

## Moving Citizens: Citizenship Practices among Polish Migrants in Norway and the United Kingdom

### Abstract

Following post-EU-accession migration, Poles currently form the largest group of foreign nationals in Norway and the second largest group of foreign born residents in the United Kingdom. Given the considerable volume of new arrivals, there is a growing literature on Polish migration to both countries; however, there is little comparative research on Polish migration across different European settings. By exploring how Polish migrants reflect on the possibilities of settlement or return, this paper comparatively examines the effects that permanent and 'normalised' mobility has on Polish migrants' self-perception as citizens in four different cities. In addition to classic citizenship studies, which highlight the influence of a nation-state based institutionalized citizenship regime, we find that transnational exchanges, local provisions and inter-personal relationships shape Polish migrants' practices of citizenship. The resulting understanding of integration is processual and sees integration as constituted by negotiated transnational balancing acts that respond to (and sometimes contradict) cultural, economic and political demands and commitments. The research is based on semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a total of 80 respondents, conducted in two British and two Norwegian cities that experienced significant Polish immigration, Oslo, Bergen, Bristol and Sheffield.

### Keywords:

integration – transnationalism – citizenship – Polish migration – Norway - UK

### Introduction

Post-EU-accession migration within Europe has gained considerable attention in the media, in political debates, as well as in academic circles. Research has highlighted the liquid distinctiveness of this new intra-EU mobility (Engbersen et al 2010). Important elements across geographic locations included filling gaps in the labour market in particular sectors, such as construction work, but also in seasonal work, such as agricultural labour. 2.3 million Poles emigrated between 2004 and 2008 according to Polish statistics (Kaczmarczyk & Okolski 2008). There is also evidence of seasonal and temporary migration taking on circular patterns (Engbersen et al 2013), of permanent emigration (White and Ryan 2008, Friberg 2012), as well as secondary movements within Europe. Much of the on-going debate has centred on alleged and actual effects of Polish migration on receiving societies and national economies, and research has looked into macro- and micro 'push' and 'pull' factors that help us to understand migration flows between nation-states (Favell 2008, Drinkwater, Eade and Garapich 2009, Ogolski and Salt 2014). There is also a growing body of literature that explores Polish migrant's distinct experiences, perceptions, and livelihoods in a variety of Western European settings or localities, including Norway (Friberg 2012, Mostowska 2013) and the United Kingdom (Burell 2009, 2010, Cook et al. 2010, Galasinska 2010, Garapich 2008, 2013, 2014, Rabikowska 2010, Ryan et al. 2008, Ryan 2011, White and Ryan 2008, White 2010). These works, however, tend to form somewhat disconnected 'national' literatures that often, explicitly, or implicitly, refer to a national frame of reference. As has been highlighted previously (Burell 2010, Friberg 2012), comparative analyses are especially scarce in this emergent field. This article, alongside with other contributions to this Special Issue, seeks to fill the gap in this literature by comparatively exploring the experiences and perceptions of Polish migrants who - temporarily or permanently – settled in two British and two Norwegian cities, Bristol, Sheffield, Bergen and Oslo. Given that Polish migration has

taken so many different trajectories, including seasonal, temporary, circular, and also permanent emigration, our study is less focused on contributing to causal explanations for these distinct movements, but examines the effects that permanent and 'normalised' mobility has on Polish migrants' self-perception as citizens. Our comparison of settlement and return considerations among Polish migrants in four cities in Norway and Britain points to complex interactions between national, transnational and local demands, perceptions and identifications, and offers a challenge to scholarship that analyses migrant claims and experiences predominantly through national frames of reference. We suggest that contemporary Polish migrants' orientations, migration decisions or trajectories are best understood as distinct national, transnational and local *practices of citizenship*. This analytical lens has, as we will show further below, implications for our understanding of processes of social, economic and political integration in the context of intra-European migration. Integration processes are thereby affected by the high volume of Polish migration to Britain and Norway, as well as by geographic, legal and perceived cultural proximity between the country of origin and the country of settlement.

The first section sketches the conceptual framework and develops our notion of practiced citizenship. In the second part, we present our methods and discuss our comparative findings of similarities and differences in return and settlement considerations among Polish migrants in four cities in the UK and Norway, focusing in particular on reflections on socio-cultural belonging, socio-economic considerations and political engagement.

### Conceptual framework

Since the 1990s, a growing comparative citizenship literature has emerged, which illustrated cross-nationally how various dimensions of citizenship, including laws and legal norms, political institutions, ideas of collective identity, the history of immigration or political party positions form national citizenship regimes that shape possibilities and limit options of minority claims-making and integration (Favell 1998, Koopmans et. al 2005, Joppke 2010). While this literature has offered important insights into opportunities and constraints that migrants encounter in different countries, its conceptualization of citizenship and integration suffers from two shortcomings.

