationality were allowed to travel and work legally in the European countries. That is how this group came to form the first group of recent Polish seasonal workers in the Netherlands during the 1990s (Koryś 2004).

#### 1.1.4 POLISH MIGRATION AFTER EU-ACCESSION

The accession of Poland to the European Union resulted in increases of both the temporary and permanent migration of Polish citizens. During the first few years of Poland's membership of the EU only three labour markets were open for Poles, namely Ireland, Sweden and the UK. On May 1, 2006, Spain, Portugal, Finland and Greece allowed Polish workers to enter their labour market. The trend continued with the Netherlands, which also opened its labour market on May 1, 2006, and later on in May 2011 Germany joined in (Markowski 2008). These countries made their labour markets accessible for the new members of the EU by liberalising their legal regulations and implementing policies to support Polish immigration. According to the statistics of the Central Statistical Office in Poland (GUS), at the end of 2006 around two million Poles stayed abroad. By contrast, in 2004 the estimated number of emigrants for the entire year was only one million (Central Statistical Office of Poland 2010).

The most popular countries of destination after EU accession have been the United Kingdom and Germany. The data from the Central Statistical Office in Poland demonstrates that in 2006 approximately 580.000 Polish citizens went to the UK and approximately 450.000 to Germany. Nevertheless, Polish migrants became interested in other destinations as well; Ireland received approximately 120.000 migrants, Italy 85.000 and the Netherlands approximately 55.000 Polish emigrants (Central Statistical Office of Poland 2010).

#### 1.2 POLISH MIGRATION TO THE NETHERLANDS

Polish migration to the Netherlands is not a recent phenomenon. Polish migrants came to the Netherlands in different periods of the previous and present century escaping authoritarian government or enticed by an attractive labour market, great living conditions and social benefits. Therefore, this part focuses on the history and current development of the Polish migration to the Netherlands.

### 1.2.1 POLISH MIGRANTS IN THE NETHERLANDS BEFORE 2004

The roots of the Polish migration to the Netherlands go back to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This first group of Polish emigrants came to the Netherlands to work in the coal mines during the industrial revolution, along with Italian, Slovene and German migrants (Pijpers 2006). The second wave of Polish migrants arrived during the 1980s. Polish migrants arrived in the Netherlands on tourist visas or as asylum seekers during the communist regime. They remained in the Netherlands and filled positions in the agricultural and construction sectors or packing industry (Pijpers 2006). During the 1990s the Netherlands became a popular destination for Polish migrants. Polish citizens with the dual German-Polish nationality had free access to the Dutch labour market. In 1998 the Dutch government allowed Polish citizens with a Polish passport to work for a limited period of time, mostly in seasonal jobs. Later, those who stayed started to work as entrepreneurs in the construction and renovation business (Lewandowska 2008).

When in 2004 the Netherlands opened their borders for new EU members, work permits were still required. This resulted in a high number of illegal workers. Those who came to the Netherlands as seasonal workers stayed there illegally. Since 2007, Poles do not need work permits in the Netherlands; the only condition for legal work is to obtain a Social Fiscal Number (Sofi Number-BSN). The number of Polish applications for a BSN number is estimated at 17,000 in 2003 and have increased in 2004 to 30,000 (Statistics Netherlands 2007). Furthermore, the agreement regarding social privileges and social security between the Netherlands and Poland, signed in Warsaw on March 26, 2003, gives Polish migrants the right to Dutch social services, including social security and insurance. The only condition is that they have worked legally for at least 6 months in a row (Lewandowska 2008).

### 1.2.2 POLISH MIGRANTS IN THE NETHERLANDS AFTER 2004

While estimating the current number of the Polish migrants in the Netherlands we need to take into consideration that the available statistics do not reflect the actual number of Polish migrants in the Netherlands. Firstly, the temporary migrants are not obliged to officially register with the city council. Even if they stay longer than three months they often

do not register because they don't have an official address or because the companies employing Poles do not require an official address and simply avoid registering their employees. Secondly, when Polish migrants leave the Netherlands they do not inform the city council (Lewandowska 2008). Nevertheless, according to the data from the Central Statistic Office in the Netherlands (CBS 2009), approximately 60,000 Poles were officially registered in the Netherlands in 2008 (CBS 2009). According to the report from Stedenband (2009) the number of Polish migrants in 2009 was estimated at 150.000. The exact number of Poles in the Netherlands is hard to calculate.

Recent Polish migrants are employed mainly in the services sector like health care, business and trade services. However, Polish migrants still work in low paying positions in the agriculture, horticulture, domestic services or manufacturing sectors (Ecorys 2006).

## 2. TOWARDS A STUDY OF MIGRATION

This chapter sets out the theoretical approach to this study of Polish migrants in the Netherlands. First, international migration theories will be discussed. Different approaches to the concept of migration and the definition of international migration will be presented. During the process of migration people become mobile and develop migration strategies/orientations. Here, it becomes obvious what people say about their future plans, the duration of migration, where migrants see themselves: in the country of origin or in the host country, and how migrants will adjust to the new environment. In addition, this chapter will elaborate on a transnational perspective towards migration. Before, during and after the migration process, people create and maintain social networks that help them to migrate and achieve their goals with migration. Therefore, the second part of this chapter focuses on the migrants' networks. Consequently, a distinction between formal and informal networks will be explained. Here, it becomes obvious that social networks are important elements in the migration process. They encourage moving, facilitate migration and provide migrants with necessary support. After having focused on migrants' networks, the third section will explore the relationship between migration and gender roles within a family. I will provide a definition of the concept of gender and explore the role and importance of gender in migration studies. Finally, the changes in and reinforcement of 'traditional' gender roles of men and women in the migration process will be examined.

### 2.1. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Migration is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, and migration studies attract the interest of different disciplines, including anthropology, economics, sociology, geography, history, law, and others. There is no single definition of migration or of a migrant that is widely accepted, nor one theory that thoroughly explains the complexity of migration (Brettell 2003, Okólski 2004, Fihel, Kaczmarczyk, Okólski 2006, Toruńczyk-Ruiz 2008).

Hollifield and Brettell (2000) define international migration as: *“a self directed movement of individuals from one state to another”* (Hollifield and Brettell 2000 in Toruńczyk-Ruiz

2008:9). Until recently, a mobility of a person leaving one state and moving to another often resulted either in a permanent settlement in the new location or in the return to the country of origin. Contemporary mobility of people is shaped by the forces of globalization. Crossing borders has become easier and faster. Moreover, the development of cheap and easy transportation and communication technologies enables people to more easily maintain ties between the host and origin countries. Therefore, migrants develop a strong social, economic and sometimes political connection with both countries. Triandafyllidou (2006) asserts that recent international migration has put migrants into “*a state of limbo between two societies of references*” (Triandafyllidou 2006:1). Migrants seem to be caught between two places whereby the distance between two societies and the individual migrant’s ties to both countries are not distinct anymore; since the distance between these two contexts has been reduced by the flexible movement across borders and by dynamic globalization processes.

In explaining migration processes, scholars often refer to classical theories of migration that focus on the motives and impact of migration, rather than on the migration process itself. The decision to leave the country of origin is often based on classical theory of ‘push and pull factors’. Push factors refer to the circumstances in the home country that encourage and force people to leave, such as poverty, unemployment, and political persecution. Pull factors refer to the circumstances in the host countries that attract people to go somewhere in particular, including better living conditions and the availability of jobs (Okólski 2004).

In addition to exploring motives for migration one has to focus on the process of migration, including its causes and consequences. Pennix, Spencer and Van Hear (2008) formulated a definition of international migration that is relevant to this study. They argue that international migration is a process that can be defined as: “*the spatial movement, voluntary or forced, of persons across political borders along with its reasons and consequences*” (Pennix, Spencer and Van Hear 2008 in Karczemski, Boer 2010:10). The study of international migration focuses on spatial movements rather than on movements along social spheres. People migrate as workers, highly educated specialists, refugees, or as accompanying family members. Therefore, migrants not only change the place of living but often their social and economical status as well. This can be understood as a “*new*

*geography of migration*” (Penninx, Spencer and Van Hear 2008 in Karczemski, Boer 2010:10). This new geography of migration refers to the size, destination, origin and composition of international migration (Karczemski, Boer 2010:11).

Movement in social spheres and across borders is perceived to be caused by strategies/orientations and choices that migrants make. Therefore, the following sections of this chapter describe shifts in migration strategies, including migrants’ orientations to the country of origin and the host country.

### 2.1.1 MIGRATION STRATEGIES

Migration has a significant impact on migrants. After migrating, they find themselves in a new environment. New circumstances can lead to different developments in their lives, including a new job, new friends, lifestyle, family etc. Based on their new experiences in a host country, migrants develop their migration strategies/orientation to determine their plans towards migration duration, maintaining old and developing new social contacts, and life goals. By migration strategies/orientations, I refer to ways that indicate what migrants say about their future plans, the duration of migration, where migrants see themselves: in the country of origin or in the host country, and how migrants will adjust to the new environment.

State institutions and scholars use different categories to define migrants and their strategies. There is no clear connection between the legal status of migrants with their plans and social realities. Moreover, many migrants are illegal in the host country and therefore, their status does not fit their expectations and social realities (Triandafyllidou 2006). Düvell and Vogel (2006) present four different categories of migrants, which are relevant for this research and help to describe types of Polish migrants in The Netherlands. The four categories are: *return oriented migrants*, *emigrants*, *global nomads* and *transnational migrants* (Düvell and Vogel 2006 in Triandafyllidou 2006: 273). *Return oriented migrants* plan to return to their homeland. They only stay in the host country for a short period of time or seasonally (Düvell and Vogel 2006 in Triandafyllidou 2006: 273). Based on the main motive of stay, *return oriented migrants* are divided into subcategories:

*learners, travelers and target earners. Learners* opt to invest in themselves by for instance learning a language or obtaining additional courses/education (Vogel and Jordan 1997 in Triandafyllidou 2006: 275). *Travelers* search for possibilities for personal growth and development. *Travelers* also seek adventure, the challenge of living in another country; through their migration experience they broaden their horizon, see the world and meet new people. *Target earners* migrate to earn money in order to buy a new car, house, capital for opening new business, paying off debts etc. This type of migrant is characterized by a short-term stay. However, the motivation can change as target earners overestimate the possibilities to save in the migration country (Martin 1998 in Triandafyllidou 2006: 275). Subsequently, they get used to a new standard of living and higher incomes, and slowly lose their connection to their country of origin. Therefore, they risk following the pattern of return illusion: the plan of return is postponed and in the end, migrants stay in the host country (Triandafyllidou 2006: 275).

