

MIGRATION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELDS

A comparative study between post-WW2 and post-2004 migration
from Poland to the UK

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Doctor of Philosophy

ASTON UNIVERSITY
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Thesis Abstract

This thesis centres on the relationship between migration and national identity in transnational social fields. I explore how national identity, of people who move from one country to another, evolves over time under contrasting transnational conditions historically, politically, socially, economically and in the context of recent technological advancements. To achieve this, I compare two flows of Polish migrants in the UK: those who arrived just after World War 2, with those who came following Poland's EU accession. This comparison puts identity construction of a *communitas*, a very physical collective of the post-war group, vis-à-vis with the more individual experiences in the European space in this millennium. There are two main findings in this study. Firstly, I demonstrate that these contrasting national identity formations are triggered by different transnational conditions, which continue to be controlled by nation-states. Secondly, I bring to the forefront the integral role of emotions which underpin migrants' practice and their experiences of transnational mobility.

The concepts of *roots* and *transnational trajectories* are introduced to capture the relational and affective processes underlying people's transnational practices and identity building. *Roots* represent the complex relationship between the continued national way of thinking, the relationship within old and new localities as well as agency and emotions towards the national. Transnational conditions experienced over time make up migrants' individual *transnational trajectories* which fluctuate in size and available opportunities depending on the political situation and arrangements made by nation-states.

Key words: affect, *communitas*, emotions, national identity, Polish migration, transnationalism; transnational social fields; transnational trajectory, roots

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Czesia. Apart from her difficult 3 weeks stay in hospital with Covid in 2023, not even one day went by without her asking about my progress.

I would also like to thank my entire family who helped me, each in their own different way to make this thesis as good as it can possibly be. I am grateful to Ela for providing the initial inspiration, friendship, and sisterly commitment; to Ryszard, my brother-in-law, for his patience during proofreading, and his undeterred support; to Les, my husband, who successfully created a home when I most needed it; and to my daughters Sara and Sonia - Sara, for the kind interest throughout; Sonia, for keeping me company during my fieldwork throughout England and Wales.

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Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| List of tables, figures and photographs | 7 |
| CHAPTER 1 – Introduction | 8 |
| 1.1 Introduction | 8 |
| 1.2 Research problem – aims and research questions | 9 |
| 1.3 Research design – philosophical and theoretical perspectives..... | 11 |
| 1.4 Positioning myself..... | 13 |
| 1.5 Originality and contributions..... | 16 |
| 1.7 Structure of this thesis..... | 17 |
| CHAPTER 2 – Conceptual literature review | 18 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 18 |
| 2.2 National identity, migration and transnationalism | 18 |
| 2.2.1 Dynamic nature of transnational social fields..... | 21 |
| 2.2.2 Diasporas and transnationalism..... | 23 |
| 2.3 Construction of national identity..... | 25 |
| 2.3.1 The enduring nature of the national | 26 |
| 2.3.2 Transmission of national identity and social memory | 27 |
| 2.4 Conclusions | 29 |
| CHAPTER 3 – Polish migration to the UK: research context and conceptual framings | 31 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 31 |
| 3.2 Historical and political context..... | 31 |
| 3.2.1 Polish nation building..... | 31 |
| 3.2.2 WW1 and WW2 | 33 |
| 3.2.3 Formation of Polish communities abroad after WW2 | 36 |
| 3.2.4 Lived experiences of (post)-communist Poland..... | 48 |
| 3.2.5 Poland’s EU accession..... | 55 |
| 3.2.6 The UK’s social and transnational context and immigration..... | 61 |
| 3.2.7 Conclusions..... | 64 |
| 3.3 Conceptual framings of Polish migration to the UK | 64 |
| 3.3.1 The impenetrable walls of the post-WW2 migrants | 65 |
| 3.3.2 The impenetrable walls vs postnational and transnational conceptualisations | 70 |
| 3.3.3 Conclusions..... | 73 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| CHAPTER 4 – Methodology behind story telling | 76 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 76 |
| 4.2.1 Sampling methods and locating the research..... | 78 |
| 4.2.2 Data collection and analysis | 81 |
| 4.3 Cross-cultural considerations | 85 |
| 4.3.1 Ethical considerations..... | 85 |
| 4.3.2 Informed consent..... | 86 |
| 4.3.3 Researcher’s role and reciprocity | 87 |
| 4.4 Delimitations and limitations of the study | 88 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 5 – Preface to the findings chapters: the concepts of roots and transnational trajectories | 92 |
| 5.1 Introduction | 92 |
| 5.2 The concept of roots | 93 |
| 5.3 The concept of transnational trajectories | 96 |
| 5.4 Bringing roots and transnational trajectories together | 97 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 6 – Post-WW2 migration: construction of rerooted national identities | 99 |
| 6.1 Introduction | 99 |
| 6.2 Identity construction as the collective “we” rooted in the UK | 100 |
| 6.3 Identity construction in the UK-Poland transnational social fields | 115 |
| 6.4 Identity construction in the transnational community fields..... | 120 |
| 6.5 Transnational social fields within in the EU | 124 |
| 6.6 Conclusions | 128 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 7 – Post-2004 migration: construction of uprooted national identities | 129 |
| 7.1 Introduction | 129 |
| 7.2 Identity construction as the uprooted “I” residing in the UK | 130 |
| 7.3 The uprooted “I” in the transnational social fields | 146 |
| 7.4 Conclusions | 155 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 8 – Comparison: emotions and construction of national identity in different transnational conditions | 157 |
| 8.1 Introduction | 157 |
| 8.2 Polish Home and theories of emotions..... | 158 |
| 8.2.1 The Polish home..... | 159 |
| 8.2.2 Theories of emotion in the Polish home | 160 |
| 8.3 Departure and avoidance: fear, disgust, anger, mistrust and frustration..... | 163 |
| 8.4 Desire: love and pride | 172 |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 8.5 Protection and defence: feeling safe and secure | 178 |
| 8.6 Conclusions | 183 |
| CHAPTER 9 – Conclusion | 185 |
| 9.1 Thesis aims | 185 |
| 9.2 Summary of findings and contributions | 185 |
| 9.3 Opportunities for further research | 188 |
| List of References | 189 |
| Appendix 1 – List of Participants and socio-demographic characteristics of the sample | 204 |
| Appendix 2 – Volunteer Information Sheet | 208 |
| Appendix 3 – Consent form | 209 |
| Appendix 4 – Interview Topic Guide | 210 |

List of tables, figures and photographs

| | | |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 3.2.3 | Figure 1. Map of Poland..... | 35 |
| 3.2.3 | Table 1. Examples of Kresy deportations to USSR Gulags..... | 37 |
| 3.2.3 | Figure 2. Polish born population resident in Britain between 1931 and 1991..... | 44 |
| 3.2.5 | Figure 3. Polish-born population resident in Britain between 2004 and 2021..... | 58 |
| 4.4 | Photo 1. Cross of Merit awarded by the Polish Catholic Mission in England and Wales..... | 90 |
| 4.4 | Photo 2. Polish Shop in Guildford..... | 90 |

CHAPTER 1 – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This qualitative enquiry centres on the relationship between migration and national identity in transnational social fields. I explore how national identity formation, for people who have migrated from one country to another, evolves over time under contrasting transnational conditions historically, politically, socially, economically as well as in the context of huge technological advancements over the last few decades. To achieve this, I compare two case studies of first-generation Polish migrants in the UK: those who arrived following the end of WW2, and those who came to the UK after 2004, following the collapse of the Soviet bloc which subsequently led to Poland's EU accession in 2004.

My passion about this topic was initially triggered in 1999, when I moved to the UK from Poland and met the first and second generation of Polish migrants who arrived in the UK after WW2. I had little previous knowledge of this group's existence and their own "little Poland" they had created in this country. I was deeply moved by their experiences of war and suffering in exile, at times crying together with the person I was speaking to when listening to their life stories. Their trauma was in the core of their life narratives. I started to curiously explore the plethora of national spaces they had constructed in the UK, including churches, clubs and places of religious pilgrimages, holidays and other cultural events. Subsequently, when Poland joined the EU, the UK borders opened to new Polish people who arrived from post-communist Poland in high numbers in a short space of time. Despite the new political situation, not all of these transitions were easy; with migrants often feeling forced to leave Poland and as a result felt fearful, angry or disappointed. The emotional aspects of migration were evident in both groups, albeit experienced differently. However, overall, the new arrivals did not share the same need for national spaces and their national identity formation was far less collective compared to the post-WW2 generation. Most significantly, despite sharing the same national context, the social spaces of these two groups overlapped only occasionally, with some tensions arising especially around the physical Polish spaces built by the post-WW2 group in the geography of the UK. This puzzled me. I was keen to investigate how different migratory and transnational conditions

lead to different national identity re-construction processes initially as well as throughout migrants' lives.

More generally, I was keen to investigate these two contrasting national identity formations within the wider context of the modern world. While this world is characterised by transnational social fields – understood as transnational networks and transnational practices of people who move across national, creating 'society that transcends international borders' (White et al. 2018, p.46) – it also continues to be organised into national units (Malkki 1995). Consequently, crossing national borders means entering spaces regulated by the politics of nation-states. As Brexit and the Covid pandemic have demonstrated, even within 'the EU mobility laboratory' (White and Goodwin 2021) national borders continue to matter and can be easily un-blurred or resurrected by nation-states (Bulat et al. 2020). Thus, as the world of politics fluctuates over time so do transnational conditions that are underpinned by inter-state relations. Within this dynamic context, more recent migrants also experience significantly greater connectivity that has revolutionised the way transnational experiences operate in practical terms. These changes mean that increasingly people experience the world differently, with impacts across all social formations, including identity building (Giddens 2002).

1.2 Research problem – aims and research questions

As a researcher I wanted to know how different transnational conditions impact migrants' subsequent national identity building and their national formations across the spaces they occupy over time. The world has undergone tremendous technological transformations impacting most aspects of social life and supporting the growth of global economy (Sassen 1996b), with smart phones, social platforms, faster modes of transport, just some of the technological advancements that mould migratory experiences. Unsurprisingly, this has also triggered new academic debates, which are at times too preoccupied with the novelty of transnationalism as a theoretical lens (Foner 1997, Vertovec 2001). Therefore, to tackle this research problem in a balanced way, I studied Polish migrants in the UK, choosing to focus on two different migratory flows in different historical, political, economic and technological periods. It was an exciting comparison, which from inception had a huge potential for offering a broader understanding of migration, transnationalism and national identity formation over time and across generations; as well as for using the transnational lens consistently across migrants whose initial movement across borders is separated by over six decades.

To find the answers to my research problem, I formulated one central research question underpinned by three sub-questions, which divided my enquiry into separate areas of concern (Stake 1995):

Central Question

1. How does national identity construction evolve in the context of continually changing transnational conditions?

Sub-questions

1. What are the lived experiences of national identity of Polish migrants who came to the UK after WW2?
2. What are the lived experiences of national identity of Polish migrants who came to the UK after Poland's EU accession?
3. What are the differences in the meanings ascribed to national identity by the two groups of Polish migrants in the context of current more politically open and more technologically connected transnational social fields, compared to the previously more isolated conditions during the Cold War era?

The answers to my research questions brought some reaffirming findings around the nature of transnationalism as well as migrants' agency. Despite the Iron Curtain separating Poland from the West for over four decades, transnational activities between Poland and the UK continued during the post war period, albeit initially disrupted due to the immediate impacts of the war and the political situation. Overall, apart from the obvious differences in cheaper and quicker travel and better technological connectivity, my findings show a lot of similarities between the two groups in terms of their active and conscious engagement in transnational social fields. There are, of course, examples of transnational forms of living that are only possible thanks to increased technological and travel connectivity (e.g., the quintessential transmigrant living in two countries simultaneously). However, the main differences between the two groups were not to do with limited transnational activity in one of the groups in my study, but rather these were differences in the types of attachments the migrants created in their new localities as a result of different transnational conditions.

As both post-WW2 and post-2004 migrant interviewees in this study create transnational social fields regulated by inter-state politics, the findings from my fieldwork became situated within literature questioning the novelty of transnationalism as a new phenomenon (Foner 1997, Portes 2001, Vertovec 2001). Further details of these conceptual deliberations around transnationalism, including its conceptual relevance for different types of activities across borders of nation-states, are discussed in Chapter 2.

Moreover, by not including in my research question the overarching perspective of the technological connectivity as well as by focusing on people's individual lived experiences, I was able to concentrate on the individual, their agency and emotional aspects more effectively. My story is about individuals who reconstruct their identities as they operationalise conditions they encounter in their respective social worlds. As this will be discussed throughout this study, the dislocation from the home country constitutes a momentous event for many migrants, often distressful and emotional, and in extreme cases leading to long-lasting trauma which generates strong emotions such as fear, anger and resentment, impacting identity construction in the new setting (Hutchison and Bleiker 2008). Trauma due to war displacement experiences played an important part in the identification processes of the post-WW2 group of my informants (also Smojkis 2013, Winslow 1999); whereas narratives of the post-2004 migrant interviewees show that for many the decision to migrate was far from a voluntary lifestyle choice too – as is at times concluded with this group of Polish migrants.

This approach allowed me to tackle my research problem more holistically, with transnational social fields seen as dynamic networks within which national identities evolve as the fields themselves evolve over time. Changes are driven by both political and social developments in the country of origin and the receiving country as well as through migrants' agency, including emotional responses to conditions within their social space. The processes are not unique to the more recent time of greater technological connectivity, and the migrant remains the main social actor grappling with changing conditions within their social reality; this social life experienced by individual actors is perhaps best exemplified in the following narrative of home provided by one of my interviewees:

[My home] is where my heart is. Where I am. It doesn't matter whether it is here, in Poland or Canada. Home is where I am. I am fine here." (Jakub, m, 38, Tipton, 15 years in the UK)

Jakub's social reality is where he is; it is subjective and has a particular meaning to him – "where my heart is". Consequently, my research problem commanded a philosophical approach that allowed me to grasp this subjective reality of "where I am" – as it is explained from the epistemological and ontological perspectives in the section below.

1.3 Research design – philosophical and theoretical perspectives

The research design adopted in this study is driven by the nature of the research problem. It is an enquiry into social life where there is no objective meaning as people understand

reality differently, and 'where no interpretation is the only true and valid one' (Crotty 1998, p.47). My research questions point to an investigation into national identity based on the lived experiences of migrants throughout their lives and across a range of spaces they enter as a result of their migratory experiences. I am specifically interested in migrants' individual subjective perspectives and their narratives related to the meanings they ascribe to this concept. Consequently, from the epistemological and ontological perspectives, this enquiry is situated in the paradigm of interpretivism and constructionism, whereby social reality has a meaning to people who 'act on the basis of the meanings that they attribute to their acts and the acts of others' (Bryman 2012, p.30).

Following from this, all meaningful realities are seen as socially constructed (Gilbert and Stoneman 2016, Denscombe 2014, Bryman 2012, Creswell 2007, Crotty 1998). People actively construct subjective meanings and understandings of the world, which are negotiated through interaction with other people in a particular social and historical context (Creswell 2007, p.20-21). People create multiple realities where 'truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with realities in our world' (Crotty 1998, p.8). Consequently, these meanings are not discovered or found but are made through people's interpretations of our social world (Fish 1990), building upon interpretations and cultural deposits already in place (Crotty 1998, pp. 52-62). These cultural understandings are not external realities, but they themselves undergo an ongoing process of re-construction and re-interpretation by social agents. Thus epistemologically, my role as a researcher is to 'gain access to people's common-sense thinking' (Bryman 2012, p.30) to study these dynamic social realities and to interpret actions and meanings continually constructed by different people from their point of view (Bryman 2012, Gilbert and Stoneman 2016). In the light of this interpretative stance, the main purpose of a sociological enquiry is to deeply understand and interpret accordingly (Bryman 2012, p.28-30), based on culturally derived and historically situated understandings of the social world (Crotty 1998, p.67).

Within this epistemological and ontological context, Polish national identity is seen as a socially constructed product, the meaning of which is continually constructed in and through interaction of migrants within their particular circumstances (Bryman 2012, p.34). In this sense, the production of meaning by migrants is shaped by the characteristics of their migrant journey through transnational social fields underpinned by nation-states and their politics. However, these nationally conditioned spaces are constituted by the duality of their social structures (Giddens 1984, p.25): nationally and politically conditioned constraints (the structure with its rules and resources), and the migrants themselves (the social agents) who are situated in these spaces drawing upon their constraints, producing and reproducing social systems in interaction. Within this duality, migrants exercise their freedom of action,

make choices and re-construct identities (more on this in Chapter 2). In other words, Polish migrants are perceived as social agents who actively construct their individual understanding of Polishness through daily practice as they engage in social realities in the UK, Poland and for some also in other countries. Therefore, my task is to explore the meanings and lived experiences of the two different groups of Polish people to deeply understand and analyse the different meanings constructed by them in the light of their specific cultural, historical and political determinants.

Consequently, my research strategy is based on the qualitative approach set in the context of the comparative design of two contrasting case studies. Each case study is based on oral history methods. This approach will bring me close to individual migrants and their stories of migration and continued experiences of their transnational social fields. Listening to their narratives carefully and 'restoring' them into a 'general type of framework' (Creswell 2007, p.56) will be the key lens employed throughout this study. Voices of my participants will be heard directly, providing a composite narrative of their experiences within each case. This approach is vital in this comparative study of multiple narratives that move through consecutive spaces in a linear manner as well as across different historic periods. For my data analysis I employed thematic analysis of these 'lived and told stories of individuals' (Creswell 2007, p.54) to effectively contrast these two cases.

I recognise that my adopted philosophical and theoretical approach is not without its difficulties. Studying subjective realities of multiple individuals requires time, closeness to the participants, ability to capture and frame narratives of multiple realities, rigorous data collection processes, and above all, the researcher's skills to conduct interviews, appreciating the researcher's own positionality throughout the process. Hence, the section below reflects on my own positionality, experiences and values I bring to this research project; whereas the details of my methodology including methods, impacts of the Covid-pandemic, analysis and data validation are provided in Chapter 4.

1.4 Positioning myself

Within the qualitative design, the researcher herself becomes an important consideration. The research process is never value free (Bryman 2012, p.39, Creswell 2007), and interpretation of social realities subjectively experienced by individuals takes place within the context of the researcher's own experiences, knowledge and values. Therefore, my autobiographical statement below forms an important part of this process, allowing my

readers to understand my experiences and events that had inspired me to undertake this study.

Overall, in addition to academic reasons, my own personal experiences as a Polish migrant in the UK played a significant role in my decision to embark on this research journey. I came to Birmingham, the UK in the late 1990s, before Poland's EU accession. As I have reflected in the introduction, my keen interest in this topic was initially triggered through conversations with the post-WW2 generation I met following my arrival. I had not known the details of their war and exile experiences, and I found the life stories they shared with me very emotional, listening to their accounts of war efforts and life in exile, including hard labour, starvation and often death. As time passed, my curiosity kept growing as my knowledge of the post-WW2 group's vast networks of physical national spaces in the UK expanded too. I discovered their "little Poland" or "pieces of Poland", as they themselves would often say, in so many different clubs, churches, schools, community spaces, including restaurants, bars, halls, retirement homes and camp sites or other holiday destinations scattered across the UK. When 2004 came, high numbers of Polish migrants arriving in a short period of time changed the landscape of many places in the UK. However, on the whole these new arrivals were not seeking the national spaces created by the established Polish community in the UK, unless this was to reach out for help, to find jobs or deal with homelessness in the initial early years post-2004.

From the historical perspective I share a lot of the experiences with the post-2004 migrants; hence from the outset it was essential for me to recognise my own positionality. This served two purposes. Firstly, this enabled me to better understand the meanings around national identity constructed by migrants who did not live through communism. Secondly, I avoided extending the understandings of Polishness I had constructed myself on other people who also had grown up in communism or post-communist Poland. That is why, in addition to academic considerations, my own narrative became a starting point on this research journey. My narrative is a narrative of a Polish person who was born in a city in south-eastern Poland and spent all her childhood and young adulthood years behind the Iron Curtain of the Cold War era. I myself described the reality I re-constructed from my childhood as follows:

"I experienced two simultaneous realities, interwoven with double meanings and hidden facts. The official version was promoted at school and in the media such as TV, radio and newspapers. We were constantly told about the supremacy of the socialist project and the collective effort. (...) The second reality I experienced as a child was the hidden, unofficial one. We 'gossiped' and whispered about it. We talked about it behind closed doors at home and in churches."

The above quote is an extract from my article which appeared in a Polish parish magazine in Birmingham (Wiadomości December 2017) and on the website pages of the Kresy Family Organisation.¹ It provides an overview of how I navigated communist reality, with emphasis on my understandings and meanings I ascribed to a variety of daily activities and national events. In particular, I referred to communist oppression and other control mechanisms employed by the regime, including propaganda, a manipulated version of Polish history, and the introduction of new national holidays and customs. For example, my classmate's father was a political prisoner throughout our primary school years. I provided facts related to my everyday life such as housing, ration books and the clothes we used to wear. The article also referred to the role of the Catholic church in supporting resistance against the communist regime.

Additionally, the article also allowed me to identify the experiences of WW2 migrants which were not well known in communist Poland. By making this connection, my own story became more relevant for the post-war migrants too. In other words, by exposing my own narrative I created a platform through which I could engage with both groups of migrants. Consequently, my own narrative contributed to the reflective process I undertook during this research journey, allowing me to consider any potential biases. The process also gave me an extraordinary opportunity to share my experiences with other Polish people in the UK through this and other articles I have written for local communities following the original article in 2017.

Overall, I have become more active in the Polish community, forging friendships and visiting places of importance for Polish people in the UK, including locations in Birmingham, London and Wales. For example, in October 2017 I paid my first visit to the Polish care home in Penrhos² in Wales, an ex-RAF base which originally served as a resettlement camp for Polish servicemen after WW2. In time, I returned to Penrhos to interview the residents. Furthermore, since 2017, I have participated in a number of community events including the 70th Anniversary celebrations of the establishment of the Polish Parish in Birmingham, and the 60th anniversary of the construction of the Polish Millennium House. These have been also opportunities for me to write about these events in the local magazine, allowing me to establish an approach based on reciprocity.

¹ Kresy Family is a group aiming to 'promote the history and experiences of Polish citizens' who lived in Kresy (the Eastern Borderlands of Poland) in pre-WW2 Poland. Website - <http://www.kresyfamily.com/>

² The Polish retirement village in Penrhos was handed over to the Welsh housing group ClwydAlyn. At the point of writing (2023) it is due to be redeveloped for affordable housing. See Wales Online at <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/unique-welsh-village-built-very-26695554>

1.5 Originality and contributions

Whilst the full summary of findings and contributions is provided in the concluding Chapter 9, this section is to highlight some high-level outcomes that inspired this study initially and drove me as a researcher forward.

This thesis contributes to the literature on transnationalism and its impacts on national identity formation by providing insights into the construction of national identities of migrants who move between nation-states under contrasting transnational conditions. The comparison of the two vastly different migratory flows from Poland to the UK, separated by time, political transformations in Europe, and huge technological advancements provided a fascinating and germane platform with a broad spectrum of transnational conditions experienced by migrants within a single national context. This approach allowed this study to go beyond a social enquiry which is often “dominated by single-case studies or sweeping guesswork” (Faist 2010, p.26).

Equally exciting was the prospect of applying the transnational lens to both groups evenly and consistently. I moved away from the optic based purely on the ghettoised mentality of the post-WW2 group, inter-generational tensions, and the clash between modern and postmodern identities. On the contrary, through my research I was able to show that the collective “we”, *communitas* like experiences of the older generation (concept borrowed from Turner 1969), and the more individual experiences of national identity re-construction of the post-2004 group (the individual “I”) are both products of political forces that regulate transnational conditions. Furthermore, using the *communitas* lens, I was able to contribute to the debates surrounding reasons why the post-WW2’s construct did not carry through to the second generation nor did it attract new arrivals from Poland (for example Zebrowska 1986).

Another observation that feeds into the wider literature on current societal trends is the fact that based on the findings from my participant sample national identity remains an important reference point for identity building despite globalisation and increased transnationalism; it is the national that has escaped the confines of the political borders and lives transnationally. Within this context, I emphasise the role of emotions in transnational mobility of the Polish migrants in this study as they respond differently to different transnational conditions in their respective spaces. Thus, using the Polish case studies, I am able to offer contributions to literature on emotions and migration more broadly too (in particular in Chapter 8).

Finally, my study was conducted during the Covid pandemic which broke out whilst I was still conducting my fieldwork. As a result, my experiences of switching to fully online methods

can be also placed within the wider debate regarding virtual methodologies (more details in Chapter 4).

1.7 Structure of this thesis

The introductory chapters set the context of this thesis:

- Chapter 2 – conceptual literature review,
- Chapter 3 – historical and political context of this research as well as academic framings of Polish migration to the UK,
- Chapter 4 – methodology, including impacts of the Covid pandemic.

The analysis is structured around a short preface and three findings chapters, guided by the two dominant responses to national identity formation identified in this study:

- Chapter 5 – preface to introduce the guiding concepts of *roots* and *transnational trajectories* proposed by this study,
- Chapter 6 – findings for the post-WW2 group (the *rerooted* “we”),
- Chapter 7 – findings for the post-2004 group (the *uprooted* “I”),
- Chapter 8 – comparison of the findings from the two participant groups, with a focus on the role of emotions in transnational mobility.

Chapter 9 offers concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 2 – Conceptual literature review

2.1 Introduction

This thesis brings together two conceptual frameworks to support the analysis of people's movement across national borders and the impacts on their identity construction of different conditions surrounding this movement. Most significantly for this research project, this analytical junction is situated within a study which is cross-generational, comparing migratory experiences of different generations at two different historical times. Consequently, additional focus is placed on how and what memories of these migrants' past and what memories of their homeland they brought into their present in different social spaces they entered over their lifetime. Therefore, this conceptual literature review chapter is divided into two main theoretical areas of attention; firstly, conceptual frameworks regarding migration, in particular through the lens of transnational theories, and secondly, identity construction and its close links with both memory and the national.

2.2 National identity, migration and transnationalism

Migration has been part of the history of humanity from the earliest times (Castles and Miller 2003, p.4) – long before modern nation-states emerged through processes triggered by modernity (Anderson 2006). However, growing international migration of the contemporary world is intrinsically locked within the politics of nation-states and their power to control and shape people's movements across their national borders (Ehrkamp 2020, Castles and Miller 2003, Vertovec 2001). Therefore, the conceptual framework supporting this research connects two theoretical areas: construction of identity of migrants who come from established nation-states most of which 'impart their peoples with a sense of national identity' (Waldinger 2015, p.34) linking with theories on migration and more broadly continued movements between national spaces of different nation-states. In this context, the formation of national identity is considered as a dependent variable of the conditions of migratory experiences over time and throughout people's lives.

The above approach is reflected in the definition of migration proposed by Kearney and Beserra, according to which migration is '*movement across a significant border that is defined and maintained by some political regime – an order, formal or informal – in such a way that crossing it affects the identity of the crosser*' (Kearney and Beserra 2004, p.4). Therefore, different migratory experiences, i.e., different types of crossing of significant borders will result in different processes behind identity construction in new spaces.

This micro level approach represents one view of migration, with its focus on the individual 'crosser', which literature contrasts with macro theories of migration looking at wider migratory networks and systems (Richmond 1994). As outlined by Castles and Miller (2003) there are several theories of migration, which can be broadly grouped into push-pull economic theories, with the focus on the individual's decisions to migrate and their rational comparison of potential destinations; historical-structural theories and world system theories, based on inequalities in the world economy, with cheap labour being mobilised for the capital; as well as the migration systems theory, a more interdisciplinary theory, which strives to find the middle ground between the push-pull theories with their focus on the individual and the historical-structural approaches, which ignore the individual. As a result, the migration systems theory takes into consideration both the macro-structures (e.g., world economy, political relations and legal structures) and micro-structures, i.e., informal social networks, and also brings to the table the impacts of migration at both ends of the migratory flow. However, despite the more holistic approach of the latter theory, overall, for the purpose of this study, these frameworks do not sufficiently concern themselves with linkages between sending and receiving countries through spaces that are established and continue throughout migrants' lives. As re-construction of identities inherently takes place over time, it is crucial to understand migrants' relationship with their old and new localities as well as their continued movement and other exchanges across their 'significant borders'. Therefore, more recent transnational theories, which expand on the ideas of migrants' continued social linkages between their nation-state of origin and the new locality, provide a more germane perspective on the formation of migrants' national identities.

Transnationalism as a framework emerged in the 1990s in response to increased globalisation processes driven by rapid technological advancements (Castles and Miller 2003). Undoubtedly, globalisation brings societies progressively closer. Rapid time-space compression over the last few decades (Giddens 1990), fuelled by more affordable air travel and new communication technologies, has had a profound impact on migrants' ability to maintain links with their country of origin. Transnationalism stems from these observations, where transnationalism is defined as 'the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and

settlement' (Glick Schiller et al. 1995, p.48). Vertovec comments on increasing duality of migrants' daily experiences, where 'large numbers of people now live in social worlds that are stretched between, or dually located in physical places and communities in two or more nation-states' (Vertovec 2001, p.578), further conceptualising this as bi-focality or double orientation, with 'lives lived here-and-there' (Vertovec 2004, p. 970). Furthermore, this approach brings to the fore human agency, whilst also recognising that the spaces between nation-states are shaped by inter-state relations – transnationalism is restricted to certain regions and is situated in specific localities of 'the functional and geographical groupings of states' (Faist 2004, p.3). As a framework, transnationalism builds on the idea that social spaces previously confined within the borders of a nation-state – comprising of everyday lives, social networks and social institutions – have spilled over national borders, allowing for the circulation of goods, services, ideas, capital, information, symbols and people among two or more nation-states within a specific regional context (Faist 2000, Pries 2001). Pries defines these transnational social spaces as 'pluri-local frames of reference which structure everyday practices, social positions, employment trajectories and biographies, and human identities, and simultaneously exist above and beyond the social contexts of national societies' (Pries 2001, p.69), whereas Levitt (1998) conceptualises a wide range of exchanges within these spaces as social remittances. What follows is that transnationalism is a product of the expansion of social space beyond the geography of one nation-state (Pries 2001, p.56), where the local specificities of transnational networks provide a multi-layered context in migrants' lives. Transmigrants (Glick Schiller et al. 1995, Pries 2001) settle in one country, but at the very same time 'they maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they emigrated' (Glick Schiller et al. 1995, p.48). This conceptual shift to a more deterritorialised notion of social spaces is visible through studies which focus on a more circular, open-ended crossing of national borders, where 'the passage between the old and new countries is blurred', 'with the living space of migrants simply extended rather than replaced' (Galasińska and Kazłowska 2009, p.89), and with migrants 'stretched between two countries' (Bielewska 2012, p.87), where the boundaries become 'defunct, banal and hence unimportant', and where 'there is no either-or' (Garapich 2016, p.157), as societies spill over borders (White and Goodwin 2021).