Firstly, many accounts within the comparative citizenship literature presuppose a one-dimensional account of a state based framework or a "dominant culture", which is seen to underpin national laws, institutions and public values; integration is consequently defined as shaped by the existence of a pre-defined coherent cultural collective and its national set of legal and political arrangements (Bertossi and Duyvendak 2012, Lewicki 2014). Thereby, migrants are portrayed as simply absorbing ideas and practices of citizenship as opposed to negotiating, co-producing or collaboratively modifying them (Bousetta 2000, Peró and Solomos 2010, Peró 2011). Citizenship, furthermore, is also about everyday life, which constitutes individual people's experiences and their often mundane negotiations of social, economic, and political considerations (Fox and Jones 2013, p. 395). Everyday thoughts, conversations and activities are thus constitutive of democratic politics and minority claims-making (Bakardjieva 2009). Secondly, the focus on 'national models' pays little attention to the complexity of local and transnational relationships and processes, which play a major role in shaping orientations, trajectories and

experiences of migration and integration (see also Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). Migrants' lived experience thereby spans the places of settlement and the places of origin, whether including actual mobility and concrete communication within a transnational social field (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004, Bauböck and Faist 2010), or within communities of people with similar origins in the country of settlement, or whether in the realms of memories, imagination and emotions (Ho 2009).

The notion of practiced citizenship adopted here thus assists us in accounting for the transnational, national and local dimensions of citizenship, as well as for everyday citizens' orientations, trajectories, decisions and negotiations under the influence of intra-European mobility. We argue that intra-European mobility has become part of Polish migrants' self-understanding as citizens, which is expressed through their national, but also their transnational and local citizenship practices.<sup>1</sup> Rather than defining citizenship – in a liberal understanding – as a status that is determined by a set of rights and national institutions, we thus focus on 'practices of being a citizen' that take on distinct manifestations in different contexts. This approach draws on a political notion of republican citizenship which recognizes that individuals actively engage in communal affairs on a daily basis. Communal and interpersonal relations are therefore understood as regulated by rights, responsibilities *and* everyday practices and negotiations. Furthermore, such an understanding of 'performed' citizenship is inspired by recent conceptualisations as enactment of political subjectivity, which reclaims the term citizenship by detaching 'being a citizen' from a territorial referential frame and the sole authority of the nation-state (Isin 2012). However, while the latter is mainly concerned with political activism that transgresses frontiers, our primary focus here is on mundane relations of 'ordinary' people whose self-understanding as citizens crosses national borders.

To illustrate our understanding of citizenship practices, we distinguish between three dimensions of citizenship, namely narratives of cultural belonging, socio-economic considerations and political engagement. Although these are partly related to distinct national conditions, or varying institutional 'opportunity structures', that Polish migrants face in the UK and Norway, they are equally influenced by transnational exchanges, local provisions and inter-personal relationships. Table 1 offers an overview of how the socio-cultural, socio-economic and political dimensions of practiced citizenship manifest themselves in local, national and transnational interactions.

<b>Practiced Citizenship</b>	<b>Narratives of cultural belonging</b>	<b>Socio-economic opportunities</b>	<b>Patterns of political engagement</b>
<b>Local</b>	Everyday interactions with the local community, sense of belonging to city or local environment, diasporic kin and friend networks	Local economy and social networks in the place of settlement	Rights to vote in local elections, online-based organisation and exchanges about local politics
<b>National</b>	Nation as inclusive or exclusive community	Distinct requirements in different sectors of the labour market, diverging effects of financial crisis, regulations in the	Limited rights to participate in national politics, mixed messages from national governments regarding access to

		workplace	welfare provisions
<b>Transnational</b>	Transnational communication combined with transnational support networks, diasporic kin and friend networks	Patterns of circulation as a coping strategy in global economy	Online based communication and mobilisation encompasses commentary of events in different national contexts

Table 1: Local, national and transnational scales of practiced citizenship

Drawing on this multi-layered approach to citizenship, we study integration too as a multi-layered process (Erdal 2013) that involves 'balancing acts' (Erdal and Oeppen 2013). The latter often reflect contradicting emotions and considerations, and cannot be fully explained with reference to rigid contextual variables or institutional provisions. Integration constitutes a series of balancing acts between local, national, and transnational institutional arrangements, demands, commitments and orientations.

### Methods and data

The data this paper draws on was collected as part of a comprehensive study of the *Possibilities and Realities of Return Migration* ([www.prio.no/premig](http://www.prio.no/premig)), which involved data collection in Norway and the UK, as well as Afghanistan, Burundi, Iraq, Pakistan and Poland. The research focused on the potential or possibility of return while in the country of settlement, a possibility which is present in many migrants' minds, without them ever acting upon it, but also focused on experiences of actual return migration. This article is based on interview and focus group data with Polish migrants (and their descendants) in Norway and the UK, which explored their migration trajectories and reflections on the future, focusing mainly on return and settlement considerations. Our sample included those who had active plans for a return, and those for whom this was either a more distant plan, or not something they were contemplating actively at all. A key insight that we gained was that for many respondents from the Polish sample, considerations about return were continuously subject to change; to them, mobility was such a permanent and 'normalised' state that it constituted a key feature of their self-perception as citizens.