*Emigrants* are oriented towards the host country. They intend to stay permanently in the country of destination and therefore express strong social ties to that country. They do not plan to return (Düvell and Vogel 2006 in Triandafyllidou 2006: 273). The category *global nomads* refers to migrants that have lived in a several countries and are open to live in different places in the world depending on job opportunities. Consequently, they have not developed an intense connection to any one country (Düvell and Vogel 2006 in Triandafyllidou 2006: 281). John Urry (2007) explores the concept of *nomadism* and argues that nomads live along the borders whereby a constant transformation plays an important role (Urry 2007). Polish migrants often fit into the *nomad* category, traveling around Europe, often changing their place of living in search for yet another new job. Attractive job openings are a major pull factor for Polish migrants. Their migration can be perceived as flexible, dynamic and fluid. Polish migrants often do not define the host country as the country of their final destination or settlement, but instead as a place of ‘*passage*’ along their journey. When one place, city, region, country stops being profitable, they simply pack and move to another one. *Transnational migrants* have a long- term bipolar orientation on the country of origin and the host country (Düvell and Vogel 2006 in Triandafyllidou 2006: 273). Furthermore, Glick- Schiller (1997) designates *transnational migrants* as *transmigrants* (1992:1-2) and argues that *transmigrants* show strong loyalties towards both

countries and keep strong personal, economic and personal ties with the country of origin and the host country (Glick- Schiller 1997 in Triandafyllidou 2006: 280).

The typology presented above provides a framework to understand the types of Polish migrants in the Netherlands with respect to their orientation strategy, networks, and maintaining of ties with the host and origin country. However, these categories are fluid and flexible. For example, *return oriented migrants* can become *emigrants* and settle down in the host country. Furthermore, migrants can correspond with more than one type in the presented typology.

In order to further conceptualize and analyse migration processes with respect to migration strategies and migrant’s networks: the concept of transnationalism requires additional elaboration. To that end, the following paragraph focuses on the transnationalist approach to migration processes.

### 2.1.2 TRANSNATIONAL APPROACH TO MIGRATION

The transnational perspective on migration emerged in the late 1980s, when US anthropologists found out that traditional migration theories did not account for new developments in the migration field. They observed that migrants with whom they worked developed transnational connections and practices (Basch, Glick-Schiller, Szanton-Blanc 1992). In order to avoid treating migrants as individuals who departed or arrived (emigrants vs. immigrants) they argue that migrants have to be understood as parts of two dynamic interconnected realities that combine the place of origin and the place of destination. Consequently, the analytical focus of scholars becomes constituted both in sending and receiving societies. This is the core of the transnational approach to migration studies (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004: 3). Subsequently the focus of academic scholars shifted to analyse: *“how ordinary individuals live their everyday lives across borders and the consequences of their activities for sending- and receiving- country life”* (Levitt and Waters 2002:8 in Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004:3). Cheaper and easier accessibility of information, transportation and communication technologies meant that people became more mobile and flexible. Furthermore, sending money and goods, as well as maintaining connections with family and friends, became easier. The transnational connections influence individuals

that migrated and their family and friends back home. The link between transnationalism and peoples' everyday lives and its impact is discussed by Michael Smith and Luis Guarnuzo (1998), who define transnationalism: *“as the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement”* (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992:1-2 in Smith and Guarnuzo 1998:74). In other words, migrants live dual lives in transnational communities, moving easily across spatial, cultural, ethnic, religious, social and economic borders. Furthermore, Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004) argue that transnational migrants are connected through interlocking ties of social relations, networks that enable them to exchange information, ideas and practices. This brings the analysis to actors who migrate and to actors who do not move but are connected to migrants through social networks maintained across geographical and political borders. Therefore, the following section of this chapter focuses on migration networks.

## **2.2 MIGRATION NETWORKS**

This section focuses on migration networks that are created before, during and after migration. For the purpose of this research, a distinction has been made between informal and formal networks. Informal networks are based on interpersonal ties. Formal networks consist of organizational relations, including job agencies, professional associations, recruiters etc. They will be examined separately in order to provide a comprehensive picture and understanding of migration networks. Moreover, an analysis of the influence of formal and informal networks on Polish migrants in the Netherlands will be provided. Furthermore, the concept of social capital will be examined. Social capital is a crucial component in migrants' networks. It enables migration and helps to facilitate the migration process.

### **2.2.1 NETWORKS**

Networks play a significant role in the investigation, explanation and understanding of migration processes (Arango 2004). According to Castles and Millar (2003) networks are essential for studying migrants' strategies, ways of employment, settlement or links with

the homeland. Networks link migrants to non-migrants. The contacts and relationships in a host country may encourage migration, as well as provide financial support and information required to migrate. After having arrived in the destination country, these networks may help migrants find a job and accommodation, and provide information and emotional support (Portes 1997). Therefore, social networks constitute a key element in facilitating the migration process.

Migrants' home networks can be defined as a set of relations that connect migrants with relatives and friends that remain at home (Arango 2004:28). Through these networks migrants gain information about events back home, financial support, and assistance in finding a job and accommodation in the host country. Networks provide personal support and by doing so, reduce the uncertainty and risks of migration (Massey 1998:42-43). Consequently, they secure and maintain the process of migration. Palloni (2001) elaborates on the definition of social networks provided by Arango (2004), arguing that networks refer to the formal and informal ties that link migrants, non migrants and returned migrants with each other. This set of connections is based on kinship, friendship and a common origin (Palloni 2001). In order to achieve a deeper understanding of networks, the following paragraph elaborates on different types of networks and their key characteristics.

### 2.2.2 TYPES OF NETWORKS

Social networks are fluid, flexible and diverse. Different types of social networks are based on ties with respect to gender, age or social class. Vertoves (2002) suggest that unskilled, poorly educated migrants rely on family or friendship-based networks, whereas skilled highly educated migrants rely on their colleagues or professional organizations (Vertoves 2002).

### 2.2.3 INFORMAL NETWORKS

Informal networks refer to a connection between the migrants and their relatives, friends and the shared community at home and in the country of destination and also to the contacts with the 'new people' in the new country. As stated earlier, networks with people

that remain at home are mostly used for personal support, for exchanging information and to send money or goods home. Informal networks reduce the risks and uncertainty of migration. Therefore potential migrants use existing social networks and decide to move to places where other members of the networks are settled and employed. This is also true for the Polish migrants. They often migrate to places where their family members or friends live and work (Ryan et al., 2008). Strong emotional ties with relatives and friends enable migrants to conquer or cope with loneliness, uncertainty and feeling homesick. Contemporary media and communication tools endow and strengthen contacts with people back home. Polish migrants communicate with their relatives and friends through internet social networks, like Polish social portals *Nasza Klasa*, Polish messenger *Gadu-Gadu*, *Skype*, *Facebook*. The Polish *Nasza Klasa* is mostly used to maintain contact between migrants living all over the world and Poland. This internet forum together with *Gadu-Gadu* and *Skype*, form a new dimension in Polish informal networks (Ryan et al., 2008).

Emotional support from close relationships with family and friends plays a significant role in the migration process, in the beginning and even after migration (Ryan et al., 2008). Besides an informative and emotional function, social networks also have an economic influence on migrants and people in the country of origin. Remittance and any kinds of goods sent home influence the home economy and often secure the financial situation of the family or friends back home. Money flow from migration is sometimes the only financial source for people that remain in Poland. For many Polish migrants, having contact with their homeland is crucial. Contact with other Poles settled in the in the Netherlands can also provide an additional sense of security. Through internet portals like *Niedziela.nl* or *Polonia.nl* they maintain contact with each other, exchange information and experience and provide communal support. For most Polish migrants these portals and therefore informal networks are the only way to gain access to the Dutch job market, find accommodation, or receive practical or tourist information. For many it is one of the few ways to meet new people and find companionship.

During and after migration, people form new friendships and thereby create new social networks. However, in addition to the positive aspects of migration networks, there are also several negative ones. In her recent study of Polish migrants in the Netherlands, Sabina Toruńczyk- Ruiz (2008) examines the negative features of migration networks and

suggests emotional and social ties with the homeland can limit the development of new social networks and undermine successful integration into the community of the country of migration. Moreover, it can lead to the creation of closed communities (*ghettos*) and disrupt a friendly pattern of social interaction between the migrants and the citizens of the receiving country. Furthermore, people who are a part of strong social networks can act as ‘*gatekeepers*’ and reduce the access to migration to disable the migration process of people outside the network. A study conducted by Ryan (et al., 2008) among Polish communities in London indicates that Polish migrants form a strong and closed community based on internal competition rather than collaboration. Polish migrants distinguish between close friends and relatives and the rest of the community. Only the close circle of friends and relatives is perceived as supportive and helpful and therefore acts as the only source of practical and emotional support. People who do not belong to that circle are simply excluded and distrusted (Ryan et al., 2008).

#### 2.2.4 FORMAL NETWORKS

Formal connections are maintained through institutions like, universities, job agencies, intermediaries, professional organizations, social institutions etc. Garapich (2008) takes a step further and defines formal networks in the migration process as migration businesses. He states that migration businesses operate as commercial and social actors or institutions to directly benefit from migrants who seek for help with migrating, finding a job and accommodation, and managing practical issues (Garapich 2008:15). Here migration businesses refer to the job agencies that recruit Poles to work in the Netherlands in the low skill jobs. Polish migrants, who migrate using formal networks, receive support to secure basic living facilities. Employment agencies that work with Polish migrants provide them with both accommodation and work. On one hand, migrants do not have to worry about finding a job or a place to live. On the other hand, the process of migration is then controlled by the employment agencies, and therefore migrants depend on them. Moreover, migrants can be an easy target for agencies and employers who simply use them in order to obtain their own business objectives. These formal networks offer an advantage to migrants in the beginning of the migration process. But they can cause problems during the later stages.

The problems that can occur include the simultaneous loss of job and accommodation when they lose their job they automatically lose their accommodation, too. These circumstances often force migrants to use their informal networks and/or create new ones. However, sometimes migrants come to the Netherlands through friends or relatives and later search for a job opportunity through an agency or other intermediary.

Networks provide support and cooperation and are a crucial source of social capital for migrants. In order to achieve a full understanding of the role of social networks in the migration process, a brief elaboration of the social capital is required. Hence, the next paragraph focuses on the concept of social capital.

The aspects, role and function of social networks are different for men and women. Gender forms an important dimension of international migrants and social networks. Therefore, the next section examines the role of gender in the process of migration.

## **2.3 GENDER AND MIGRATION**

The term *gender* has become widely known in the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s. Jansen (1987) has explained the concept of gender as: “*culturally construed categories of man- and womanhood*” (Jansen 1987:176), created in every historical, cultural, social, political and economic context. In other words, gender is a continuous process, whereby the meaning of masculinity and femininity is constructed. Moreover, gender refers to how masculinity and femininity are related and how power relations between men and women are organized (Jansen 1987). Jolly and Reeves (2005) define gender as: “*the differences and commonalities between women and men which are set by convention and other social, economic, political and cultural forces.*” (Jolly and Reeves 2005:5). For a long time gender issues have been largely ignored in migration studies (Mahler and Pessar 2006). However, some researchers do incorporate the gender variable into migration studies. Boyed (1989) emphasized the importance of gender in analyses of migration processes and networks. According to her, gender division of labour, changing positions of men and women and gender differences in a decision making process need to be integrated

in the analysis of migration because they significantly impact migration in many ways (Boyed 1989:656-657).