However, transnationalism as a conceptual framework is not without its debates either and has been contested over the last few decades. Firstly, its novelty has been questioned; for example, Foner's study (1997) demonstrates how Russian Jews and Italians, who immigrated to New York at the turn of the 20th century, maintained extensive and intensive transnational links, including regular communications (albeit through slower written

correspondence), transnational family arrangements, financial remittances, buying property in their country of origin, or return migration. The findings in this study support this approach too (Chapter 6 will provide evidence of transnationalism of my informants who arrived after WW2). Secondly, some scholars reject the over-generalised notion of unfixed and fluid existence of transmigrants as the 'defining feature of contemporary experience' (Ahmed et al. 2020, p.2-3; Ryan 2018, Waldinger 2015); again, as the study will show, the truly transmigrant way of living with physical presence in two countries is not only rare but also hard to maintain, equally in practical terms and emotionally. Furthermore, Waldinger (2015) disputes the core of transnationalism itself, by arguing that migrants' cross-border connections are 'persistently eroded by the many forces that lead social relations to converge with territorial boundaries' (2015, p.65), where distance continues to matter, keeping connections is elusive, and in the end, migrants inevitably shift their loyalties to where they live. Nonetheless, whether seen as 'a theory or simply a phenomenon (if it exists at all)' (White 2011b, p.7), even the most vehement critics of transnationalism recognise the value of some form of transnational social spaces as a concept to capture social spaces that link nation-states – albeit in Waldinger's case an alternative concept of intersocietal convergence is proposed as 'a conceptual space in which home and host societies overlap' (Waldinger 2015, p.176). Overall, the power of this type of conceptualisation of spaces extending across national borders is pronounced in migration studies of the contemporary interconnected world, brought even closer by technological advancements, global economy and politics of inter-state relations.

2.2.1 Dynamic nature of transnational social fields

Consequently, conceptual efforts have been made to frame these supranational spaces further, recognising at the same time that they continue to exist in the context of and are regulated by nation-states themselves; for example, the concept of translocalities to capture spaces in a particular nation-state that extend beyond its borders through 'ties of marriage, work, business and leisure' (Appadurai 1996, p.192); 'transnational families and their social fields/personal networks' (Slany 2018, p.125) and transnational social space (Faist 1998, Pries 2001, White et al. 2018), setting out to establish a new approach to how societies should be understood in the era of enhanced interconnectivity. Levitt and Glick Schiller further propose a reformulation of the concept of society, with the analytical lens focusing on migrants who are 'often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind' (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, p.1003). Pries (2019) and Faist (2010) recognise transnational social spaces as dense, stable and lasting ties extending across state borders, with continued cross-border mobility,

communications, and exchanges of money and other resources. As a result, these spaces are dynamic and evolve over time. They are shaped by continued social change in both the country of origin and the receiving country (White et al. 2018) and driven by continued accumulation of different types of capital transmitted through social and symbolic ties, including: 'economic capital, human capital, such as educational credentials, skills and know-how, and social capital' (Faist 1998, p. 216). Thus, "society abroad" emerges thanks to the creation of dense transnational fields' formed through migrants' personal transnational networks and transnational practices (White et al. 2018, p.46).

This dynamic nature of migrants' transnational social fields which underpin 'society abroad' is at the centre of this study. However, this is not only due to continued social change and migrants' proactively accumulating capital and devising their strategies based on the resources available through their transnational networks - this is a dynamic space also due to its inter-state underpinnings. Transnational literature emphasises that as transnational networks cut across borders, they are therefore 'embedded in particular power relations and multi-layered structural context' of specific places (Dahinden 2017, p.1482). This understanding contributes to my subsequent theory building in the findings chapters based on two assumptions; firstly, each transnational social field has its contextual specificities based on different inter-state relations politically, economically, and socially; and secondly, these spaces continue and evolve over time, depending on the wider regional context and relations between nation-states. Furthermore, in terms of the continuity of experiences within transnational social fields, Ehrkamp (2020) refers to a body of literature which makes a connection between transnationalism and transit, i.e., the stage between departure and arrival, which constitutes a significant part of transnational migration too. The transnational transit is often across multiple borders, where migrants' options and trajectories are controlled by the politics of the nation-states, providing or refusing access to their spaces, at times keeping migrants forcefully within transit spaces as well as creating new spaces where this meets particular political needs and objectives (e.g., refugee camps, Fitzgerald 2019). Overall, the idea of this continued evolution and fluctuation is relevant for the analysis in this study twofold – to allow for study of the impacts of changes in transnational conditions over time, for example the prolonged transit stage of the informants who arrived in the UK after WW2; and to capture the impacts of different political or natural events that can disrupt transnational social fields over time, such as Brexit or the Covid-pandemic in more recent years.

Consequently, as a concept, dynamic and evolving transnational social fields encapsulate matters around movement, locality, agency, power and change over time. This conceptualisation guides this study throughout, allowing for the investigation of the

differences in transnational conditions and their impacts on migrants' identity construction as part of their individual transnational trajectory and transnational social fields they build during their lifetime – which, as is shown in this study, may result in contrasting national identity formations.

2.2.2 Diasporas and transnationalism

More specifically, the post-WW2 group, which may be perceived as a more traditional diaspora formation with established institutional structures in the new locality whose journey concluded away from the homeland, is contrasted with the more recent Polish migrants to the UK who show less reliance on ties in the new space (Gill 2010). In fact, the concept of diaspora itself is an important consideration for transnationalism – a relationship which is eloquently compared to 'awkward dance partners' by Faist (2010). The transnational lens offers the opportunity to re-visit established approaches to diasporas, moving away from the traditional focus of diasporic studies on the initial dislocation and cultural distinctiveness in the new locality. Instead, transnationalism focuses on studying continued links across borders and therefore is broader than diaspora. Seen through this lens, transnational communities encompass diaspora as a type of transnational formations, characterised by the re-production of a group identity and with different intensities of links with their homeland, and with their new locality (Faist 2010, p.21).

Furthermore, the concept of diaspora raises another key consideration, especially for a theoretical framework such as transnationalism which aspires to underpin a broader range of issues related with people movement as well as to offer a new perspective on societies – namely, the voluntary vis-à-vis involuntary nature of migration. Bruneau (2010) summarised the key features of diaspora which have emerged in literature, including 'dispersion under pressure, choice of destination, identity awareness, networked space, duration of transnational ties and relative autonomy from host and origin societies' (Bruneau 2010, p.36). In particular, 'dispersion under pressure' can be problematic if perceived as the defining feature of diasporas which differentiates them from other movements of people who are understood to act as free agents making voluntary decision to improve their economic situation or lifestyle. In fact, the distinction between voluntary and involuntary movement has been disputed in literature, and has been recognised as artificial and hence misleading (Popov 2016, Richmond 1994, Voutira 1991). This question is more broadly linked with some important issues that social enquiries have to address in terms of agency of individuals versus structural limitations in their social spaces. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, the lens offered through Giddens' theory of structuration (1984) is useful here as it allows to capture the dynamics of continuous re-production within social spaces through the concepts of

duality of structure, consisting of rules and resources, and systems understood as reproduced relations between actors and collectives (Giddens 1984, p.25). Within this duality, social agents exercise their agency and reproduce social systems through this process. Building on this theory further, through his theory of structuration of migration, Richmond captures some key aspects surrounding agency and migration, where degrees of freedom vary and people's autonomy and potency are determined through the structuration processes in their spaces (Richmond 1994, p.55). This can result in either proactive or reactive migrations, both of which can be experienced equally by all migrants, regardless of the reason of their migration, 'according to the degree of autonomy exhibited by the actors involved' (ibid, p.58). This conceptualisation will underpin the rejection of the distinction between voluntary and involuntary nature of departures of migrants in this study.

Finally, it is also useful to reflect on the terminology traditionally used in diaspora studies, and in particular with the (post)-WW2 movement of Polish people in this study. These types of population movements are often classed as a victim or refugee diaspora (Cohen 1997) or an 'accidental' diaspora (Waterbury 2010); whereas typologies based on the reasons and aims of these diasporic formations would suggest their political character (Bruneau 2010). Commentators of the post-WW2 group recognised the establishment of an idealised representation of this group of migrants as a "fighting emigration" (Zubrzycki, 1956, p.90), opposing the political situation in their home nation-state and ultimately awaiting and supporting the change of the political regime (more on Zubrzycki's view of Polish 'emigracja' in Section 3.3.1). This representation is also directly linked with Poland's long history of migration during the country's consecutive partitions and uprisings in 18th and 19th centuries (full historical context is provided in Chapter 3). In fact, the division of Polish migrants into political and economic is long established in literature (Davies 1981, p.275); for example, the economic migrants of the late 19th century and early 20th century ('peasant and small town communities') are contrasted with the émigré triggered by the November Uprising 1830-31 ('politicians, soldiers and intellectuals') (Znaniński 1918-20 cited in Zubrzycki 1993). However, for the purpose of this study, the division into political and economic migrants may be as problematic as the distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration discussed above; such framing does not capture all complexities of longer-term migratory experiences and subsequent identity re-construction over time. Instead, the transnational lens will offer a more fitting approach (also in line with Faist 2010), recognising that the division between diasporism and transnationalism (Bruneau 2010) is much more blurred. As I will show throughout my analysis, the post-WW2 migrants in my sample demonstrated the diasporic "clear cut break" (Bruneau 2010, p.49) precisely because they experienced different

transnational conditions and proactively engaged in transnational activity throughout their lifetime.

2.3 Construction of national identity

There are additional theoretical underpinnings needed to study the construction of national identity itself. More broadly, theories on identity construction tell us that everyday routine practices are part of identity construction – a process which is perceived as a deeply social phenomenon undertaken continuously by active social agents. It is never completed and always in process (Hall 1996a, p.2). People constantly negotiate and (re)-produce meanings through the process of representation and signification in their everyday lives (Hall 2009). This process always takes place in the context of what is excluded and different, marking symbolic boundaries in relation to the Other – the ‘constitutive outside’ (Hall 1996a, p.3-4). Literature already tells us that identities may become unfixed during the migratory journey (Vertovec 2001). This is both through self-definition and through encountering identities ascribed by others (Ryan 2010, p.361). For migrants this process also involves a geographical relocation and thus encounters with a broader range of difference and new others; as well as it involves an experience of their own identity in new locations and through new social interactions (Ryan 2010, p.360).

Furthermore, in the case of national representations, they often take a form of ‘banal’ practices in people’s daily lives, which act as constant unnoticed reminders, and situate people physically, legally, socially and emotionally within a particular nationhood (Billig 1997, p.8). These unnoticed, and seemingly natural practices demonstrate how deeply embedded modern nation-states are into people’s daily lives – by many experienced as something as natural as having ‘a nose and two ears’ (Gellner 1983, p.6). These approaches have also permeated into some scholarly theories which study nations through their primordial connections with pre-existing ethnic groups through shared history, myths of origin, territory, and culture (Smith 1991, 2004), and by doing so they unavoidably essentialise culture and disregard the political aspects behind the creation of nation-states in modernity. Instead, this study is based on the notion of nations as modern creations and political units which were triggered by modern processes in response to changes brought about by capitalism, industrialisation, introduction of print and new forms of social communication, as well as universal suffrage and universal elementary education (Anderson 2006, Hobsbawm 1990, Gellner 1983, Deutsch 1966, Kamusella 2016). Modern nations are ‘imagined political communities’; they are a deep, horizontal comradeship of limited and sovereign character (Anderson 2006, p.6-7). The ‘national order of things’ (Malkki 1995) has become the modern

way of dividing social spaces. People are born into specific national cultures, and therefore national cultures have become the 'principal source' of cultural identity (Hall 1993, p. 291) through the process of socialisation supported by 'education, politics, the media, sports or everyday practices' (Wodak et al. 1999, p.4). However, people are far from being 'docile bodies' (McNay 1994, p.104, quoted in Halls 1996a, p.12) who are subject to nationalistic moulding. What is most significant in the process of becoming national is the way in which individuals invest in these national meanings to make the world around them meaningful and to share the meanings with others (Hall 2009, p.25). It is how people imagine themselves and as a result, feel bound to a community, without actually knowing all the other people in it – Hall labels this process as *imaginative identification* (Hall 1997, p.13, emphasis as in the original text). As a result of this imaginative process, identities of people as social agents are constructed, internalised and transmitted through practices they adopted in their social spaces.

2.3.1 The enduring nature of the national

Additionally, the fact that under the 'national order of things', social spaces are regulated by nation-states cannot be ignored in this analysis set in the transnational context, i.e., a context which itself exists because nation-states exist. Previous discursive approaches (Wodak et al. 1999, De Cillia et al. 1999) point this out, preoccupying themselves with identity construction through discourses based on power relations, 'launched by politicians, intellectuals and media' and shared through schooling and mass communication (De Cillia et al. 1999, p.153). This perspective is of great significance for this study too; the control exercised by nation-states in their national spaces as well as in spaces linking them with other nation-states comes to the fore. At the same time, however, in this millennium nations themselves have become under pressure due to increased globalisation and technological advancements. Consequently, more recently, conceptual frameworks for national identification are themselves responding to changes in the contemporary world of intensified supranational connectivity. Increasingly scholars argue that globalisation and transnational practices of migrants undermine the national, and people's identities are progressively deterritorialised, more cosmopolitan, transnational or postnational (as summarised by Leitner and Ehrkamp 2006), where the nation is no longer 'the sole or principal source of identification' (Sassen 1996b, p.217). In this postnational, postmodern vision of the contemporary world, for example, Sassen's studies global grids of cities bound to each other by economic globalisation. Denationalised and outside of state controls, global cities become terrains where identities are unmoored from the traditional sources such as the nation, and where transnational identities emerge (Sassen 1996b). Furthermore, Appadurai's

conceptualisation of ethnoscapes (1996) focuses on this deterritorialised quality of human experience of group identities: '*The landscape of group identity – the ethnoscapes – around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous*' (Appadurai 1996, p.48).

Such approaches put forward a vision of societies where people can escape the national, where identification at the national level is losing its validity, and where people increasingly participate in identities outside of the national collective no longer based within the territorial boundaries of one nation-state. In this vein, for Vertovec, transnationalism 'presents possibilities of *unfixing* identities', especially national identities (2001, p.580, emphasis as in the original text). At the same time and in contrast to these new approaches, there is an understanding among many scholars that opposite forces are at work as well. It is recognised that increased transnational conditions of the contemporary world and transnational social fields underpinned by politics of nation-states actually give 'a helping hand' to national identity by strengthening migrants' links with their home country (Burrell 2006, p.110). Similarly, based on their empirical findings, Leitner and Ehrkamp (2006, p.1630) add that far from erasing territorial identifications, lived experiences of transnationalism draw their strength from sustaining national ties and practices overtime. Overall, it is exactly these theoretical tensions that are in the heart of the premise in this study too, looking at identity formation of migrants who experience different transnational conditions, historically as well as at the current time of new societal shifts triggering questions around the continued validity and endurance of the national in this millennium. The findings of this study strive to contribute to these debates by showing the continued endurance of the national identified through the fieldwork with a group of Polish migrants.

2.3.2 Transmission of national identity and social memory

Furthermore, as this cross-generational study explores contrasting historical times and two different generations, further considerations need to be made with regards to the national identity as a collective form transmitted over time. As 'the most pertinent form of collective identity' (Triandafyllidou 2001, p.10), national identity draws its strength from its ability to resonate with an individual. Burrell comments on this quality of this concept by stating 'national consciousness combines an acknowledgement of the collective with a personally constructed and individually experienced national identification' (Burrell 2006, p.182). Moreover, the focus on the personal and individual draws attention to the process of transmission of national identity as a collective identity. Scholars agree that identity and memory are closely connected (Assmann and Shortt 2012, Hall 1996a). In particular,

Halbwachs's concept of a socially constructed collective memory is significant in conceptualising how national identity is shared and passed down. Overall, in Halbwachs's theory, the strength of memory comes from a coherent group of people, where individuals as group members remember (Halbwachs 1992 [1941], p.22), and where their memories can be understood only if placed 'within the thought' of the group (Halbwachs 1992 [1941], p.53). This early conceptualisation provides the foundation for subsequent theories which focus on memory as a social practice, and a 'crucial site of identity formation' (Eley 2011, p.556) – it is live, constantly evolving, subject to remembering and forgetting, and unaware of its re-interpretations (Assmann and Shortt 2012, Confino 1993, Boyarin 1994, Burrell 2006, Nora 1989).

Building on these ideas further and recognising that Halbwachs failed to historicise the concept of memory, in his work on '*Space, Time and the Politics of Memory*' Boyarin (1994) offers some crucial insights into these concepts. The focus is on the complex ways in which the past continues to impact the present, questioning the traditional one-dimensional perception of time and space. In his example, the marks of torture on the bodies of victims, intended to terrorise the memory of the individual, gain new meaning through action in the present as they become a sign to remember the crimes through human rights organisations. In a similar vein, the past gains presence in public spaces through public art and monuments, becoming key in shaping memories as well as providing space for states to legitimise themselves; hence, memories are a manifestation of power relations in societies. Following on from this, Boyarin brings under the lens the difference between the construction of identity and this type of politics of memory; also recognising that memory cannot be purely individual nor literally collective. Instead 'both group membership' and individual "identity" (understood as 'the impressions and imaginings' in the brain) are produced through a dynamically chosen selection of memories, constantly reshaped, reinvented and reinforced as individuals engage with them and link among themselves (Boyarin 1994, p.23-26). Boyarin concludes that identity and social memory are 'virtually the same concept' (ibid, p.23).

Furthermore, memory cannot be reduced merely to the political, as this approach 'ignores social practice and transmission' (Confino 1997, p.1393). It also overlooks the role of human agency in reception, interpretation and internalisation of memories and their links with everyday life experiences involving friends, family, workplace, leisure and other day-to-day practices. Confino comments further: '*That a given memory exists, that it has a symbolic representation and a political significance is obvious, but in itself it explains little if we do not place this memory within a global network of social transmission and symbolic representations*' (ibid, p.1402).

Within this framework – and what is significant for this study – memories are captured in people’s narratives of the past. These are stories people want to tell; it is a ‘creative act’ (Temple, 2001, p.389); as they re-experience and re-construct the past, at the same time bringing it into the present. Boyarin (1994) compares this continual effort to preserve the image of the past to rescuing ‘the dead and oppressed ancestors by giving their lives new meaning’ (ibid, p.27). Following on from this, literature tells us how these new meanings are created and how memories are brought from the past into the present, as they are re-socialised through linking them with memories of others, to history and larger processes that continue to shape societies (Farmer 2005, Rylko-Bauer 2005). In Temple’s words – these narratives are ‘explorations of the past and possible ways of dealing with perceived futures and not accounts of how things really are or should be’ (Temple 2001, p.396). They are not the past themselves; they are re-told and re-interpreted over time, constantly evolving and shared with others. They are about meaning, not facts – they are “true” in the sense of a *story*’ (Rylko-Bauer 2005, p.15, emphasis as in the original text), giving voice to people and remaining relevant beyond the story itself and a specific time in history. Therefore, memory does not stand for history. The two concepts are not equivalent. History is how modern societies organise the past (Nora 1989, p.8), whereas memories captured in stories by scholars of societies have a moral purpose (Rylko-Bauer 2005) and wider aims to learn about societies themselves and draw lessons for the future. This is exemplified in literature on Holocaust where stories of survivors not only give a human face to individual narratives, but they speak against structural violence and mechanisms in societies that allow violence to happen over and over again (Farmer 2005). Farmer continues to say: ‘*Yes, these are stories; yes, these are narratives; yes, these are coloured by various experience. But they also get at a certain critical truth*’ (ibid, p.134).

2.4 Conclusions

Overall, the conceptual framework applied in this study has been chosen to study stories of people’s movement across national borders in two different centuries: the concepts of transnational social fields on the one hand, and identity construction embodied through memories of transnational experiences on the other hand. The participants in this study, the storytellers, are themselves a part of history, engaging with the past and bringing it into the present selectively and to create new meanings. This conceptualisation of time applies to both groups but will especially support the analysis of narratives of (post)-war experiences. This is due to the fact that – as this study shows – the transnational conditions experienced by these two groups triggered different temporalities of their respective national identity

formations: the older generation constructing their Polish identity by looking back, whereas the more recent generation draw upon Poland which they continue to access through their contemporary transnational social fields.

Furthermore, in addition to the framework outlined in this chapter, Chapter 8, which compares the two groups of interviewees, introduces an additional theoretical lens based on the findings in Chapters 6 and 7. This final comparison chapter brings to the forefront the emotional and affective dimensions of transnational mobility, with the main theoretical insights from Ahmed (2013) and Pile (2010). More details can be found in Section 8.2.

Following on from the above overarching theoretical underpinnings, the next section will provide the historical and political context of this study, as well as examples of literature on Polish migration to the UK.

CHAPTER 3 – Polish migration to the UK: research context and conceptual framings

3.1 Introduction

Through this chapter I build an understanding of the research context. The chapter is divided into two sections: firstly, I provide the historical and political context for this study, and secondly, I provide a discussion on the analysis and conceptual approaches applied to Polish migration to the UK by other scholars, allowing for triangulation and the understanding of how this study builds on existing literature.

3.2 Historical and political context

This section consists of three main parts, offering insights into how the Polish nation-state was built initially and what building blocks continue to be used in the Polish national project. To begin with, I provide an overview of how the Polish modern state emerged, followed by two separate areas: the formation of Polish communities abroad after WW2; and the experiences in (post)-communist Poland, including social change that has taken place over time. This section also discusses changes in the UK's social and transnational context, including the British empire, the EU membership, and subsequent Brexit, providing the context to how Polish migrants were received and constructed by the local groups in their respective times.

3.2.1 Polish nation building

Poland disappeared from Europe's geopolitical map following its first partition in 1772 by Austria, Prussia and Russia, to re-appear at the end of WW1 in 1918. Consequently, for the five or six generations it only existed in people's memories (Davies 1981, pp.8-9), and as an idea of Polish elites. This was also the time when other modern nations started to emerge in Europe from the previous dynastic order. Their creation was consciously inspired by elite groups and was fuelled by capitalism, industrialisation, introduction of print and new forms of social communication, as well as universal suffrage and universal elementary education

(Anderson 2006, Deutsch 1966, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1990, Kamusella 2016). As such, the new nations were products of modernity: 'historically formed constructs' (Brubaker 1996, p.15), and 'imagined' political communities (Anderson 2006, p.6), which were created to support the new direction of development in societies.

However, Poland's construction was different from the first modern nations that initially emerged in Western Europe. Discussions about the processes that led to the creation of nation-states in Central and Eastern Europe have been often set in the context of Western ideologies, with the West referring to themselves as 'the invigorating spirit of the West' (Hans Kohn 1967 [1944], pp.518-9) and with other nations wanting to follow their 'success of the new social construct' (Greenfield 2001, cited from Hearn 2006, p.71). This approach, especially during the age of Enlightenment, became embedded into the Western-centric understanding of nation and modernity, with the West inventing Poland and the wider Eastern Europe as their uncivilised backward 'complementary other' within the same continent (Wolff 1994, p.4) – more on this in Section 3.2.4. Increasingly scholars oppose this worldview (Hearn 2006, Said 1978, Woolf 1996, among many others), highlighting that the concept of the West is still a prevailing force in global politics, although subject to continuous "rebordering" throughout time and space (Berger 2019) – for example, its definition may now also include parts of Eastern Europe due to the EU's enlargements.

More specifically, scholars point to cultural nationalism as the driving force in Central and Eastern Europe, based on the concepts of ethnic community, common pride, and the rejection of the rational (Hearn 2006) – these were communities which had to be 'preserved and revived' (Hutchinson 1994, p.17). The need to preserve and revive is pivotal for the subsequent formation of the Polish nation-state and the Polish national identity itself; the process was set in the context of the geographic location and the political situation on the continent at that time. Whilst the old dynastic orders significantly weakened in the West, the empires in Central and Eastern Europe continued to pursue their expansive ambitions and enjoyed power over their territories throughout the 19th century (Woolf 1996, p.18). As a result, in the initial stage of modernity, any local national interests in Central and Eastern Europe were against the general political direction in the region.

Overall, modernity was a turbulent period for the region, with three consecutive partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772, 1793, and 1795, and recurring periods of uprisings. The 1794 Kościuszko Insurrection, the Greater Poland Uprising of 1806, the November Uprising from 1830 to 1831, the Cracow Uprising in 1846, the Posnanian Uprising in 1848, the January Uprising from 1863 to 1864, and the 1905-07 Revolution in the Russian partition of Poland marked the key events in the struggle for independence. These national

uprisings became the main part of a 'patriotic narrative of Polish history' until the present day (Struve 2016, p.215).

In the absence of a strong monarchy, the drive to construct a Polish nation state came from below. It was led by intellectuals and nobility of middle ranks, who drew on Polish language, literature and interpretations of history as the main building blocks (Breuille 1993, Hearn 2006). Additionally, Catholic clergy played a key role in building a sense of ethnic identity among peasants, who lived across multi-ethnic populations separated by three state frontiers (Woolf 1996). Through this, the Roman Catholic Church grew strongly, contributing heavily to the construction of the Polish nation. This is in contrast to the West where a general decline in religion was observed in response to modernisation (Kedourie 1993 [1960], Hearn 2006). This was not the case in Poland where the Roman Catholic Church provided a potent building block. Davies records that in some provinces of Poland in the pre-partitioning era, the Roman Catholic Church became associated with the Polish population, where 'a Catholic peasant would often be called a 'Pole' even though he said his prayers in Latin and spoke to his family in Byelorussian or Ukrainian' (Davies 1981, p.18). Later, strengthen further through the national narrative of the elites, Catholicism became synonymous with the struggle for independence. 'God, Honour, Fatherland' became the national motto, and service to the national cause became merged with service to the Church. Hann compared this alignment to a 'perfect symbiosis' between the nation and the Church (Hann 2006, p.172).

3.2.2 WW1 and WW2

The 20th century brought about far-reaching changes to the wider political situation in the region. The position of the empires weakened, and political tensions escalated, leading to WW1. The power struggle on the continent meant that statesmen across Europe became more sympathetic towards the Polish national ambition, which opened a path to Poland's independence at the end of WW1 in 1918. The Polish state (the Second Polish Republic) re-appeared on the European map, concluding the struggle of the Polish elite to create a modern Polish state. The formation of borders of the young state was a multi-layered process, erupting in not just multiple military conflicts with other nations, but also placing demands on the local populations to identify their national allegiances. Additionally, something which is significant for this study, the government introduced schemes offering land in the Eastern Borderland (Kresy) to ex-soldiers, free for those who had served in the Polish Army during WW1. Thus, thousands of military settlers and also civilians moved the

Kresy region to set up homes in these new spaces.³ Overall, the Polish state in the interwar period was a multi-ethnic construct, with significant ethnic minorities of both national and a-national inclinations. The 1931 census reports the following figures by nationality, split on an ethnolinguistic basis: Poles (69%), Ukrainians (15%), Jews (8.5%), Belarusians (4.7%), Germans (2.2%), Russians (0.25%), Lithuanians (0.25%) and Czechs (0.09%) (Davies 1981, p.406).

The events that followed the end of WW2 started yet another chapter for the new state (more on the war period itself in Section 3.2.3), with some profound implications for Poland's borders and its ethnic make-up. The three Great Powers of the post-war era (the Soviet Union, USA and Great Britain) agreed on a new political order in Europe that would result in pivotal changes for Poland. Three consecutive conferences in Tehran (1943), Yalta (1945), and Potsdam (1945) determined the country's geographical shape and its political future as well as the fate of millions of people who lived in the region after the war. Poland's eastern and western borders were moved as part of the negotiations among the three Allies, creating new borders which appear on contemporary political maps. Under the new arrangements, Poland's western border was extended and fixed along the river Oder, encompassing formerly German-held territory. Its eastern frontier was trimmed back as part of Stalin's vision of the new order after 1945. The map below (Figure 1) provides a comparison between the current borders (light and dark green) and Polish territory prior to WW2 (light green and Eastern Borderland in blue). Many post-WW2 migrants, who stayed in the UK after the war, were originally from the Eastern Borderland region (*Kresy*); consequently, this group of people found their pre-war homes outside of the new Polish borders as a result of the Yalta Conference.

³ Details of regions and settlers can be found at <https://www.polishexilesffww2.org/settlers-military-and-civilian>; also see Stobniak-Smogorzewska (2008).

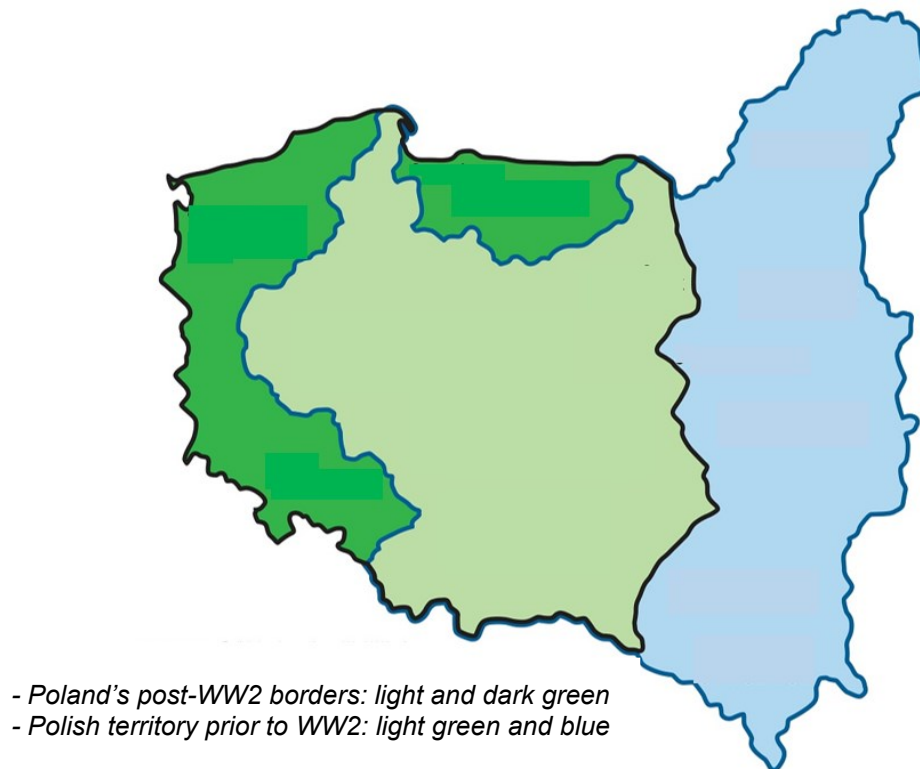


Figure 1: Map of Poland

Design adapted by the author based on: <https://forum.axishistory.com/viewtopic.php?t=165099&start=45>

Unsurprisingly, the borders of the new Polish nation-state drawn by the Allies in 1945 had a profound impact on the local communities. According to Davies (1981, p.489) 'only a small proportion of the population inhabited the places where they had lived before the war'. As a result of the agreement reached in Potsdam, Germans who had lived within the newly established Polish boundaries were expelled and replaced by Polish refugees from the *Kresy* Region. The vast majority of ethnic groups who had resided in the east, including Belarusians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians were annexed by the Soviet Union as part of the Tehran deal. The Jewish community in Poland was practically eradicated as a result of the Holocaust by Nazi Germany during WW2. Consequently, Poland became a brand-new construction, which was based on the overwhelming majority of the Polish speaking Roman Catholic people; in other words, an ideal Gellnerian model of a homogenised nation-state (Gellner 1983). Maria Todorova also refers to this kind of ethnic and religious homogeneity as 'the cherished ideal characteristics of the European nation-state' (1997, p. 175). This was a phenomenon which had not been previously observed on such a scale in Eastern Europe.