Forty-five respondents participated in the Norwegian case study, including individual and pair semi-structured interviews, and three focus groups. The research was conducted in the two largest cities in Norway, Oslo and Bergen, in 2012. In terms of volume, Polish migrants are by far the largest immigrant group in Norway, with 91 000 registered Polish immigrants as of 01.01.2015 (SSB 2015), which is more than double the number of the second largest group, Swedish immigrants. Because of the free mobility between Norway and Poland, there is some uncertainty with regard to this number. Estimates used in the media in Norway range from about 100 000 upward. Polish migrants live across the country, however, like many other immigrants they also tend to settle in urban areas. In Oslo the largest group of immigrant background is from Pakistan, while in Bergen the largest group is of Polish background, counting nearly 39 000 individuals (IMDi 2013). The demographic make-up of the Polish migrant community in Norway has been very specific, and is under change. Between 2004-2009, when Poles were obliged to register in Norway, 90% of Polish migrants were male, and many came for shorter periods on contract work. After a 3 year stay in Norway, 1/3 of migrants settled in Norway. Among migrants from Poland arriving in 2005, 65% are still in Norway in 2013, while for those arriving

in 2010 and 2011, the rates are 92% and 98%. This trend is also confirmed by the fact that Poles (usually women) coming to Norway for family reunification were the largest group in this category in the period 2006-2011 (Eldring & Friberg 2011). Respondents interviewed for this study were primarily post-accession migrants (24 respondents), with earlier migrants (mainly pre-1989) also included (12 respondents), including perspectives of the so-called 'second generation', children born in Norway to Polish migrant parents (9 respondents).

Thirty-five respondents participated in the British case study, which included fifteen individual semi-structured qualitative research interviews and four focus group interviews which were conducted in two large British cities that experienced significant Polish immigration, Bristol and Sheffield. Compared to the UK Census in 2001, which recorded 58,000 Polish born UK residents, the overall volume of Poles residing in the UK has risen to 700,000 in 2012, which makes up 14.4 % of the entire population of the UK (Office of National Statistics 2013). The Polish have now become the second largest group of foreign born residents in the UK (after people born in India), and Polish has become the second most frequently spoken language after English (Booth 2013). The 2011 Census indicated that there are no geographical 'clusters' of Polish born UK residents across the UK, Poles are represented in every local authority. Sheffield, which has a total population of 552 000 and significant numbers of Asian and Black African/Caribbean populations (around 50 000), has registered an increase of about 6 500 Eastern Europeans in the last decade. Bristol, with its 428 000 residents and a similar proportion of 50 000 of Asian and Black African BME communities, received about 10 000 post-accession migrants, the majority of whom are Polish (Centre for the Dynamics of Ethnicity 2012).<sup>ii</sup> National insurance number allocations indicate that migration from Poland over the past few years has been highly cyclical and responsive to the economic situation in the UK. According to Sumption and Somerville, the volume of Polish migrants rose steadily from 2004 onwards, peaked in 2006, and started declining dramatically in response to reduced labour demands during the financial crisis in 2008/9 (2010:14). Labour Force Survey data further reveals that Polish migrants tend to be young and less experienced in the labour market compared to the UK born population and to other immigrant groups (ibid. 15). However, they are equally likely to be highly educated, and employed in professions that require low skills and offer scarce financial rewards (ibid.16). Individual interviews for this study were held with post-accession migrants to the UK (13 respondents), and also included 2 individuals who had arrived prior to 2004. The focus groups included interviews with young professional females (6 respondents), post-war migrants and the second generation (4 respondents), young couples who had moved to Bristol prior to 2004 (6 respondents) and a group of more recent arrivals in Sheffield (5 respondents).

Respondents were recruited through a variety of channels, including through local mailing lists, internet forums and social networking sites, participation in social gatherings and public events, and through gatekeepers and snowballing. Purposive sampling was used to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, education, occupation, family experience, duration of settlement and intentions to stay in Norway or the United Kingdom. Interviews and focus groups were conducted mainly in Polish, although a minority of respondents chose to speak English or Norwegian.

Throughout the research process, from access, via fieldwork, to analysis, the researchers maintained a dialogue on positionality. Both researchers are themselves

born in Poland, and both left the country with their parents as young children. The experience of growing up in Germany and Norway respectively, and subsequently living in the UK as adults, and interacting both with the older Polish migration, as well as the post-accession migrants, in non-research related capacities, was a very particular starting point for venturing into research among Poles. The insider-outsider divide in migration research with regard to being a 'co-ethnic' insider, or a member of the majority society is increasingly being challenged, and in this research process our positions have certainly shifted between insider and outsider, as well as a number of different kinds of 'third positions' (Carling et al. 2013).