Gender and migration are interconnected and affect each other. From the one side, migration challenges and changes gender roles, sometimes strengthening the traditional role division and inequalities between men and women. From the other side, gender influences who migrates and the motives for migration (Jolly and Reeves 2005:9). Therefore, the following paragraph will focus on gender-based causes of migration.

### 2.3.1 GENDERED CAUSES OF MIGRATION

Decisions to migrate are based on different factors. People migrate due to economic, social or political reasons. The differences and inequalities within and between countries create motives to leave. People migrate due to economic reasons, familial reunification, escaping gender discrimination, conforming to gender norms, or challenging those norms. In the context of the family household, the decision to migrate, where to go, and for how long, is determined by the familial hierarchy and gender relations (Jolly and Reeves 2005:9).

In the classical migration, women have always been considered a part of the luggage of the male migrants. After arriving in the host country, finding a job and accommodation, male workers would take their family with them to the new country. Male migrants have been perceived as the family breadwinners (Triandafyllidou 2006:226). However, several researchers point out that many immigrant women occupied various positions, worked outside the home and contributed to the family income both in the country of origin and in the country of destination (Morokvasic 1984; Tastsologu and Alipranti 2003; Mahler and Pessar 2003). Morokovis (1984) distinguishes between various types of female job occupations: legal or illegal, formal or informal, at home, outside the home, paid or unpaid. She also suggests that the position of women on the labour market is not fully considered in the study of migration. In addition, Cerrutti and Massey (2001), argue that women lack agency and have no power in decision making processes in their households. Therefore, previous migration research has perceived women as ‘associational’ or ‘secondary’ migrants (Kanaiaupuni 2000:1315).

Nevertheless, findings from different research projects all over the world over the last 20 years have suggested an increasing participation of women in the migration process (Donato 1993). For example, in Thailand, the traditional role of men is to be free and seek adventures, while the role of women is to stay home and take care of the household. However, evidence from Thailand suggests that women have developed an independent migration strategy, migrating for economic purposes from the rural regions to the city (Curran and Saguy 2001:63). Despite some empirical studies, knowledge about female migration with respect to why, how and where they migrate is limited. Little is also known about whether women decide for migration themselves or simply follow the family strategy (Stecklov, Carletto, Azzarri, Davis 2010). Hence, these aspects require further explanation. The following section will investigate the position and role of women in the migration process and how migration influences and changes traditional gender roles of women.

### 2.3.2 MIGRATION AND GENDER ROLES

For many women migration could be the only way to gain access to knowledge and recourses with respect to women’s rights, opportunities, and access to the labour market. Even when women migrate with the family, new resources provide them with a better ability to direct the household and support the family. Also women that are left home when their spouses migrate could experience changes in their role and power relations. Staying at home means greater economic and household responsibilities and autonomy. Regarding the remittances from the migrated relatives, women are often head of the family and have power in the decision making process; they handle the money once it arrives (Forbes-Martin 2004:27).

Women who migrate can experience difficulties adjusting to the new country, culture and society. This can be both because of barriers in the host society, as well as personal ones (Forbes-Martin 2004:27). Migrant women could face racial or sexual discrimination, intolerance in seeking employment or while participating in the socio-cultural activities organized in the host country. This situation is most common when migrant women have a different ethnic origin than the majority of the people in host country. Furthermore, the personal barriers harming successful adjustment include, lack of

education and language skills, and different conflicts or traumas experienced by women such as war or ethnic cleansing. These limitations make women strongly dependent on their spouses and relatives. However, the role of male migrants can also change in the migration process. When the skills of men are not sufficient and they fail to find a job, they may perceive themselves as unable to support their family and be the head of the household (Forbes-Martin 2004:29). Unfortunately, the men's failure can have negative consequences for the women's position in the family. Martin 2004 states that: *"Men often feel neglected and disappointed, which sometimes brings out patriarchal habits and efforts to re-establish traditional roles even by force if necessary. In a situation where men are unsure of themselves, they often become skeptical about their wives. Their own feelings of inferiority can lead to their doubting the love or trustworthiness of their wives. When men mistrust their wives, they may restrict them and try to control them in an effort to boost their egos."* (Forbes-Martin 2004:28). By contrary, the men's failure can also positively affect the position of women and reinforce traditional gender roles. Migrant women can access the foreign labour market, seek a career, and fulfill their role of family breadwinner. Many migrant women work, not only in low paid positions such as house cleaning, child care or elderly care, but also as professionals, managers and in other high skilled occupations.

### 3. MIGRATION? WHY NOT?!

In order to better understand the process of migration, one must examine why people actually decide to migrate. Although Polish migrants comprise a very diverse group, this thesis shows some common characteristics of Polish migrants in the Netherlands. Therefore, in this chapter I will examine the reasons that motivated Polish migrants to leave Poland and analyse how the decision to leave took place in each case. I distinguish three types of factors that encourage Polish migration to the Netherlands: economic factors, social factors, and love relationships between Polish and Dutch citizens. The stories of Polish migrants I met during the course of my fieldwork experience will accompany us in this and the following chapters. The stories of Olek and Monika highlighted in the first paragraph of this chapter show that their reason to leave Poland was a search for a better life and economic stability. The second paragraph sheds light on Justyna and Agnieszka, who both left Poland in search of challenges and adventure. The third paragraph focuses on Dorota, a woman migrated to the Netherlands to be with her Dutch boyfriend.

#### 3.1 IN SEARCH OF BETTER LIFE

*At some point I figured out that there is nothing to look for in Poland. There was no job for me. I couldn't find a well-paid job. So what could I do? My friend worked in the Netherlands and told me that there [in the Netherlands] you can have a job and good money out of it. So I went, just like that<sup>5</sup> Olek May 8<sup>th</sup> 2011.*

Olek is a 33-year-old Polish man who, like the majority of Polish migrants I have spoken to, left Poland for economic reasons. Olek comes from a small city in south-eastern Poland. He finished his educational training to be a professional cook and worked for one year as a cook.

When we talked in the park on a sunny Sunday afternoon, he said he really liked his job, but just could not earn any money with it. He saw no future in that what he was doing.

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<sup>5</sup>In -depth interview with Olek, date: 08.05.2011

*“Cooking? I like to cook, but you have to make a living, you know!”*<sup>6</sup> One day a friend of his told him about a job in Germany and Olek decided to go for it. Even though he knew that Polish citizens were not entitled to work and live legally in Germany, he left. He spent his first four months working illegally as a carousel operator in an amusement park in Germany. Then, he got caught and was deported to Poland. Olek found it very difficult to find a job at that time in Poland.<sup>7</sup> *“I didn’t know what to do so I joined the army service.”*<sup>8</sup> Though he admitted it was not ideal, *“At least I had a place to stay, a small amount of money for myself and I learned something.”*<sup>9</sup> After he finished the army service he decided to leave Poland for the second time, again due to the lack of work opportunities. He migrated to Great Britain and stayed there for five years; he had a job washing dishes but was not really happy about it and planned to return to Poland. One day, when he was in Poland on holiday, he met his old friend Marek, who told him about job opportunities in the Netherlands and the glorious life he could have there. *“You only have to contact the job agency,”* his friend explained to him, *“and they will take care of everything. The money is good and there is always an open job position”*. *“So I didn’t think long, registered [with] the agency Otto Work Force and after a week or two I went to the Netherlands and...Here I am!”*<sup>10</sup> He looked at me and laughed. Olek migrated to the Netherlands in April 2009. He did not expect much, just a normal job and normal money, which he described as *“Money that will allow you to have a decent life, to buy a house and support your family.”*<sup>11</sup>

Monika is a 23-year-old Polish student that I met through a student network. Like Olek, she expressed that people in Poland have no job prospects, and added that it is very difficult to study and work at the same time in Poland. Monika migrated to the Netherlands in 2009 through the ‘Erasmus’ student exchange network. Over dinner, Monika looked me straight in the eyes and said loudly: *“I really like Holland, I really do... and you know what? I*

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<sup>6</sup> In -depth interview with Olek, date: 08.05.2011

<sup>7</sup> In the middle of the 90s Poland was in a transition period, recovering from the fall of the communistic regime. At that time the unemployment rate was very high and the best option to find a good job was join the army or working in the governmental company or government itself.

<sup>8</sup> The army service in Poland was obligatory for every man after he turned 18. However due to education or medical reason the obligation with respect to the army could be suspend.

<sup>9</sup> In -depth interview with Olek, date: 08.05.2011

<sup>10</sup> In -depth interview with Olek, date: 08.05.2011

<sup>11</sup> In -depth interview with Olek, date: 08.05.2011

*love Utrecht!*”<sup>12</sup> Monika came to the Netherlands to finish her studies and to later find a well-paid job. Originally from Kołobrzeg, a small city in Poland located on the Baltic Sea, she studied National Security and Defense at the private University in Wrocław. Before beginning her studies, she worked in Ireland for a year and in Cyprus for two months. Both experiences were intended to be temporary, to earn money and gain a new experience. She stated that she always wanted to leave Poland because in Poland, there are few future prospects, studying is expensive and students have to work hard in order to make even a modest living. Monika stressed that both the quality of education and the student financial aid from the government are worse in Poland than in the Netherlands. Further, in her complaints, she said that the money from a part-time job in Poland is not sufficient to survive. Students do not have many possibilities to earn money. Either they work full-time and they do not have time to study or they work part time and are constantly out of money. Even though they often receive financial support from their parents, students in Poland are often not able to fulfill their financial needs. Money they receive is not sufficient to pay for the tuition fee, rent, food and to cover personal expenses. She underlined that the governmental financial support is far better in the Netherlands. As a student in the Netherlands, Monika receives a monthly scholarship of 500 Euros. Because she is a foreigner, she must work part-time (at least eight hours per week) in order to receive the scholarship. She works two days a week in an office in Utrecht. This is illustrated in the following statement from Monika:

*In Poland I studied at the private university and had to pay a six thousand zloty tuition fee. In the Netherlands I have to pay the same and I am entitled to get support from the government. The money I receive is enough to pay all my bills and there is always [plenty] left to spend. Now I'm able to afford for example expensive cosmetics or clothes, weekend trips or a good party.*<sup>13</sup>

Olek and Monika represent a group of Polish migrants that decided to leave Poland in search of a better life. Their stories show very clearly their reasons and motives for

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<sup>12</sup> In -depth interview with Monika date: 20.05.2011

<sup>13</sup> In -depth interview with Monika, date: 20.05.2011

migration to the Netherlands. Monika decided to leave to finance her studies. The advantages of the Dutch scholarship system, along with the possibility of well paid part time jobs, attracted her. Olek did not succeed professionally in his home country; he could not find a well-paid job there. This made him decide to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Olek was also encouraged by the experiences of his friend. The visions of the glorious West that offers many great opportunities, together with disbelief in any great future prospects in Poland enhance the decision to migrate. Additionally, the previous temporary migration experiences of Olek and Monika influenced their decision to leave. Once they realized the possibilities in Western Europe, the decision to leave to the Netherlands was easier to make.