With the new geographical borders came the new political and economic order, which led to Poland becoming part of the Soviet bloc. The new order became a clear point of departure with regards to the kind of Poland that was available for the construction of national identity by the two groups of people in this study. Most of the post-WW2 group who came to the UK

during the war, or shortly afterwards, never fully experienced the communist reality first hand, whereas for the recent migrants the communist past and its legacy constitute an essential reference point, becoming a 'baseline in their constructions of their lives' (Hann 2006, p.4) or 'the key marker of 'then' as opposed to 'now' (ibid, p.247). Therefore, to provide further context for the findings chapters later on, firstly, I explore experiences outside of Poland during and after the war, followed by a section on experiences of people who lived in (post)-communist Poland and subsequent social changes in the country.

3.2.3 Formation of Polish communities abroad after WW2

In the new political reality after WW2, many Polish people displaced during the war decided not to return to Poland, distrusting the communist regime. Some thought this was a temporary stage, awaiting further political changes on the European continent, including WW3 (Garapich 2008b, 2016, Smojkis 2013, Sword 1986,1996). However, for many their migratory journey started well before their settlement decision itself at the end of the war.

The events in the early stages of WW2 had a profound impact on the post-WW2 participants in this study, including the initial period when Germany and Soviet Russia were allies between 1939-1941. The war started with the invasion of Poland from the west by the German Army on 1st September 1939, followed by the attack on the eastern border by the Soviet Army on 17th September 1939. As the war progressed on the continent, people were displaced due to the country's occupation and war activity. Sword (1996) divides these population movements into two routes: western and eastern in line with the two war fronts. In the West many people were forced into Wehrmacht service, labour camps, working in German industry and farming, as well as many ended up in concentration and prisoners of war camps. Moreover, the First Polish Corps under British command was formed from soldiers who escaped from the continent following the fall of France in 1940.

However, the most significant for this study in terms of numbers and the subsequent dominant narrative (Sword 1986) was forced mass movement of Polish citizens which took place in the east between 1940 and 1941. Thus, some more details on this context are crucial. It is estimated that during that period between 1.5 to 2.2 million people were deported by the Soviet Army from the Kresy region to labour camps in Siberia, Kazakhstan and Central Asia (Barański 1991, Davies 1981, Association of Poles in India 1942-1948 2002, Midlands Polish Community Associations 2011). Various associations and archival organisations have made efforts to gather records of these deportations and wider impacts

of the war, including searchable archive collections such as Polish Exiles of WW2.⁴ For example, the Kresy Family Group provides records of 228 trains departing from Poland with 295,665 people taken to the following destinations:

| Date | Number of trains / destination⁵ | No of people |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Feb 1940 | 98 trains - Archangelsk, Sverdlovsk, Omsk, Novosibirsk, Irkutsk | 138,616 |
| April 1940 | 50 trains - Kazakhstan, Sverdlovsk, Altai Kraj, Akciubinsk, Kustanaj, Petropawlosk, Semipalatinsk | 56,828 |
| June 1940 | 38 trains - Novosibirsk, Bashkirska, Maryjska, Krasnoyarsk, about 10% to Northern Ural, Rep. Komi | 48,188 |
| July 1940 | 21 trains - Archangielsk, Kazakhstan, Sverdlovsk, Altai Kraj, Novosibirsk, Krasnoyarsk | 26,994 |
| June 1941 | 21 trains - From around Wilno; scattered widely throughout USSR | 25,039 |
| Total | 228 trains | 295,665 |

Table 1. Examples of Kresy deportations to USSR Gulags⁶

The reports captured the hard conditions endured during these long train journeys – as Davies summarised “the conditions in those trains defy coherent language” (1981, p.448), followed by hard labour, starvation and death in harsh living conditions in labour camps (Davis 1981, Association of Poles in India 1942-1948 2002). The situation changed drastically on 22nd June 1941 when unexpectedly Germany attacked the USSR; this was a turning point in WW2, as the USSR became an ally in the war effort against Germany. This also opened doors to the Sikorski-Mayski Pact signed in July 1941 between Poland and the Soviet Union, in the presence of Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister and Anthony Eden, British Foreign Secretary. Although hugely controversial and by many perceived as a sign of Poland’s insignificance in the forging of a relationship between the Western Allies and Russia, the agreement granted amnesty to Polish people on Russian territory (albeit “for crimes that had not been committed” Davies 1981, p.451), including imprisoned soldiers and previously deported civilians. It also paved a way for the Polish Army to be formed in Russia under the command of General Anders, which later became known as Anders Army.

Between 1941 and 1942 an extensive network of assembly points emerged across Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, attracting soldiers and civilians who were gathering to seek help and escape from the labour camps. It soon became clear that more support was needed for these high numbers of civilians, including families with children. Already at this stage schools were being organised alongside the military preparations. Records show

⁴ <https://www.polishexilesfww2.org/>

⁵ Destinations as recorded on the Kresy Family website, noting Akciubinsk is likely to be “Aktiubinsk” a city in North Kazakhstan; Bashkirska - Basjkir Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Bashkir ASSR – now Republic of Bashkortostan, Russia) and Maryjska - Mari Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Mari ASSR - now Mari El Republic) in the Ural-Volga region in Russia; whereas Rep Komi was then Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Komi ASSR) in north-western Russia.

⁶ <https://www.kresyfamily.com/3-deportation.html>

that there were six schools, most of them in Uzbekistan, with the largest of them located in the Narpay District providing schooling to 1,200 cadets (Barański 1991, p.17). In the meantime, relations with the Soviet government were deteriorating further, and following a period of shortages of food and practically no political relations between Stalin and Sikorski, Prime Minister of the Polish government in exile, a decision was made to evacuate the new Polish Army from this region to join the British Army in the Middle East. It was agreed that the army would be transferred from Krasnovodsk (the present-day Türkmenbaşy) to Persia (now Iran) across the Caspian Sea, and that the evacuation would include soldiers as well as their families. In total, 114,500 people came through this route to Iran, including 78,000 soldiers (Officers and Men, Women's Auxiliary Service and Cadets), as well as 36,500 civilians: 24,000 families and 12,500 children (Siemaszko 2014 cited in Davies 2015, p.117).

Consequently, the high number of civilians required additional arrangements, with many people weak or ill, exhausted and traumatised by their exile experiences. The Polish government in exile and the British government coordinated the establishment of displaced persons camps beyond western Asia, including British African colonies such as Tanganyika (now Uganda and Tanzania), Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Kenya and South Africa. In addition, political arrangements were made directly with the government of Mexico (10,000 people in 1942, Barański 1991, p.54) and New Zealand, with the latter receiving 750 Polish orphans thanks to public support in 1944 (ibid, p.61). Overall, a big operation was triggered with people being relocated in groups to different camps as and when they were prepared in countries which had agreed to host the Poles.

Alongside the activity to create the camp spaces, efforts were made to provide Polish education to people scattered across these many countries. In his report on Polish schools during WW2, Barański (1991) offers an overview of the networks of schools that emerged during this period, reflecting both the post-1941 movement of the Kresy deportees, as well as the wider impacts of the war across the European continent. Coordinated by the Polish government in exile, the Polish Army in the West, and many humanitarian and refugee organisations (Barański 1991), the schools offered education at all levels for those who were not of army age; whereas those who were aged 14 and over were educated in cadet schools aligned with their army training. Barański reports on schools established in over 15 different countries between 1941 and 1945, including the Middle East: Persia (4 schools), India (4 schools), Palestine (16 schools), Egypt (3 schools) and Lebanon (8 schools); East African British Colonies: Tanganyika (6 schools), Kenia (2 schools), Uganda (2 schools), Northern Rhodesia (5 schools), Southern Rhodesia (3 schools), South Africa (1 school); as well as

Mexico (1 school), and New Zealand (1 school). Additionally, Polish schools also emerged in Europe: France, Italy, Sweden and Britain.

Overall, books, archives and other documents from this period demonstrate highly organised structures within the displaced persons camps, with Polish schools, Polish scouts and guides, Polish churches, community spaces for entertainment and celebrations, and theatre halls, all set up within the boundaries of many of these camps (e.g., in a camp for 5,000 Polish people in Valivade, Association of Poles in India 1942-1948, 2002). A monthly youth magazine from the Valivade camp contains articles on Polish literature and India as the host country, and provides extracts from diaries all young people were encouraged to write (Camp circular 'Youth' - *Młodzi*, 15th Jan 1946). A diary note entitled 'Tomorrow is the 2031st day of war' recounts how the author, feeling safe in her camp environment, learnt from a letter about the fate of her friend in a labour camp in Germany: *First we were deported too, but to Russia, and then India. Secondary School here. My scout unit here. Hala is far away – I don't know anything of what happened to her. And then suddenly – she is alive! She is in a labour camp in Germany [...] I know she will be jealous of my fate. It's awful when I go to school, she has to work.* Furthermore, from a scouting bulletin prepared for the unit established in this camp (Camp bulletin - *W Kręgu pracy*, Bulletin No 7, Valivade February 1946), we learn about the timetable for young scouts, which gives an insight into the expected structure of their day:

7:15 – Getting up

7:15 – 8:00 – Prayer, exercise and wash

8:00 – 8:15 – Breakfast

8:15 – 8:20 – Checking the timetable

8:20 – 13:00 – School

13:00 – 15:00 – Wash, dinner, complete rest

15:00 – 16:00 – Scout unit meeting

16:00 – 19:00 – School homework

19:00 – 21:00 – Supper, club, walking, visiting

21:00 – 23:00 – Reading, own interests

23:00 – 23:30 – Diary, evening wash, prayer

(Home archives: W Kręgu pracy, Bulletin No 7, Valivade February 1946)

The above extracts from the bulletins show both the organised character of these camps and the haven they offered to the displaced people for many years, up to six years in some cases. The focus was on Polish schooling and preserving Polish traditions and customs, and ultimately awaiting news from Poland and on its post-war arrangements.

Meanwhile, the war effort continued on many fronts. The Polish government in exile moved from Paris to set up its headquarters in London in 1940, working closely with the British government. Furthermore, following its evacuation from the Soviet Union, Anders Army was

established as the Second Polish Corps of the British Army, fighting alongside the British Army in North Africa, the Middle East and Italy. Together with the First Polish Corps, the number of Polish servicemen in the West amounted to 228,000 by 1944-45 (Davies 1981, p.272). Their efforts in many battles became written into history books, for example the Battle of Britain (1940), battles in the North African Campaign (1940-43), Monte Cassino in Italy (1944), and Arnhem in Holland (1944). However, these efforts were not matched by the outcomes of the post-WW2 arrangements made by the three post-war world powers; for the Western Allies, the Russian involvement was crucial for the war campaign. As a result, they 'inevitably sacrificed Polish interests to the Soviet Union' (Biskupski 2000, p.111), aligning the plans for Poland with Stalin's vision for the region. Moreover, as the Soviet Union stopped diplomatic relations with Poland in 1943, subsequent discussions about political arrangements in the region were taking place without Poland's presence at the consecutive conferences on post-war arrangements - Tehran (1943), Yalta (1945), and Potsdam (1945) (Section 3.2.2 provides details of the outcomes of these conferences). Consequently, the new world order meant that for many Polish people in the West return to Poland under Soviet control was not an option, and especially for those who had experienced exile to Soviet labour camps at the beginning of the war.

The following extract from a letter written by Father Kački, a parish priest in Birmingham (Polish Catholic Community in Birmingham 1972) captures the variety of war displacement circumstances that brought Polish people to his parish, including labour camps and prisons in the Soviet Union, prisoner of war camps and concentration camps in Germany and Spain, and a wide range of military paths and battle experiences:

They came through different routes. Some through green borders, taking them to the Polish army in the west. Majority of them experienced the most inhumane conditions. Some had been to Kolyma⁷, others have been to Soviet prisons; they witnessed suffering of thousands of people. They stood by the graves of people starving to death and killed by typhus. They had been to prisoner of war camps and concentration camps in Germany; they had experienced slave labour, and some of them had even been to Miranda del Ebro⁸. They had worn different uniforms, as they had fought at Tobruk, Narvik, Battle of Britain, the epic fight of Polish Navy and Air Force. They had been through the Battle of Monte Cassino, 1st Armoured Division, and had followed the Parachute Division's path, they fought the enemy at Arnhem. And of course, they were from Polish Home Army too.' (Polish Catholic Community in Birmingham 1972, pp.23-24)

Overall, according to different sources (Patterson 1961, Smojkis 2013, Sword 1996, Zubrzycki 1956), the vast majority were Polish army, but also forced labourers or involuntary recruits to the Wehrmacht or the Organisation Todt, prisoners-of-war from German camps

⁷ Kolyma, located in the Russian Far East, became the most notorious region for Gulag labour camps.

⁸ Miranda De Ebro – a Spanish Concentration Camp constructed by the Franco regime.

who came with the army, including the Home Army members previously captured following Warsaw uprising of 1944; political prisoners from German concentration camps; as well as later on people recruited through the UK's European Voluntary Workers (EVW) to work in British industry, and finally, a significant group of members of military families from displaced persons camps. Based on the House of Commons Papers (Vol. 473, p.87), Zubrzycki reports that in December 1949 Poles who resided in the UK were: 93,700 ex-servicemen, 31,800 of their families and dependants, including Polish national arriving to marry British subjects, 2,400 people under the distressed relatives' scheme, and 29,400 Polish EVWs (Zubrzycki 1956, p.62).

Their right to stay in the UK was not certain during the early years after the war. Initially, Winston Churchill's statement to the House following the Yalta Conference in 1945 expressed gratitude for the service of the Polish troops and outlined intentions to welcome them into the country, referring to potential citizenship of the UK:

"In any event, His Majesty's Government will never forget the debt they owe to the Polish troops who have served them so valiantly, and to all those who have fought under our command I earnestly hope it may be possible to offer the citizenship and freedom of the British Empire, if they so desire. I am not able to make a declaration on that subject today, because all matters affecting citizenship require to be discussed between this country and the Dominions, and that takes time. But so far as we are concerned we should think it an honour to have such faithful and valiant warriors dwelling among us as if they were men of our own blood." (Churchill 1945 cited from Kaczmarek 2020)

However, despite this promise (known as Churchill's pledge), the future of Polish people abroad was not straightforward. As discussed above, the political situation on the continent had changed drastically for Poland following Stalin's switching of his allegiance from Germany to the West in 1941. As a result of this new political situation, some anti-Polish sentiments had started to emerge in Britain already before the end of WW2, including marches against the Polish cause organised by the left (Zubrzycki 1956). When the war ended, the question of Polish servicemen became pressing within the context of the new arrangements in Europe and the servicemen's mistrust towards Soviet Russia, many of whom had lived through the Kresy deportations of 1940 and 1941. Furthermore, information coming from Poland, which was shared by the Polish community through a network of community newsletters, added to their uncertainties. For example, *Wiadomości Kresowej* (*Kresy News*), 9th February 1947, a community newsletter reported on prosecutions and imprisonment of Polish soldiers: the Colonel Jan Rzepecki trial of a group of soldiers previously involved in the Home Army resulted in a death sentence for one of them and prison sentences for the rest of the group. Later, the death sentence was replaced with a life sentence, with the UK-based community newsletter reporting this headline news as follows:

Headlines this week

Warsaw, 3.2.47. On 3rd February this year the final sentencing was announced by the Warsaw District Court in the long showcase trial of Colonel Rzepecki and others. Death penalty – the only one in this trial – was given to Głębocki. Prison sentences for the others range from 12 to 2 years. Colonel Rzepecki was sentenced to 8 years in prison. On 5th of this month, “president of the Polish republic”, Bierut, granted “a pardon” (although he does not have this kind of authority based on the March Constitution), changing Głębocki’s death penalty to life imprisonment, granting a total pardon to Rzepecki, Jachimiek, Szczurek and Emilia Malassa, and reducing prison sentences for others. Both this relatively lenient sentence and the unexpected “pardon” given by Bierut in this trial which had been so widely discussed by the Warsaw propaganda suggest that the Warsaw regime would like to convince the Polish opinion and people abroad of the “state’s generosity”. (Wiadomości Kresowej, 1947)

The above demonstrates how the mistrust towards the new regime in Poland was becoming embedded in daily lives through press and other community channels, impacting settlement decisions in the long term.

In the meantime, anti-Polish sentiments grew further in Britain, especially following the victory of the more pro-Soviet Labour Party in government elections in 1945, as well as coupled with the fact that the stories of the Kresy deportations to Soviet Russia were unknown or incomprehensible to the people in Britain (Sword 1986). A most controversial decision by the new government led by Clement Attlee was not to allow Polish Forces to participate in the Victory Parade in May 1946, ultimately showing complete lack of support for the Polish cause and their contribution to the war effort. Polish soldiers who were stationed in Britain at the end of the war were encouraged to go back to Poland, tempted with a free passage, ‘56 days pay and allowances plus a war gratuity according to the years of service and rank in the Polish forces while under British Command’ (Sword, Davies and Ciechowski, 1989 quoted in Midlands Polish Community Association 2011, p.5). Many of them did – over 100,000 ex-servicemen decided to either return to Poland or emigrate further (Kaczmarek 2020). The destinations included a wide range of countries; UK national archives list over 50 countries on their register of repatriation to countries other than Poland as at 31st October 1947 (Kaczmarek 2020), for example with larger numbers for the Argentine and Canada at that point in time. The uncertainties around future settlement were also visible in the Polish community’s weekly newsletters, for example *Wiadomości Kresowej* (*Kresy News*), dated 9th February 1947) contain an article entitled ‘Agriculture in Canada’ opening with the following: ‘*Despite the fact that the means or countries open for our emigration are not known yet, it is prudent to provide here information on conditions in potential destinations for emigration.*’ The local information channels were preparing the community by providing them insights into different destinations, in this case Canada.

However, despite this backdrop of settlement uncertainties among the Polish community in Britain, and the attitudes within the Left, there was a recognition of Polish servicemen's loyalty to the allies and the British Army. Also, more urgently, the government needed to deal with the high numbers of Polish people who were unable to return to communist Poland. Consequently, in 1946 the Polish Resettlement Corps was formed, with the aim for all Polish servicemen to be demobilised within two years. The Polish Resettlement Act 1947 was passed by Parliament, giving Polish servicemen, their families and dependants the right to stay in Britain, as well as 'cash allowance and maintenance in camps or hostels of the Assistance Board' (Midlands Polish Community Association 2011, p.5). This Act also directly impacted on the fate of people in the displaced persons camps and those who found themselves in the British Zone in Germany after the liberation of the Nazi camps; many of them had family links with the Polish Army in the West and thus gaining the right to settle in the UK. There was a variety of emigration decisions at that time. Some people from the displaced persons camps emigrated directly to other countries through their existing family networks, others through recruitment campaigns run within the camps before their imminent closures. For example, reports from the Valivade camp in India refer to 280 people who individually left for Canada and the USA sponsored by their relatives in these countries, whereas the Australian Immigration Office recruited 10 men to work in the hydro-electric plant in Tasmania, and 10 women to work in hospitals. One of the women leaving for Australia reflected "Saying goodbye to my brother and sister, who stayed behind, was not easy" (Association of Poles in India 1942-1948 2002, p.611); over the next few years this trend grew for many families, stretching family networks across different countries.

Nonetheless, many people chose Britain as their destination, in the hope to be reunited with their families as well as supported by the new legislation. As a result, the number of Polish born residents in Britain after the war increased significantly, with the 1951 Census recording 162,339 Poles living in Britain (compared to 44,462 in 1931) (Midlands Polish Community Association 2011). The following years show a decline in the numbers due to the older war generation dwindling, continued migration to the USA, and also naturalisation processes; for example, according to Zubrzycki (1956, p.63) around 10,300 became naturalised between 1950-54, hence they were no longer recognised as aliens by the Home Office.

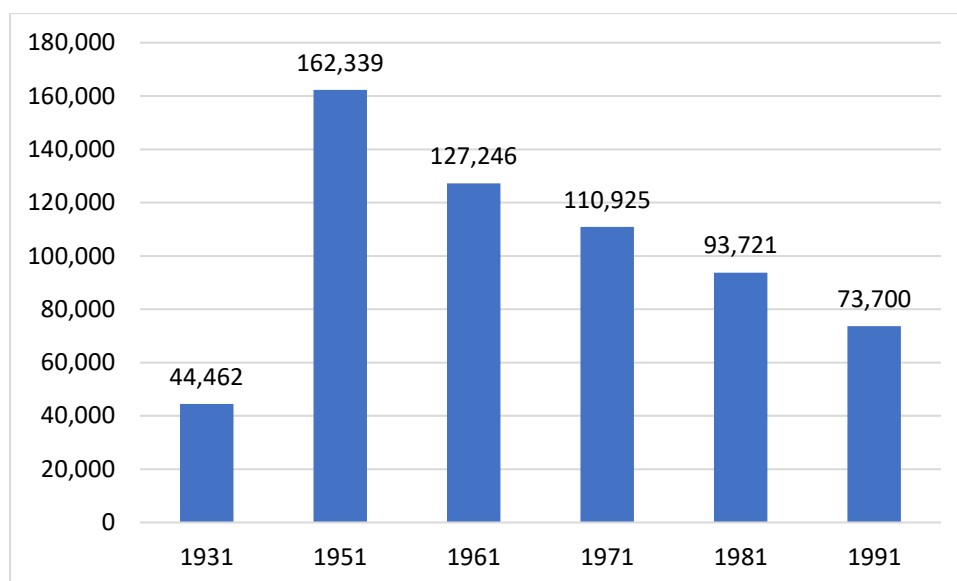


Figure 2. Polish born population resident in Britain between 1931 and 1991⁹

Furthermore, according to the statistics of the Polish Resettlement Corps, the Polish army population demobilised in the UK was much more homogenous compared to pre-war Poland. Based on these statistics, Patterson (1961) contrasts these numbers in terms of religious affiliations as follows: Roman Catholic (86%), Greek Catholic (<4%), Orthodox (4%), Protestant (4%), and Jewish (2%), which is in stark contrast to the pre-war make-up of Poland - Roman Catholic (65%), Greek Catholic (10.5%), Greek Orthodox (12%), Protestant (2.5%), and Hebrew or Jewish (10%) (ibid, p.73). It is also hugely different from the makeup of a relatively small group of Polish-born residents in the pre-war Britain – only 10.3% were Christian Poles in 1931 (4,500 in Zubrzycki 1956, p.47). This shows a shift to predominantly Roman Catholic composition of the group settling in the UK.

Moreover, the statistics demonstrated a high proportion of educated people (Sword 1986, 1992); and based on the 1951 census, there was an imbalance in terms of gender, with 114,776 males and only 47,573 women. The situation was to an extent compensated by a steady flow of women from Poland over the next few decades, especially, after the Polish thaw in 1956¹⁰, when many women came to marry members of the post-WW2 group. The

⁹ Graph based on census data (Midlands Polish Community Association 2011, p.5)

¹⁰ Events of 1956, also known as Polish October, brought about more relaxed central controls, more personal freedoms and easier contact with the West. The trigger was the “secret speech”, denouncing Stalin’s tyrannical rule, delivered by Nikita Khrushchev, the head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union at the party’s congress in Moscow in 1956, three years after Stalin’s death. The speech became well known in Poland, coupled with the death of Boleslaw Bierut, the First Secretary of the Polish Communist party, during his visit to Moscow that year. A period of unrest followed culminating in Władysław Gomułka coming to power (see Pienkos (2006) or Davies (1981) for more details).

1971 census showed that 75% of those who arrived between 1950 and 1970 were women, out of 13,470 arrivals (Zebrowska 1986).

The post-WW2 arrivals were initially accommodated mainly in hostels and former military camps, administered by the Assistance Board from 1947. A vast network of camps provided a home to around 120,000 people across England, Scotland and Wales (Biegus and Biegus 2013). Over the years, the camps were gradually closed, with people moving out to find work, albeit initially closely monitored and restricted to certain industries, including coal mining, spinning, foundry work and agriculture (Zebrowska 1986). Many settled in London (38,000 in 1949, Zebrowska 1986) and other large industrial areas, including West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and Nottinghamshire (Sword 1996). The majority of the camps disappeared by 1969, with a handful remaining as retirement homes or other community spaces till the present day, for example Ilford Park Polish Home, Stover in Devon, now a Polish retirement home.¹¹

Schooling of young people became a priority. Between 1947 and 1954, the Committee for the Education of Poles was established to provide an oversight over Polish schools set up in resettlement camps. The Committee's objective was for Polish people to be fitted for resettlement, providing them with an 'adequate knowledge of English' and teaching them 'the British way of life' (National Archives, undated). Initially the schools were under joint Polish-British administration (1947-1954), followed by solely British administration through Local Education Authorities (until 1962), with the last two Polish schools closing in camps in Northwick Park, Gloucestershire and Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire in 1962 (Goławski 1965, p.37, Barański 1991, p.79). Overall, in the first decade after the war, there was a gradual shift away from the managed resettlement process, with steady closures of resettlement camps and Polish state schools.

In parallel, the Polish political scene in the UK was shaped by the Polish elite, driven by the traditions of the political 'emigracja' (émigré) - tradition which had emerged as a result of waves of migration from Poland triggered by consecutive insurrections in the struggle for Poland's independence during the partitioning period; in particular the 'Great Emigration' which followed the November Uprising of 1830-31. In addition to these émigré traditions, the political and military leadership had been established in the UK well before the end of WW2, with the Polish government in exile setting up its headquarters in London in 1940. With the end of the war and feeling betrayed by the outcomes of the Yalta Conference, the London

¹¹ Archival footage from Ilford Park is available via YouTube :
Our Little Poland pt1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxnEpYyWxIU>;
A Place Called Home pt2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vko1wQggPhs>;
Place Called Home pt3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwHRteOn4Hs>

émigré leadership gained new objectives, including continued opposition to communist Poland and, as highlighted by Sword (1996, p.27), the establishment of a large settlement in exile to provide a significant political voice. Hence, unsurprisingly, there was pressure on the UK-based population through formal organisations: firstly, not to take British citizenship and secondly, not to return or visit communist Poland. However, the political scene in the UK became too fractioned and pre-occupied with leadership challenges and internal squabbles, and so lost touch with the wider population. Sword captured these trends in the following statistics: only 4,500 voted in the 1954 elections to the National Council (out of 80,000 entitled to vote), with in-country contributions to the National Treasury falling by more than half to £4506 in 1954 and £1400 by 1959 (cited from Sword 1996, pp.33-34). Thus, withdrawal from the political space was observed in the 1950s, with many people gaining stable employment (albeit many deskilled in manual jobs), housing, free medical care and schooling for their children – Sword (*ibid*, p.35) identified this period as a shift from being politically motivated to being an economically motivated migration.

However, away from the official structures of the government in exile and faced with the closures of camps and Polish state schools, Polish people started to build their own community spaces in many geographical locations in the UK, collectively and with huge fund-raising efforts. They came together through a dense network of associations and churches, with two backbones of the community life: Polish Ex-Combatants' Association (Stowarzyszenie Polskich Kombatantów), and Polish catholic parishes. Community-funded Polish clubs, churches and schools started to emerge in many larger cities. They invested huge amounts of time and money into those buildings, with no remuneration for those involved which continued over the decades to come. The value of these properties and their proliferation were staggering. For example, the Polish Club POSK in London lists the names of 1,838 founders and 165 people who left donations to the club in their wills between 1970 and 1989 (Polski Ośrodek Społeczno-Kulturalny, POSK 1989). Significantly, the political leadership were sidelined in the POSK project (Sword 1996, p.105), with many more clubs and churches built through similar collective efforts. Overall, at that time over 40 Polish organisations operated under the umbrella of the Federation of Poles in Great Britain (Smojkis 2013, Zubrzycki 1956), including the large Polish Ex-Combatants Association, as well as a network of 80 parishes under the Polish Catholic Mission (Patterson 1961, p.89), whose network grew to 78 parish churches, 30 churches, 13 chapels, 54 parish clubs and 38 presbyteries by 1993 (Sword 1996, p.92). These new physical spaces, often purpose-built, became centres for Polish social and cultural life bringing together diverse populations of Polish people from different parts of pre-war Poland and often of different social position. For example, the Parish priest described the formation of the Birmingham community as follows:

They were settling down across Great Britain, in different regions, but mainly industrial regions, and this is how they arrived in Birmingham. How many arrived in Birmingham, it is difficult to say. According to official figures, their number was never above 3,000. They represented all layers of Polish society. Free professions, blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, people from the Eastern Borderland Kresy, professional officers / two generals /, professors, judges / seven I believe/, teachers, doctors.' (Polish Catholic Community in Birmingham 1972, pp.23-24)

Despite this diversity, together they formed a wide range of groups and associations based in their clubs and churches, including ex-combatant associations, associations of Poles from Indian or African displaced persons camps, social groups, scouts, choirs, dance organisations, sports clubs, industry or professional groups. For example, in Birmingham there were religious groups: the Rosary Group, Marian Solidarity, and the Altar Boys Group, as well as a range of societies and associations such as the Birmingham section of the Polish Ex-Combatants Association, the Polish Community Magazine, a Charity Section to help Polish hospital patients, two choirs, a library, an Amateur Theatre; Youth Groups, the Catholic Association of Polish Youth; Folk Dance Groups, the Philatelist Society; a Women's Group; Polish Scouts, Polish School, and sports clubs – football, volleyball, table tennis and basketball (Polish Community in Birmingham 1972).