The data we discuss in the following revealed a number of striking similarities among Poles in Britain and Norway, some of which are remarkable in the light of the differences in demographic make-up of migrant communities in Norway and the UK; others are less surprising in that they are related to the shared context of origin more than other factors. However, our research also exposed key differences in Poles' self-understanding as citizens, underlining the significance of transnational exchanges, local context as well as broader cultural, socio-economic and political conditions.

### *Socio-cultural ties and narratives of belonging*

The centrality of pre-existing social networks for initiating a move, accessing housing and employment or organising social life abroad has been discussed extensively in quantitative (Sumption and Somerville 2010) and qualitative research on Polish migrants in the UK (Ryan et al. 2008, Ryan 2011, Galasinska 2010, Garapich 2014) and Norway (Friberg 2012, Mostowska 2013). The networking strategies that we observed among our respondents resonate very much with this literature and thus constitute one of the striking similarities between the two samples. Although we did not ask any explicit questions about networks, virtually all our research participants, regardless of age, profession or gender, told us that they initiated their move to the UK or Norway by drawing on existing social or kinship ties, and also used these contacts when looking for accommodation or work. The considerable volume of migrants from Poland in both settings is likely to have facilitated such exchanges. In some instances, professionalised agencies played an additional role in recruiting workers (Garapich 2008). In addition to a formalised migration industry that emerged in response to labour market shortages, the terms of mobility are thus informally negotiated within extended family and friendship circles, and often also supported by online resources. Either way, respondents in all four cities highlighted how transnational and local support networks played a significant role in their decision to migrate and to settle, and focus group research indicated that considerations of return are similarly influenced by the views held within such networks.

Nevertheless, there are also differences in the ways that Polish migrants in Norway and the UK reflect on their mobility, with regard to socio-cultural narratives of belonging. The varying approaches to accommodating diversity within the UK and Norway play an important role here. We found, for instance, key differences with regard to perceptions of inclusion and exclusion among 'second generation' Norwegian-Poles and their UK counterparts.

Poles based in Bristol or Sheffield, whether they have arrived recently, or have spent most or even the entirety of their lives in Britain, highlight exchanges with people from a variety of backgrounds as a positive aspect of their daily experience. A

majority of respondents' described Britain's everyday multiculturalism as a feature that made it easier for them to manage tasks such as registering their children in a nursery, accessing medical treatment or speaking in Polish in public. Several interviewees were impressed by how nurses, for example, had been trained in engaging with people from different backgrounds, and were able to communicate even when faced with poor language skills and responded with high sensitivity to vulnerabilities. Interviewees reported that staff involved in the provision of public or private services at times even knew how to pronounce Polish names correctly. Many highlighted that they felt comfortable maintaining and publicly expressing a sense of cultural connectedness with and proximity to Poland, which was particularly striking among interviewees who lived most or all of their lives in Britain. Frequent and regular visits to Poland were important to this group; respondents expressed a strong emotional and somewhat nostalgic appreciation of Polish customs, food, or cultural expressions. For this group, taking their families to live for a certain period in Poland was an attractive add-on to their permanent base in the UK, which offered an opportunity to engage with what they perceived as their cultural roots. Geographical and legal proximity and cheap travel options allowed these respondents to consider their 'double roots' as a lifestyle. One of them told us that sometimes she had her Saturday morning breakfast in Bristol, followed by lunch and a visit to the theatre in Krakow. To her, this lifestyle was about maintaining cultural proximity to her parents' country of origin. Asked about her preference to live in Poland or the UK, Gosia responds that she would rather combine both worlds to the degree possible: "I would not want to decide - I would not want to have something final, that's it. I would like to have one foot in each of these countries in which I feel very much at home."

Similarly, among young adults with Polish background who were either born in or grew up in Norway there was a very strong sense of Norway being the home country, and the place of their belonging, while they also retained transnational ties with Poland and considered these an important part of their cultural heritage. Yet when asked about experiences of discrimination, and of inclusion and exclusion in different social settings in Norway, it turned out that there was ambivalence with regard to their sense of belonging to Norway. A telling example of these experiences were focus group participants' reflections on their names, as Polish first names as well as surnames tend to be distinctively different from Norwegian names, and also tend to have both 'complicated' pronunciation and spelling. As Ela told us: "I've given my son his father's French surname, because it's much simpler". Marysia reflected on the implications of having a complicated name: "They always call me different things, I've been called anything from Svetlana to Magdalena, really anything". Tomek's experiences were related to his surname, and he told us how during job interviews he had received comments, such as: "But you, you look Norwegian", in response to his name. This example shows that the external gaze can create a distancing narrative even if the respondent's own self-description assumed shared cultural proximity. Several focus group participants could also relate the experience of feeling urged to account for their parents' integration performance in Norwegian society in formal settings, such as a job interview. Tomek felt this was a waste of time where he could have had a chance to talk about his professional experience and his skills, rather than explaining how his parents had been working in Norway for decades.