Olek and Monika are two examples from a huge population of recent Polish migrants. Marek Okólski and Lucyna Grabowska-Lucińska (2009) try to explain the reasons for the enormous outflows of Poles since EU accession. According to them, the recent outflows have been affected by the development of the Polish economy and Polish society in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Social, economic and political developments were regulated by state authorities. Furthermore, the communist system, and specifically its labour system, had a negative effect on many social groups. Many people were left with only low paying jobs and no prospects for something better to come, and therefore found themselves on the margins of society. Consequently, many decided to try seasonal work abroad in order to earn money. They departed to Germany, the UK then later to the Netherlands and Italy after 1989. According to Okólski and Grabowska-Lucińska (2009), these developments affected the recent flow of Polish migration.

Migration in search of better life and better perspectives is not the only motive I distinguished among Polish migrants I met during my research. Justyna and Agnieszka decided to leave Poland to see a different part of the world, meet other people and cultures and simply experience something different. I elaborate on their stories in the next paragraph.

### 3.2 SEEKING AN ADVENTURE

When I arrive on my bike in one of the parks in Utrecht, Justyna stands up and greets me with a big smile. We are sitting on the bench and the sun is shining right on our faces. Next to us a group of teenagers play the guitar, sitting on a blanket while having a barbeque. Justyna opens a bottle of wine and starts telling me her story. Justyna is a 26 year-old-Polish woman, who moved to the Netherlands in 2010. She comes from a small city in Poland, situated near the German border. She graduated as a master in development studies and tourism at the Polish university in Poznan. When I ask her why she decided to migrate to the Netherlands, she immediately replies: *“Why not! Tell me why not? What do I have to lose? I have no husband, no children; it’s just me and the rest of the world.”*<sup>14</sup> Justyna had always wanted to see the world, meet new people, learn new languages and experience something new. *“You know what,”* she says to me after drinking a whole glass of wine in one gulp, *“Life changes so quickly. One year ago I worked in a fancy winery store and had boyfriend that I believed to be in love with. But one day everything changed; I broke up with my boyfriend and I could not stay where I was; I needed a change. So when my friend Dominika invited me to visit her in the Netherlands and try it for myself, I didn’t have to think twice. This world belongs to those who are brave, right?”*<sup>15</sup> She came to the Netherlands and after two weeks she found a job as a waitress in an Italian restaurant. After four weeks she got an offer to work in a logistic company where she still works now. Justyna learned Dutch and has applied for an additional language course. She doesn’t know how long she will stay, but she is very happy about her decision to move to the Netherlands.

The story of Agnieszka, a 28-year-old Polish woman, is similar to the accounts of Justyna. Agnieszka comes from one of the biggest cities in Poland, Wrocław. She decided to leave Poland when she was 25 years old. She was studying zootechnics<sup>16</sup> at the Open University in Wroclaw, still living at her parents’ house and working a part-time job when one day she decided to change something in her life. Right before her graduation she received an email from her friend Patrycja who worked as an au- pair for a Dutch family

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<sup>14</sup> In -depth interview with Justyna, date: 11.05.2011

<sup>15</sup> In -depth interview with Justyna, date: 11.05.2011

<sup>16</sup> “the scientific art of maintaining and improving animals under domestication that includes breeding, genetics, nutrition, and housing : the technology of animal husbandry” Merriam-Webster Medical Dictionary <http://www.merriam-webster.com/medical/zootechnics> (accessed on the 10 August 2011)

close to Amsterdam. In her email Patrycja asked Agnieszka if she knew somebody or maybe if she is interested in taking over her position. The work included taking care of two children and doing small cleaning jobs. In exchange she could have her own room, money and the possibility to learn English and Dutch. While having a coffee with me Agnieszka says: *“I received that email and I said to myself: “Why not?” and left a few days later.”*<sup>17</sup> Agnieszka stresses that she did not leave for economic reasons. She had a part-time job and financial support from her parents. She wanted to gain independence and new experiences. Agnieszka took the opportunity that appeared in her life and simply took her chance. She learned Dutch and English and later, together with her boyfriend, who came to the Netherlands before she finished her au pair work, she established a construction company.

The cases of Justyna and Agnieszka illustrate that migration is perceived both as a change and challenge. Their decision to move was not initiated by unsatisfactory living conditions or a difficult economic situation. For Justyna, migration to the Netherlands was a kind of adventure and desire to change something after her life turned in another direction. For Agnieszka, it was a chance that appeared in her life when she was looking for some changes. Both women consider migration as a way to develop and enrich their lives, meet new people and learn new languages, as well as an opportunity for personal development.

### 3.3. MIGRATION FOR LOVE

Dorota’s<sup>18</sup> apartment is very cheerful and full of flowers. When I enter the house, an intriguing smell fills the air. Dorota greets me with a smile and explains that she is baking a Polish cheesecake for this occasion. Dorota is 28 years old. She comes from a city in south-eastern Poland, where she studied English language and literature. While waiting for the cake to be ready, we sit on the balcony and talk. I move my chair a bit closer to her, as the topic of our conversation is very personal. *“Hm...”* a glorious glance comes to her face, *“I met my husband through an internet-chat network,”* she starts her story. *“I’m a big fan of Prince and at that time, I was very active on the internet [fan site] of Prince. One day I started chatting with a person nicknamed ‘a Dutchman’. This is how I and Roger met,”*<sup>19</sup> she laughs.

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<sup>17</sup> In -depth interview with Agnieszka, date: 25.05.2011

<sup>18</sup> Name changed for the purpose of this thesis.

<sup>19</sup> In-depth interview with Dorota, date: 07.06.2011

Dorota and Roger kept on talking to each other every day. After six months of daily chatting conversations they switched to *Skype* to finally see and hear each other ‘live’, she explains. Soon after that they decided to meet at a Prince concert in London. “*That was amazing*”, says Dorota and smiles at me, “*We finally met and went to the fantastic concert together, it was great.*”<sup>20</sup> For a year, they kept on meeting every two months in England, Belgium and other European countries depending on the Prince tour. When Prince played in Amsterdam, Dorota decided to visit Roger for a few weeks. She was still studying in Poland but she had a summer break and so they could stay together for longer than a long weekend. She stayed at Roger’s place the whole summer. Together they decided that after her graduation she would move to the Netherlands to live with him, she explains to me, while preparing plates for the delicious cheesecake. I ask Dorota if she would have migrated to the Netherlands if she had not met Roger, “*Are you kidding me?!*,” she shouts, “*I really like this country but the only reason I came here is Roger, the love of my life.*”<sup>21</sup> After graduating, Dorota moved in with Roger. In the first few weeks, she worked as an English teacher for a language school. After a few months she received an interesting job offer and started working in the administration field, using her language skills. Dorota had been living in the Netherlands for three years, when her boyfriend asked her to marry him. “*Of course I said yes and we got married last year in September*”<sup>22</sup>, she says and gives me a wink with a big smile on her face.

The presented stories of Polish migrants illustrate the reasons that pushed and pulled them to migrate to the Netherlands. Olek and Monika decided to migrate for economic reasons. Justyna and Agnieszka sought adventure. Dorota left Poland for love. To provide a better understanding of Polish migration to the Netherlands, one has to analyse how migrants enter the host country, how they find a job and accommodation, how they organize their life in the Netherlands and what is the attitude of Polish migrants towards Poland and the Netherlands. The stories of Olek, Monika, Agnieszka, Justyna and Dorota will be elaborated in the next chapter with respect to these aspects.

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<sup>20</sup> In-depth interview with Dorota, date: 07.06.2011

<sup>21</sup> In-depth interview with Dorota, date: 07.06.2011

<sup>22</sup> In-depth interview with Dorota, date: 07.06.2011

## 4. IN THE NETHERLANDS

This chapter focuses on the migration journey with respect to the key elements that facilitate migration. First, I examine two patterns of how migrants come to the host country. I will illustrate how Olek, Justyna, Agnieszka, Monika and Dorota started their migration journeys and eventually moved to the Netherlands. The patterns will also show how they took their first steps in the Netherlands and who helped them. Here it becomes clear how formal and informal networks facilitate and enhance migration. Second, we will see how Olek, Justyna, Agnieszka, Dorota and Monika organize their lives in the Netherlands, what the components of their social networks are and how they interact with Dutch people. Finally, the last paragraph focuses on how Polish migrants establish contact with other Poles and how they maintain a connection with Poland.

### 4.1. FIRST STEPS...

The first pattern shows that the choice of the Netherlands as a destination country is not determined by a migrant's specific skills or certain attitudes about the Netherlands. In that case migrants arrive through informal networks. A friend or a relative who lives and works in the Netherlands informs the future migrant about job possibilities and helps setting up necessary formalities. When Justyna received information from her friend Dominika, she decided to move to the Netherlands. *“Dominika's account of her life in the Netherlands was very positive”,* states Justyna. *“She told me that it's not difficult to find a job [in the Netherlands] and that she would help me with everything.”*<sup>23</sup> Justyna bought a flight ticket and packed one suitcase and left to the Netherlands. When she arrived in the Netherlands, she stayed at Dominika's house in Utrecht. In this way she did not have to worry about accommodation. *“Dominika helped me to arrange the Dutch fiscal number and to improve my resume. She also showed me internet websites to look for a job and supported me in searching for work at the job agency.”*<sup>24</sup> Although Justyna registered herself at the job agency, she did not find her first job through the agency. After two weeks of searching, a Polish friend of Dominika's who worked in an Italian restaurant decided to quit his job and

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<sup>23</sup> In -depth interview with Justyna, date: 11.05.2011

<sup>24</sup> In -depth interview with Justyna, date: 11.05.2011

leave the Netherlands. He recommended Justyna and she started her first job as a waitress.<sup>25</sup>

The first pattern is also exemplified by the story of Agnieszka, who also migrated to the Netherlands through an informal network. As explained earlier, her friend Patrycja was working as an au pair for a Dutch family near Amsterdam and looking for someone to take over her job.<sup>26</sup> Patrycja arranged everything for her. When Agnieszka arrived she had secured a job position and accommodation. While working as an au pair, Agnieszka had at her disposal a single room with a separate entrance. She received a monthly salary of 500 Euros and did not have to work on the weekends. Her job consisted of taking care of two little girls (Laura and Kim) and cleaning the house from time to time. Agnieszka stresses that:

*This was a great opportunity for me. I didn't have to manage anything on my own. I got my room, salary and the possibility to learn Dutch and English. My job was secure because the agreement between me and the family was that I would stay for one year. At that time this was the best option for me.*<sup>27</sup>

Justyna and Agnieszka used informal networks in the process of migration. Before they migrated, their friends informed them about the possibility to move to the Netherlands. After they arrived, their friends took care of the accommodation, job and formalities for example acquiring fiscal numbers. As Arango (2008) and Massey (1994) state, informal networks are the connections between migrants and their friends and relatives which provide migrants with information about how to find a job, accommodation and finally to enable the travel to and arrival in the host country. Justyna and Agnieszka started and sustained their migration journeys through informal networks. By doing so, both Justyna and Agnieszka reduced the risks and uncertainty of migration.