In 1965, Polska Macierz Szkolna (Polish Educational Society), itself established in 1953, (Goławski 1965) reported on 94 Polish Saturday Schools, usually aligned with Polish clubs. There were also two Polish boarding schools: Fawley Court (boys), Henley-on-Thames open until 1986, and Pittsford (girls), Northampton until 1983 (Goławski 1965, p.37).

Alongside the Polish community organisations, there was an extraordinary number of printed materials, newsletters, newspapers, journals and books; emerging already in pre-war Poland (Smojkis 2013) and then in displaced persons camps through community newsletters and bulletins (as per the examples shared by the participants through this fieldwork). Once in the UK, according to Patterson (1961), there were 202 periodicals in the UK between 1939 and 1949, reduced to 33 by 1960 due to the withdrawal of government funds in 1945, thus, having to rely on readers and advertising. Overall, it was a significant platform to share information and to continue the Polish language (Smojkis 2013), especially through local and community newsletters and magazines. With the post-WW2 generation dwindling, these local publications have mostly disappeared, with Birmingham's *Wiadomości*, I have written articles for, being one of the last surviving magazines published through the Polish Millennium House in this city.

Finally, the dramatic political changes of 1980s and 1990s had a great impact on the Polish community in the UK, by then many middle class, and with an established routine for practising their Polishness locally. The key events included the election of the first Polish

Pope in 1978, the Solidarity Trade Union movement leading to regime changes in 1989, the formal closure of the government in exile in 1990, and finally, the total collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (more on this in the next section). For Poles in Britain, this was time of vigorous fundraising and campaigning, for example the Medical Aid for Poland set up following an appeal from Lech Wałęsa, the Solidarity leader, with 319 lorries of medicine, medical equipment and clothing sent to Poland between 1981-94 (Sword 1996, p.57). However, mass returns to Poland did not happen, and people continued observing the events from afar. Many remained suspicious towards the Polish state, further disappointed with the election of former communists (the Democratic Left Alliance, SLD) in elections in 1993. At the point of writing this group of people is nearly gone, and their community places are dwindling too, not attracting the second or third generation, and alien or invisible to newcomers from post-communist Poland.

3.2.4 Lived experiences of (post)-communist Poland

As a result of the post-WW2 treaties, Poland found itself under Russian influence and became part of the Soviet bloc which defined the world's power struggle during the Cold War. The 1952 Constitution established the Polish People's Republic, whose growth was based on a centrally planned economy implemented by a communist government closely collaborating with Moscow. Post-war Poland saw rapid development in industry, with the global index of industrial production rising from 100 in 1950 to 940 in 1974 (Davies 1981, p.595). Slower growth was recorded in agriculture, where most of the land remained privately owned. Overall, all areas of political, economic, public and cultural life of the country were subjected to state controls through central mechanisms. Consequently, people had to adjust to this centrally controlled system and undemocratic governments. This situation continued for nearly half a century until the collapse of communist regimes in the Soviet bloc in 1989 – in Poland led by the Solidarity Trade Union. The collapse sent shockwaves across the entire bloc as well as the rest of the world. However, the deconstructive process itself started long before the revolutionary events of 1989. Countries in the Soviet bloc experienced varying degrees of isolation from the world outside the Iron Curtain, where Poland differed from countries like Bulgaria and Eastern Germany (Sztompka 2004) – Polish society already had some access to Western Europe through mass media, links with Poles abroad, some migration and tourism outside of the region. Additionally, throughout the communist period Poland was able to nurture its spirit of nationalism by maintaining a certain level of autonomy within the bloc and by preserving the Roman Catholic Church's strong position, which was further consolidated by the election of the

Polish Pope, John Paul II in 1978. In Hann's words, the Roman Catholic Church in Poland served as 'a highly effective vehicle of political opposition' (Hann 2006, p.168).

Hann (2006) undertook a number of ethnographic studies into rural communities in the Carpathian province, south-eastern Poland in the 1970s. The region was mainly populated by Polish peasants, who had been resettled into the area after the war, and a minority group of Lemkos - Greek Catholics who were the indigenous ethnic group in this part of the Carpathian province. This setting gave Hann an insight into the role of the Roman Catholic Church as the dominant church, and its 'symbiosis' with the national movement which provided the foundation for a modern national identity in Poland (Hann 2006, p.172). The research also provided an intriguing enquiry into the tensions created by a resettlement programme Operation Vistula (*Akcja Wisła*) in 1947; during which the non-Polish population of south-eastern Poland was deported to the north and west of the country. Consequently, this minority was dispersed within the new state, with only a small group of returnees that still resided in the Carpathian south-east area.

Moreover, Hann was interested in fieldwork in Poland, as it offered an opportunity to research 'rural transformation in a socialist country which had failed to implement collectivisation' (ibid, p.115), and a case of 'highly insufficient socialist economy' (ibid, p.119). The communist government in Poland gave up attempts to implement mass collectivisation after a period of unrest in 1956 (see Footnote 10). Apart from Yugoslavia, this was an exceptional circumstance within the Soviet bloc. As a result, peasants continued to own their land and the rural production was predominantly based on small-scale farming. This meant that peasants were 'perceived to be a suspect class' in the 1950s and 1960s (ibid, p.120). During this period, they mainly produced for their own consumption, and provided simple produce such as grain and milk for the market, at prices controlled by the central government. There was little opportunity to modernise and increase production, leading to food shortages. However, the situation changed in the 1970s, when the communist government introduced a new category of 'special farmers' to tackle shortages in the food market. This group of farmers received additional support which over the years resulted in growing social divisions in the countryside. In post-communist years, this division continued, with emphasis placed on promoting commercial farming and entrepreneurial family agriculture. This caused large-scale dissatisfaction and protests in the early 1990s.

Overall, the disintegration of the communist system in 1989 brought about the degeneration of the established meanings and symbols that the society could refer to in the early days of this epochal event. The changes that followed embraced all spheres of social, political and economic life in a systematic and multidimensional way which shook the foundations of the

previous system as well as of the old identities constructed in the communist reality.

Therefore, it is unsurprising that this huge change triggered scholarly debates around its impacts on individuals and societies. In the approach adopted in this study, I totally reject views which perceive people as somehow damaged by communism and therefore unable to successfully navigate the new capitalist reality. Although the differences between the two world orders are incontestable, the concept of homo sovieticus who is destined to fail in the capitalist reality (proposed by Zaslavsky 1994, Tischner 1991, Sztompka 2004) essentialises culture and removes people's agency, wrongly suggesting that social reality is sharply split between the backward communist past and forward-looking capitalism, and predetermining people's destiny as a result. For example, Sztompka (2004, pp.172-173) arranged the qualities of the new reality and those of the previous system along the following lines of dichotomy: "a) collectivism vs. individualism, b) solidarity in poverty vs. competition, c) egalitarianism vs. meritocratic justice, d) camouflage in mediocrity vs. conspicuous success, e) security vs. risk, f) reliance on fate vs. emphasis on agency, g) counting on social support vs. self-reliance, h) blaming failures on a system vs. personal responsibility and self-blame, i) passivism and escape to the private sphere vs. participation and activism in public sphere, and j) dwelling on the remembrances of the glorious past vs. actively anticipating and constructing the future." According to Sztompka, the struggle between the two worlds is normally unsuccessful as people, who have been corrupted by communism, are unable to deal with the new realities. Again, this essentialist view has been widely disputed and disapproved of as a 'culture-determinist approach' (Buchowski 2006, p. 472), nor is it supported by any of my findings from the field.

Furthermore, within the context of this debate, two contrasting theories have been proposed to explain the different post-communist models that have been observed in response to the disintegration of the system: the theory of revolution and the theory of evolution (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, p.4). Scholars who favour the theory of revolution see the disintegration of the totalitarian system in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as a complete collapse where the whole system needs to be fully replaced with free economy and liberal principles (discussed in Lipton and Sachs 1990, Boycko, Schleifer and Vishny 1995). Others disagree with the approach based on total discontinuity and suggest a more transitional outlook. The latter stance is based on the belief that the end of the previous order did not erase the communist past but rather provided the foundations for the new order. Within this framework, an approach based on 'evolution rather than revolution' as well as the idea of 'hybrid societies rather than polar extremes' has been elaborated by Burawoy and Verdery (1999, p.1). From this perspective, during the transitional phase post-communist countries relied on the institutional framework already in place within their national structures.

In Poland the end of communism started a rapid process of political and economic reforms, penetrating all spheres of social life. The magnitude and speed of the changes meant that this was a demanding time for many people. Overall, Poland is often regarded by economists as an example of a successful post-communist transition (Kaczmarczyk 2018), although some of the implemented reforms incurred high social costs. These challenges became acutely visible at the micro level, where many people adapted their responses to the new day-to-day realities based on their previous experiences, often employing a language familiar to them from the communist order. At times, these responses were regarded as communist mentality and political nostalgia. However, anthropologists and sociologists have shown that they were a sign of people's attempts to reconfigure the old system to defend their rights in the present. Soon after the collapse of the regime, fieldwork conducted in Poland (Dunn 1999 and Zbierski 1999) provides evidence of how the transitional process and daily navigation between the constructions of the communist past and the capitalist future took place across different parts of the society.

Elizabeth Dunn (1999) conducted an ethnographic study in a newly privatised firm which was in the process of implementing strategies based on the capitalist ethos of its new Western owner. The focus of this ethnography was on two groups of workers: shop-floor workers and sales representatives. Dunn observed a process based on 'the culturally constructed dichotomy' between communism and capitalism (Dunn 1999, p.135) whereby the shop-floor worker is constructed as a product of the communist system, unable to adapt to economic changes and lacking the ability to think ('repositories of bad habits'). On the other hand, the identity of the sales representative is created based on the qualities required to be successful in the new capitalist reality, such as being modern, dynamic and flexible. However, this dichotomy is challenged by the findings of the research. The shop-floor worker believes that the experience of communist constraints makes them a better worker, as they can adjust to changes quicker. Dunn identifies a clear process whereby the production worker re-constitutes communism as a symbol in the present, bringing forward elements of the previous system and inserting them into the new situation, whereas, the sales representatives efficiently negotiate the new capitalist reality, relying, however, on certain communist practices – for example gifts for potential customers. Dunn concludes that the new post-communist reality constructed by human agents in the Polish firm is driven by a continuous process of reconfiguration, which at the same time prevents American management techniques from being adopted in their pure western form. Consequently, the transition process is much more multi-layered, combines capitalist and communist practices, and reshapes them in the local context, based on historical experiences.

A study conducted by Zbierski-Salameh (1999) further supports the theory of evolution in showing that the neoliberal approach based on total discontinuity between communist and capitalism did not lead to the expected social outcomes in the early transitional period in Poland. Zbierski-Salameh placed her ethnography in the context of the responses of Polish peasants to reforms introduced by the Balcerowicz Plan in 1990 – also referred to as “Shock Therapy” (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, p.6). This programme of economic reforms was modelled on nineteenth century competitive capitalism of the West, ignoring the country’s subsequent development and its historical and economic conditions after the end of one-party rule. As a result, peasants were the first social group to rebel against the changes, leading to a change in government in 1993 in which the post-communist party, the Democratic Left Alliance, promised “capitalism with a human face” (Zbierski-Salameh 1999, p.210). In her study, Zbierski-Salameh captures the process by providing an account of the peasants’ rejection of the reforms, whereby they involuted their production, withdrew from markets and undertook political action. This came as a surprise to the governing elites, as this particular social group theoretically had a real interest in the capitalist transformation that would re-confirm their claim on private ownership rights. However, in the late 1980s the communist government introduced minimal prices for agricultural products to equalise urban and rural standards of life. Consequently, this transitional period, which brought about trade liberalisation, triggered a response in peasants that directly referred back to their experience under communism. What is especially significant is the fact that their rejection manifested itself as a collective struggle, without seeking narrow individual interests but instead encompassed the whole social group; this phenomenon contradicted the model promoted by the new capitalist approach. Within this process, the economic reforms were constructed as anti-Polish and damaging for the country; in addition, they were not perceived as inevitable, but rather as the fabrications of dishonest politicians, and as such were rejected totally.

The two examples provided by Dunn and Zbierski-Salameh offer an intriguing insight into the transitional period in Poland. They also allow for a better understanding of human agency and identity construction that followed the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Dunn’s example of the Polish shop-floor worker shows how the post-communist reality is reconfigured and altered by workers in light of their previous experiences, creating a historically coherent continuum between communism and capitalism; whereas Zbierski-Salameh shows how social agency challenges and subsequently rejects the version of the capitalist reality proposed by officials. Both ethnographies provide evidence of how the new reality was negotiated by people in the context of both the communist past and the capitalist future. Thus, yet again these examples defy the notion of frozen in time uncivilised homo sovieticus who is unable to liberate themselves from the communist past (Buchowski 2006). Furthermore, the lived experiences

of communism and its subsequent collapse cannot be seen simply as a historical adjustment and transformation from one system to another to correct mistakes from the past. As exemplified by Dunn and Zbierski-Salameh, human agency is key in the evolution between communism and capitalism and the agents' responses 'must be filtered through the historical possibilities that opened up to them under state socialism' (Zbierski-Salameh 1999, p.192). This is an intricate process negotiated by each person in the context of their surrounding culture and the wider society, politically and economically. Overall, this was a time of significant change across all layers of society. The World Bank macro-economic data of that time (Aldaz-Carroll et al. 2017) tells a story of Poland's fast and stable growth, averaging about 4% per year, with the country moving from middle to high-income status in less than 15 years. However, micro-level experiences were different, with growing unemployment in the country. Therefore, despite the high level macro-economic outcomes, increasing numbers of people were leaving Poland – a process that intensified after the EU accession on 1st May 2004 (more discussion on Poland's EU accession in Section 3.2.5).

Further insightful fieldwork, disputing the notion of homo sovieticus, was undertaken by Garapich (2014) who studied the Polish homeless population in London in the context of Poland's newly acquired EU status. Garapich explores the reasons behind the rise of homelessness from the new EU member states, of which a striking majority were Polish nationals. Some of them had pre-existing troubled backgrounds of unemployment, homelessness, prison, alcohol and drug abuse; while others spiralled into homelessness due to structural factors related with their insecure position in the UK labour market. The findings of the research show that most of the Polish homeless in London were the victims of high unemployment in post-1989 Poland, who suddenly lost their status due to failed businesses or redundancies in state owned companies. Overall, the key feature of their narratives is a sense of loss and the feeling of being denied the benefits of the market economy. However, yet again, Garapich disagrees with the syndrome of homo sovieticus who was indoctrinated by the previous system and therefore is unable to successfully adjust to the new neoliberal order. According to his findings, the homeless Polish migrants engage actively with their new reality by rejecting the institutions of the establishment. Instead, they build networks and friendship bonds within the homeless world in London based on trust, mutual help and often alcohol consumption. The meanings they construct are set in the context of their resistance against the forces of the institutionalised system. These tactics and attitudes are familiar to them from the previous era and were developed as a way of their adaptation and strategy to navigate the new context in the UK. In Garapich's words: '*homeless Poles respond actively to their situation of powerlessness by reinforcing and re-enacting tested means of survival in the face of dominant power – be it a hostile socialist regime, inequalities of the transition era,*

or exclusionary practices of the British welfare state. This combination of factors helps explain why the numbers of homeless Poles have swollen in London in the last few years' (2014, p.111).

Finally, the deliberations around the concept of homo sovieticus, and the theory of revolution versus the theory of evolution are also underpinned by the wider academic discourse regarding the relationship between the West and the East in Europe. Similar to the processes of construction of modern nation-states discussed in Section 3.2.1, there is a body of literature dealing with the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy and the process of 'othering', in the light of which the Western identity can exist only if it can be contrasted with and referenced against other identities – the Other (Hall 1996b, p.345). Thus, the perceived superior status of the West is demarcated from the backward and uncivilised other in the East. Within this framework, the concept of orientalism elaborated by Said (1978) specifically looks at the power and authority of the West, which employs *'the corporate institutions for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short ... a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient'* (1978, p.3). Todorova observed similar processes in her studies of the Balkans: *'As in the case of the Orient, the Balkans have served as a repository of negative characteristics against which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the "European" and the "West" has been constructed'* (1997, p.188). This approach permeated through to all spheres of political, social and economic discussions since the eighteenth century, expanding the division in Europe further in terms of both space and time. The latter denotes development over time from backward to civilised and from primitive to cultured. Todorova comments as follows: *'the element of time with its developmental aspect has been an important, and nowadays the most important, characteristic of contemporary perceptions of East and West'* (1997, p.12). The West has been constructed as a 'measuring rod' (ibid, p.47) for the East in terms of its development and level of civilisation.

Furthermore, the shifts in collective identities and the meaning of 'the other' in contemporary Europe have been elaborated further by Buchowski (2006). On the one hand, as a result of events of 1989 spatial orientalism has moved eastwards in geographical terms. On the other hand, orientalism also escaped the traditional confines of space and time, allowing different identities to be construed based on an individual's perceived adaptation to the new capitalist social life. Buchowski contends *'that for those still thinking in "orientalizing" terms a mental map has morphed into social space, or, that they have found "otherness" in their sisters and brothers'* (2006, p.466). The degree to which people are able to embrace the free market and democracy is used as a 'yardstick', dividing society along the lines of urban vs. rural,

educated vs. uneducated, and winners vs. losers of transformation (ibid, p.466). This has led to the new practice of “nesting orientalism”, where people are socially stigmatised as less equipped to cope with the demands of the new social order – the orient within, where the border between the West and the East runs across society, not across geographical borders as it was in the previous political system. However, no individual is frozen into a particular social state; people are active agents interpreting social situations and contributing to continual change – as a result, the concept of homo sovieticus is replaced by Buchowski with his concept of ‘homo orientalis’, which denotes people who construct and internalise these differences. The pre-deterministic homo sovieticus approach is rejected as ‘spontaneous occidental orientalism and naïve social Darwinism’ (ibid, p.476).

Overall, this study strongly supports the theory of evolution, whereby there is a coherent continuum between communism and capitalism, within which social reality is negotiated and constructed by people who are active agents. A frozen in time homo sovieticus does not exist. People bring forward elements of the previous communism system and insert them into the new capitalist situation. Therefore, in order to be able to understand the transition in Poland, we need to understand how the communist past continues to impact on the present. Hann goes on to conclude: ‘*The ingenuity with which people adapt in times of instability and crisis is often grounded in their traditional ways of viewing the world; and in most Euroasia these traditional ways now include several generations of socialism*’ (2006, p.248). As the difference in ‘traditional ways of viewing the world’ is a distinguishing factor between the two groups of migrants in this study, these understandings provide a platform for the findings chapters that follow; for example, the failed collectivisation project under communist Poland or the rejected neoliberal ‘shock therapy’ during the transitional period provide the context for the less collective tendencies and mistrust towards the state of the post-2004 migrants. Additionally, Buchowski’s idea of the orient within and “otherness” found in ‘sisters and brothers’ (2006, p.466) is useful when exploring how the two groups of Polish migrants under this study interact and construct each other through their respective ways of viewing the world. These two contrasting perspectives found themselves vis-à-vis when Poland joined the EU – on a scale and with intensity not experienced before – with the UK, Germany and Ireland (in this order) becoming the most popular destinations for Polish people between 2004 and 2018 (Olbrycht 2022).

3.2.5 Poland’s EU accession

Poland’s EU accession and the UK’s decision not to impose any significant transitional constraints on the movement of workers from the new member states meant that Polish citizens and citizens from the other Accession 8 countries gained the legal right to work in

the UK overnight on 1st May 2004.¹² A new transnational field emerged instantaneously between the UK and Poland, built upon the principles of free movement within the EU's neoliberal political economy (Smith and Rochovská 2007) and in particular upon the “rights of movement and residence for workers, the rights of entry and residence for family members, and the right to work in another Member State and be treated on an equal footing with nationals of that Member State” (European Parliament, undated). Post-2004 Polish migration has grown to be possibly the largest the UK ‘has ever seen in a single movement,’ (Burrell 2018), at its peak in 2017 reaching over 922,000 people (Office for National Statistics 2021); in 2021 Poland remained in the top three countries of birth (India 9.3%, Poland 7.1% and Pakistan 4.7%) and nationality (Poland 11.6%, Rep of Ireland 6.2% and India 6.2%) among migrants in the UK according to the latest data available through the Office for National Statistics (The Migration Observatory 2022).

As briefly mentioned in Section 3.2.4, overall Poland became a success story of the EU enlargement if measured by the country's macro-level economic indicators, coupled with the fact that Poland was the only EU country that managed to avoid the global financial crisis of 2008-9 (Kaczmarczyk 2018). However, the unemployment levels were high (originally 20.4% in the first quarter of 2004 according to Polish Central Office for Statistics, Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2005), whereas the distribution of the subsequent economic growth was uneven, structurally causing continued migration from Poland (Kaczmarczyk 2018); and notably also from regions in Poland that had little previous experience of international migration. As a result, Poland became the largest exporter of labour within the new EU space (Goździak 2016). Without any major transitional restrictions on the movement of Polish workers to the UK, the British Isles became one of the key destinations from the very beginning and at a fast pace. According to the Accession Monitoring Report, in March 2006 there were 228,235 Polish people working in the country (Home Office 2006, p.8)¹³. This figure can be compared with 48,585 in the Accession Monitoring Report for the period between May and September 2004 (Home Office 2004, p.5), over 350% increase in the eighteen-month period. Based on the initial reports between 2004 and 2009, the top five sectors that received new EU workers were administration, business and management (40%), hospitality and catering (19%), agriculture (10%), manufacturing (7%) and food, fish,

¹² Only two other old EU member states, Sweden and Ireland, did not introduce any significant transitional constraints on the movement of workers from the Accession 8 countries (A8): Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

¹³ The Worker Registration Scheme used by the Home Office to monitor the numbers from the A8 countries was abandoned in 2011, criticised for not capturing the full picture as well as for ignoring migrants' movement longer-term (Garapich 2016). For example, self-employed people were not included, as well as those who wanted to avoid the cost or worked illegally. However, for the purpose of this analysis, the trends captured in the early stages are staggering.

meat processing (5%) (Home Office 2009). Poland became a significant and easily accessible source of labour for the UK government who hoped this would help to fill '600,000 vacancies in the economy', as stated by the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett, in his speech on managed migration at the 2004 TUC Conference (Political Speech Archive 2004). In addition to migrants' own strategies and migratory networks that developed through family and friends, both the public sector and private companies launched targeted recruitment programmes aimed to deal with specific labour shortages in the UK. For example, as part of my unpublished MA research project into "The EU and migration to and from Poland" (2006), I interviewed the Divisional Staff Development Manager at Travel West Midlands, who had recruited 360 Polish bus drivers between November 2004 and September 2006. In that period the company undertook monthly recruitment trips to Poland, with the overall target of 10% of the Polish driving force.

In subsequent years, the number of Polish migrants coming to the UK continued to grow, and with increasing numbers it also became apparent that the new arrivals are much more spread across the country, including both larger cities, traditional immigrants' destinations, and rural areas and smaller cities with little prior experience of migration. Scott and Brindley (2012) demonstrated that whilst London and the Southeast continued to receive significant numbers, the largest increases in migrant inflows between 2002 and 2010 were in Scotland (125%), the East Midlands (103%), and Wales (103%). Scholars suggest that this is possibly the most interesting feature of this post-accession migration (Harris 2012, Scott and Brindley 2012), whereas the scale combined with the new geographies are perhaps the most valid reason to describe these inflows as "new migration", different from previous migratory patterns (White 2011a). In terms of the overall scale, the following trends of Polish-born population residents living in Britain were recorded between 2004 and 2021 (Office for National Statistics 2021):

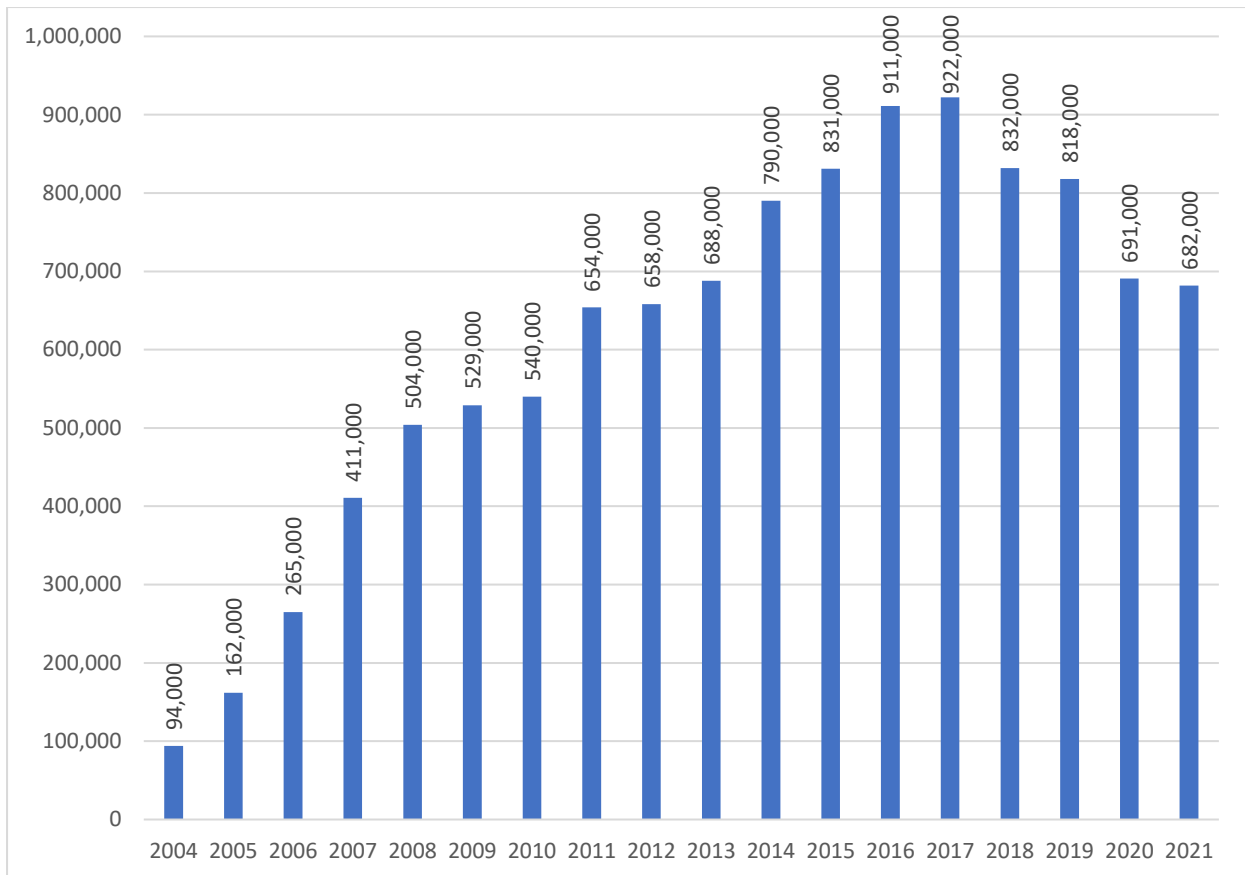


Figure 3. Polish-born population resident in Britain between 2004 and 2021¹⁴

The above graph shows a rapid growth from 94,000 in 2004 to over 922,000 at its peak in 2017, as well as the subsequent significant 26% drop following the UK's vote to leave the EU (more on Brexit in Section 3.2.6). Further movements (potentially in both directions) may take place due to longer-term impacts of Brexit, coinciding with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, also in January 2020, as well as the potential impacts of the more recent cost of living crisis (2022). These events are a significant consideration for the future of the Polish population in the UK. However, most importantly for this study, what the above graph also shows is that large numbers of Polish people have settled and continue living in the UK despite more recent disruptions to their day-to-day lives and practices in their space linking the UK and Poland.

There have been a wide range of studies into the post-2004 group of Polish migrants in the UK offering insights into some key characteristics of these migrants and their engagement within their localities, co-nationals and transnational activity (literature reviews by White

¹⁴ Graph based on data available until June 2021 (Office for National Statistics: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/datasets/populationoftheunitedkingdombycountryofbirthandnationality>)

2011a, 2016). Overall, the scale of this population movement is directly linked with its considerable diversity in terms of age, education, English language skills, social standing and work experiences. Some experienced communism directly, whilst others were born in post-communist Poland. They have moved individually but also in family units. Focusing on the latter, White (2011b) identified a sudden shift in migration cultures which determine why, who and where people should go, leading to more families migrating to the UK (as opposed to the pre-2004 migration of one self-sacrificing family member, usually the husband). Furthermore, despite the fact that they tend to keep their distance from other Polish migrants, they have established networks of Polish businesses (shops, restaurants, services and others) and created numerous media platforms for Poles in the UK. The attendance in Polish churches has increased (although not by all and not always regarded positively), whereas the number of Polish Saturday schools has grown, with some struggling to meet the demand (Małkosa 2022), and more recently with concerns over potential closures following the pandemic (Young and White 2022). Projects by Young and White (2022) and Małkosa (2022) report on 117 and 140 Polish complementary schools in the UK respectively. They are associated under Polska Macierz Szkolna (The Polish Educational Society), whose, according to its website, 'core activity is the support of Polish Language Saturday Schools' and running an examination centre for GCSEs and A-levels in Polish. According to Małkosa (2022), most schools are linked with local parishes; and 87.9% teach Religious Education. However, he also estimates that only about a quarter of all Polish children based in the UK attend Saturday schools.