While the fact that new Polish migrants, in the post-accession period, may face challenges as newcomers, both in Norway and in the UK, it is more surprising



that descendants of Polish migrants in Norway experience exclusionary practices, based on something like their Polish-sounding first or surnames. Among respondents in Norway there was a general feeling that Norwegians like to stay among themselves, with several interviewees referring to Norwegians going away to their cottages or huts in the mountains or by the sea. While this is not an exclusionary practice in itself, the interviewees' understanding of the nature of inclusion at the local level suggested noticeable limitations. The contrast between socio-cultural narratives of belonging between the UK based and Norwegian based descendants of Polish migrants were pronounced in some aspects, while less so in others. We find that the differences can be related to the two societies' different experiences with accommodating socio-cultural diversity at the national and local level. Of course we do not suggest that European migrants do not face mechanisms of cultural exclusion in the UK; alongside of their experiences of everyday multicultural pragmatism, our research participants also offered reflections on various forms of discrimination (see also Fox, Morosanu and Szilassy 2012). However, our analysis here focused on what emerged as differences to the Norwegian sample.

With regards to the socio-cultural dimension of citizenship practices we thus conclude that everyday experiences of inclusion or exclusion play an important role in Polish migrants' own narratives of belonging, just as formal and informal local and transnational friend- and kinship networks significantly shape their perceptions, decisions and experiences of arrival, settlement, and return migration. Irrespective of the duration of their stay, respondents in both settings were keen to maintain cultural practices of both settings in their daily lives.

### *Socio-economic position*

Norwegian and British legal practices of granting social rights to foreign born residents hardly vary, and this back-drop constitutes a similarity with regard to our analysis. Furthermore, despite not being an EU-member, Norway adheres to similar regulations regarding mobility rights as EU member states do. Therefore the socio-legal institutional landscape that Polish migrants in Norway and the UK relate to is by and large comparable. A difference worth mentioning might be the consequences of the global financial crisis, where the Norwegian economy has been far less hard hit, than most of Europe, including the UK. In comparison to other European countries, the UK also recovered less rapidly from the effects of the financial crisis. This may have resulted in some secondary movements from the UK and other countries to Norway. As our research was conducted in 2011/2012, we recruited individuals who had either not returned by then or arrived despite or even because of the ongoing economic turmoil.

While there are clearly many similarities with regard to socio-economic position of Polish migrants in the UK and Norway and implications for settlement and return considerations, not least the institutional and economic contexts of the settlement and origin societies, there are also a number of differences. First and foremost, there is a notable and well-documented (Friberg 2012, Sumption and Somerville 2010) difference in the demographic make-up of Polish migrant communities in Norway and the UK. Highly educated young people and recent graduates, have been identified by previous studies as main demographic component of the pre- and post-EU accession migration to the United Kingdom



(Favell 2008 p. 704, Burrell 2010 p. 298, Cook et al. 2010 p. 61-62, Sumption and Somerville 2010, Szweczyk 2013). Our sample comprises firstly, highly-skilled individuals who hold employment equivalent to their education, secondly, university degree holders who work in administrative posts and hence are not able to make full use of their qualification, and thirdly graduates who work considerably below their skill level in catering, construction or cleaning. Lastly, a minority of respondents who work in manual professions have also obtained equivalent manual qualifications.

Across these three groups, we observed that individuals who migrated together with their partners or families, or those who founded a family during their stay in the United Kingdom were the least likely to consider returning to Poland. One respondent suggested his parents were considering joining him, his wife and his newly born daughter in Sheffield. Several interviewees highlighted that the uncomplicated process which had enabled them to enter self-employment or facilitate home ownership in the UK as strongly impacting on their decision to settle permanently, and contrasted to the difficulties their family had faced in Poland in this respect. Iglicka's research found that Polish women residing in the UK had a much higher fertility rate than their counterparts in Poland, which she related to childcare and welfare provisions in Great Britain (2011). These findings indicate how economic regulations and social rights in the UK, but also locally distinct housing conditions figure in Polish migrant's transnational family planning strategies.

In contrast, respondents who stated that they seriously considered or decisively planned their return to Poland had recently experienced significant changes in their private situation. Remarkably, however, in each case the actual decision to return was either entirely jeopardised or had to be balanced against complex transnational socio-economic considerations. Magda, a pharmacist, can be seen as representative for several respondents here. She had been recruited by a UK based agency after her graduation as there was a shortage in the pharmaceutical sector in the UK. She extended her stay beyond her initial contract as she had met her partner at the time in the UK. When we interviewed her in 2011, her relationship had just ended and she was determined to return to Poland within the following year. Although she felt that her prospects to develop professionally were better in the UK, she had firmly decided to return as she felt lonely and outside her comfort zone abroad. Two years after the initial interview, in 2013, we met Magda by accident and she told us that despite her high qualifications, numerous job applications in Poland had remained without success. She was still decisive about wanting to return one day, but less convinced that the labour market in Poland had anything to offer to her. Two years later, in 2015, her situation had shifted again – but had not lost its emotional complexity. After four years of unsuccessful applications in Poland, Madga decided to give up on her plan of return, and very soon also met a new partner in Bristol; half a year into the new relationship, she unexpectedly and without having applied for it, received an attractive job offer in Poland and decided to take it up, not without hesitation and second thoughts about how her sudden return would affect the new relationship. During this extended period that we were in touch with Madga, her considerations of settlement or return were continuously subject to balancing acts that encompassed – often conflicting – personal and professional priorities. Through legal and geographical proximity, Magda's continuously considered options in Poland and the UK as part of her professional development.