The story of Dorota shows the migration journey through an informal network as well. In her case the choice of the Netherlands as a destination country is based on the previous knowledge and visits in the Netherlands due to a love relationship with a Dutch citizen.

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<sup>25</sup> In -depth interview with Justyna, date: 11.05.2011

<sup>26</sup> In -depth interview with Agnieszka, date: 25.05.2011

<sup>27</sup> In -depth interview with Agnieszka, date: 25.05.2011

Dorota represents the group of migrants that migrated to be together with her/his Dutch boyfriend/girlfriend. Dorota, as stated in the previous chapter, decided to migrate to live with Roger. Before she decided to move to the Netherlands, she had only a slight idea of what to expect and how her life would look.<sup>28</sup> This is how she remembers her first experiences:

*After I moved in, I didn't know where to start. Thanks to God Roger was with me, she laughs; he arranged a meeting for me at the tax authority to obtain my Dutch fiscal number, helped me to look for a job by asking friends and suggesting internet sites where I could search for a job. He also took care of my insurance-- well, our common insurance.<sup>29</sup>*

The boyfriend of Dorota provided her with different kinds of help, including accommodation, information about the labour market and handling different formalities.

The second pattern I distinguished refers to migrants that left Poland through a job agency. As stated earlier, Olek migrated to the Netherlands by registering at the job agency Otto Work Force in Poland:

*After my friend told me about the opportunities in the Netherlands, I went to an agency Otto Work Force and filled in some papers. They explained to me that if they would find an open job position for me they would contact me as soon as possible. After one maybe two weeks a lady from Otto Work Force called me and offered me work in a factory as a fork-lift trucker or to pick tomatoes. I decided on the factory work. She asked me to visit their office once again to fill in the rest of the required documents. Otto Work Force offered me a fulltime job and accommodation in the complex of houses with other Polish people. They also regulated things with the tax authority and insurance. Of course, for their service I had to pay a fee, but moving to the Netherlands through Otto was the only option for me...You know when you don't speak Dutch and only a little*

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<sup>28</sup> In-depth interview with Dorota, date: 07.06.2011

<sup>29</sup> In-depth interview with Dorota, date: 07.06.2011

*English, a job agency helps you a lot. I didn't have to worry about how to find a job or a house after I moved to the Netherlands.*<sup>30</sup>

Olek represents the group of Polish migrants that decided to migrate via a formal network, or as Garapich (2008) refers to it, using migration businesses. Migration businesses refer to social actors and institutions that seek profit from human mobility and migrants that attempt to adapt in the new environment. As stated earlier Olek, like many Polish migrants, used the services of a job agency to find employment, accommodation and manage practical issues in order to facilitate the migration process. However, migration through a formalized institution can also limit a migrant's options after arrival in the host country. Polish migrants that work for a job agency emphasized that some agencies exploit migrants. They state that many migrants have had serious issues with Polish job agencies or Dutch job agencies specialized in hiring Polish employees. A similar opinion about the job agency is expressed by Olek that worked for Otto Work Force. His account and the story of the job agencies will be explored in the next chapter.

The second pattern is also illustrated by the story of Monika that started her migration journey through formal network. Monika, as mentioned before, moved to the Netherlands through the 'Erasmus' student exchange network. She told me in one of our conversations<sup>31</sup> that migration through 'Erasmus' is very easy. She applied for studying in the Netherlands through an international office at her university by submitting several documents like motivation letter and language certificate. The host university in the Netherlands provided Monika with accommodation. As a participant in the 'Erasmus' she receive a monthly scholarship for participating in the program. After arriving, Monika informed herself about the possibilities of financial support in the Netherlands. With the help of a Dutch fellow student, she managed required formalities and now she is entitled to receive a monthly scholarship.

The two patterns examined in this paragraph illustrate how Olek, Justyna, Agnieszka, Monika and Dorota started their migration journey and entered the Netherlands. The patterns show also how they made their first steps in the Netherlands and who helped

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<sup>30</sup> In -depth interview with Olek, date: 08.05.2011

<sup>31</sup> In -depth interview with Monika, date: 20.05.2011

them. In the following paragraph we will see how they organized their life in the Netherlands and what their attitudes are towards Poland and the Netherlands.

#### 4.2 BETWEEN POLES AND THE DUTCH

When Monika arrived in the Netherlands she found a part-time job as a customer service representative in Utrecht. She still works as a customer service representative for the same international company that she started at after her arrival. At work and as a student she interacts with people from different parts of the world who speak different languages: *“My friends and my colleagues come from a variety of countries like Portugal, Spain, France, Germany, Sweden, Brazil, the UK and of course Poland but in Poland, she states, I never had so many international friends. I used to work, party and hang out only with Polish people but now...”*, she laughs, *“now we all are migrants, we all learn from each other, and spend time together. For example we cook together, go for a drink or to a party.”*<sup>32</sup> When I ask her about her relations with the Dutch, she sighs and takes a breath: *“Well, she says, I really tried to make friends with Dutch people but somehow it does not work. In the beginning when you meet them, they seem to be nice and friendly but later I discovered that they are very closed and keep people at a distance. I mean I work with Dutch people and this is not a problem but in my personal life it just didn’t click.”*<sup>33</sup> Although Monika does not have Dutch friends it is important to notice that she expresses a positive opinion about Dutch employers and employees, regarding professionalism, good treatment, politeness and support at work.<sup>34</sup>

A similar view with respect to contact with Dutch people is stressed by Agnieszka. When her boyfriend Marek came to the Netherlands, he started to work in a Polish construction company that renovates houses. After Agnieszka finished her work as au-pair they decided to open their own construction company and to live together. Later they bought a house in a small city close to Utrecht where they still live today. Even though Agnieszka speaks Dutch and Marek speaks English, they do not have many Dutch friends. When I visited Agnieszka in her house, she explained to me what her social life looks like:

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<sup>32</sup> In -depth interview with Monika, date: 20.05.2011

<sup>33</sup> In -depth interview with Monika, date: 20.05.2011

<sup>34</sup> In -depth interview with Monika, date: 20.05.2011

*To be honest, I don't have time to hang out with friends, meet them in a bar or a restaurant, because I work hard every day. Sometimes things have to be ready before the next day starts; sometimes in the evening I have to visit a customer or finish all the paper work. When I come home I just want to rest and relax. Of course it doesn't mean that I don't have friends. I do, but mostly Polish people. We know many couples like us that run their own companies; our friends from Poland live here [in the Netherlands] as well. Sometimes Polish guys that work for us come over for dinner or a beer. Before all this started [starting a business] I had a Dutch friend but the relationship didn't last long. We just didn't fit together and this is not because she is Dutch. In my opinion, Dutch people are very open. For example, our neighbors are very friendly; they greet us every day and invite us for a coffee.<sup>35</sup>*

Clearly then, Agnieszka has positive contact with the Dutch, but she also underlines that she almost always spends her free time with Polish compatriots. However, she has a different experience of working with Dutch people than Monika. As mentioned earlier Agnieszka is the co-owner of a construction company together with her boyfriend. Their company offers renovation services and sells construction materials on the Dutch market. Their customers are mainly Dutch people but sometimes they also have Polish customers. In the following statement she recounts her working experience with Dutch people:

*We had many Dutch customers that turned their attitude towards our company at the end of our cooperation. Before we start a renovation we discuss all the details. Later, after each part is done, we charge the customer. The last invoice used to be the highest one, but after many incidents when Dutch people didn't want to pay, we changed our system. They didn't want to pay, complaining that the work is not done according to what we discussed initially. They never wanted to pay the last bill. This didn't even happen once with the Polish customers.<sup>36</sup>*

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<sup>35</sup> In -depth interview with Agnieszka, date: 25.05.2011

<sup>36</sup> In -depth interview with Agnieszka, date: 25.05.2011

Monika and Agnieszka both stress that they do not have many social contacts with the Dutch, for both these are very professional (or superficial, such as contact with the neighbors) and job related relationships. Striking in their stories is that they both perceive the Dutch as open and friendly on the surface but actually very closed when it comes to trying to establish a deeper relationship. However, Agnieszka also expresses negative attitudes based on negative experiences with respect to working with the Dutch.

Agnieszka is not the only one that experiences challenges in interacting with Dutch people. Also Justyna reports very negative experiences with her Dutch employer and colleagues. Justyna works in administration for a Dutch logistic company in Utrecht. This is her second job position in the Netherlands. As stated earlier, when she moved to the Netherlands, she registered at many job agencies. While this did not lead her to a job, using informal connections she started her first job as a waitress in an Italian restaurant in Utrecht. After one month of working there she received an offer from a Dutch job agency for her current position.

When I meet Justyna for a coffee in a small cafe in Utrecht, she is very upset. She smokes one cigarette after another. When I ask what happened she looks at me and a gruesome glance comes to her face: “Ah...work...today I quit my job! I’m officially unemployed!”<sup>37</sup> I ask her to tell me more about her work experience. In the following excerpt Justyna gets to the core of the issue:

*My work experience in a Dutch company..? I have been employed without knowing the Dutch language, only able to communicate in English. In the beginning [September 2010], the job agency told me that I would be entering data into Excel documents. But instead I didn’t do anything for the first three days. After talking to my boss and people from the job agency, some measures were taken and they opened a new department at this company. From that moment I was responsible for controlling incoming deliveries, documents, for handling inquiries from the business partners and controlling incoming goods. The company started to grow and new people were needed in order to manage all tasks. At that time, they gave me people to support my work who only spoke Dutch--*

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<sup>37</sup> In -depth interview with Justyna, date: 10.06.2011

*no English, and I had to figure out how to communicate with them. Somehow we managed to understand each other by using gestures, for example [she laughs]. Later, I went on holiday and after I came back things had changed drastically. Two people I trained had taken over my position--of course they were Dutch-- and I became the last one in the team. Furthermore we got a new team leader, a Dutch man who most of the time did not try to translate things for me. What I got was only short summaries of the meetings. I had to take care on my own to understand things and gather the information. They knew that I only speak and understand English but still everyone approached me speaking Dutch. So why did they hire me in the first place? Only in a case of a problem they tried to speak English to me. The company promised me a contract five months ago. I still didn't receive any contract [...]. This, along with neglecting me at work, even though I finished a masters [degree] and have great work experience, led to me to quit this job. So I did it.<sup>38</sup>*

The stories of Agnieszka, Monika and Justyna represent the accounts of many Polish migrants. Although they interact with Dutch people on a daily base these connections are limited and some are not perceived positively. Besides contacts with the Dutch, Polish migrants establish new relationships with people of different genders, ages, background and origin, and thus participate in multicultural social networks. However, they emphasized to have many social ties with other Poles. Therefore, the following chapter addresses this component of their social network.