More generally, many Polish people are not linked to any Polish community organisations (Garapich 2016, White 2011a), with many of the old clubs closing (e.g., Reading in 2008 or Peterborough in 2014) or struggling financially due to dwindling numbers and lack of interest by the new migrants. Officially, Zjednoczenie Polskie w Wielkiej Brytanii (Federation of Poles in Great Britain), established in 1946, remains the umbrella organisation for Polish groups and associations. Currently, its website lists 58 members. The list contains a mixture of organisations including well-established associations as well as those created by the new arrivals. Perhaps, the latter offer an initial glimpse into the future of Polish organised activity in the UK. It is already clear that the new generations will not continue the legacy of the post-WW2 migrants, where for example in Elgenius's study (2017) a London-based priest estimated that around 10 to 15% of the city's Polish population attended Polish church. Instead, the UK government's Companies Register reveals that there are other structures starting to emerge in the form of the Community Interest Company (CIC) – the Federation of Poles in Great Britain lists two of these: European's Welfare Association CIC, and Bal Polski

CIC.¹⁵ These companies are able to generate and distribute profits, hence a very different model to that of the old Polish community organisations. Around 50 of these Polish CIC organisations have been registered since 2007, including 17 which have now been dissolved.¹⁶ Based on the information submitted as part of the Companies Register returns¹⁷, one of the larger ones - EWA (European's Welfare Association) places its main focus on 'education to Central & Eastern European community living in Black Country and Birmingham area'. EWA also runs a number of UK government funded projects and a big Polish school (367 children aged 3 to 18 – pre-Covid). Notably, their statement of aims, goals and aspirations starts with the goal of 'Enhancing the integration of the Polish Community into the British Society', followed by 'cultivation of the Polish language, traditions and values through the provision of Polish Supplementary School'. Overall, these new spaces are the functional spaces the post-2004 migrants will refer to for their cultural capital (discussed further in Chapter 7), especially for Polish schools for their children, as well as practical support and information, including projects delivered with the Home Office.

At the same time, literature tells us that most Polish people who arrived in the UK after 2004 consider themselves Polish (Ryan 2010, White et al. 2018), and often demonstrate 'a sense of living lives in 'Poland' despite being far away' (White 2018, p.188). White puts forward the concept of "society abroad" to capture the idea of Polish society spilling over national borders; it is a space which encompasses Poland and other countries, in particular popular destinations in the EU such as Ireland, Germany, Norway and the UK (ibid. p.188). This conceptualisation is significant in showing that these migrants continue to be part of wider societal change impacting society in Poland. More broadly, as discussed in 3.2.4, the collapse of the communist regime in Poland triggered multidimensional social change in beliefs, behaviours, norms and values (Sztompka 2004, White et al. 2018). Although migration is not the main driver behind this change, scholars assert that social change among Poles abroad and social change in Poland are linked (White 2018, p.211), including for example changes in gender roles, family relations, lifestyles, behaviours in workplaces, or a wider range of changes visible in public spaces, among many others. In particular, the role of social remittances is key in understanding how migrants contribute to this deep social change. My study also uncovered examples of how these remittances are carried by migrants through their networks, continually contributing to social change back in Poland

¹⁵ <https://www.zpwb.org.uk/organizacje-czlonkowskie>

¹⁶ See UK Companies Register search results at [Search results - Advanced company search - Find and update company information - GOV.UK \(company-information.service.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁷ European's Welfare Association – micro company accounts dated 30 June 2021: <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/08589617/filing-history>

through their personal networks and practices in their transnational social fields (more on this in Chapter 7).

3.2.6 The UK's social and transnational context and immigration

Finally, in order to investigate the experiences of Polish people who came to the UK in two different centuries, it is also necessary to place their arrivals within their respective social and transnational context of the UK itself. In fact, any social enquiry into the UK's migratory trends over the last few centuries requires careful unpicking of the impacts of the British imperial past with its mesh of transnational networks throughout the empire and through new political contexts that emerged in the aftermath of its decline. As Bhabra (2017, p.92) aptly states, since its political union with Scotland in 1707, 'Britain has not been an independent country but part of broader political entities, most significantly empire, then the Commonwealth and, from 1973, the EU' (the UK joined the Union's predecessor, the European Economic Community in 1973), albeit the latter until Brexit, thus it has been linked with many territories through a range of political arrangements evolving over a few centuries.

Overall, the post-WW2 group of Polish people arrived in the UK at the time when British governments became preoccupied with the immediate impacts of the war, including shortages of housing and food, and the need to re-establish post-war manufacturing (Sword 1986), all this taking place in the context of the fast-declining British colonial imperium. At the beginning of the 20th century Britain was losing its position as a global power, with the Commonwealth countries gradually establishing their independence. Reconfiguring these relationships and building new transnational networks for trade and labour became a priority. Within this landscape, until mid-20th century, the immigration levels to the UK were relatively low, with the numbers starting to grow at a faster pace from the end of WW2. The Polish Resettlement Act of 1947, discussed in Section 3.2.3, was the UK's first mass immigration law for people outside of the British empire, which granted around 200,000 Poles the right to obtain citizenship and settlement (Dorling and Tomlinson 2019), followed by 100,875 European Voluntary Workers who came under the Westward Ho and Balt Cygnet guest workers schemes (Zubrzycki 1956). Furthermore, the British Nationality Act 1948 granted the subjects of the British Empire the right to live and work in the UK, resulting in 472,000 people arriving from the Commonwealth countries between 1955 and 1962 (Parliament. House of Lords, 1968). Overall, the 1961 census recorded the following top three white European-born populations: 683,000 Irish, 121,000 German and 120,000 Polish, and top two non-white / Commonwealth-born populations: 157,000 Indian and 100,000 Jamaican (data cited from Bhabra 2017, p.96). Despite most migrants coming from white European backgrounds, from the 1960s colour became the driving force in many political and social

debates, including positive changes such as the introduction of Race Relations Acts of 1965, 1968 and 1976 to address racial discrimination in the UK (Brown 2018). Overall, however, efforts to reduce the number of non-white people coming to the UK continued, with two main outcomes relevant for this study: firstly, the Commonwealth Immigration Acts of 1962 and 1968 were passed to restrict migration from the Commonwealth; and secondly, these enhanced and continued efforts to stop the arrival of people from the Commonwealth meant that despite their significant numbers, white migrants became far less visible in public discourses in Britain (Bhambra 2017, Dorling and Tomlinson 2019, Smojkis 2013, Sword 1996, Vertovec 2007). In Dorling and Tomlinson's words 'the battle to "keep Britain white" began' (2019, p.206), pushing the Polish migrants into shadows of these debates, and making the presence of their first and second generations far less visible. As observed by Zubrzycki (1993), even specialised literature on this subject at that time did not refer to this group as an ethnic group, with the focus primarily on non-white migrants from Commonwealth countries. As he points out further, there is 'a difference between a group which claims ethnic distinctiveness and one which has distinctiveness imposed upon it by the majority group', where despite the Poles claiming distinctiveness, they were 'not perceived as culturally inferior and therefore politically subordinate' (Zubrzycki 1993, p.396).

In parallel, the UK was developing its new political and economic relationship with Europe; Dorling and Tomlinson (2019) hold that the UK joined the European Community in the 1970s only because its empire had fallen apart, cutting the country off its riches, and favourable trade arrangements through its colonial network. Vertovec (2007) brings attention to some further 'dramatic' changes in the subsequent decades, which also provided the backdrop for the arrival of the post-2004 group of Polish migrants. Whilst Commonwealth immigration continued, mainly through the dependants' route, there were new patterns emerging at a fast rate too. In addition to the increased numbers of citizens of EC countries and (from 1993) EU citizens following the UK's EC/EU membership (from 10% in 1971 to 17% in 2002), National Statistics Online shows a rapid growth of those classed broadly as 'Middle East and Other' (from 16% in 1971 to 40% in 2002) (cited in Vertovec 2007, p.1029). More generally, the European Union experienced new types of immigrants, many due to an increased number of conflicts causing inflows of people seeking asylum. Consequently, the growing number of immigrants as well as the variety of their countries of origin and backgrounds came to the fore. Overall, the late 1990s marked a rapid growth in migration to the UK, also triggered by policy changes of the Labour Government. This was the context for six immigration acts passed by the Parliament between 1993 and 2005: the Asylum and Immigration Acts of 1993, 1996, 1999, the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 and the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill 2005 (Vertovec

2007). Furthermore, in the first two decades of the new millennium, the number of the foreign-born population doubled from 5.3 million to over 9 million between 2004 and 2021 (The Migration Observatory, 2022), including arrivals from new EU members states. These numbers and growing variety of migrants' origins are at an unprecedented level in the UK's history, changing the demographics of many localities. Vertovec (2007) captures these new migratory patterns through the concept of superdiversity: *'Britain can now be characterized by 'super-diversity,' a notion intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the country has previously experienced. Such a condition is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants'* (2007, p.1024).

In this landscape, the campaign to leave the EU became about immigration and free movement above all else (McGhee et al. 2019, Viskanac 2017), in particular immigration from the new accession states. The campaign slogan "take back control" stood for taking control of the UK borders. This was also the time when the old imagery of the great empire was brought back by the campaigners and conservative politicians, driven by the imperial nostalgia and longing for the lost greatness and superiority as a global power. This included the promise of a special relationship with the Commonwealth countries (Bhambra 2017, Dorling and Tomlinson 2019). Therefore, the Brexit vote in 2016 and the developments following the UK's subsequent departure from the EU in December 2020 brought about a clear end to both: the fallacy of the imperial networks politically or economically, and free movement within the space between the UK and the EU.

As part of the post-Brexit arrangements, the EU Settlement Scheme was introduced by the UK government "to enable EU, EEA and Swiss citizens resident in the UK by 31 December 2020, and their family members, to get the immigration status they need to continue to live, work, study and access benefits and services, such as healthcare, in the UK after 30 June 2021."¹⁸ All post-2004 migrant interviewees in this study were able to access this scheme. This space is now closed for other Polish citizens. However, these transitions were not easy, and therefore, the Brexit decade was set in the context of political discourses that increased racial and ethnical prejudice and violence, including against Polish people (Burrell undated (a), Dorling and Tomlinson 2019).

¹⁸ The deadline to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme was 30th June 2021. More details can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-introduction-for-employers/eu-settlement-scheme-introduction-for-employers>

3.2.7 Conclusions

The context presented in this section has brought together events across two generations, across two centuries and across numerous countries. Both flows of Polish migrants to the UK are set within their respective historical and political transnational contexts which expand beyond the two countries themselves. Events of WW1 brought the modern Polish state to life and onto the geopolitical maps of the world. WW2 violently scattered Polish people across many parts of the globe, ultimately bringing some of them into spaces leading to the UK, either through the army, labour camps, displaced persons camps in British colonies, family reunion, marriage or post-war worker schemes. Whereas political arrangements after WW2 meant that Poland lived through the era of the communist regime and its eventual collapse, followed by Poland's EU accession into the European space where large numbers of Polish people chose to migrate to the UK through this new space. Additionally, the UK within its own transnational context did not remain static either. The last century marked significant changes for the country, where old political arrangements became re-shaped through the end of the British empire and transformed into the Commonwealth; and in parallel, new spaces emerged through the UK's EU integration and then abruptly closed through its subsequent departure following the Brexit vote in 2016.

This complex map of transnational, politically underpinned spaces came to exist through a variety of political arrangements, with old spaces closing, and new spaces emerging, replacing as well as overlapping with the existing ones. Within this dynamic context, Polish people experienced different and constantly evolving transnational conditions which continued to impact their transitions and practice in their social spaces as well as their reception by very different local in-groups. Furthermore, Poland they knew and continued to re-construct was not the same, with the communist experience separating the groups.

Within this multi-layered research context, the next section will focus on how these population movements and their identity formation have been framed in various academic writing, which in itself spans two different centuries and has undergone significant conceptual shifts, with pressures coming from more recent globalisation processes as well as transnational and post-national ideologies.

3.3 Conceptual framings of Polish migration to the UK

Literature on Polish migration to the UK prior to Poland's EU accession is relatively limited. From the 1950s onwards, white Poles who came in the post-war era became mostly invisible

in political and academic debates, with the focus on race and colour following the arrival of the South Asian and Caribbean migrants from the Commonwealth (Smojkis 2013, Sword 1996, Zubrzycki 1993). However, Poland's EU membership made Polish people visible again. They became visible physically on the streets across the UK due to the scale and spread of the post-2004 movement and consequently, through tensions in political debates. These changes also had an impact on Polish populations already in the UK, including second generation British-born Poles who unexpectedly became 'part of the UK's largest minority national population'; White and Goodwin (2021) described the latter experiences as shedding of 'the cloak of invisibility'. This new visibility triggered a plethora of academic work on Polish migration which 'suddenly blossomed' after 2004, including an 'impressive body' of UK-based empirical research (White 2016). University College London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies continues its efforts to capture these contributions and to provide a platform for 'anyone who is interested in migration from and to Poland'.¹⁹

In fact, as Burrell (2018) comments 'it would be difficult to find another group as closely researched as post-accession Polish migrants' due to the novelty of this movement in terms of its speed, scale, geographical spread and overall, an important opportunity to study this group's potential of fluidity and the extent to which their mobility could be transient or circular in this new space. Equally, academics themselves created their own transnational social fields for collaboration and knowledge exchange, including research in Poland and the UK, fieldwork in both countries covering movements between the UK and Poland, as well as more broadly to and from Poland, and across other EU countries (White 2016).

Within this busy academic space, in this section I focus on some selected examples of previous work on the first generation of Polish migrants to the UK to situate the contributions of this thesis as well as to highlight key findings that further informed this study. This is to signal some theories and approaches used in literature to discuss and frame Polish migration to the UK, especially around migrants' national identity formation and their relationship with their new localities and with Poland.

3.3.1 The impenetrable walls of the post-WW2 migrants

The first notable study of the post-WW2 Polish arrivals in the UK was conducted by Zubrzycki (1956), himself part of the post-WW2 generation. Zubrzycki's study explored the experiences of this group, basing the analytical framework on the processes of accommodation, assimilation and conflict, as the three types of adjustment to life in the new country. He concluded that this group would never go beyond the accommodation stage.

¹⁹ See <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/people/anne-white/ssees/research/polish-migration>

Their full assimilation would not be possible due to a number of reasons, such as their strong Polish cultural ties, Polish organisations focused on maintaining national distinctiveness and preventing assimilation, disappointment with the role Britain played in post-war Peace Conferences (especially Yalta in 1945), including Poland's sacrifice and territorial concessions made to Soviet Russia, organisational focus purely on economic integration of Polish migrants, and overall prejudice and discrimination by the local communities. In his later work Zubrzycki (1993) put forward the notion of 'asymilacja bez wynarodowienia' (assimilation without the loss of cultural identity) to capture his personal experiences as well as identity building of some other people in his generation, recognising however that overall, the older generation tended to be parochial, enclosed and subjected to in-group and organisational pressure to retrain Polishness (ibid, p. 400-5). Zubrzycki also provided an interesting discussion on terminology used to describe migration from Poland more generally; including *Polonia*, *emigracja*, *diaspora*, *uchodźstwo*, *wychodźstwo*, *the émigré*, or *the émigré community*; often used interchangeably and not necessarily in a consistent manner (1993, p.395). Zubrzycki himself focuses his analysis on two terms: *emigracja* and *Polonia*, rejecting the other terms as insufficient. In his analysis, *emigracja* as a group is focused on the process of emigrating, hence looking backwards; whereas new *Polonia* is a collectivity existing in their receiving society, 'crossing and recrossing those cultural boundaries that, from the point of view of the receiving society, identify us as an ethnic minority' (1993, p.404).²⁰ Zubrzycki was critical of the post-WW2 group's isolated communities ('ghettos'), with new *Polonia* seen as the desired development for future Polish communities abroad, assimilated without losing their cultural identity.

In her anthropological study, Patterson (1961) described the post-war group as an exile community or "wartime" emigration. In her view, unless there were major political changes in Europe, the usual process of adaptation and acceptance would take place, followed by assimilation and ultimately absorption (ibid, p.97). Similarly to Zubrzycki (1956), her attention was on the highly organised nature of this group, with Polish institutions established in the UK already in the pre-war period, as well as with the Polish Government in exile operating from London during the war; hence this group's highly networked and organised political structures, organised social life, Polish schools, Scout and Guide movements, local

²⁰ Further discussion on the topic of terminology is provided by Garapich (2016), who explores how the terms of *Polonia* and *emigracja* are constructed in different discourses by migrants and the Polish state, including who belongs and which group describes itself under which label; thus, presenting these constructs as areas of power struggle and class division. For example, Garapich highlights the post-WW2 group's rejection of *Polonia* understood as permanent settlement abroad triggered by economic reasons. He also argues that for the post-2004 elites aligning with the '*political* guarantees a higher social position within the local hierarchy of an ethnic community and in relation to the state' (ibid, p.273), thus distancing themselves from economic migration which is considered lower class.

organisations, voluntary associations and Catholic parishes, all connected through a large network of Polish press. According to Patterson, the latter helped to strengthen community links, at the same time also contributing to their accommodation to life in Britain. Moreover, despite the initial British xenophobia towards this group, which added to their solidarity, Patterson stated that with time they became to be seen as 'good workers, rate-payers, solid citizens and family men' (ibid, p.96), and increasingly less visible to local officials as a separate ethnic group. Their adaptation practices included naturalisation as non-British status hindered job prospects and access to local housing lists; whereas younger generations' engagement with the older exile organisations was diminishing. Overall, Patterson proposed that the next step would be for the second and third generations to be fully absorbed into British society.

Furthermore, Patterson's study is significant to this research in providing focus on increased transnational activity of this group (described as 'family and kinship ties'), including parcels (e.g., one company sent a record 110,000 parcels to Poland in 1957); the London-Warsaw telephone lines were regularly booked, and regular travel since the Polish October of 1956 (See Footnote 10). In addition, this study also recognised some key features of this national identity formation, in particular its levelling up effect during the war and the creation of its own spaces even before their arrival in the UK; this is described as the army becoming 'a little exile *world of its own*, first in Palestine and later in Italy, with its own ethos and organization' (ibid, p.70, emphasis added).

In his work written five decades after the initial post-war arrivals, Sword (1996) concluded that the Polish community was in decline, failing to attract the second generation and not welcoming new arrivals, both in terms of attraction and appeal for younger people, and in terms of "affect' (an emotional, sentimental pull)' (ibid, p.233). Sword agreed with Patterson that the post-WW2 group would be assimilated and disappear over time. He also held that the group's goals, its restrictive definition what it meant to be Polish, and continuous 'commemoration of national and wartime anniversaries' kept this group in 'time-warps' (ibid, p.229), preventing others from entering their spaces. Sword also referred to Temple's study, which highlighted tensions within this group, with informal groupings emerging away from the dominant narrative (Temple 1994 cited in Sword 1996).

Furthermore, for the purpose of this study, Sword made two observations which corroborate my line of analysis later on. Firstly, he made some key observations in terms of this group's dominant narrative of exile from the Kresy region and the subsequent war experiences of the Second Polish Corps and their families (Sword 1996). He concluded that '*There was a unique atmosphere of comradeship and self-sufficiency in conditions which, although*

wartime, were nigh idyllic after their Soviet travails. They had a commander who was revered as a latter-day Moses for having engineered their exodus from the land of their captivity' (1992, p.24-5). Sword also emphasised that the exile period, between five to eight years, contributed to their overwhelming sense of transience, with many initially doubting they would settle down again (Sword 1986). Overall, this strong narrative of the exile group had the greatest impact on the community forming after the war. Thus, Sword's notion of exile with its 'unique comradeship' also speaks directly to Paterson's 'little exile world of its own' quoted above.

Secondly, Sword points to the switch in the 1950s from schemes managed by the UK government and agendas driven by the London-based Polish political elite, towards spaces where 'the Poles began *spontaneously* to develop their own cultural defence mechanisms' (1992, p.28, emphasis added), including schools and associations supported by local groups and parishes – thus, driven by the people themselves. Similarly, Zebrowska refers to various organisations flourishing in parishes, 'predominantly at the initiative of local people' (1986, p.54).

Likewise, within the context of the dominant narrative that emerged through the displaced persons camps, Burrell's oral history research focuses on histories and memories of migration of Polish people in Leicester (Burrell 2002), as key in shaping how they built and passed on national identity away from the homeland. With the narrative of WW2 dislocation, trauma of war and exile, and experiences of displaced persons camps, Burrell captured the impacts on national identity formation of different experiences during their migratory journey; for example, she highlighted that 'Polish national identity was so strong in the camps' that even those who did not remember Poland grew up knowing they were Polish (ibid, p.63). In the UK context, Burrell explored migrants' daily practices, the role of religion, community building in their new locality as well as their relationship with Poland. In particular, Burrell explored transnational links this group maintained with Poland over time, finding evidence of continued although at times difficult and limited transnational activity during the communist period (difficulties with visa and censored phone calls), with significantly increased transnational travel and other exchanges following the collapse of the communist regime and increased technological connectivity (e.g., Polish TV). Burrell recognised that the political and technological changes helped with maintaining Polishness, but overall, she concluded that exile had 'become a 'natural' state for these Poles' (ibid, p.67), less disruptive than a potential return to Poland. Burrell also reflected on this community as being really 'in this time warp' (also Sword 1996), where their experience of forced migration had 'enhanced, even romanticised Polishness' within the group (ibid, p.75).

Literature also considers the impacts of trauma these people experienced during the war, haunted by memories of violence throughout their lives with serious implications for their mental health. Winslow (1999) looked specifically at the longer-term impacts of the wartime legacy on this group, observing how they rebuilt their lives and identities. Regularly visited community spaces helped them to practise their Polishness and also played a crucial role as a network of support, helping them to make sense of the past through sharing their memories with others. For Winslow, this community's drive to buy and renovate premises played an important role by 'redirecting emotions towards recreating Polishness in Britain', and as 'a form of therapy' (ibid, p.63).

Similarly, through the lens of loss and trauma, Smojkis's thesis (2013) explored the lives of Polish people who came to live in Birmingham between the mid-1940s and 2010. Four waves of migrants are under this study: the first wave of post-WW2 migrants in the 1940s and the 1950s is contrasted with people who arrived in the UK in the 1960s and the 1970s; those who came following changes triggered by the Solidarity movement in the 1980s; and finally, with the fourth wave from 2004 when Poland joined the EU. Supported with her background in mental health, Smojkis, herself a second generation Pole, was able to provide an analysis sensitive to the experience of loss, trauma and mental health issues of the first wave of war displaced migrants, which she contrasted with the experiences of subsequent waves of migrants directly from Poland. The division is based on push and pull reasons for migration that differentiate the first wave from the others. Whilst the split between voluntary and involuntary migration will be further debated in this study, Smojkis identified two important processes. Firstly, she highlighted the continuation of practices and relationships formed during the war into life in the UK, and secondly, she brought the attention to the national formation created by the post-WW2 migrants as "their 'little Poland'" that needed protecting and provided them with a space to share experiences of displacement, loss and trauma (also Winslow 1999). The analysis delved into the experiences of loss, religion, language and relationship building across all waves, proposing that the loss experienced by the first wave made them more isolated from the local communities, more self-contained and suspicious of new arrivals from Poland. This consequently prevented any deeper relations with local communities and subsequent Polish migrants, as the new arrivals were 'faced with an almost impenetrable wall' of the first wave (Smojkis 2013, p.240). Based on this, Smojkis concurred with Zubrzycki's findings (1956) stating that assimilation or integration of the first wave of Polish migrants was not possible, further retarded by established Polish organisations such as the Federation of Poles of Great Britain and the Polish Catholic Mission. Smojkis further concluded that more recent migrants are more open to other

communities, with encouraging signs for the future in terms of social cohesion and shared experiences by migrant communities.

3.3.2 The impenetrable walls vs postnational and transnational conceptualisations

In addition to Smojkis's metaphor of impenetrable wall, there are a number of studies seeking further reasons behind these intra-generational tensions: Bielewska (2012), Brown (2011) Elgenius (2017), Galasińska (2010), Garapich (2008b, 2016) and Gill (2010), many taking into consideration recent changes in social life which have led to a shift in identity construction from modern to postmodern identities. This is portrayed by Garapich (2008b) as power relations of the 'Odyssean refugee identity' of the post-WW2 group ('the old style exclusive national citizenship') positioned against the newcomers and their emerging forms of postnational or transnational citizenship through the legalisation of their work and tax payments following Poland's EU accession, and supported by a dense transnational network of ethnic media and press. In a similar vein, Bielewska (2012) contrasts the modern national identity of the WW2 group with the post-modern identity of the more recent migrants, which for Bielewska signals *'a deep change in the circumstances of migration and in the shape of national identity, which has moved from the centre of the life of Polish migrants to the periphery, from the sphere of the collective to that of individual experience, and from the political reality to something expressed through consumption and brand loyalty'* (Bielewska 2012, p.103). Within the parameters of my participant sample and recruitment information specifically focused on national identity, my study has not found evidence of a complete dislocation of national identity to the periphery of migrants' lives to the extent proposed by Bielewska. However, these are important considerations, in particular in terms of how migrants interact with each other as well as with their localities, especially where the national or state actions are rejected. Other scholars draw further comparisons based on the groups' intensity of their collectivism. For example, Gill's research focused on migrants' place-making practices as a form of forging a collective identity and thus maintaining a national identity collectively (Gill 2010). Within the proposed model, the post-WW2 group of migrants was thought to have followed the 'ideal' pattern, whereas the new migrants were portrayed as less predictable, exhibiting 'pathological' place-making processes through not projecting a common identity (pathology 1); unequal representation in migrant spaces (pathology 2); slow adjustments by established Polish organisations (pathology 3); and finally, lack of affinity to existing migrant structures and networks (pathology 4) (ibid, p.1170). Whilst successfully capturing these two groups' contrasting relationships with their new localities in the UK, for the purpose of this study, Gill's study did not sufficiently consider how these different place-making practices emerged, what experiences led to particular identity construction

processes and migrants' links and relationship to Poland. In contrast, the comparison in Brown's study (2011) was based on the concepts of restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia, through which she recognised the difference of temporality of the groups' representation of Poland, with the older generation re-constructing Poland in the new location by looking backwards; and the post-accession migrants' placing 'their sense of belonging firmly in today's Poland' (2011, p.236). Like Gill, Brown also concluded that '*Despite their shared experience as economic migrants, this [post-2004] wave shows no signs of forming a community*' (Brown 2011, p.232). Within the context of these studies, I propose there is still a need to better understand the underlying reasons for these contrasting identity formation processes, which I set out to achieve through placing a stronger focus on the comparison of the totality of experiences of different transnational social fields throughout the migrants' initial journey as well as their subsequent lives.

On the whole, the flows of Polish migrants in this millennium have received a lot of attention, driven by the dynamics of the political changes within the EU and the emerging transnational lens for which the new wave of migrants provides a perfect case study (literature reviews, White 2011a, 2016). These studies offer insights into a huge range of migratory experiences, many of them underpinned by the transnational theoretical framework with migration seen as a continuous process with no clear end point, and supported through cross-border networks which enable continual movement as well as political, economic, social, and cultural remittances. The examples include: circular short-term or prolonged mobility of Polish health and care workers (Goździak 2016); lived experiences of migration, mobility, gender and return, where transnationalism is defined as migrant mobility, no longer a privilege but part of everyday experience for many, and where transnational practices continue to matter for those who return (Ignatowicz 2012); go-stop-go mobility of Polish graduates for whom British citizenship may open a gateway to further geographical locations beyond Europe (Szewczyk 2014); transnational orientation as migrants' resource, through which they narrate and evaluate the success of their migration (Nowicka 2014); whereas Kusek (2015) concludes that Polish professionals in London construct their global identities through evaluating their experiences against the cultural context back in Poland. These are just a few studies among many others. There is also an emerging body of literature dealing with longer-term impacts of disruptions caused to people's transnational activity due to Brexit and Covid, for example: a study on post-Brexit identities and imaginaries of the future of Polish young people in the UK (Sime et al. 2020); the impact of COVID-19 on EU citizens' rights in the UK, highlighting inequalities and discrimination experienced by people holding the UK's EU Settlement Status (Bulat et al. 2020); or impacts of Covid on Polish Saturday Schools, causing not only

disruptions but also opportunities to link with Polish people in the UK, as well as transnationally in Poland and other countries during the pandemic (Young and White 2022).

From this large body of work, I further focus on three examples of different conceptualisations which have been put forward based on empirical studies of the post-2004 group. In particular, the selected examples look at migrants' identity construction through practice vis-à-vis changes in migrants' relationship with their locality and attachments they develop over time. Although set in the context of the contemporary transnational optic, they all consider migrants' need for stability who therefore with time develop attachments which may limit the circularity or temporariness of their migration.

Firstly, in her paper on Polish double return migration, hence providing a more in-depth reflection on both migrants' continuous movement and their longer-term settlement strategies, White (2014) discusses three types of transnationalism: transmigration (understood as frequent travel between Poland and the UK), transnational practices (collective and individual cross-border activity) and transnational identities (of "here" and "there"). This study shows how transnational identities are constructed through practice, as well as how changes in transnational behaviours happen over time. In search for stability, migrants may change strategies from target-earner to settler, which is especially visible in double returners who come back from Poland following their initial return. In this process they may scale down some international activities, shifting from being segregated to being more integrated within their localities, through entering more regular labour and housing markets in the UK. As a result, migrants' practices become less split between the two localities, reducing their transnational practice and thus, transnational identity, as they become gradually settled abroad and more connected to locations in the UK.

Secondly, in the same vein of understanding identities through practice, Grzymała-Kazłowska (2016, 2018) uses the concept of social anchors to study post-2004 Polish migration to the UK, linking identity, security and integration. According to her definition, *'the concept of anchoring refers to the processes of establishing footholds which allow migrants to acquire a relative socio-psychological stability and function effectively in new life settings'* (2018, p.255). Social anchoring is multidimensional and often transnational, expanding over different geographical locations, including anchors that contribute to the Polish identity, those that link migrants with British society, and finally, those that go beyond this division such as performing gender, daily practices, spirituality, leisure activities, attachment to nature and animals, material objects and technology, as well as constraining illnesses and addictions (ibid, p. 632). In this framework, national identity is maintained through social anchors attached to 'Polishness'; daily practices and celebrating cultural events, as well as through

self-identification, including in response to difference, and perceived social categorisation. These anchors can be simultaneous, parallel and transnational linking migrants to geographies of different nation-states or “un-localized” spaces (2018, p.644). They can be created or undone as migrants negotiate their spaces.

Thirdly, the concept of differentiated embedding was introduced by Ryan (2018) in her study of belonging of Polish migrants based in London. Although in many respects similar to Grzymała-Kazłowska’s anchoring, the two concepts are not the same (Grzymała-Kazłowska and Ryan 2022); Ryan’s particular interest is on how over time migratory trajectories become less temporary or circular, with a more established presence in the new locality. Drawing on her previous research of Irish migrants to the UK in the post-WW2 era, Ryan explores how attachments, captured in the concept of differentiated embedding, insert Polish migrants into their localities through dynamic temporal, spatial and relational processes. These differentiated processes are contextual and place-specific processes, and therefore can produce identification with the place of residence. Also, they are ‘neither unidirectional nor irreversible’ (ibid, p.248), where transnational mobility does not necessarily represent dis-embedding, however maintaining transnational links over time can be challenging (also Waldinger 2015).