Ewa, a manager in a larger company, reported a similarly non-linear story; having lived eight years in the UK, her relationship ended and she had decided to

return to Poland on her own. Shortly before the interview, she had booked a flight, moved out of her apartment and handed in her notice at work. However, she told us, when it actually came to realising her plan, she pulled out at the last minute and decided to start a new life in a different British city. She argued that she could not see herself returning to the 'working culture' in Poland, she had become so used to how employees in Britain were treated with respect by their employers. To Ewa, her rights as an employee, and the high level of awareness about these rights that she experienced in the UK, had become a key practice of citizenship that formed her experience abroad and shaped her considerations of return. Several other interviewees, two females and two males, reported similarly determined plans to return, which were jeopardised by material anxieties and subsequently abandoned. All reported that local friendship networks and their transnational exchanges with Polish graduates in their field of work had reassured them in their decision that there was "nothing to return to" the Polish labour market.

Among Polish post-accession migrants in Norway, who comprise more than 90% of the total population of Polish background in Norway, the male construction workers, often working through recruitment agencies, have made up a significant proportion numerically. This was particularly true in the first years after 2004, but there is still a marked presence of this group, with a very particular take on considerations about both settlement and return, as well as their own migration projects (which differs from considerations among other Polish migrants). In a focus group discussion at a building site near Oslo we learned that the male construction workers, of varying ages, and with different educational and professional backgrounds from Poland, were by and large not considering settlement in Norway. Meanwhile most of them had been working in Norway for 6-8 years, all the time with the idea which Marek most explicitly stated while laughing: "You know... it's only till the summer, only till the end of the year. Then I'm going back". Yet they continued to work in Norway, going back to families in Poland every few months for a break. There, considerations about settlement in Norway were sometimes linked with their wives views on the matter, or they were based on their own views, realising that total quality of life for their families would be lower in Norway, even with their wives working in Norway. Using the allegory of thinking of themselves as sailors, some of these men were content with their lives by and large away from their families, but others were more trapped in this context, and were suffering emotionally, at a distance from their loved ones. All of them were planning to return to Poland, but none of them had a concrete plan of how they would go about it, and the usual fall-back plan was re-emigrating, to Norway or elsewhere, should their socio-economic position in Poland prove too precarious following from return. Due to geographical and legal proximity, their mobility between Norway and Poland, between work and family, had become permanent to them, and was part of their self-perception as head of the household and carer.

With regard to settlement and return considerations we find that the socio-economic dimensions of practiced citizenship among Polish migrants and descendants in the UK and Norway differed along lines related to the demographic make-up of these migrant communities. In particular the young and highly educated substantial segment of Polish migration to the UK stands out in comparison to the skilled, older, and often male migration to Norway, where considerations about settlement and return are radically different. However, among family migrants, of whom there are an increasing number in both the UK and Norway, it seems there are

smaller differences. Once families with school age children start settling in a society such as Norway or the UK, it seems that their socio-economic position at the outset is often counter-balanced by factors related to particular life-cycle stages. As in research on considerations about return migration in other geographic contexts (King 2000), personal and family issues figure prominently in both the UK and Norway. In cases where a return decision was made, this was often framed and perceived with regard to personal matters. In our research we found such personal issues to include where a partner was located, so a boyfriend in the UK, or a girlfriend in Poland, could make a difference with regard to settlement or return considerations. Equally, the occurrence of a crisis, sudden illness or death in the close family, or the birth of a child with handicap, could translate into a sudden and previously unplanned return migration to Poland, where the knowledge of the system and the presence of a larger family network were seen as key issues.

It seems that migrants' balancing acts with regard to socio-economic practices of citizenship are focused around considerations about family, where local lived experiences of child care provision, housing, schooling and health care become significant, whereas transnational and interpersonal ties offer a sense of cultural proximity, familiarity and safety, and imminently shape considerations of migration, settlement and return. Both, Poland and the country of settlement thereby continue to be seen as options for professional development, and life in either continuously remains a possibility.