### **4.3 POLES AMONG POLES**

All of the Polish migrants I met during my research developed new contacts with other Polish migrants or/and maintained those contacts with Poles that already existed before the migration. In a few cases Polish migrants do not only have ties with other Poles but also with people from other ethnic groups. In Poland, Monika mostly associated with fellow international and Polish students. In the Netherlands Monika represents migrants that interact with people from different cultures and origin. However, as she states, she also

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<sup>38</sup> In -depth interview with Justyna, date: 10.06.2011

has many Polish friends.<sup>39</sup> Justyna came to the Netherlands through her friend Dominika, who introduced Justyna to her own Polish friends. Although Justyna works with internationals, she prefers to spend her free time with other Polish people: *“It’s easier, you know, they speak the same language and they are similar to me, like my friends in Poland.”*<sup>40</sup> Agnieszka, as explained in the previous paragraph, has only Polish friends. These friends consist of couples like her and her boyfriend that they meet for dinner, drink or a weekend trip.<sup>41</sup>

Although Dorota has a Dutch husband and is friends with many Dutch and international people, she also has many Polish friends: *“In Poland I would never meet so many interesting people from different cultures. Here I have this opportunity; my husband is Dutch and I also have Polish friends.”*<sup>42</sup>

Polish migrants, as indicated above, have different compositions of their social networks. Some have mostly Polish contacts some both Polish and international. Apart from that, Polish migrants in the Netherlands sustain the strong ties and connections with family and friends that remained in Poland. They regularly visit places like Polish stores, bars or churches.

*When I enter a church in Utrecht, on a Sunday morning, I cannot believe what I hear. A clear, deep and strong Polish voice greets people in Polish and invites them to participate in the mass. I look in the direction where the voice comes from. A man in his mid fifties stands at the altar with the microphone in his hands. He is wearing a long, golden cassock with the big cross on his chest. Behind him, on the altar, two young boys in white gowns prepare accessories necessary for the mass. “Please stand up and let us begin, God we gather here to...” The priest begins the praying in the Polish language. I look at the faces of all the people gathered. All of them are focused, some people are praying and everyone is looking at the priest.*<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> In -depth interview with Monika, date: 20.05.2011

<sup>40</sup> In -depth interview with Justyna, date: 10.06.2011

<sup>41</sup> In -depth interview with Agnieszka, date: 25.05.2011

<sup>42</sup> In-depth interview with Dorota, date: 07.06.2011

<sup>43</sup> Participant observation , date: 22.05.2011

I asked many Polish migrants if they attend Polish masses and what it means to them. Dorota said what many others also said:

*In Poland I used to go to the church from time to time. I was raised in a catholic way, like almost everyone in Poland, you know, but when I came here I stopped attending masses. One day a friend told me that there are masses in few big cities in the Netherlands carried out in Polish by a Polish priest. So I went to the church and since that time I attend mass almost every Sunday. It is a really great experience, it brings me closer to Poland and this is also a possibility to meet other Polish people.<sup>44</sup>*

All of the Polish migrants I have talked to visit Polish stores. As Olek states: *“I miss Polish cuisine, so from time to time I visit Polish store to buy Polish products.”<sup>45</sup>* They also enter Polish community portals in the Netherlands like *Niedziela.nl* or *Polonia.nl*. These portals provide migrants with information about upcoming events, as well as important information about regulations and laws. Migrants can also use these portals to exchange information, look for a job, apartment, or sell a product. Through these portals Polish migrants also meet other Poles.

Polish migrants maintain contact with Poland in various ways. They call their families and friends in Poland, write emails or chat. They also send money back home in order to support their families. As Justyna explained:

*I contact my parents and my sister every second day. Sometimes I call them, sometimes we talk on the phone, sometimes on Skype, or we chat on Nasza- Klasa<sup>46</sup> or Facebook. I do not earn great money but still I send them 250 Euro every month.<sup>47</sup>*

Justyna mentioned that she maintained contact with her family through the internet, using *Skype* or social network portals like *Nasza-Klasa* or *Facebook*. All Polish migrants claim to manage the contact with their families and friends at home through these portals or *Skype*.

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<sup>44</sup> In-depth interview with Dorota, date: 07.06.2011

<sup>45</sup> In -depth interview with Olek, date: 08.05.2011

<sup>46</sup> Nasza-Klasa is a Polish equivalent of Facebook

<sup>47</sup> In -depth interview with Justyna, date: 10.06.2011

However, they also underline the importance of visiting Poland from time to time and to be together with their families during Christmas or Easter.

According to Ryan (et al., 2008) strong ties with the country of origin provide migrants with emotional support in the process of migration, in the beginning and even after migration. By sending remittances, migrants influence the home economy and secure the financial situation of their family back home. Due to developments in technologies like cheap and easy transportation and internet, the transnational connection with people at home has become easier to maintain. This enables migrants to stay in transnational connection between the country of origin and the country of settlement (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992:1-2 in Smith & Guarnuzo 1998:74).

We have seen in the previous chapters how migrants start their migration journey why they decide to migrate and how they enter the host country. We have also seen how they organize their life, what the composition of their social networks is and how they maintain connections with Poland. To provide a better understanding of the whole migration process for some Polish migrants one needs to consider the risks/ potential negative sides of the migration. I observed that the most vulnerable group of Polish migrants in the Netherlands consists of those that enter the country through a job agency. According to their statements, many agencies exploit migrants and many migrants have had serious issues with Polish job agencies or Dutch job agencies that specialize in hiring Polish employees. This aspect will be examined in the next chapter.

## 5. MIGRATION ALL INCLUSIVE?

This chapter focuses on Polish job agencies and Dutch job agencies that operate on the Polish and Dutch market to recruit Poles to work in the Netherlands. These recruitment agencies act as de facto directors of Polish migration to the Netherlands. In this section it will become clear how these agencies work, how they facilitate and also how they limit the migration of Polish workers. Additionally, Olek’s experience with the Otto Work Force job agency will serve as an example of how such agencies treat and exploit Polish migrants.

A willingness to work abroad in order to escape a gray Polish reality, characterized by a lack of job prospects and financial hardships, as elaborated in the first chapter, pushes many Poles to migrate. In most cases they migrate through a formal network, using the help of a job agency. These people do not typically have friends that already work in the Netherlands and do not speak foreign languages. For them migration is only possible through a job agency. Migrants receive all-inclusive migration packages that consist of work, accommodation, transportation and arranging formalities.

Job agencies recruit workers in Poland and determine where they will work in the Netherlands. The workplace is often agricultural or in the construction sector. In these sectors, education is not required so uneducated people can easily get a job. The duration of work contracts ranges from a few weeks to a few months, depending on where the agency sends workers. Sometimes a few days of holiday or illness result in transfer from one place to another. Also, in some periods of the year, additional manpower is required in certain employment sectors and workers are placed in the workplace that needs the most people. Polish migrants that work through agencies work many hours a day; they leave their houses early in the morning and come back late at night. Often they work during weekends. Their salaries are often below the minimum wage and moreover, the cost of housing and insurance are deducted from the weekly salary. Nevertheless, for many Polish migrants it is still more that they could earn in Poland, and therefore an improvement in their financial situation.

The cycle in which Polish workers in the Netherlands find themselves is characterized by the unfair dominance of job agencies and unequal power relation between

the agency and a migrant. The agency regulates every detail of the migrant's situation, operates as an intermediary between employees and employers, and determines to a great extent the shape and structure of this relationship. Polish migrants that migrate through this formal network are highly dependent on it. Because agencies arrange work, housing, bank accounts, fiscal numbers, and insurance, they are automatically part of the social network of Polish migrants. The agencies are the first contact option with the Dutch authorities. Job agencies provide migrants with the necessary conditions to migrate. However, they also limit migrant's decisions and choices after arrival.

The job agency Otto Work Force is a Dutch job agency that recruits workers from Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic to work in the Netherlands and Germany. Otto has offices in main cities in both of these countries. According to the agency's internet site, it sends approximately 10.000 workers every year to the Netherlands.<sup>48</sup> Olek worked for this agency for six months as fork-lift trucker at a company in Zeist. Olek told me about the terrible living conditions provided by Otto Work Force and a system of penalties introduced by this agency. He and his colleagues had to pay a high rent of 300 Euros each, for a small room shared with 5 to 6 other Polish people. The salary was almost never paid on time. He also told me that if he would like to terminate the contract, regardless of the reason, he would have to pay a fine of 500 Euro. The system of penalties consists of financial fines for smoking inside or being loud after 22.00. Olek:

*One day I was smoking inside my room, I don't know it was around midnight, when a man from the security that once a while would check the building knocked on the door and ask me to put out my cigarette. Of course I laughed at him and he left. After one week I received an official letter from Otto with a penalty of 25 euro.<sup>49</sup>*

Another issue with Otto Work Force according to Olek was that people do not work according to their contracts. Usually an employee is suppose to work 8 hours a day based on the 40 hours contract; however, people often work only a few hours a day or only one or

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<sup>48</sup> Otto Work Force 'About our company' <http://www.ottoworkforce.co.uk/> (Accessed 3 August 2011)

<sup>49</sup> In -depth interview with Olek, date: 08.05.2011

two days a week. Sometimes they work 12 hours a day. The shifts differ from one day to the next. Olek explains what happened when he complained about it:

*People have no other option; there is always someone else to take your place. The employer does not let you forget about it and often says something like ‘If you don’t like it then you are free to go.’ Once I came to work in the morning and there was no job for me for that day. When I asked why nobody informed me about it, a man from Otto said that if I’m not happy I should leave because there are plenty of other Poles to replace me.<sup>50</sup>*

Furthermore, Olek states that there are many restrictions on the work floor. For example, you are not allowed to talk on the phone or go outside during your working hours: “Once,” he explains, “one Polish guy went outside to make a phone call. His team leader noticed this and fired him right away, claiming that the [re were] other people happy to take over his position.”<sup>51</sup> The experiences of Olek with Otto Work Force give voice to the stories of many migrants I have heard in the course of my research. Polish migrants that decide to migrate via a migration business, such as an agency, do not expect to become a victim of abusive practices. Before they migrate, the agency promised to provide them with work, accommodation etc. Migrants that do not speak a foreign language and want to work abroad do not have to take care of any formalities. However, after the arrival they usually faced with a very different reality than what they expected, and in the most cases they are not able to change these circumstances. In Poland they could not find a well-paid job and they did not succeed financially, so they agree to terrible conditions. Although Polish media informs about the practices of job agencies and Poles exchange their experiences on internet forum for example on *Niedziela.nl* or *Polonia.nl*, for many a migration through a job agency is the only way to migrate. As Olek said: “What can I do? I have to pay my bills.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> In -depth interview with Olek, date: 08.05.2011

<sup>51</sup> In -depth interview with Olek, date: 08.05.2011

<sup>52</sup> In -depth interview with Olek, date: 08.05.2011

Migration via job agencies is mainly maintained by Polish men and they are more likely to be exploited by the agencies. My findings suggested that women in the most cases decide for migration through informal network with the help of a friend or family member. Sometimes they follow their husbands/boyfriends. The gender dimension of migration is an important element in analyzing the process of international migration. Therefore, the next chapter focuses on the influence of migration on gender roles and power relations between men and women.