Overall, these three examples are helpful for this study for two reasons; firstly, they help to ground transnationalism as a theory which is relevant for Polish migrants, bringing to the forefront migrants’ potential to continually connect, dis-connect or re-connect within social spaces across borders (albeit the frequency and intensity may change over time); equally, this is achieved without overexaggerating the novelty of transnationalism as well as without the perception of the more recent Polish migrants’ as always transient and in passing. Secondly, national identity is understood and constructed through migrants’ practices, hence transnational practices (White 2014), or anchors to Polishness (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2016, 2018). My study will delve into the construction of national identity further, by specifically looking at the relationship between the formation of national identity, evolving transnational conditions and migrants’ localities, using the optic of transnationalism experienced by migrants over their lifetime and throughout the totality of their transnational experiences, including the initial transit.

3.3.3 Conclusions

The above various conceptual perspectives can be easily translated across both groups of migrants under this study and will be helpful in avoiding the perception of complete intra-European liquidity (Engbersen and Snel 2013) of the post-2004 migrants’ existence, as well

as in bringing to the fore the intense drive of the post-WW2 group to stay together across their consecutive social spaces. Especially for the latter, the comparison between the two contrasting national identity constructions through the transnational lens is an exceptionally exciting prospect, with some strong themes already signalled through the findings in previous studies of the post-WW2 group presented in the section: Zubrzycki (1993) points to the parochial and enclosed nature of this group which is under pressure to practise Polishness; Patterson refers to the army having ‘a little exile world of its own’ even before arrival in the UK (1961, p.70) and the community being self-segregated by choice (ibid, p.96); Sword (1996) describes the Second Corps under British command as having a ‘unique atmosphere of comradeship and self-sufficiency’; whilst both Sword (1996) and Burrell (2002) highlight the time warp the Polish people are in, with romanticised Polishness from the past (Burrell 2002); Winslow (1999) identifies the migrants’ need to redirect their traumatic emotions and these manifest itself in recreating Polishness and Polish spaces in the UK; finally, for Smojkis (2013) these redirected emotions also lead to building defences and erecting invisible walls, separating them from the local communities and new arrivals from Poland. This strong self-segregating and demanding attention national identity formation of the post-WW2 group – with what Temple calls a ‘passionate commitment to remaining Polish’ (2001, p.389) – will be analysed through their experiences in successive social spaces and then contrasted with identity formation of the post-2004 flow of migrants experiencing their national identity in the UK far less collectively and often described as having no prospect of forging a collective identity (Brown 2011, Gill 2020).

On the whole, the post-WW2 group’s national ritual, their passionate commitment to their little exile world separated from others by invisible walls, as quite rightly observed by previous scholars of this group, already points to the conceptualisation that will be further developed in the following chapters. It will culminate in the conceptualisation of the post-WW2 national identity formation as a *communitas*, Turner’s concept (1969) to capture a national identity formation based on ritual, sacredness, lowliness and comradeship, which can only emerge under very specific conditions experienced by this group. These were transnational conditions and strong emotions that neither their children nor the later arrivals from (post)-communist Poland had personal experience of – notwithstanding, however, the latter migrants’ own struggles and identity formation trajectories through new spaces created between Poland and the UK following the collapse of the Soviet bloc, also situated within the wider context of the EU, Brexit and the Covid pandemic. Therefore, by providing the same analytical foundation for both groups of migrants, this thesis will add a new insight through comparing such contrasting national identity formation which emerged in these two groups at two distinct points in time historically. Overall, the focus is on different transnational

conditions the two groups experienced; a result of which – as I demonstrate – they connected with their spaces differently. Subsequent chapters introduce the concepts of *roots* and *transnational trajectories* to support this approach – ultimately offering an explanation to how migrants' national identity formation takes place over time, using the lens of transnationalism and emotions. However, before proceeding with the analytical chapters, further considerations regarding the methods used to achieve these objectives are provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4 – Methodology behind story telling

4.1 Introduction

From the epistemological and ontological point of view (Section 1.3), this study is framed in the paradigm of interpretivism and constructionism. From this theoretical perspective, Polish migrants are seen as active agents constructing subjective realities. As these multiple realities can only be studied through a close interaction between individuals and the researcher, I have adopted a research strategy based on a qualitative approach. This qualitative strategy allows for ‘the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants’ (Bryman 2012, p.380).

Within the qualitative framework, my approach is further supported by a two-case study comparative design, where the stories of migrants from two contrasting migratory flows provide the data, enhanced by additional archival and other documents to further capture their experiences of national identity in hugely different historical times. I chose the comparative design as it gave me the best platform to understand national identity formation in different transnational conditions through studying two meaningfully contrasting cases (Bryman 2012, p.72). The logic of the comparative design provided me with a broader range of transnational conditions and lived experiences to explore both differences and similarities between the two cases but remaining within the same national context, hence providing genuine comparability. Therefore, the comparative element is key to this enquiry, setting the basis upon which the analysis is conducted to gain a deeper understanding of social realities and national lived experiences of two contrasting flows of Polish migrants to the UK. This is also reflected in the structure of the chapters in this thesis itself, by providing the in-depth analysis of each flow in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 respectively, and bringing the comparison together and offering generalisations beyond these cases in Chapter 8.

Furthermore, each case study focuses on lived experiences of the Polish migrants in these two groups using oral history methods with the objective for the researcher to listen to their stories and to understand the meanings they make of their past, present and future. In that I followed Clandinin and Connelly: “*Stories are the closest we can come to the experience as we and others tell our experience ... Experience in this view, is the stories people live. People live stories, and in telling them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones*”

(Clandinin and Connelly 1994, quoted in Shaw 1999, p.49). Therefore, through in-depth unstructured interviews I was able to get close to the lived experiences and meanings that migrants ascribe to their migratory journeys and experiences of national identity. As discussed in the conceptual chapter (Chapter 2), these are stories my participants wanted to tell, as they re-experiences the past choosing what memories to bring into their narratives allowing them new meanings and as a result, re-socialising them in the present (Boyarin 1994, Farmer 2005, Rylko-Bauer 2005).

Furthermore, to generate richer data on national identity experienced by migrants throughout their migratory journey and over time, in-depth interviews were complemented by materials identified by the migrants themselves, archival documents to support findings for post-WW2 migrants, and materials regarding the wider current political developments that affect the post-2004 group in particular (e.g. extracts from political speeches directed by the Polish government at Polish people in the UK).

4.2 Sampling methods, locating the research, data collection and analysis

I embarked on this research project as a part-time student in October 2016 with the initial plan for my thesis to be submitted in September 2022. Unfortunately, as the whole world experienced enormous disruptions due to the Covid-19 pandemic in the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, so did my research plans. My original data collection strategy was deeply rooted in close engagement with my participants, including face-to-face interviews and visits to the places they occupy in their daily lives, including community places and private homes.

Fortunately, I was able to conduct the majority of my face-to-face interviews with the older generation before the pandemic erupted in January 2020. However, my fieldwork with the post-2004 migrants was initially totally disrupted. Due to lockdown restrictions and my participants' (and my own) hesitancy around face-to-face meetings for an extended period of time, I had to re-design my research approaches, including a new focus on online interviewing. This was both a new challenge for me, as well as an exciting opportunity to come up with different strategies for connecting with my participants, and more importantly to also observe how unexpected events such as the pandemic impact the migrants' transnational social fields, thus contributing to the analytical part of my study as well.

Therefore, the following sections on my data collection and analysis are situated in the context of this unexpected change, including the introduction of virtual methods, and my

ability to identify participants through alternative online channels. In total, I interviewed 25 post-WW2 migrants (all in-person), and 28 post-2004 migrants (9 in-person and 19 virtually).

4.2.1 Sampling methods and locating the research

My sampling process and identifying locations for my fieldwork can be divided into two stages: before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. These two stages differ in terms of my recruitment techniques and the location of my participants. However, in both approaches, the choice of participants was based on non-probability, purposive sampling (Denscombe 2014, Bryman 2012, Silverman 2014), which produced an exploratory sample of people who were most likely to provide valuable insights. I applied the following sampling criteria:

Post-WW2 group

1. Experience of migration to the UK as Polish servicemen or prisoners from labour and concentration camps, and their families (children, wives and fiancées), who came to the UK either from re-settlement camps (the Middle East, Africa and India) following their deportation from Poland between 1940 and 41 or directly from Poland through the family re-union and marriage route.
2. Guided by the characteristics of this dwindling population, location and gender were not the criteria upon which I sampled for this group.
3. The participants' characteristics were captured for the quotes used in this study as follows: e.g., name, gender, age, path to the UK (war displacement route, family re-union route or marriage route).

Post-2004 group

1. Experience of migration to the UK following Poland's EU accession in 2004.
2. Migrants selected for this study had lived in the UK for a minimum of 5 years, because they needed to have been immersed in the European/UK transnational context.
3. A balanced split between genders and a variety of locations in the UK (big cities vs smaller locations).
4. The participants' characteristics were captured for the quotes used in this study as follows: e.g., name, gender, age, UK location, length of stay in the UK.

Initially, I recruited participants by using snowball techniques based on personal recommendations (Gilbert and Stoneman 2016) through a network of friends and family contacts in the Polish community, organisations and care homes. All individuals 'hand-

picked' (Denscombe 2014, p.41) for this study shared the same experience, i.e., the experience of being a post-WW2 Polish migrant in the UK from one of the groups identified in Point 1. For the post-2004 group, I initially sought a balance of gender (which was subsequently disrupted due to the pandemic) and a variety of locations in the UK to explore broader migration trends and identity formation with increased superdiversity in some parts of the UK (Vertovec 2007); whereas this was not possible for the older generation due to dwindling numbers of this population. Furthermore, there was an additional criterion for post-2004 migrants. As this research set out to examine established practices in the transnational context, migrants selected for this study needed to have lived in the UK for a minimum of 5 years. Where disclosed, the following socio-economic characteristics were recorded for each participant: age, gender, location, year of arrival in the UK, marital status, education and occupational background/employment status (see Annex 1 for full details). These factors did not form part of the selection criterion but provided me with further insights into the participants' social capital and the position in their social space.

Most significantly for the progress of this project, from the start, I was conscious of the fact that the number of migrants who arrived in the UK after WW2 was rapidly declining. Some of them were frail and struggled with ill health, and therefore, I was keen to finalise fieldwork with this group of migrants in the first stage. As a result, I was able to conduct 22 interviews before the pandemic, with 3 taking place after all lockdowns were lifted and the vaccination programmes were well established. This allowed for safe and comfortable face-to-face interaction with this older generation, who on the whole had limited access to virtual platforms.

As a result, my in-person fieldwork is located in England and Wales; my networks and snowball sampling took me to cities such as Birmingham, Bournemouth, Kidderminster, Reading and London, and to Penrhos, a small village in Wales where in 1949 the post-WW2 community established a retirement village for war veterans and their families. I visited the village on three occasions: in 2017 to observe and learn more about the retirement home itself and twice in 2019 to conduct interviews; this was one year before a decision was made to close the Polish village and transfer the site to a Welsh housing association. Overall, the regions I visited had high levels of Polish migrants and were more accessible to me as I am based in Birmingham, centrally in the West Midlands area, where I had already established links with the Polish community. I also had personal links with the older generation in the London area. More details regarding my engagement with the community can be found in my reflective introduction (Section 1.4).

When the pandemic struck in 2020, all networks I had created froze, changing people's daily priorities and the way they interacted. It took me a little while to re-focus as in-person visits were not possible during lockdowns, especially meeting the older generation was not an option until the vaccination programme was fully implemented. Therefore, changing my data collection strategy became a necessity. With humanity switching to online platforms practically overnight, my research had become a very different proposition in terms of reaching out to people. The literature on research design and methods pre-2020 shows growing interest in virtual research methods, although to start with caution and demonstrating "considerable anxiety" around how far virtual can replace or complement existing methods (Hine 2005, p.1). In her editorial work, Hine's (2005) compiled a selection of papers on a variety of virtual methods that started to emerge at the beginning of the century, including online ethnography, online surveys, web content analysis and email interview. Issues around establishing a close relationship with participants and limited access to the Internet were highlighted by the contributors (Jankowski and Van Selm 2005, p.203). Two years later, Creswell in his guide to qualitative approaches recognises email interviews and adds online focus groups as a new form of interviewing (2007, p.129-30). The decades that followed revolutionised people's everyday lives; for example, Skype was launched in 2003, gaining 600 million within 5 years²¹. Facebook, launched in February 2004, attracted one million users within a year, and in the early 2020s was estimated to be the largest social network in the world with three billion users.²² The introduction of smart phones at the end of the first decade of this millennium added another layer on already vibrant social platforms available online. Overall, accelerated by the pandemic, the virtual reality is hardly special or unusual for most people globally. To borrow the term "banal" from other scholars (e.g., Billig 1995, i.e., happening casually and infiltrating our day to day lives without people even noticing), virtual technologies have achieved just this – banal virtual interactions form part of many people's daily lives across the world.

Therefore, by the time I was able to switch to virtual interviews (from May 2020), my post-2004 participants had become experienced users of virtual platforms. Everyday virtual connectivity had become normalised in many workplaces and personal lives. Therefore, in addition to continued use of snowball techniques and networks of family and friends to recruit my participants where this was possible, I also connected with Polish communities using Facebook groups of post-2004 migrants residing in different parts of the UK (e.g., Swindon, Darlington and Coventry). This resulted in some positive outcomes, extending my reach significantly. I was able to interview people living in much more diverse locations

²¹ <https://www.britannica.com/technology/Skype>

²² <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Facebook>

across the UK. My extended locations included in the south: Okehampton, Bournemouth, Eastbourne, and Petersfield, through to Swindon in the south west and Guildford in the south east; as well as London, Cambridge, and areas in the Midlands, including Birmingham, West Bromwich, Coventry, Tipton, Wolverhampton, and finally up north to Darlington.

Overall, the locations for the two groups can be compared as follows:

| Location - post-2004 migrants | No | Location - post-WW2 migrants | No |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|
| Birmingham | 7 | Birmingham | 6 |
| Bournemouth | 2 | Bournemouth | 1 |
| Cambridge | 1 | Kidderminster | 1 |
| Coventry | 3 | London | 2 |
| Darlington | 1 | Penrhos | 14 |
| Eastbourne | 2 | Reading | 1 |
| Guildford | 1 | Total | 25 |
| London | 1 | | |
| Okehampton | 1 | | |
| Petersfield | 1 | | |
| Swindon | 2 | | |
| Tipton | 2 | | |
| West Bromwich | 2 | | |
| Wolverhampton | 2 | | |
| Total | 28 | | |

There are 6 male and 19 female participants in the post-WW2 group, and 12 male and 16 female participants in the post-2004 sample. The full participant list can be found in Annex 1, including the participants' socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, location in the UK, place of origin in Poland, marital and parental status, occupation, education and English language knowledge (where disclosed).

4.2.2 Data collection and analysis

In-depth interviews were my main method of data collection. As a Polish native speaker, I was able to conduct my interviews in Polish, in total with 25 post-WW2 migrants (all in-person), and 28 post-2004 migrants, including two joint interviews (9 in-person and 19 virtually, including 18 with camera on setting and one with camera off setting). This informal, interactive and open-ended interview process allowed for a close interaction between the participant and me as a researcher in order to establish an in-depth account of the participant's individual, subjective experience. I prepared a list of topics with potential prompts, if needed. This included questions about the circumstances surrounding the initial departure from Poland, life in the UK (first, in the time since and currently), meanings of

being Polish in general and on a personal level, as well as migrant experiences, including experiences of the Polish community and other Polish people in the UK (the full topic guide is included in Annex 4).

Conducting interviews in Polish was an important element of the process allowing for open and direct conversation, as some of my participant spoke little or limited English (in both groups). These multiple interviews allowed me to also capture migrants' life histories. The introduction of this narrative method into my approach helped me to account for the notion of identity evolving over time. Through migrants' life stories – perceived as a continuous process – I was able to elicit their perspective as revealed in the telling of the story (Bryman 2012, p.582-4). During the interview process I kept field notes to capture additional observations related with the participants' responses. This was helpful for both in-person and virtual conversations, with the latter also presenting some interesting opportunities to see the participants in their own home, often very informally. With the older generation I was able to reach them during my fieldwork days, weekends and when on annual leave from my full-time job. Most remarkably, the flexibility of the virtual interactions offered me as a part-time researcher and my participants was extraordinary. Where face-to-face was the preferred option, I arranged this accordingly. Overall, however, in terms of timing and scheduling of the meetings, the virtual method allowed me to connect with my interviewees informally and at the time that suited them best. It was notable to compare most in-person meetings were in the 9 am to 6 pm window for practical reasons such as travel to different destinations, to the wider spread of appointments I made with the virtual group. This included an interview which took place at 9 pm, after the participant's children went to bed, and a 12 o'clock conversation during the participant's lunch break at work. In total 42% of the virtual respondents preferred an interview between 10 am and 2 pm, 32% between 4pm and 5:30 pm, and 26% between 6 pm and 10 pm.

In addition to this greater spread in the timing of the interviews themselves, I found my virtual participants relaxed and familiar with their preferred virtual platform: either WhatsApp or Zoom. The following scenarios demonstrate the advantages of offering online interviews in practical terms:

- Online observations: Czesia (f, 28, Bournemouth, 10 years in the UK) also introduced her children to me and continued with her house chores, including tidying up and preparing dinner; whereas Julia (f, 43, Petersfield, 15 years in the UK) paused the interview twice to tend to her cooking – Polish traditional dish “kopytka”. As with many others, both were very comfortable with the online process, offering me informal insights into their everyday lives with their families.

- Participants' agency: not all participants want a face-to-face interaction, either physically or virtually. One of my participants rejected the invitation for a video chat, with the camera staying off throughout the interview. Igor said '*I thought this was compulsory. But I prefer not to. I don't like this form of conversation*' (Igor, m, 42, Eastbourne, 6 years in the UK). I always listened to the preferences of my participants, allowing for the conversation under conditions which were most comfortable for my interviewees.
- Rapport and reflection: finally, it may be more difficult to build an intimate relationship in the online setting (Bryman 2012, Denscombe 2014, Hine 2005); however, this also depends on the predispositions of both the participant and the researcher, and their ability to develop a close rapport more generally. I received feedback suggesting that this could be a successful and effective method to get close to the participants, benefitting them too. Anastazja reflected after our interview: '*This conversation was a great pleasure for me too. Thanks to this conversation, I reflected on the positive changes in me whilst living outside of the Polish borders - in the way I see other people and understand their actions. I am proud to be Polish, but I am happy I don't live in Poland.*' (Anastazja, f, 45, Eastbourne, 15 years in the UK)

Pre-pandemic these online conversations, carried out in a relaxed and casual manner, may not have been possible on a large scale. The world has changed, and humanity got used to interacting online. However, it does not mean that the virtual is to replace the in-person, as being immersed and fully present in a particular context has significance in its own right. Nonetheless, based on my experiences of conducting my research during the pandemic, I would propose for these methods to be used in tandem, where needed and always guided by the participant's preference. This will allow for more participant circumstances to be captured. Previous concerns around limitations of online interviews to do with access to online facilities, technical difficulties or the asynchronous process (examples of disadvantages listed in Bryman 2012, p.667) have ceased to be an issue for many people.

However, there are additional considerations to be made when comparing in-person and virtual interviews. When I physically visited my participants, both post-WW2 and post-2004 migrants, I was able to explore their context more, including their community collective spaces or private homes. This was of huge benefit in terms of my secondary source of data. As part of my research process, in addition to the interviews, and to allow for greater triangulation, I asked my participants to select visual materials and archival documents

which would further support their experiences of Polish national identity. On the whole, the post-WW2 generation provided an abundance of documents during the in-person meetings, albeit reasons for this are not only to do with the form of the interview. The older generation had more materials linked with the physical collective spaces they constructed in the UK. The more recent migrants do not occupy physical spaces in the UK in the same way; hence they were unable to produce the same amount or type of materials. However, by not visiting them in their houses I was unable to appreciate fully the more subtle experiences in their homes. In the case of the 9 in-person interviews with the post-2004 migrants, I could observe their context more in-depth. For example, when sitting in his garden, Jakub started talking about his plants, including those he brought from Poland (roses, cherry trees and gooseberry bushes). This immensely contributed to my deliberations around the wider thinking around *rootedness* and *rerootedness*. Jakub reflected: '*We have jasmine here; it smells like in Poland*' (Jakub, m, 38, Tipton, 15 years in the UK). The garden also represented a place of parties and barbeques for his close friends. Two other participants provided a few photos – a Polish shop and sporting events involving Polish teams (tennis and football). This embodied the way this group of migrants embrace their experiences of Polishness in the UK. Therefore, this additional 'researcher-provoked data' during interviews (Silverman 2014, p.359) helped me to better observe and engage in the meanings identified by migrants, looking for patterns, and to analyse the choices migrants made in terms of the visual images and objects that they wanted to talk about (Banks 2003, p.7). Archival documents came through personal libraries, Polish community centres and online archives. Further outcomes through this additional data source are captured throughout the context chapter (Chapter 3) and findings chapters (Chapter 6 and 7).

Overall, all interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically. I used the NVivo software to help me organise my data and bring structure through coding, looking for connections and patterns of meaning within my data set (Braun and Clarke 2006, Denscombe 2014). All interviews started with an open question around the circumstances of the interviewee's departure from Poland, followed by their experiences in their new spaces and links with Poland. As I was dealing with two different groups of migrants, I developed two coding frameworks to allow for analysis and interpretations of contrasting or simply different findings across the groups. It was a bottom up, inductive process, with no pre-set ideas and evolving as I was reading and re-reading the interviews. Throughout the process, I used the theoretical framework of transnationalism and social spaces to anchor 'the analytic claims' (Braun and Clarke 2006, p.95). This was not a search for unidentified emerging themes, but rather focused analysis grouping migrants' experiences and practices through the lens of spaces of transit, spaces linking national spaces of Poland and the UK, the EU space and

wider networks of transnational families. Additionally, the flexibility of the thematic analysis method allowed me to combine themes at the interpretative and semantic levels. This was helpful when building my interpretations for each case study and when looking for migrants' descriptions and metaphors through which they imagined their relationship with their locality.

4.3 Cross-cultural considerations

4.3.1 Ethical considerations

The Ethics Approval for this research was granted by Aston University's Ethics Committee on 22nd April 2018. Protecting participants' interests was a major concern in this social research from the start (Denscombe 2014, p.311). When we involve people, we 'enter a *relationship* with them' (Silverman 2014, p.140). Therefore, it was my responsibility to ensure that all practices adopted as part of this research did not cause any harm or disadvantage (Silverman 2014, p.148). Furthermore, I wanted this study to benefit not only myself as a researcher, but also the participants (Oliver 2003, p.34, Punch 2014, p.50). The Polish migrants' stories are meaningful to the Polish community in the UK. Some of my intended participants have already expressed a desire to share their histories, often accompanied by community records, newsletters, magazines and other personal documents.

Overall, the planned strategy for data collection through face-to-face interviews, the participants' materials and archival documents is linked with a number of ethical issues. I recognised that dealing with people bore a high level of responsibility during the pre-interview, interview and post-interview stages. There were also ethical implications related with the usage of people's materials and archival documents. Moreover, throughout the project I was mindful of the fact that the post-war participants were elderly, frail and at times still suffering from experienced war traumas; whereas some of the post-2004 migrants were affected by their migratory decision longer-term too, feeling they had been forced to leave Poland for a variety of reasons. Uncertainties caused by the Brexit vote were also a consideration for the more recent migration. Consequently, in order to protect the participants, my key ethical considerations were around informed consent and issues related to dealing with vulnerable people, confidentiality and use of anonymised data, as well as the relationship between the researcher and participants, including relevant permissions to use participants' information.

4.3.2 Informed consent

Participation in research should always be voluntary. Nobody should be coerced into taking part (Denscombe 2014, p.311), and all participants should be told how the information they provide will be used. Therefore, informed consent was given actively through opt-in procedures (Punch 2014, p.44), supported by relevant volunteer information sheets with a clear 'non-technical account' of the project (Silverman 2014, p.149). Prior to the participant agreeing to be interviewed and to share textual and/or visual materials with the researcher, the participant received an information sheet (Appendix 2) containing an overview of my study and information related to confidentiality, anonymity and protection of data. Each participant received a consent form to confirm that they were taking part voluntarily (Appendix 3). All documents were available in Polish to ensure that everybody fully understood the process. All interviews were conducted in Polish, as the language preferred by the participant. Bearing in mind that some of my participants were elderly and potentially more vulnerable people with impacts of old age physically and mentally, I only proceeded with my research activity where I was confident that my participants gave an informed consent and were safe, including during the pandemic and post-pandemic period.

Furthermore, all participants were asked for permission for the interview to be recorded, with the right to refuse as well as to withdraw from the study at any stage. In that sense, informed consent is seen as an 'ongoing process' (Gilbert and Stoneman 2016, p.213) which needs to be 'monitored on an ongoing basis' (Punch 2014, p.45); it is a 'process of negotiation, rather than a one-off action' (Silverman 2014, p.149). Individual responses were anonymised through the usage of pseudonyms, contributing to the aggregate, composite picture (Punch 2014, p.47).

Finally, in order to protect my participants, for the usage and storage of my primary data I comply with the General Data Protection Regulation. All personal data is kept separate from the research data and is stored securely on password-protected drives, with appropriate back up. All participants have been informed how and why the data is kept, and that they had the right for their data to be withdrawn and destroyed at any time (Denscombe 2014, p.317). Furthermore, all materials provided by each participant can only be used with the full consent of the participant as the creator and legal owner of a particular image (Banks 2003, p.132). Under UK law copyright can be waived by participants and given to the researcher. However, in order to avoid any procedural difficulties in terms of the usage of other people's materials, I have been following any potential changes in UK law on a regular basis. Any textual documents used for the purpose of this study required the agreement of the owners.

4.3.3 Researcher's role and reciprocity

The role of the researcher is to create an atmosphere where participants feel comfortable and will respond honestly and comprehensively. Interviewees should be free from any pressure resulting from the researchers' position of authority or their standing in the 'hierarchical system' (Oliver 2003, p.36). To help me achieve this, I used the opt-in sampling method, whereby my participants were approached through friends, family networks and social platforms. They were asked to contact me only if they were interested in participating (Gilbert and Stoneman 2016, p.210). Moreover, this research was driven by the principles that participants 'must not be silenced, marginalised, or disengaged, all voices must be heard' (Creswell 2007, p.212), and where the researcher deals 'even-handedly' with people's lives and experiences (Silverman 2014, p.148), with the intended approach based on trust and mutuality (Punch 2014, pp.46-51).

Therefore, to ensure both trust and safety of my participants, throughout my project I undertook continuous risk assessment, where the wellbeing of my participants was at the forefront of my research activity. This dynamic risk assessment proved essential with the Covid-pandemic breaking out in 2020, for example when I decided to cancel an interview with a post-WW2 migrant originally planned for 20th March 2020. Three days later, on 23rd March 2020, the government announced the UK's first national lockdown. I was able to go back to interview this participant in July 2021, once the pandemic was more under control and we were both fully vaccinated. Overall, social research involving human interaction is inherently linked with issues of personal safety and a certain level of risk to both the participant and the researcher. Therefore, I was vigilant about any risk of harm to my participants and sought advice from my supervisors as the difficulties escalated due to the pandemic during my fieldwork. More generally, all participants were provided with detailed information about the research in advance of the interview, allowing me to minimise any potential risks related with causing psychological harm to my participants, including for example talking about migrants' experiences in the context of their previous war traumas, emotions related with often difficult migratory experiences for both groups, or more recently insecurities caused by the Brexit vote.

Finally, a relationship based on reciprocity or 'giving back' (Gilbert and Stoneman 2016, p.216) between the researcher and informants is considered an essential principle. Giving back for time and effort is important, as well as ensuring that the participants do not feel abandoned after the study is finished. During my visits to Penrhos, I helped with activities in the village, visited the elderly residents with the choir from Birmingham, and spent time with them, including playing cards and bingo. I plan to continue with my involvement beyond the

focus of this study, including writing articles on a range of issues relevant to the local community. Since, 2019 I have written 9 articles free of charge for the Polish parish quarterly magazine *Wiadomości* in Birmingham sharing my findings as I learnt about the community, and capturing their celebrations and events:

- “What do our home archives hide?” (2019)
- “Penrhos – Polish Village in Wales” (2019)
- “Schola” (2019)
- “Daily virtual reality – work and life during the pandemic” (2021)
- “Celebrations in Polish Millennium House” (2021)
- “Waters of the Jordan in the Birmingham Parish” (2022)
- “Jubilee of the Parish Priest” (2022)
- “75th Anniversary of the Polish Parish in Birmingham” (2022)
- “60th Anniversary of the Polish Millennium House in Birmingham” (2023)

I was able to give back in kind through the activities listed above. This was not possible in the same way with the post-2004 migrants. Firstly, they are not always aware or inclined to take part in the more organised, physical spaces created by the post-WW2 Polish community, and secondly most of my post-accession participants were recruited during the pandemic, mainly through Facebook with interviews taking place online. In these cases, I offered a £10 Amazon voucher for their time and effort.

4.4 Delimitations and limitations of the study

This concluding note is a reflection on the boundaries of this study itself. It is a study of first-generation migrants, as my main objective is to analyse how national identity is re-constructed and carried through transnational social fields of those who are part of the initial departure from their homeland; hence second and third generations are out of scope.

Moreover, Poland has a rich history of migration since the 19th century; traditionally economic migration is contrasted with political migration, the latter often constructed as migration of the elite, which is perceived to be of higher moral value as it refers back to the patriotic narrative of Poland’s struggle for independence (Galasińska 2010, Garapich 2016). However, I made a choice to limit my case studies. I wanted to contrast large population movements following critical events which opened brand new and significantly different transnational social fields underpinned by contrasting transnational conditions. Thus, I decided to focus on two flows of Polish people to the UK: post-WW2 migrants arriving immediately after WW2 following their war displacement and those who arrived to join them between 1945 – 1962 (based on my sample) are contrasted with those Polish people who

arrived post-2004 after Poland joined the EU. I did not include in my sample flows of the 1980s caused by political repressions of the Solidarity movement, nor those who arrived post-1989 before Poland's EU accession. Although interconnected through networks and organisations (Elgenius 2017, Garapich 2016), these were smaller flows of often undocumented migrants, thus not representing the fully fluid EU transnational conditions that followed 2004.

Furthermore, returnees in both flows under this study are acknowledged but not included in the sample due to practical reasons. Additionally, also for practical reasons, I did not draw upon Polish migration to other countries triggered by the same transnational conditions (WW2 and EU accession respectively), as having a consistent context in terms of the sending and receiving country was essential.