### *Political engagement and trust*

The political dimension of citizenship and its implications for considerations of return and settlement, as it was reflected in our interview data, encompasses transnational, national and local political developments. Prime-Minister Cameron's endorsement of a referendum on the British EU-membership as well as the recent introduction of benefit restrictions for EU migrants in the UK (Wintour 2013) resonate with widespread British anxieties about being flooded by a considerable volume of Eastern-Europeans, as they have more recently become to shape local and European elections in the UK (for a detailed analysis of frequent stereotypes reproduced through UK media see Fox, Morosanu and Szilassy 2012). Similar anxieties over the implications of the substantial post-accession immigration have also been expressed in Norway. This includes a government report looking into the future of the welfare state, with migration as a key dimension, which concluded that the Norwegian welfare state's financing model needs to be adjusted, regardless of levels of immigration, but that immigration can also play a role in contributing to the need for a new model of financing welfare (NOU 2011/7).

A significant number of participants in our study in the UK mentioned these kinds of discussions when asked about their considerations of return or settlement; several reflected on the (costly) possibility of applying for British citizenship if the United Kingdom were to leave the European Union. Users of the Bristol based Polish internet forum 'Bristol-24', posted regular updates on the referendum debate, and reflected on the possible implications of a negative outcome of such a vote. Fitzgerald et al., who studied institutionalised internet based interactions between trade unions and Polish migrants in the UK, highlighted that popular online forums are not merely based on the transnational community, but combine a focus on a specific city, town or region with debates on national politics in the UK (2012 p. 98).

'Bristol 24', for example, has multiple functions, covering national, transnational and local concerns and themes. Fitzgerald et al. have thus argued that these internet based platforms are not only used for information exchange about various aspects of everyday life in the UK, including work, housing, or the promotion of Polish services, but increasingly become a feature of new migrant politics and representation (ibid.).

A moderator of 'Bristol 24', who participated in our research, told us that he conceived of the website as a tool to offer information services, but also to politically unify and mobilise the Polish community in the South-West of England. Pustułka found that similar informal web-based forms of social and civic engagement are currently growing in popularity across the UK (2013). Despite the highly fluctuating and loose membership, regular celebrations of diasporic cultural proximity, such as Polish festivals, dancing events or pub crawls serve community building purposes, distinct from but not dissimilar to explicitly face-to-face ethnic organisations typical for post-war migrant communities in the UK. According to the 'Bristol 24' moderator's vision, forms of web-based interaction, accompanied by informal gatherings and cultural events, supported the emergence of a collective local identity and could – in a long term perspective – also assist in remedying what he perceived as a deficit of formal political representation (also identified in a study by Garapich 2013). The moderator's long term plan was thus to build stronger community ties through digital and social activities on 'Bristol 24', which could then be mobilised to elect a Polish MP into the House of Commons. Several research participants, including the web-activist who moderated discussion forums on 'Bristol 24' and other, less regular contributors to the platform, highlighted the possibility to facilitate political change as one of the reasons why they would not want to return to Poland. Piotr, who occasionally participates in social activities organised via 'Bristol 24', explains that he has a sense he could get involved politically any time in the UK, whilst

"in Poland, people trust each other less, they don't believe in themselves, in their ability to organize and mobilise in order to introduce change. They do not feel that their opinion has weight in a democratic platform - they believe less in themselves as a unit or social group."

Although many research participants in Bristol and Sheffield described themselves as disillusioned with politics in general and related their frustration to their experiences in post-socialist Poland, many also suggested that they experienced transnational, local and national citizenship practices in the UK as enabling. Our findings correspond with Garapich's, who also found that politically engaged Polish migrants stressed the enabling features of the UK's political opportunity structures as constitutive of their civic engagement (2013). Novel political commitment that emerged in the place of settlement was, we observed, also accompanied by transnational online-based involvement in political developments in Poland.

Among Polish migrants in Norway (at the time this research was conducted in 2012) perhaps the most contentious issue with regard to settlement and return considerations was linked to trust in the political system and institutions in Norway, represented by the child protection services [Barnevernet]. While no questions were asked about this specifically, a large proportion of respondents discussed the theme, as a dimension of their experiences of life in Norway (Erdal 2012), illustrated by Wojtek's comment: "How could I contemplate raising my children in a country where the state may simply come and take them away from me?".

The background to this fear of the child protection services was a few cases where Polish families had indeed been in contact with the services, and two instances where children had been removed from Polish families. A Polish TV documentary starring a celebrity private detective was produced about one of the cases, where the private detective kidnapped the children from the child protection services and escorted them to Poland. Whether or not these children were at risk, and whether the child protection services had followed their procedures, and expressed sufficient cultural sensitivity in these particular cases, is not the point here. Rather what is interesting is that many Polish migrants in Norway were left with the impression that Norwegian public institutions should be feared, not trusted. Ensuing media debates in Norway did not contribute to resolve the situation, as an opinion piece by a professor and public debater of Polish origin at a Norwegian university, Nina Witoszek, on the topic was heavily criticized, leaving the impression among Polish migrants that the state cannot be scrutinized, nor criticized.