## 6. GENDER ROLES

Below, I will examine the stories of Beata, Andrzej and Krystyna to illustrate how migration alters and reinforces traditional gender roles of men and women. I met Beata and her husband Andrzej through Dorota. Beata and Dorota work at the same company in Utrecht. One day I visited Beata at their house in Gouda.

*“I hope you like paprika soup?”* Beata asks as she turns her head in my direction and puts some salt into a cooking pan. *“Today I have time to cook, my baby boy sleeps, and my husband is visiting a friend,”* she says. While she is preparing soup I look at the pictures hanging on the wall in the hall. Beata and her husband on a beach, next a wedding picture and finally their baby boy Paweł. After the soup is ready we sit in a cosy living room eat and talk. *“When we moved to the Netherlands I couldn’t find a job. I had been searching for more than four months but couldn’t find anything.”* When I ask her how she managed financially, she replies: *“We migrated to the Netherlands because Andrzej got an attractive job offer to work as project engineer in a Dutch company, near Amsterdam. He moved first to the Netherlands and after six months I went after him because I was pregnant and was still unemployed. In Poland I lost my job as a secretary in a logistic company and for a long time I could not find any work, even though I have a degree in German studies and we were living in a big city in central Poland, Łódź. Together we decided to search for other opportunities in the Netherlands. After I moved to the Netherlands Andrzej was working all day and I tried to find a job. After four and a half months, I found a customer service supporter position in an international company in Utrecht where I still work,”* a smile came across her face when she says it. *“I only stopped working after Paweł was born. I stayed home for six months and came back to work after that. You know, I like my job, I have the opportunity to develop and improve myself and I’m able to take care of my family, especially now,”* I look back at her and see that her smile is gone; I take another plate of soup and wait for a while. When I try to change the subject of our conversation, feeling a bit awkward, she looks at me and says: *“It’s ok, I’m fine. Andrzej lost his job three months ago; since a few days he works again, she explains, but the time when he was unemployed was hard for both of us. I had to take care of the family. My*

*contract is based on a four day work week [...] but then I was working five days a week and sometimes even on Saturdays.”<sup>53</sup>*

The account of Beata and Andrzej is similar to the stories of other Polish migrants I have talked to. As stated by Triandafyllidou (2006), from the traditional point of view, women have been essentially a part of the luggage of the male migrants, while the male migrants have been perceived as family breadwinners. Typically, after male migrants made the migration journey they took their families with them to the host country (Triandafyllidou 2006:226). Beata and Andrzej migrated separately. Andrzej moved to the Netherlands due to a job offer and later brought his pregnant wife over. In the beginning of their stay Andrzej fulfilled the role of the family breadwinner. He was responsible for financial issues, while Beata was looking for a job. Andrzej providing financial support for his family reflects the traditional gender roles within the family: The woman, Beata was taking care of household and a child, and the man, Andrzej was earning the money. In the course of their migration journey, the situation and the role of Beata and Andrzej in their household changed. The roles of man and a woman within a family developed and influenced the classical gender power- relation. When Andrzej lost his job as a project engineer, Beata was obligated to fulfill his role. She worked more in order to financially support the family. When she was at work, Andrzej took care of their baby Paweł. When I ask Andrzej about his role within a family, he says:

*I’m a happy man. I have a great wife and a lovely son. But when I lost my job I felt lost. I felt that I failed in my role as father and a head of the family. I have been taking care of Beata and later for a baby since she lost her job. I felt like a man again. Losing a job changes you but also gives you opportunities. With Beata’s help I realize that I can support my family not only financially but also by taking care of our Paweł, doing groceries, cleaning and being there for them.”<sup>54</sup>*

As seen in the case of Beata and Andrzej, men’s ‘failure’ can also positively affect the women’s position (Forbes- Martin 2004). Beata’s account reveals a balanced view of her

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<sup>53</sup> In-depth interview with Beata and Andrzej, date: 31.05.2011

<sup>54</sup> In-depth interview with Beata and Andrzej, date: 31.05.2011

roles as a working woman, spouse and a mother. She took life into her own hands and became the head of her household. Andrzej, although at first upset about his failure as the family breadwinner, he adjusted to the new situation and changed his role in the household so that he could continue to contribute.

As (Morokvasic 1984; Tastsologu and Alipranti 2003; Pessar and Mahler 2003) states, the presence of women in migration studies has been neglected for many years. They argue that women lack agency and have no power in the decision making process in domestic households. The story of Krystyna,<sup>55</sup> a 40 year old Polish woman, shows an example of a woman bravely and independently making a decision for her household. Krystyna comes from the city of Sosnowiec, in the Silesia region in Poland. She worked there in a small grocery store, while her husband worked for many years in coal mine. They have a 20 year-old-son that studies informatics at the Silesian University in Opole. After the communist regime in Poland collapsed, Krystyna’s husband (along with many others) lost his job. For many years he could not find any work and Krystyna was not able to financially support the whole family with her salary. Due to economic needs, she went to the Netherlands to work as cleaning lady. *“It was eighteen years ago, can you imagine?”* she asked me. *“I didn’t have a choice. My husband was unemployed and instead of doing something helpful, sometimes he was just drinking; I didn’t know what to do. When a friend of mine told me about a cleaning position in Wassenaar, I took it and went to the Netherlands. I would work for three months in row and then go back to Sosnowiec. I sent money to my husband and my son every month. My husband works in the factory close to Sosnowiec, but the money he earns is still not sufficient to support our family. Additionally, my son is studying and I want to support him financially. It is my duty. This is how it goes, since eighteen years.”*<sup>56</sup> When I asked Krystyna why her family did not follow her she told me that her son did not want to leave Poland. When she migrated he was at school and later started his studies. Together with her husband they agreed that she will work in the Netherlands and the husband will take care of their son and the house. Krystyna is an example of a woman that becomes a migrant and worker in order to support her family. In her story, it becomes obvious that the man is no longer a breadwinner for the family, nor a primary agent of

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<sup>55</sup> Name changed for the purpose of this thesis.

<sup>56</sup> In-depth interview with Krystyna 15.06.2011

migration as the migrant woman brings more money to the household (Triandafyllidou 2006). Because her husband was not able to provide sufficient support for the family, Krystyna felt that she had to solve the problem by herself and decided to migrate. This decision and her role as the head of the family enhanced her self-confidence and hence her sense of achievement in life.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> In-depth interview with Krystyna, date: 15.06.2011

## 7. CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have attempted to portray Polish migrants in the Netherlands and to break stereotypes about Polish migrants presented in the Dutch media. Polish migrants are not the intruders that steal jobs, houses and threaten the Dutch economy and social cohesion (Oudenhoven, Ward and Masgoret 2006). They all have interesting stories to tell. Here, I give Polish migrants a voice and provide them with a chance to present their stories along with their own perspectives and experiences. By doing this, I aim to decrease the informational gap between Dutch and Polish people. With this work I have opted to answer the questions *How do Polish migrants in the Netherlands perceive their immigration to the Netherlands, what is the impact of the migrants' participation in social networks on the migration process and experience, and how does gender affect people's migration experiences and vice versa?* In order to answer this central question, I have focused my research on the stories of Polish migrants I came across and selected in the course of my fieldwork experience. Although Polish migrants comprise a very diverse group, this thesis shows some common characteristics among them, represented by the stories of Olek, Justyna, Monika, Dorota, Agnieszka, Beata, Andrzej and Krystyna.

The process of migration starts with the decision to migrate. That is why I first examined why people actually decide to migrate. Notable was that three types of reasons were predominant in my findings. I distinguish between economic and social reasons, as well as love relationships between Polish and Dutch citizens encourage Polish migration to the Netherlands. They left in search of a better life, economic stability, challenge and adventure. I found it remarkable that the majority of Polish migrants I spoke to expressed disappointment in the situation in Poland regarding the economy, opportunities in the labour market and chances to live the life they want to live. Many stated that in Poland they still experience the consequences of communist regime that harmed the development of Polish economy. According to the background and the history of Polish migration the recent outflows have been affected by the development of the Polish economy and Polish society in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially by the influence of the communist system (Okólski & Grabowska-Lucińska 2009). Many Poles decided to try seasonal work abroad in order to earn money and after 1989 migrated to Germany, the UK then later to the Netherlands and

Italy. According to Okólski and Grabowska-Lucińska (2009), these developments have affected the recent flow of Polish migration. In this light we should understand the underlying reason for the recent mass flow of Polish migrants in the Netherlands.

Once migrants decide to migrate, they use different networks to enter the host country. I have illustrated two general patterns which show how migrants made their first steps and who helped them in this. Here it became clear that they use formal and informal networks in order to facilitate and enhance the process of migration. The first pattern showed that migration is maintained via informal network. In that case, a friend or relative informed the migrant about the possibility to work in the Netherlands and helped to arrange required formalities after arrival. Arango (2008) and Massey (1994) state that informal connections between migrants and their friends, boyfriends and relatives provide migrants with information about how to find a job, accommodation, and finally to enable the travel and arrival in the host country. This pattern is common for well- skilled migrants that are able to find employment in the different branches of the Dutch economy themselves. The second pattern exemplified migration via formal networks. I observed that many migrants use help of job agencies to move to the Netherlands. This pattern is followed by low-skilled migrants, with scarce knowledge of foreign languages. Many Polish migrants use the services of a job agency to find work, accommodation and manage practical issues in order to facilitate the migration process. This can be very helpful when people do not speak foreign languages. However, migration through a formalized institution can also limit a migrant's options after arrival in the host country. Although migrants receive all-inclusive migration packages they also emphasize that many agencies exploit migrants. This aspect of migration clearly requires further investigation. Firstly, the Dutch municipalities should recognize this group of Polish migrants and implement policies that help to control the work of job agencies and regulate the housing and work conditions of Polish migrants. Secondly, the Polish community itself needs to establish an institution that can operate as an intermediary between the Polish and the Dutch side. Such an institution can function as an information center about Polish migrants in the Netherlands and as a service point providing any kind of help for Polish migrants.