Finally, my fieldwork, especially with the post-2004 group, was impacted by the Covid pandemic. As part of my initial strategy, I was keen to use additional documents, objects or photos identified by the participants themselves. This was to help them illustrate their understanding of 'Polishness' using their day-to-day objects or any other materials they had in their homes, giving me the opportunity to reinforce my interpretations and better identify themes across the data set. This method worked remarkably well with the older generation through in-person meetings. Their dwellings offered a wealth of materials relevant for this study; on many occasions we spent a lot of time talking about objects around us. As a result, there was a plethora of various types of documents, materials, objects and photos across the post-WW2 group; including family photo albums, historical documents from pre-war Poland and during war time; Polish history books including on displaced persons camps; books on Polish education in the UK; historical newspapers and magazines; Polish classics literature, a variety of personal documents identification documents before and after WW2; war medals and medals for contributions to the Polish community in the UK; qualifications gained in the UK; objects such as a folk dance vest or spoons saved from pre-war Poland; certificates and recognitions for war effort or commitment to the community in the UK; records of numerous photos from scouting events, Polish schools, first communions, community day trips, folk groups, funerals, and weddings in Polish community spaces; poems written for the community; or own paper on the importance of teaching the Polish language. These additional materials enhanced the basis of the post-WW2 context section in Chapter 3, supporting the historical element of this study (for example bulletins from displaced persons camps in India from 1946, among others) and providing an insight into the life of the community at that time, thus further meeting the triangulation requirement to validate this study.

However, I was not able to achieve the same with the post-2004 group due to two factors: firstly, the impacts of the pandemic, hence the need to switch to online interactions, and secondly, more generally, due to their far less collective relationship with their localities in the UK. The following two photos contrast visually the in-person and virtual interview process and material gathering, with more spontaneous and interactive encounters with the post-WW2 group (the casual pointing to a picture on the wall in the hall) as opposed to the fewer direct interactions and more static exchanges with the post-2004 migrants – the photo of the local Polish shop was emailed after the interview.

Example - Post-WW2 interview



Photo 1. Cross of Merit awarded by the Polish Catholic Mission in England and Wales (Stefania, f, 82, marriage route)

Example - Post-2004 interview



Photo 2. Polish Shop in Guildford (Iwona, f, 31, Guildford, 9 years in the UK)

However, even with the fewer face to face interactions with the post-accession group, and a smaller number of artefacts identified during the process, materials that were identified were an invaluable source of information and validation. For example, it is the Polish shop that was chosen by Iwona in Photo 2, rather than a Polish club. Such findings speak directly to the narrative from the interviews, providing an additional element of triangulation. In this vein, other materials included Polish children's books (Natalia, f, 38, Tipton, 16 years in the UK), and plants from Poland in the garden (Jakub, m, 38, Tipton, 15 years in the UK) identified during in-person interviews; whereas I received some photos from virtual interviews: in addition to the Polish shop, photos of the interviewee supporting a Polish football team at home; and Polish tennis players at one of the tennis tournaments in the UK (Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK).

Overall, despite the difficulties, the objects that were shared further support the findings from the interviews, where the more collective experiences of the post-WW2 migrant interviewees can be contrasted with objects showing the distinctly individual character of the post-2004 informants' experiences, very much personalising their individual sense of Polishness.

CHAPTER 5 – Preface to the findings chapters: the concepts of roots and transnational trajectories

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is a short preface to introduce the two guiding concepts of *roots* and *transnational trajectories* which provide the analytical framework throughout the findings Chapters 6 and 7. Thus, it is crucial for me to start with some wider theoretical reflections that led to the development of these concepts.

This study is based on stories of Polish migrants who experienced a range of transnational conditions underpinned by the different political, national and technological contexts of their respective historical times. Many of these stories are memories of forced movement but are always based on people's agency within the boundaries of social spaces created by the nation-states. Inherently political (Vertovec 2009), transnational social fields link national spaces, thus becoming key domains for identity construction of migrants and national construction projects of nation-states themselves. Within this dynamic context, my findings demonstrate that the formation of national identities is primarily driven by the conditions within the transnational social fields that are open to different migrants at historically, politically, economically, socially and technologically different times. On the whole, the findings across both groups show that firstly, both groups engage in transnational activity, and therefore transnationalism is not a new phenomenon (also in line with Foner 1997), and secondly, that transnationalism does not disrupt the "national order of things" (Malkki 1992) for the participants in this study, although the evolution of national identity formation itself is driven by the transnational conditions experienced by them over time.

More specifically, I demonstrate that transnational social fields continually evolve in migrants' lives due to social and political changes: they emerge; they develop with time; they are open for some but remain closed for others; they are further shaped by changing political environments between nation-states; they continue in migrants' lives but can also suddenly close as a result of a wider political context. This constant fluctuation creates new opportunities and adds new layers, impacting migrants' national identity construction. This fluctuation also means that transnational social fields do not necessarily produce a

sequential continuum. The two groups do not access the same transnational networks between Poland and the UK; they experience different transnational conditions resulting in contrasting identity formation and a different relationship with their new localities. For example, by the very nature of the political context and the events that trigger the emergence of a particular transnational social field, specific transnational conditions in this space will determine whether it is negotiated and experienced collectively or individually. Furthermore, the transnational journey, or often consecutive journeys, including each step of the physical migratory movement (e.g., the transit stage linking the point of departure with the point of arrival) as well as continued engagement in transnational social fields are crucial in understanding the experience over time and subsequent identity formation.

Therefore, throughout the findings chapters I argue that different configurations of transnational conditions produce different national identity formation responses in migrants' new localities and through the transnational social fields they build throughout their lifetime. I further argue that depending on the type of transnational experiences, migrants' emotional responses to these experiences can lead to temporary departures, more fluid unfixing from the original locality, or a complete break from the original location. In some cases of the latter, there may be a shift of the identification reference point from the original nation-state to the new location – as the case of the post-WW2 group will show, resulting in a separate national formation which will emerge under very specific transnational conditions. However, not all unfixings from the original locality lead to permanent departures; equally, not all more permanent unfixings lead to a full national insertion into the new locality. Consequently, in order to fully capture migrants' relationship with their localities and subsequent national identity formation throughout their dynamically evolving transnational social fields, I introduce two concepts to visualise the analysis and embody these variables: the concepts of *roots* and *transnational trajectory*.

5.2 The concept of roots

The metaphor of *roots* is not new in academia; in fact, roots are perhaps the most common botanical metaphor of human connection to place (Malkki 1992) used colloquially, in nationalist discourses, and in scholarly literature, including Ahmed et al. 2020, Cohen 1997, Long 2009, Malkki 1992, Mapril 2017, Sala and Baldassar 2017, Smith 1986, among others. Literature engages with this metaphorical concept to capture different aspects of human-place relationship over time. For example, Malkki (1992) positions roots in the debate which constructs 'uprootedness' of refugees as pathologised in the "national order of things" of the contemporary world, with national roots representing belonging and identity; whereas being

uprooted (i.e., not attached to a national unit) is constructed as pathological and immoral. Long (2008) studies the perpetuation of Israeli nationhood through the imagery of roots and tree planting in Palestine, 'rooting' settlers in the land and 'linking them to their ancient ancestors by (re)awakening their connection to 'nature' (Long 2009, p.75); this also links with ideologies related with Smith's essentialised primordial national roots (Smith 1986). Mapril (2017) explores experiences of second generation Portuguese Canadians, who through the metaphors of origins and roots create new local identities as middle class, cosmopolitan and multicultural. More broadly, the concept of 'root' migration has attracted more academic interest too – Sala and Baldassar (2017) studied second generation return of Italian Australians 'performing the transnational family' (ibid, p.387), connecting the concepts of roots, place and family with return to the ancestral 'roots' (ancestral home) as a culturally appropriate way for young people to gain independence. By contrast, Cohen (1997) produces a more *'tongue in cheek "the good gardener's guide"* for different types of diaspora, including the category of "weeding" for refugee or victim diasporas who were *'uprooted, cast out, destroyed, if possible, by weed killers'* (Cohen 1997, p.178). This wide-ranging conceptualisation behind the metaphors of roots/uprooting/rerooting demonstrates the multiplicity of lived experiences related with movement and place, as well as the conceptual effort to cope with this variety. The processes are 'simultaneously affective, embodied, cultural and political' (Ahmed et al. 2020, p.2); and therefore, these examples contribute to the concept used in this thesis across all chapters in some way: Malkki's national *rootedness* as the forced condition of current nation-states; Long's imagery of ancestral *roots* used in different political debates, Mapril's, and Sala and Baldassar's proactive translation of ancestral *roots* into identities and migratory strategies constructed in the present; or finally, the political, emotional and often brutal process of being extracted from the original locality (removal of *roots* - Cohen's weeding).

Another important contribution to the conceptual thinking around *uprootedness/rerootedness* used in this thesis, and especially in Chapter 6, is inspired by Gilroy's work (1993) on race, culture and the political and the concepts of 'roots and routes' (also Clifford 1994). Roots are the memory of the historic homeland, whereas routes symbolise migrants' journey through the middle passage: it is the traumatic rupture between the past and the future with significant effects on subsequent identity construction and its related imagery. The concepts of routes and middle passage signal some deeply profound change that takes place in this transitional space, creating 'a pervasive state of rootlessness' which results in new meanings and 'the desire for arrival and homecoming' (Kaup 2000, p.89). In this space, as Clifford observes *'Linear history is broken, the present constantly shadowed by a past that is also a desired, but obstructed, future: a renewed, painful yearning'* (Clifford 1994, p. 318). The

imagery of sea and ships in motion of the Black Atlantic can be compared to the WW2 deportees' imagery of cattle trains rupturing their known meanings and linear histories. In fact, Winslow (1999) discusses Tatiana Sceglova's oral history project which captured experiences of different ethnic groups exiled to Siberia, where the imagery of long train journeys occupied a significant place in memories outside of the Polish group too. This is for two reasons: the trauma of the event itself, and the significance of the event in determining their future. Moreover, to an extent, "routes" also converse with the concept of the liminal space of the rite of passage (Turner 1969). The post-WW2 group's experience of the profound rupture caused by the outbreak of the war, deportation and labour camps was followed by spaces of liminality of battle fields, labour camps, displaced persons camps and resettlement camps. These were spaces of 'liminality, marginality and inferiority' (ibid; p.130), where people were in a 'homogenous totality' outside of social structure (ibid; p.113). In this space they stayed together through national ritual, re-constructing their memories of their lost homeland and re-experiencing the trauma of the initial rupture. This was an experience of 'unprecedented potency' (ibid; p.128), creating a *communitas* (Turner 1969), a sacred national formation, in need of protection and its own spaces for that ritual to continue.

Therefore, in this study the notion of *roots* metaphorically represents my informants' continued national way of thinking as well as their relationship with their localities. The metaphor helps me to demonstrate how *uprooting/rerooting* is constructed, enacted and emplaced in spaces that the migrants enter. Overall, I show that the departures or unfixings from the original locality (the *uprooting*) and finding a new geographical location for re-building of the original national identity (the *rerooting*), are not consequential. Based on my sample, I observe that the migrants can remain *uprooted*; *uprooting* is a potentiality within which they continually seek options as part of their migratory strategies, and change their localities where desired or needed, or they can *put down their roots* – a process through which they change their identification reference point from the collective of the original nation-state to their new locality. Moreover, this metaphorical *rootedness/uprootedness* which provides the framework for the findings chapters is of course symbolical; however, it may also have very physical consequences in migrants' localities – for example it can be embodied through the purchase or construction of physical buildings in new localities creating new national terrains for identity re-construction.

Thus, my conceptualisation of *rootedness* goes beyond Zubrzycki's idea of *roots* discussed in Section 3.3.1 (Zubrzycki 1993), where his concept of '*assimilation without loss of roots*' (*asymilacja bez wykorzenia*) stands for assimilation without the loss of cultural identity. Indeed, the idea of *roots* I propose is not only about migrants' national or cultural identity and the relationship they develop with their localities. It is also about their personal and emotional

response to the political which underpins the process of migration. As many migrants' stories show across both groups in this study, *uprooting/rerooting* processes are emotional and can be violent, playing an important role in their subsequent decision making and meaning making across their available spaces. Therefore, in addition to analytically visualising the process of becoming unfixed and setting up physical spaces to national ritual in the new locality, for the purpose of my analysis, the symbol of *roots* also captures people's agency within their old and new spaces – and linking with it – their emotional attachments and detachments. Raffaeta and Duff's words capture this link between space and emotions succinctly: 'place is first and foremost the creation of a structure of feeling' (Raffaeta and Duff 2013, p.341). Seen from this perspective, the presence as well as the absence of the metaphor of *roots* became significant when compared across the narratives, with the post-2004 group more engaged with the metaphor itself, for example by remembering, missing and in some cases rejecting their *roots* in Poland driven by strong feelings and unable to accept their contemporary Poland. On the contrary, the post-WW2 migrants' "*piece of Poland*" or "*Polish soil*" did not trigger the same symbolic representation of *roots* fixed in Poland; they became closer to their *roots* constructed at the local level in the UK. For example, they financed the new spaces to *put down their roots* through the construction of physical spaces, engaging financially and emotionally; or on the contrary, they rejected spaces, for example due to fear, anger or disappointment (e.g., communist Poland).

5.3 The concept of transnational trajectories

As *uprooting/rerooting* processes happen gradually, I grapple with the impacts on national identity formation of different transnational conditions changing over time through the concept of *transnational trajectories* – it is the journey through all spaces that become available and are negotiated by a migrant throughout their lifetime. In fact, migratory journeys are seldom linear (Ehrkamp 2020). As migrants cross national borders, their journey is shaped by alternatives that become possible based on political arrangements made by nation-states, migration controls they put in place, and also practicalities related with migrants' own location or access to information which can either support or prevent entry to a particular space. Therefore, migrants experience their individual transnational paths – *transnational trajectories*, although they can also be experienced as a collective when migrants are together physically and have similar access to a particular space. The latter was not the case in Alicja's story, who following her deportation in 1940 spent 6 years in Kazakhstan, despite the Sikorski-Mayski agreement signed in 1941 allowing the

deportees freedom to leave. She had been separated from her original 'Kresy' group as she stayed in an orphanage together with her sister.

We knew that the war had started as we had been still in Poland, but we didn't know that the war had finished in 1945. All Polish people who had come with us had been taken away in the first year; we as orphans had been left in an orphanage. Two sisters. And then one day [...] in 1946 a person came and spoke Polish to us; and told us that we could go to Poland. We were very happy, hoping to find our father. Our mum had died, but we hoped to find our father (Alicja, f, 89, marriage route)

Alicja and her sister did not get access to the displaced persons camps which were created through the arrangements between the UK and the Polish government in exile in 1942 – like many other people taking part in this study. In fact, it is unclear how many people never returned from the original 1.5 – 2.2 million deportees as estimated in different sources (Barański 1991, Davies 1981, Association of Poles in India 1942-1948 2002, Midlands Polish Community Associations 2011). Alicja herself did not realise that the war had finished, although she subsequently gained access to the space that linked her with Poland to allow for her return in 1946.

Therefore, the concept of *transnational trajectory* is an important consideration in this analysis. It is the migrants' life trajectory through different transnational conditions evolving over time as opportunities open for some but remain closed for others – it is the totality of transnational experiences. Overall, as a politically underpinned concept, *transnational trajectory* itself is not static or fixed, as the political context and opportunities fluctuate in their size and access depending on the political situation and arrangements made between nation-states. People's individual transnational trajectories open, expand, shrink, opening to some, whilst remaining closed to others; additionally, new spaces become available, creating new layers and new alternatives. Each transnational trajectory is different, set in the context of different political, national, economic or technological times. In this case study, the key division is between the collective and individual paths (post-WW2 v post-2004 migrants); but we can also observe different trajectories within the same flow of migrants too, for example by considering returnees to Poland for each flow respectively – they are the 'constitutive' others (Hall 1996a) to those who remain in the UK.

5.4 Bringing roots and transnational trajectories together

When brought together, the concepts of *roots* and *transnational trajectory* provide a sturdy framework to analyse people's national identity construction recognising movement through space and time as well as people's agency. More specifically, the concept of *roots*

represents the complex relationship between continued national way of thinking throughout all spaces occupied by migrants vis à vis migrants' agency within those spaces driven by their emotional responses to the conditions controlled by nation-states. It is about the potency which is triggered by movement across national borders and continued living across different spaces (the individual *transnational trajectory*). Whilst departure from the original locality (*the uprooting*) constitutes a potentiality through which migrants re-construct their identities, as this research shows, complete *rerootedness* – a geographical shift in migrants' national identification – happens under specific transnational conditions evolving over time.

In other words, the concept of *roots* is about the individual, their physical relationship with the locality, their continued national way of thinking, and their emotional response to the political, which in this study is captured through the dynamic concept of *transnational trajectories*.

Supported with this dual conceptual framework, the following chapters present the key findings of my study.

CHAPTER 6 – Post-WW2 migration: construction of rerooted national identities

6.1 Introduction

In this first findings chapter, it is the formation of *rerooted* national identities that is under the spotlight. The focus is on the construction of identities by people whose original dislocation from Poland was triggered by the turbulent, violent and deeply traumatic events surrounding WW2. As the initial displacement took place over eight decades ago, the analysis delves into people's memories of the past with its layers of experiences, meanings, and traumas continually re-constructed and re-told in stories which take the story tellers through their memories of a number of physical locations, for many including periods of successive protracted encampment in labour camps, army camps, prisoners of war camps, displaced persons camps, and resettlement camps. Indeed, these extended experiences of various camp spaces established in different forms and for different purposes are significant for the understanding of the identity formation of this group of interviewees in this study. As literature on camps tells us, these were spaces of both force and power exercised by states to isolate, suspend, control and manage people, as well as spaces of people's daily lives and agency that 'cannot be fully explained by political force/power relations' (Achilli 2015, p.14), where new realities, new identities and new common grounds emerge among camp populations (Katz 2022). Thus, these encampment conditions, including experiences of liminality and vigorous national ritual come to the center of the analysis, providing the foundation for the conceptualisation of this group as a *communitas* (Turner 1969) and allowing for better understanding of the group's subsequent experiences in their new location as well as through different transnational social fields over time.

Driven by the characteristics of my sample – i.e., capturing a range of locations in the UK, and with the majority of women and families of the servicemen, this chapter offers a picture which is firstly less focused on the London headquarters of the government in exile and central organisations, and secondly less dominated by the 'soldier trope' (Burrell 2018), and the usual lens of "soldiers' emigration" (Zebrowska 1986). It brings to the fore the experiences of both the army and cadet schools, as well as civilians, including wives and children, who not only ensure a more nuanced view of this group but also were themselves the fabric of everyday practices this group experienced throughout their consecutive social

spaces. As their national identity construction is framed through their experiences and practices on their *transnational trajectory*, the following sections provide the structure to the analysis:

- Identity construction as the collective “we” rooted in the UK
- Identity construction in UK-Poland transnational social fields
- Identity construction in the transnational community fields
- Transnational social fields within the EU

6.2 Identity construction as the collective “we” rooted in the UK

The start of WW2 marked the initial movement of people under this study; whereas the end of WW2 marked their arrival in the UK. However, what is particularly significant for this analysis, the period in between these two events became a long period of transit for many migrants in this group through their initial dispersal, labour camps, war effort or displaced persons camps. Unsurprisingly, many of my interviewees’ narratives focus on war experiences; in particular, the dominant narrative – with the Second Polish Corps being ‘the backbone of the Polish community in Great Britain’ (Zebrowska 1986) – is focused on deportations from the ‘Kresy’ region to labour camps in Soviet Russia followed by Sikorski-Mayski Pact of 1941. The significance of the latter was twofold. Firstly, it allowed the deportees the freedom to leave the labour camps. Secondly, it led to the formation of the Polish Army in the east and its subsequent inclusion in the British forces; it also led to the creation of a vast network of displaced persons camps for the soldiers’ families, on mainly the soil of British dominions. Moreover, the end of WW2 was a particular transnational junction for this group of people. Despite the fact that the UK’s post-war government proactively encouraged return to Poland (and a large number of people did return – 105,000, Zubrzycki 1956, Sword 1996), many people looked for other options due to their fear of persecution by the communist regime. Some chose to stay in the UK, whereas others decided to go to other countries. Records show that about half of the original number (220,000, Kaczmarek 2020) chose either to emigrate further or were repatriated. Furthermore, the Polish Resettlement Act of 1947 allowed the arrival of Polish servicemen’s relatives and dependants too. Overall, as presented in Chapter 3, according to the data from the UK’s national census, the number of Polish people rose from 44,642 in 1931 to 162,339 in 1951 (Midlands Polish Community Associations 2011), becoming the second highest ranking non-UK born group in the post-war Britain at that time (Office for National Statistics 2020).

Therefore, the initial years after the war were filled with continued dislocation and movement across a range of spaces that opened to this group of migrants. My fieldwork captured arrivals in the UK between 1945 and 1962, reflecting their different paths to the UK – their different *transnational trajectories*. In my sample I identified the following three groups based on the reasons for migration, shared memory of migratory experiences and their geographic location immediately after the war:

1. War displacement route

Military and other war displacement, including labour camps or deportation from the 'Kresy' region of pre-war Poland (arrival in the UK between 1945 and 1948) – Polish servicemen under British command and their families who were displaced from Poland during the war;

2. Family re-union route

Family re-union (arrival in the UK between 1956 and 1962) – migrants who came from Poland through family re-union routes;

3. Marriage route

Marriage (arrival in the UK in early 1960s) – women who came from Poland to marry a Polish ex-service man or their family member.

The memories of the war, labour camps and deportations became the dominant narrative in my sample; especially memories of forceful deportation from the Kresy region by the Soviet army, and a long journey in cattle wagons to labour camps in Siberia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and other regions in the Far East. The late-night knock at the door opened many of these stories and has been re-constructed and re-told over many years, signalling the beginning of the traumatic events that followed: '*On 10th of February, there was a knock at the door, at 2 am. We were told to get out and not to take anything*' (Wanda, f, 89, war displacement route). The knock at the door embodies the unexpectedness and the violence of the removal of this group from their locality – i.e., the original *uprooting*. Kazia's narrative, as many others, opens her stories with memories of a long train journey to labour camps:

We were in a cattle wagon almost for three weeks. On 4th of May we reached Russia. We arrived in the capital city of Kazakhstan, called Pavlodar [sic].²³ Obviously, the journey was exhausting as there were 72 people in the wagon. There were shelves there. We lay on these shelves. In the middle there was a hole. Some curtains, kind of blankets were put round it. For three days they did not open the wagons at all because we went through Poland and they were afraid that if someone escaped, Polish people would surely

²³ This is factually incorrect. The capital of Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic at that time was Alma-Ata.

help. Only on the fourth day they brought two buckets, they assigned two men and they brought a kind of soup for us and it was our first meal. (Kazia, f, 96, war displacement route)

The memories of these long journeys in overcrowded cattle wagons and with little food became this group's imagery to represent the violence of their departure. Their narratives demonstrate deep trauma caused by the experiences of long journeys, death, loss, illness, starvation and hard work in labour camps. They re-lived and re-experienced this trauma on many occasions throughout their lives; this is particularly evident through the level of detail they include in their narratives: dates, names of people and places, and endured suffering.

Thus, these are narratives of survivors who want to share those experiences in the present to provide evidence of the violence they were subjected to and to ensure the events are remembered and recorded in history. Alicja's response to my open interview question about her initial departure from Poland exemplifies this very well. Alicja (*f, 89, marriage route*), who initially returned to Poland from Kazakhstan before moving to the UK in the early 60's, opened her interview by saying: "Ja nie wyjechałam [z Polski]; Mnie wyjechano" (*I did not depart [from Poland]; I was departed*). Firstly, Alicja focuses on the initial deportation as the time when she truly left Poland (not the subsequent return and onward migration to the UK), as this is the group she identifies with. Secondly, in this statement she contrasts the first part of the sentence, which is an active voice construction grammatically (*I did not depart [from Poland]*), by changing it into passive voice (*I was departed*) - which is incorrect from the Polish (and English) grammar perspective. However, irrespective of its grammatical correctness, when those two statements are put together, it is clear that the passive voice structure means much more. '*I did not depart [from Poland]; I was departed*' represents Alicja's memories of the unexpected, involuntary, and violent removal from the homeland that became part of the collective memory of this group. Alicja wants this violence to be understood in the present and remembered for the future. Hence, as Winslow (1999) observed this group tends to focus on the distant past, and they tend to highlight similar events. In this narrative, Wanda talks about her two years in Uzbekistan, starving and waiting:

I laid down and waited. In my mouth I had a small piece of flat bread. I didn't chew and I didn't swallow to make it last longer. I will never forget this. My parents got some flour, this is all we had. We lived two years in these conditions. [...] It was in Uzbekistan, my dear God. It finally ended. (Wanda, f, 89, war displacement route).

These are the memories of starvation of a 9-year-old child re-constructed by Wanda as the time of waiting – waiting to leave and waiting to return to her homeland. Older participants in this study narrated this space through the chores in labour camps. Again, this is a detailed narrative of time in exile, with stories of hard labour, harsh conditions, suffering, ill-health in

the family and frequently death too. Kazia in her story focused on her work on a farm and in a brickyard:

I drove a little tractor pulling ploughs, with very long metal ploughs which had to be cleaned from time to time, so my hands were always injured. The worst thing was that I had to get up when it was dark and went to sleep when it was dark. I was 15; my brother unfortunately fell ill, vitamin C deficiency. He couldn't work for a long time. My mother also worked. There was a brickyard nearby. This was hard work. When there was no farm work, I had to work there. It was worse when bricks were freshly baked, we formed a chain passing the bricks down the line to stack them. When you were near the oven, the bricks were extremely hot. (Kazia, f, 96, war displacement route)

Overall, these two examples represent the trauma suffered by this group, also showing how these experiences were re-told in order to share the experiences of violent collective departures and harsh exile conditions. This collective trauma became an important part of this group's identity, providing potent social glue. Literature tells us that trauma can pull people together, with new bonds and collective identities formed in the wake of trauma (Fierke 2004, Hutchison and Bleiker 2008). Literature also tells us that becoming unfixed from the original locality can be not only violent but under specific transnational conditions can also signal rupture. An overwhelming dislocation of meanings and identities can take place. As discussed in Chapter 5, the focus shifts from the "roots" (the locality left behind) to migrants' new geographical spaces, where in particular the space in-between becomes a space of huge significance: the space between before and after. For Gilroy, this space of middle passage is a space of stress 'involved in trying to face (at least) two ways at ones' (Gilroy 1993, p.3). For Turner (1969), these are liminal spaces of the rite of passage - "a time and space of withdrawal from normal modes of social action" (1969, p.167) where people create new meanings through repeated ritual. Based on these two conceptual approaches, the Polish deportees' transit stage can be divided into two different stages, representing the rupture of the war and exile, and the subsequent national identity formation in confined liminal spaces of the army and displaced persons camps.

Furthermore, in addition to Gilroy's and Turner's conceptual underpinnings, the literature on camps also provides a crucial lens through which we can begin to understand these spaces of liminality. According to the Agambenian tradition (discussed in Achilli 2015, Katz 2022, Katz et al 2018), camp spaces are a 'sophisticated instrument of power' to expel and exclude undesired populations (Katz 2022, p. 3), where people are stripped to bare life and suspended in a state of exception, and where the state's total control is most effective (Achilli 2015, p.13). The force and power exercised by the Soviet Union throughout the process of deportations of the Polish people in this study and their labour camp experiences certainly speak to this theoretical conceptualisation, further underpinning their narratives of rupture and trauma inflicted by the political. However, the more recent literature on camps

also reminds us that camp spaces are not only about dehumanisation and the brute force by the state; they are also spaces where ‘political actions and new identities emerge’ (Katz 2022, p.7). Supported by these theoretical insights, there are numerous examples in the narratives provided by the participants in this study showing their agency, navigating the harsh conditions in labour camps through work, and forming social networks based on ‘resistance, solidarity, care, identity’ (Katz 2022, p.2) as well as through seeking opportunities to escape. The latter was not possible until the ‘transnational configurations of power’ (Brah 1996, p.179) changed radically following the German invasion of Soviet Russia in June 1941, shifting Russia’s alliance to the West. This then paved way for the Sikorski-Mayski Pact of July 1941, triggering a new transit space for Polish deportees which suddenly opened not only to the soldiers but also to their families. Consequently, the Polish Army was established originally on Soviet territory and then subsequently moved to fight under British command, significantly increasing the number of Polish soldiers already in the West. Civilians unable to join the army were gradually relocated to displaced persons camps mainly in the British dominions.

These new army and civilian camp places were away from the usual social structures too, again keeping the people in a continued state of exception. These new spaces highlight the fact that camp spaces have different forms and purposes; including those which are established to protect life and provide for people’s needs (Katz 2022, p.15). Many of the camps in this period were built specifically for the Polish people, designed to house them until the end of the war. Sabina recollects her five years in the Valivade camp in India as follows:

There were 5,500 people in our camp. It was a camp build specifically for Polish people. Barracks were grouped into sectors; there were five sectors, each one with its own Polish school. Everything was Polish. We had a little hospital, nuns. A few shops were owned by Hindus. Families were getting some money, a little money, for us to live on. And of course, everything was organised for us really well, as we had lessons until 1 pm, and then you would put on your scout uniform on and off you would go outside (Sabina, f, 89, war displacement route)

These spaces provided this group of participants with a transit space of before and after where ‘everything was Polish’, a state of national limbo, waiting for the end of WW2. This was also a special type of a politically underpinned transit space linking Britain and Polish people mainly through the soil of its declining Empire (in addition to India, British African colonies such as Tanganyika (now Uganda and Tanzania), Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Kenya and South Africa), keeping this group of Polish people away from the war on the European continent. As Sabina says these were spaces specifically designed to accommodate Polish people, with housing, shops, churches,

schools, and scout units, as presented in detail in Chapter 3. Furthermore, Bernadeta in her memories of her camp in Kidugala (present Tanzania) describes similar arrangements, including farming, shops, kitchen, bakery and schools, as well as guards protecting the borders of the camp from the locals. She reflects further: *'I am not sure, but I think that as settlers, the majority of people had been settlers - pioneers in Wołyń [in the Kresy region post WW1], they constructed straight away'* (Bernadeta, f, 87, war displacement route). Bernadeta reminds her listeners that many of these people and their families had had more recent experiences of relocation, in particular through government settlement schemes offering land in the Kresy region after WW1 (See Footnote 4).

Thus, yet again, through their daily practices within the boundaries of the camps, they engaged in passionate re-constructing of their memories of Poland, and the memories of exile, bonded by the trauma of their deportation experiences. They were proactively using these spaces to meet their social, political and cultural needs, bringing to the fore their agency and allowing a perspective which goes beyond 'passivity, victimisation and top-down management' (Picker and Pasquetti 2015, p.682).