These very local cases of particular children and the child protection services were soon mediatized through both traditional and social media at a national level, and transnationally to Poland. Several respondents were also aware of a case where an Indian family in Norway had their 2-year old child removed by the child protection services, a case which created great media attention in India, and resulted in a diplomatic effort from the Indian side to influence this particular case. This mediatization and transnationalization of very local and very particular experiences with the Norwegian state have a disproportionate impact on the ways in which practiced citizenship, as political engagement with the Norwegian society, risks becoming political disengagement.

We thus find that political practices of citizenship among Polish migrants and descendants in the UK and Norway differed with regard to the ways in which issues of trust were articulated. The particular cases of mediatized experiences with the child protection services became a substantial issue in the data from Norway, which would perhaps otherwise have been more similar to the UK data in this regard. The similarities with previous findings, in that levels of trust among Poles in general are lower than both in the UK and in Norway, are interesting, while they also pose particular challenges for processes of political inclusion and engagement of Polish migrants in these societies. Trust in institutions is a pre-requisite for local, national and transnational political engagement. Such trust seems to develop over time, with positive experiences with institutions that are prepared for and adapt to diversity, as exemplified through examples from our UK respondents.

## Conclusion

Our comparison of return and settlement considerations among Polish migrants in two British and two Norwegian cities has demonstrated that Poles – at least those with migration experience - consider mobility as part of their self-understanding as a citizen. Their considerations of migration, settlement or return reflect on and respond to on-going socio-economic developments, distinct social rights available elsewhere, their duties and responsibilities as carers, socio-cultural experiences of inclusion or exclusion as much as opportunities of political expression and engagement. We found that citizenship practices related distinctly to national frames, but also

responded to and were shaped by transnational exchanges, local provisions and inter-personal relationships.

Perceptions of collective identity seemed more exclusive in Norway than the UK, which was evident from the reflections of migrants who had been living in Norway for most of their lives as well as the native born second generation. Interactions on the local level were shaped by what respondents characterised as professionalized routine to deal with diversity, which was observed in both Sheffield and Bristol. In all local contexts, transnational communication and networks played an important role in maintaining cultural proximity within the diaspora, and shaped Polish migrant's considerations of managing mobility.

The United Kingdom and Norway furthermore seemed to offer distinct socio-economic opportunity structures to Polish migrants, as a high volume of young and highly educated individuals have chosen the UK as a destination, while a greater proportion of skilled professionals moved into the Norwegian labour market. These patterns relate to geographical and legal proximity, but also diverging demands in both countries' labour markets, and perhaps also to the fact that high skilled Poles are more likely to speak English, and chose the UK as a destination to pursue their careers. Despite the initial difference in demographics, Polish migrants' considerations about settlement and return in Norway and the UK were strikingly similar, and often imminently related to the role that family and inter-personal relations play (Erdal 2014). For migrants in both settings, socio-economic citizenship is practiced such that the country of origin and settlement continue to be figure as options of further professional development.

Regarding patterns of political engagement, we found that both the Norwegian and the British government were sending mixed messages to European migrants, as targeted recruitment went hand in hand with limitations to welfare provisions. Both countries offer Polish residents local voting rights, and there was some indication that Poles in the UK perceive their localities as enabling of political engagement. Political citizenship was found to be practiced mostly online, a form of claims-making that again encompasses local, national and transnational features and has yet been under-emphasized within citizenship regime studies. While trust in institutions in the UK and Norway was varying, the disenchantment with the political system in Poland overall was a strong trend.

Our analysis thus complicated the picture prevalent within citizenship studies, which tends to conceive of citizenship as determined by distinct national practices. We showed that narratives of cultural belonging, socio-economic opportunities and patterns of political engagement are often shaped by elements of national politics, but equally strongly influenced by local and transnational interactions. Rather than conceiving of integration as inclusion into a pre-defined collective and its static set of institutions, we thus proposed to study it as a multi-layered process that involves local and transnational 'balancing acts'. We found that inter-personal relationships and considerations related to life-cycle stages are of great importance for the ways in which mobility is experienced, locally, nationally and transnationally. Finally, we also found that integration processes are often more rapid than might be assumed. Among migrants in the UK and Norway, the time-span from arrival and uncertainty about the migration project, to a situation where settlement is already a reality, and return is becoming a more distant plan for the future, is often quite short. The shift in

thinking about return as a reality in the short term, to something pushed ahead into the indefinite future, is frequently linked to the significance of everyday experiences, as expressed through migrants' practiced citizenship.

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<sup>i</sup> Although we study a particular ethnic group, we do not assume that migrants' activities are determined by or "centred in ethnic or national categories of identity" (Glick-Schiller et al. 2011: 405), but rather that Polish EU migrants' experiences reflect a specific positionality in Europe, which is currently strongly affected by the opportunities and constraints of intra-European mobility.

<sup>ii</sup> The Office of National Statistics also registered a rise in Bristol's and Sheffield's not 'White' population, which has mostly been caused by migration from Somalia (Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity 2012).