All Polish migrants I spoke to have a different composition of social networks in the Netherlands. On the one hand, despite developing economic and professional ties with the

Dutch residents, many Polish migrants are poorly integrated with Dutch people. The image most of them have of the Dutch is of cold or aloof people that do not easily become close friends. Instead, Polish migrants tend to associate and spend their leisure time with other compatriots. However, some migrants claim to have international friends and contacts with different people not only with a multinational staff at work. Furthermore my findings suggest that Poles maintain strong ties with the country of origin. They visit Poland often, not only during Christmas, Easter or other public holidays. Through development in technologies and devices like *Skype* or social networks, including *Nasza-Klasa* and *Facebook*, they sustain contacts with their family and friends that remain home. In the Netherlands they regularly visit Polish stores, bars or churches to strengthen their connection with Poland. The categorization of (Düvell and Vogel 2006) compromises with my finding to some extent. For example the concept of *transnational migrants* represents many Polish migrants in the Netherlands. They have bipolar orientation towards the Netherlands where they organize their lives and towards Poland where they sustain strong ties with. However, this type of migrants also fit to the category of *emigrants* which are oriented towards the host country. At the same time migrants can be perceived as *transnational migrants and emigrants*. Also a few of *transnational migrants* can be characterized by the category of *global nomads*. They migrate to different countries depending on job opportunities and develop connections to the place they stay at the particular moment or the place they have lived or come from. The types of migrants are fluid and flexible depending on migrant's situation. In this way the categorization failed to portrait Polish migrants in the Netherlands.

The subject of gender roles forms the last important element in analyzing the process of international migration. Though Polish migrants seek to hold on to some traditional aspects of their native society, migration from Poland to the Netherlands often means major changes for migrants. One significant and previously under-researched subject is shifts in gender roles during migration. I have illustrated that migration alters and reinforces traditional gender roles of men and women whereby a man is no longer a breadwinner for the family, nor a primary agent of migration (Triandafyllidou 2006). Stories of Polish migrants emphasize this argument. Gender roles and power balances in the families of Polish migrants change as the migrant woman brings more money to the

household or when she is the only breadwinner in the family. Women are not a part of male luggage anymore but they are often autonomous in their decision to migrate and independent throughout their migration experience.

In conclusion, with regards to the central question I posed for this thesis, there is neither one definite answer nor one straightforward profile of Polish migrants in the Netherlands. What should become clear from this research is that Polish migrants form a very diverse and dynamic group and many aspects of their migration still requires deeper elaboration and examination, beyond this paper. I aimed to bring the stories of Polish migrants alive in order to break the negative stereotypes in Dutch society and increase knowledge about Polish migrants.

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## I. - APPENDIX-REFLECTION

Since I started to study cultural anthropology in Utrecht I dreamed of travelling to distant places in order to conduct my first fieldwork. Due to personal circumstances, my dreams could not come true and I had to change my initial plan.

Migration has always been an interesting aspect of anthropological studies to me. When I was seventeen I moved to Germany to graduate from German High School. Later I decided to study in the Netherlands and five years ago I moved to Utrecht. Being a Polish migrant myself turned me in the direction of migration studies. From one side, my studies and stories of people presented in different ethnographies broadened my perspective towards migration and fascinated me. From another, I become more sensitive to the topics of Polish migrants in the Netherlands. Frustrated by a negative opinion and situation of Polish migrants in the Netherlands and at the same time inspired by hours of discussion with many Polish migrants and my friends and I decided to conduct research about my own people. I felt that I finally can apply the theories I learned into practice and present the story of Polish migrants in the Netherlands. When I started I was very excited but I barely knew what the coming weeks would bring.

In the course of my research I met many great and interesting people. I started my journey by attending a conference in Nijmegen. Around the same time I contacted each Polish person I knew in the Netherlands. Surprisingly, almost all of them replied and were enthusiastic about participating in my research. Consequently, they brought me in contact with their friends. I have been meeting my informants in different cities in the Netherlands, drinking a coffee, having a dinner together or a conversation in the park. Moreover I visited many Polish places in Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. I attend Polish classes at the Polish school in Utrecht, masses provided by a Polish priest and a party in Scheveningen organized by a Polish charity foundation.

In general, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of being an anthropologist for the first time in my life. Finally I could leave classes and do real anthropology in the field. Prior to my first few interviews I got a bit confused. I realized that I am carrying out research about my own people and my own culture. Many questions and doubts rose in my mind, for example: How should I remain objective? How will my informants treat me when they

realize that they see me only few times? Will they share their stories with me? In reality I found myself surprised by the openness and actual need of my respondents to tell me their stories. Being a Polish migrant myself enabled me to get access to my informants. Many times they underlined that they were happy to speak Polish with me. Many stressed that they agreed to the interview because they are tired of what they hear or read in the Dutch media. Because I am Polish they trusted that their stories would be heard. However, I found myself living their stories with them and became engaged in their lives. Once I helped with translations; another day I helped to register a newborn baby at city hall. I have been asked several times to call different authorities in the Netherlands to manage some business for my informants. At that moment I realized that being a good anthropologist means finding a balance between being a friend and keeping a distance required of an objective researcher. My informants had opportunities to speak out and to discuss matters that bothered them during our interviews. I am thankful to them for opening my eyes to many aspects of the lives of many Polish migrants in the Netherlands. I am also thankful that I could present their stories in this thesis.

The first photograph displayed below shows my respondent Olek and I sitting in a park in Utrecht. The second photograph portrays me and Monika sitting in the restaurant in Utrecht. Both pictures present my role of researcher during an in-depth interview. I'm focused on my informants and engaged in the conversation to give the full attention to the words of my informants.

**Photograph 1: In-depth interview with Olek**



**Photograph 2: In-depth interview with Monika**



## II. - APPENDIX- STRESZCZENIE

Niniejsza praca dedykowana jest wszystkim polskim imigrantom w Holandii. Jej celem jest przede wszystkim zeprezentowanie historii indywidualnych imigrantów, ale również obalenie stereotypów występujących w obecnych mediach poprzez przybliżenie ogólnej sytuacji Polaków w Niderlandach.

Praca ta jest rezultatem badań etnograficznych, które zostały przeprowadzone pośród holenderskiej Polonii. Głównym przedmiotem badań były doświadczenia, które związane z pobytem w Holandii, w szczególności motywy migracji, tworzenie sieci migranckich, organizacja życia oraz wpływ migracji na pozycję kobiety i mężczyzny w ich rodzinie oraz otoczeniu.

Proces migracji rozpoczyna się wraz z podjęciem decyzji o migracji, dlatego pierwszym etapem było zbadanie powodów jej podejmowania. W rezultacie moich badań otrzymałam trzy dominujące rodzaje motywów. Odróżniłam aspekty ekonomiczne od socjalnych, jak i również związki pomiędzy Polakami a Holendrami, które mogły zachęcić Polaków do migracji. Opuścili oni ojczyznę w poszukiwaniu lepszego życia, stabilności, wyzwania oraz przygody. Godnym zainteresowania jest fakt, iż większa część moich rozmówców wyrażała niezadowolenie z obecnej sytuacji ekonomicznej Polski, w szczególności z braku możliwości znalezienia odpowiedniej pracy oraz z nikłej szansy na życie o zadowalających ich standardzie. Wielu stwierdziło również, że wciąż jest odczuwalny dla nich komunistyczny reżim, który miał znaczący wpływ na niewłaściwy rozwój polskiej gospodarki.

Migranci, którzy zdecydowali się na przeprowadzkę, korzystają z wielu sieci aby udać się do kraju docelowego. Zilustrowałam dwa ogólne motywy ukazujące pierwsze kroki podejmowane przez migrantów, dotyczące wyjazdu oraz tego, skąd i jak uzyskali pomoc w realizacji tego przedsięwzięcia. Tu stało się dla mnie jasne, iż używają oni formalnych i nieformalnych sieci mających na celu ułatwienie i usprawnienie całego procesu migracji. Pierwszy motyw wykazał, iż migracja jest możliwa poprzez nieformalną sieć, w tym przypadku poprzez przyjaciół bądź rodzinę, która poinformowała migranta o możliwości pracy w Holandii, oraz pomogła w aranżacji formalności po przyjeździe. Drugim zaś motywem, który zauważyłam jest migracja poprzez formalne sieci. Wielu spośród

migrantów korzysta z pomocy agencji pracy, aby przesiedlić się do Holandii. Ten model jest przeważnie wykorzystywany przez mniej wykwalifikowanych migrantów posiadających słabą znajomością języków obcych. Większość polskich migrantów korzysta z usług agencji pośrednictwa pracy, które usprawniają znalezienie zatrudnienia oraz zakwaterowania w Holandii. Okazuje się to być bardzo pomocne w przypadku ludzi, którzy nie władają językami obcymi. Jednakże, migracja za pomocą formalnych instytucji może znacznie ograniczyć opcje migranta po przyjeździe do kraju przyjmującego. Pomimo tego, iż migranci otrzymują pełny pakiet usług, warto podkreślić, że wiele agencji wykorzystuje imigrantów. Ten aspekt migracji niewątpliwie wymaga dalszych i dokładniejszych badań. Gminy holenderskie powinny zwrócić uwagę na wspomnianą grupę polskich imigrantów, wdrażając konkretną politykę, która miałaby pomóc w kontroli pracy agencji, oraz kontrolować warunki zakwaterowania i pracy polskich migrantów.

Wszyscy polscy imigranci, z którymi rozmawiałam posiadają różny skład sieci społecznych w Holandii. Istnieje brak ścisłej integracji Polaków i Holendrów, pomimo znacznych związków gospodarczych jak i zawodowych. Powodem może być obraz, jaki wielu Polaków wykreowało o Holendrach, którzy ich zdaniem są ludźmi zimnymi, z dystansem do świata i innych ludzi, trudni w nawiązywaniu przyjacielskich stosunków. Według moich badań Polacy natomiast mają tendencję do zrzeszania się z innymi imigrantami i spędzania z nimi swojego czasu wolnego. Jednakże, co poniektórzy deklarują, iż posiadają wielu międzynarodowych przyjaciół i znajomych, nie tylko z miejsca pracy. Ponadto, moje konkluzje wykazują, że Polacy odznaczają się silnymi więzami z krajem rodzimym. Starają się odwiedzać Polskę jak najczęściej, nie tylko w Święta Bożego Narodzenia czy Wielkanoc. Poprzez rozwój technologii i urządzeń takich jak *Skype*, *Nasza-Klasa* czy *Facebook*, utrzymują kontakty z rodziną i przyjaciółmi, którzy zostali w domu. W Holandii regularnie odwiedzają polskie sklepy, bary oraz kościoły, co ma na celu podtrzymanie i wzmocnienie więzi z Polską – ich ojczyzną.