Furthermore, there are some striking resemblances between this group and the findings of Malkki's research into refugee camps in Tanzania (Malkki 1992). Using the metaphor of roots, Malkki compares the identity construction of the Hutu refugees to 'a deterritorialized nation without roots sunk directly into the national soil' (ibid, p.35). Similarly, the Polish group, both in camps and in the army, constructed their identities with no reference to their then locality – as 'a form of categorical purity' (ibid, p.35). In this prolonged state of liminality with social structures suspended and awaiting the end of the war, this group re-constructed their ideal national identity. Likewise, McConnachie (2018) found through her study of Karen and Karenni refugees in Thailand that prolonged experiences of the camp's liminality lead to hardening of ethnic identities, with residents preoccupied with historical memory disseminated in a more contained and controlled way, thus silencing any alternative narratives. McConnachie (2018) also observed that the camp dwellers became repositories of memories for those inside as well as outside the camps (ibid, p.129), with the liminality or in-betweenness of camps spaces adding particular urgency to their quest for belonging (ibid, p.131). This in-betweenness can be further conceptualised based on Turner's work (1969) around liminality and the rite of passage, which in this case is enacted as a Polish *communitas*, the sacred nation.

Whilst Malkki's and McConnachie's studies of camps offer meaningful insights into similar identity formation processes in confined spaces, this study follows the national identity produced through those spaces of liminality longer term, including subsequent journeys and

experiences of the Polish migrant participants in the UK. Overall, the *transnational trajectory* of this group took them from war displacement on the continent or deportation to labour camps through to the Polish army, cadet schools or displaced persons camps in India, Middle East and Africa, culminating in their arrival in the UK where they were also accommodated predominantly in dedicated hostels and resettlement camps – former army camps (Biegus and Biegus 2013). Yet again, the migrants employed national practices and collective competences previously developed in encampment conditions; this time in the UK. Thus, there is a clear continuum of their national identity formation processes across the spaces they entered during and after the war. They remained spatially confined in those physical spaces – many for a number of years even after their arrival in the UK. Zubrzycki (1956) more broadly refers to the institutional resettlement and employment programmes leading to physical segregation through special camps, hostels, hospitals, or schools, supported by special government departments for Poles and government policies designed to control and manage this group. Unsurprisingly, the narratives provided by the interviewees in this study show how this group employed identification building tools already familiar to them from the military and camp spaces created during the war.

They themselves reflect on this continuum; re-constructing the traditions and practices from the displaced persons camps and schools after their arrival in the UK, including establishing Polish churches, Polish scouting organisations, and Polish schools, as well as internalising the impact of their displacement experiences and identity formation inside the camps on their lives in the UK. Bronka, who had been in a cadet school in the Middle East which provided a home for over 1,500 girls, talks about patriotism that had been ingrained in her during the war. She linked that with her subsequent community work in the UK: *‘Because of the way we were brought up, [in the UK] we worked for parishes, built Polish churches. When we had children, they needed to join Polish scouts straight away’* (Bronka, f, 91, war displacement route).

This collective way of living for prolonged periods of time and the continuum between the spaces are best captured by the following narrative of six Polish families: 16 years in total in Wanda’s case, with 5 years in a displaced persons camp in India and 11 years in Checkendon, a Polish resettlement camp in Oxfordshire.

They placed us in India and we were there for 5 years. We had fantastic schools there where our professors were also displaced like us and they were wise people, so the schools were great and we felt free. When the war ended, transport was organised and we came to the UK. For 11 years we lived in camps in Nissen huts. When the camp was due to close in the sixties we needed to look for a house - a council house, from the government, but here a building site had started and six Polish families from our camp bought their houses on this street. A house was then only two and a half thousand.

Obviously, we did not have a lot of money then, but this was a good investment. My dad worked here, and I still live here till today. (Wanda, f, 89, war displacement route)

Even when Wanda's family finally left the resettlement camp, they found suitable housing in the same street as five other Polish families, staying as a collective again. Sword (1996) noted that residential proximity helped to maintain networks established in the camps, especially where new housing developments were built in the surrounding areas; however, with time greater geographical mobility took place too, hence, this group on the whole did not create physical residential ghettos (Patterson 1977).

Overall, the experiences before their arrival in the UK and resettlement camps in the UK became a significant continuum for Polish identity construction, and a significant place of collective rebuilding of the Polish national space in the UK. These were spaces where the communities remained close allowing for the national ritual ('ceremonial year', Elgenius 2017) to be repeated continually, through daily practice in churches, schools, scouting groups, clubs and through community national events, associations and kinship groups.

However, these resettlement camps were not always leading to settlement in the UK. Polish people faced several options at the end of the war, with a range of transnational alternatives becoming available to them in the context of the new political situation. Migrants pro-actively negotiated their options, depending on their family needs and their understanding of the benefits each destination offered. Some people did decide to return to Poland to join their families and loved ones, others decided to stay in the UK or migrate to other countries. The situation was particularly challenging for those who were originally from pre-war regions of Poland that had been annexed by the Soviet Union as part of the agreements made in Yalta in 1945. Wanda (f, 89, war displacement route) reflected on this as follows "*As it happened our home is now in Belarus. [...] And my husband was from Lvov, currently Ukraine*". Others feared return to Poland under Soviet domination. Consequently, the transnational social fields between Poland and the UK were disrupted for this group of migrants in the initial years after the war.

Thus, the key factors behind the settlement decisions were deeply emotional as well as economic, driven by the fear of the political and concern with the economic. Overall, the narratives show considerations around economic, social, political and emotional factors. The reasons included complicated paperwork for the US, proximity to Poland, cost of transportation, already being settled within the UK space (e.g. a job / an English partner), the current political situation in the potential receiving country and its potential impacts on the individual (e.g. one participant dismissed the US due to the war in Korea). All this is succinctly captured through the following narrative:

I had a brother who emigrated to Australia for a £10 fee, they took people for £10. I have a cousin in America. [...] I had a visa to America ready, together with the whole family. [...] We did not go. My dad said, I had already fought in two wars and then there was a war in Korea. He said you would have to join the army. I was 21 years old, I would have to enlist there. A lot of boys were recruited to the army, one arrived wounded. No, I thought, I had a good job and an English girlfriend [in the UK]. (Lucjan S, 92, war displacement route).

Furthermore, those who decided to stay in the UK navigated their new spaces confronted by a strong native other, with little previous experience of migrants in their communities. As discussed in Chapter 3, until WW2, immigration to the UK had been relatively low; the arrival of Polish people was one of the first larger immigration flows to the UK. As a result, the initial narratives show a number of examples of othering by the local community. ‘Bloody Poles’ appeared in a few narratives:

At first ‘bloody Poles’ and it was like this for a long, long time. In my first house, not far from here, we lived with our children. When the children played in the garden, our neighbour would constantly say ‘shut up bloody Poles’. (Aldona, f, 86, war displacement route)

Furthermore, Wiktor remembers banners “*Poles go home*” (Wiktor, m, 95, war displacement route), and many narratives refer to the word ‘foreigners’, also used in its Polonised form – ‘foreignery’. Tomasz constructs these attitudes through Polish people being more resourceful in securing homes (‘*zagospodarzyć się*’), resulting in the in-group’s hostility expressed in the following view: ‘*Poles are foreigners here; they have houses, but we don’t*’ (Tomasz, m, 91, war displacement route). For Tadeusz, this is to do with markers such as the language: ‘*You opened your mouth, and they knew you were a foreigner (‘foreignery’)*’ (Tadeusz, m, 90, war displacement route); whereas, Antoni’s narrative goes deeper by framing this tension within the context of British empire identities:

They don’t say bloody Poles; but bloody foreigners. It hurts, as for example, on the European continent, we don’t say a foreigner, but German, French, Belgium, and other nationalities. But not the British. A British person is never and nowhere a foreigner. Everybody should learn English; this is their view as the biggest empire was the British empire. They were brought up to believe they are at home everywhere. (Antoni, m, 90, war displacement route)

Bernadeta talks about these differences further, with Polish ethnicity considered lesser than the majority white in-group, and constructed as “white black people” in her narrative:

‘They [the in-group] thought of us as white black people, and black people were considered inferior, so many people had unpleasant experiences at the start’ (Bernadeta, f, 87, war displacement route).

In fact, in Sword’s view, the level of discrimination the Polish people experienced was key in them staying together, feeling outsiders, as despite being a ‘white’ minority, they

experienced ‘a level of social and professional discrimination which might seem surprising to those brought up in the more tolerant, cosmopolitan atmosphere’ of later decades (Sword 1996, p.156). More broadly, these stories speak to what Burrell identified as an under researched area of this group’s whiteness and othering processes in post-war Britain, with the previous focus on assimilation and acculturation traditionally applied to this group (Burrell 2018). To some extent, these stories contradict the more established notion of this group’s invisibility to their contemporary local communities (as discussed in Section 3.2.6). However, without any discursive academic or political framings of these tensions at that time, these were more individual experiences, bringing to the fore issues around colour and ethnicity, as well as providing an insight into how the Polish arrivals constructed themselves through the difference against the locals and other migrants. Jagoda’s story shows her disappointment to be told that she belonged less than the Commonwealth migrants, and was still a foreigner after years of living and working in Britain. Her presence in this country simply was not part of the dominant narrative of the British empire:

It was a difficult time, as we felt like we didn’t belong, and we were treated like foreigners. In the same office where I had friendships with them [the white in-group], had been invited to weddings, and other celebrations, for a drink, or an ‘outing’ as you say, one person said towards the end – there was also a black young lady who worked there – so he wanted to tease me and – after so many years of working together – he said that I was a foreigner, and the lady belonged [‘she was ours’], and I was the foreigner. “She is ours as she is from the empire; she is ours; and you are still a foreigner”, and so on. (Jagoda, f, 93, war displacement route)

The above narrative is significant in showing that Jagoda remembers her experiences of prejudice even in later years (and ‘towards the end’ at work), despite the group becoming more prosperous, largely middle class and often considered as accepted by British society – no longer conceived of as ‘potential scabs, fascists and Casanovas’, but instead viewed as ‘good workers, rate-payers, solid citizens and family men’ (Patterson 1961, p.96). These are valid observations across the group, but perhaps too optimistic at the individual level in terms of continued tensions, identity shifts, othering taking place in British society, including racism, ‘from which Poles (despite their white skins) were not always immune’ (White and Goodwin 2019, p.4).

Thus, within these complex othering processes – where the old identities of the in-group became under pressure through the collapse of the empire and post-war flows of diverse populations – the Polish people experienced institutional and structural discrimination too, struggling to find accommodation and jobs. Discrimination within Trade Unions in particular was remembered in the narratives in this study. Sword provides further examples, including the Sheffield City Council’ refusal for a Polish club to be set up in the city (Sword 1996, p.36), and an example from 1968 when British-born Michael Szuba, the son of a Polish

father and an English mother, was refused entry into the RAF for officer training, despite good grades and the fact that his mother's three brothers had been RAF pilots, thus clearly deemed as a security risk and therefore unsuitable due to his background (ibid, p.162). However, that is not to say that positive experiences did not take place. On the contrary there are many examples individually and through community events, including recognitions by the British Ministry of Defence, the interviewee's respect towards the Queen (photos of the Queen were kept in family archives), and events delivered by the Polish community alongside and for the British audiences; usually representing a particular regional community or a Polish association, as this was the case of Sylwester's choir below:

Our choir, we had a parish choir, sang for the British and at our events; we took part wherever this was possible [...] We invited the chairman [the mayor of the city council] to our events. So we had very friendly relationships with the British [...] they respected us. (Sylwester, m, 95, war displacement route)

Notably, however, in the above narrative, Sylwester reconstructs positive relations with the in-group as relations through the Polish collective, including participation in the in-group's events as a group and hosting the government officials at their community events.

Thus, against this backdrop, the Polish community continued growing closer, and in particular through community organisations and associations, already re-imagined as the collective 'we' through their migratory experience and staying as a collective due to resettlement processes, employment schemes, housing arrangements, and through associations they established. Many of these organisations were not directly linked with the political émigré leadership, but rather established through what Sword (1996, p.38) described as a more 'spontaneous' process within the group. In fact, the memories of rebuilding Polishness captured in the narratives of this group from the perspective of this millennium do not bring the political leadership structures into the stories. Achilli observes similar processes in the Al-Wihdat camp, a Palestinian camp in Jordan, where those who have experienced protracted encampment seek non-political ordinariness and opportunities to lead normal lives, far less ideological and more affective (Achilli 2015, p.8). Likewise, the narratives provided by my interviewees focused very much on their spaces of daily practice, places they created and cared for: Polish schools, Polish churches, and other collective activities and spaces. "*Polishness was where people gathered*", says Aldona (*f, 86, war displacement route*), and for this they needed physical spaces in their locality.

Therefore, they embarked on their nation building project through extensive and intensive construction of Polish physical spaces often called "our little Poland" or "our piece of Poland"—re-constructed spaces based on the army, cadet schools and displaced persons

camp experiences, and recreated in the new physical space set in the UK - *We built and built, and we all contributed financially, and we built.* (Stefania, f, 82, marriage route). *Our very own Poland was here in the UK* says Eugenia (f, 91, war displacement route); whereas Cecylia (f, 80, marriage route) remarks *'We lived like we were in Poland'*, among other similar comparisons. Furthermore, Stefania reflects *'It was our little Poland and the British did not interfere'* (Stefania, f, 82, marriage route). These quotes also show that this national building project became the narrative for many in this group, including family reunion and the marriage route. Stefania, who arrived from Poland through the marriage route in 1960, very clearly identifies with this national construction being created in physical spaces of the new localities (*"we built and built"* – emphasis added). This is significant as particularly those who came to the UK through the marriage route were constructed by the other Polish people as *'Russian spies'* and *'spinsters'* (Lucjan, m, 92, war displacement route), somehow spoilt by their initial years in communist Poland. These tensions were also visible during my observations in the field, with women who arrived in the UK to marry an ex-serviceman thanking me for my interest in stories of this group too; whereas Honorata from the family reunion group confronted one of the women who had experienced the deportation by asking her to *'stop moaning'* about Siberia (Honorata, f, 80, family reunion). In addition to this, the participants from the war displacement route constructed their war experience as the fundamental element of true Polish identity; for example, Alicja described the post-2004 migrants as unpatriotic through lacking the war experience *'it is because they did not experience the war'* (Alicja, f, 89, war displacement route). In fact, those who had not been through the Kresy deportations or military combat were more likely to be outside of the Polish *communitas*: three people in my sample, including family reunion, marriage route and displacement through the western route. However, those who were able to join the dominant narrative of the war and displacement, including those directly from Poland, were able to enter and navigate the same Polish spaces in the UK too. Despite the intra-group othering, they could join the shared narrative of Polish patriotism and re-constructing their identity in this context, and in the context of their rejection of communist Poland. This is in line with Smojkis (2013) who talks about this group building defences and erecting invisible walls against those who did not identify with the main narrative; Stefania (f, 82, marriage route) narrates this as follows: *'It was mainly people from Siberia and army officers. It was all so beautifully organised, so beautiful and so tended to. It was such a ritual'*; at the same time Stefania was able to enter their spaces and described her community experiences in the UK as [this was] *'our Poland, not communist'* (Stefania, f, 82, marriage route); thus, extending the ritual of national building through its separation from the communist Polish state.

The process of creating collective space (*putting down roots*) was constructed as a collective responsibility, financed by the community itself through community work, fund-raising, donations and community loans - a vast network of churches, clubs, community homes, homes for the elderly and holiday venues appeared across the UK. In fact, Turner (1969) identifies a clear link between unstructured spaces where *communitas* emerge versus structure and property; signalling that the Polish *communitas* left the liminal space of the transit space through the space of structure through acquiring property (Turner 1969, p.129). This rapid growth of physical spaces across the UK was extraordinary. Other scholars also recognise this unyielding drive to stay together; though contrary to the *communitas* process, this is viewed through the lens of pressure from Polish organisations and the demands the leadership placed on the Polish population to observe a Polish way of life and to retain Polishness (for example, Zubrzycki 1956, 1993). In my view, however, the focus purely on the pressure of organisations does not fully capture the scale and intensity of the passion and drive of so many individuals involved in these building projects.

Indeed, these passionate *communitas* experiences which emerged through the protracted encampment align well with what literature on camps tells us too. Firstly, “the spatial, social and political story” of a camp sometimes goes far beyond the camp itself with continued impacts on neighbourhoods over time (Kratz 2022, p.286). Secondly, camp dwellers engage in spatial action to transform their existing spaces and in some cases to expand to new spaces too; thus, this is a process based on agency, continuous movement and re-ordering (ibid, p.288). In this context, *the right to the camp* concept (i.e. a site which signifies people’s ‘rights and political identities’, and ‘a place where they feel at home’, Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska 2017, p.168) helps to further explain the rapid territorial expansion of the post-WW2 Polish migrants in the UK. The large network of community-owned properties across the country became the successor of the institutional resettlement process through camps and hostels, originally used to manage the Polish population. This group’s intensive spatial action allowed them to gain new territory and replaced previous camps with a new space which reflected their needs and where they felt at home.

As an example, archival records from Birmingham show the community developing around two spaces: the church and the community social space. The Polish church was established in 1947, and their own Polish club was built by 1962 thanks to the community’s fund raising. Like many others in my sample, Cecylia from Birmingham described the Polish club being financed collectively by the community as “*our second home*” (Cecylia, f, 80, marriage route), with a wide range of organisations and associations (Polish Catholic Community in Birmingham Księga Pamiątkowa 25-lecia 1972 – see Section 3.2.3 for the full list). As a result, they became firmly *rooted* in the geographies of the UK, re-constructing identities

within their localities and physically constructed spaces. Literature tells us about the significance of such places in any national project – these are places where people meet to collectively remember, to continually re-live their national experiences and to experience their nation in the present. Unsurprisingly, the collective “we” sought a variety of “places of memory” as well as “places of presence” (Offner and Pumain, 1995, p.163 cited in Bruneau 2010). These places are simultaneously places of memory and ‘functional places that constitute the instruments for a *re-rooting*’ in the new locality (Bruneau 2010, emphasis added). Furthermore, the concept of iconography explains these processes too, allowing nations to continue through visible and palpable symbols in their new spaces (e.g., churches or clubs), also bringing social networks together and preserving them for the future (Bruneau 2010, p. 38). Consequently, this group continued to re-produce national meanings and community networks within these acquired physical spaces, developing strong emotional attachments to the spaces and their symbolic capital (Bruneau 2010). The community needed these physical *roots* to exist, and with time the *roots* became part of its identity. In more recent years this is visible in their narratives of their fear of losing ‘their Poland’, specifically constructed as losing the physical spaces erected in the UK – Eugenia says ‘*Our very own Poland was here in the UK*’ (Eugenia, f, 91, war displacement route). By embodying their Poland through the physical spaces in the UK, the post-WW2 generation of Polish migrants made sense of their experiences. This is where they enacted their imagined Poland, with their national identification shifted from the Polish geography to the geography of their new locations in the UK.

With the post-WW2 generation growing older and with fewer of them able to tend to their extensive network of property – their *national roots*, questions about the future of these collective spaces emerge through a number of debates and tensions. Tensions arise from the ownership structure that was established initially, and the significant value of the property accumulated through their personal donations and contributions throughout their lifetime. The fear for the physical spaces brought the group closer again, through collective action and opposition against the sale of their properties in recent years, including against catholic organisations. Perhaps the sale of Fawley Court in 2009 exemplifies this most aptly. Fawley Court²⁴, a stately home in Buckinghamshire purchased by the Polish community in the 1950s, was a home to a Polish boarding school, a Polish museum, and a place of community gatherings and a wide range of community events, financed and supported by Polish people through church collections, and money and property gifted under wills. Wanda

²⁴ Following its sale in 2009, Fawley Court, situated by the River Thames in Buckinghamshire, was converted into an events venue and hotel. See Fawley Court - <http://www.fawleycourt.com/>. Another example, Polish Hearth Club in London is an example of successful efforts to stop the sale, details at <https://www.change.org/p/ognisko-polskie-polish-hearth-club>

described their efforts to stop the Marian Order, the legal owner, from selling the stately home. For the group this was an act of violation of their space, heritage, history, and financial investment undertaken by the collective over many years. This was a true struggle for their *roots*, symbolising the community's strong attachment to their physical spaces in the UK, emotionally, socially, culturally and financially:

We gave donations. For example, my husband was the president of the parents' committee in this school as there was a middle school at Fawley Court. Obviously, we went to masses every Sunday there and gave donations. Some people were very poor. These who had properties they would gift them in their will to Fawley Court. There was a museum there. Such a great museum, God. All the valuable objects there and they were given away too. [...] An ex-pupil started an organisation who fought against the sale and they hoped to stop the sale of Fawley Court. Unfortunately, the priests prevailed, they unlawfully sold it and I am so disgusted and all other people are disgusted. We invested in Fawley Court and all Poles came from all over the world for Pentecost celebrations there. [...] They [people responsible for the sale] were in the communist system for too long, for example priests. Priests came from Poland and stole Fawley Court, the only Poland outside Poland. (Wanda, f, 89, war displacement route)

This narrative further demonstrates how this group constructed their national identity through memories of their original homeland. Their Poland is the Poland from the past, their Poland exists in their memories; it is pre-communist Poland which was brought to the present through the physical spaces they had created in the UK – i.e., 'the only Poland outside Poland' as Wanda says above. In that sense, the priests arriving from the (post)-communist Poland to sell Fawley Court had been 'corrupted' by the 'communist system' and therefore are not true Polish people (also noted by Garapich 2008b).

There have been a number of post-WW2 migrants' Polish clubs and restaurants which closed over the last two decades. Others are struggling due to high bills and maintenance costs, with lower attendance and engagement from the older Polish community or its second generation, and the migrants who arrived after 2024. Consequently, tensions around ownership come to the fore, including tensions with church organisations as often they are legal owners of these properties. Over the next few years, these spaces will continue to be areas of tension, with more potential for research in terms of if and if yes, in what form these Polish spaces will remain in the UK.

Overall, the dominant narrative captured in this section has shown how the post-WW2 migrant interviewees brought their memories of pre-war Poland into the present of their consecutive spaces on their *transnational trajectory* from deportation and war displacement through to battle fields, cadet schools and displaced persons camps, leading to the UK's resettlement camps and the network of community funded clubs, schools and churches. This trajectory taking many of them through successive protracted encampments resulted in a

specific collectively experienced hardened ethnic identity, enacted through *communitas* experiences and spatial expansion in the UK. Their present and their future became the Poland of the past as they collectively re-constructed it throughout this trajectory; in particular, the long liminal space of the transit stage provided the space of potent national ritual, leading ultimately to the creation of a different version of Poland, completely separate from their contemporary Polish nation-state. This version of Poland became inserted into the geography of the UK through physical spaces extensively constructed across the country. The nation became *re-rooted*.

Having presented the dominant group of post-WW2 migrants as *rooted* in the geography of the UK, I will now turn my attention to their identity construction through other spaces they inhabited concurrently.

6.3 Identity construction in the UK-Poland transnational social fields

Originally, the space between the UK and Poland was disrupted for the post-WW2 migrants in this study due to the new political situation, and the migrants' initial fears of travel to communist Poland. Despite this, there are a lot of examples of active and ongoing transnational engagement in this space, especially from 1956 when they felt safer to travel to Poland. The scale of these activities is an exciting finding as the original research question was based on the assumption of relatively restricted transnational activity amongst this group due to the Cold War. My fieldwork revealed far more intense activity than I had originally anticipated. Overall, for those migrants who entered the field linking them with Poland, the process of becoming *rooted* in the UK was taking place simultaneously, with migrants navigating both spaces, comparing and making decisions accordingly.

This was an important space for identity construction too; through the following narrative of Sabina's visit to Poland, we learn about how she remembered her initial decision to settle in the UK permanently and apply for British citizenship.

In 1961, yes, before that to be honest we were afraid of going to Poland, although we really wanted to. [...] We decided to go to Poland, to move to Poland. [...] grandad visited us (my husband's farther) and said 'Listen before you decide to move to Poland, come over for a holiday first and then you can return permanently. Very wise advice. And we went the following year; we bought a large van; 8 people travelled in the van – two other married couples travelled with us. We had two daughters at that time. My father-in-law lived in Sopot, we stayed with him [...] So I said, 'let's go to the shop; I will buy some meat and cook us a meal, because they didn't know me well; so grandad went with me to the corner butcher's shop, the queue was very long. We got to the counter and the shop assistant very rudely told us that there was no meat left and the shop was closed. I thought - nobody spoke to me like this in England. Yes. I went back to the house and said to [my husband] 'you know what we are not going to stay here', we went back to the UK

and applied for our British passports upon our return. (Sabina, f, 89, war displacement route)

This narrative re-constructs communist Poland as unsuitable for settlement through what could be compared to the notion of “inspection visits” (concept taken from White’s study (2011b) of post-2004 Polish families). Equally, their friends and family in Poland started to see them as visitors from the UK. Despite this, there is evidence of opposite outcomes of such inspection visits too: Sword (1996, p.42) mentioned a small number of people who did take ‘the opportunity to return permanently’ in that period. The narrative above, however, captures Sabina’s memories of her decision to apply for a British passport which was triggered by this visit. The process of this strategic citizenship decision making (Mau 2010, Sigona 2021) is narrated as a comparison between the UK and Poland, including economic considerations, lack of products in shops and poor customer service. Other participants also listed benefits available in the UK, including the NHS and availability of social support and pensions, for example for their disabled parent. As a result, these transnational encounters accelerated the construction of a UK rooted positionality, with a new identity emerging in opposition to the new other (the rude shop assistant in the case above) – i.e., the communist other living in Poland. The “communist them” as opposed to “us” identity, situated in the locality in the UK, was formed further through the engagement in these transnational social fields with Poland.

With the community becoming increasingly attached to their new localities, the ‘ideology of return’ or ‘myth of return’, associated with many diasporic formations (Brah 1996, Bruneau 2010), started to disappear in this group. As they explored the capital available in each space, they reassessed the political, economic and social situation accordingly. Their transnationalism became experienced from the UK perspective. The narrative below reflects exactly this process, with Polish people initially training as Polish judges and government officials to gain skills needed for their imminent return to Poland. The newsletters and papers from this period advertise many of these training programmes. This was the case until their perspective shifted and the spatial reference point got reconfigured to the UK, with the political situation on the European continent remaining unchanged:

Particularly after the war, there was an emphasis on waiting for the end of the war for us so that we could return to Poland. In London there were various courses for judges, village leaders, presidents. We will be returning to Poland so all these positions will need to be filled in. However, I was against it as I knew the war was over, it was in the sixties. (Tadeusz, m, 90, war displacement route)

On the whole, the way the early post-war period is narrated by this group in this study reflects their huge disappointment with the post-1945 political arrangements, with Poland in

the Soviet bloc. The above narrative refers to two ends of the war: the first end of the war is the actual end of the war in 1945; whereas the second one – ‘the end of the war for us’ is constructed as the end of the communist regime in Poland. Furthermore, this narrative reminds us of another process, briefly mentioned in Section 6.2, which was triggered by the unchanged political situation transnationally. The people were growing ‘indifferent to émigré politics’ in Britain (Sword 1996, p.43), with the expectations placed (‘the emphasis’ in the narrative above) on the community to continue their existence as a nation in exile, ready to move to Poland once communism was defeated. This pressure from the émigré politics was rejected, and consequently, had little visibility in their subsequent reconstructions and narratives. Instead, over the years the post-WW2 group continued to demonstrate a wide range of spontaneous activity through associations as well as transnational activities: economically; politically, and culturally (Faist 1998), including a wide range of remittances, letters, parcels, flow of goods, regular travel to visit family and friends, for holidays, health and spa treatments, political activism, and cultural exchanges. There were also intensive processes of family re-union and transnationally arranged marriages too, as Lydia’s narrative demonstrates:”

[My line manager] visited the UK as she had two brothers in London who had come there from Siberia. So she told me that she had met a man who would like to meet a lady from Poland. (Lydia, f, 82, marriage route).

Furthermore, from early years the post-WW2 migrants were able to rely on their transnational competences in case of emergencies. After the initial disruptions in this space decreased, people’s transnational social fields with Poland could be activated quickly: one family, with their grandmother terminally ill, made an urgent 72-hour car journey to a particular region in Poland to get some herbal remedy that could only come from this part of Poland. In the 1960s, another participant’s mother travelled back to Poland for her cancer treatment, as her relatives in Poland were able to arrange surgery for her with Polish doctors they trusted.

In addition to people moving backwards and forwards within their fields, the post-WW2 migrant interviewees utilised the funds accumulated in the UK space to support particular causes and families back in Poland. Sabina recounts a programme established to support ex-combatants who had returned to Poland after the war. This was a transnational extension of the activity of the Polish Ex-Combatants Association, following the sale of two London properties originally purchased using money that had been saved from the combatants’ army pay. These transnational remittances continued until the funding was gone, with the remaining offices of the Polish Ex-Combatants Associations closing slowly at the beginning of this millennium:

This was money which Anders' soldiers had taken from their weekly spending money and saved a few lire in the bank. When they arrived in London they bought 2 huge houses. Obviously, we sold them later. The Polish Ex-Combatants Association [SPK] sold these houses and the ex-combatants' social fund was initiated. Some soldiers returned to Poland, soon after their arrival in the UK. Some had elderly mothers over there, so they wanted to go back. Others wanted to return to their wives, friends or acquaintances. Their reasons were varied and some left, very unfortunately as when they arrived in Poland, these idiots, communists accused them of being British agents. This absolutely was not true, because these people, the majority of them, could not speak English. The ex-combatants who started the social fund said that the ex-combatants living in the UK already had some benefits, so we decided to send the money to ex-combatants in Poland instead. They had to write a letter to us. (Sabina, f, 89, war displacement route)

Again, this narrative is based on the memories of difficult choices that had to be made after the war, in the context of post-war political outcomes for Poland. The fear of prosecution by the communist state is embedded in these re-constructions of their post-war dilemmas, and money allocated to those who made the decision to return. These transnational remittances for ex-combatants continued to be sent to Poland for over five decades.

The initial years also gave rise to transnational companies, supporting the new transnational activities and the flow of goods between Poland and the UK. Many people sent parcels with clothes, medicines and food. Local Polish papers, magazines and parish leaflets were filled with adverts of companies offering parcel delivery services to Poland and pharmacies specialising in mail orders providing medicines needed in Poland due to ongoing shortages. Some very prosperous transnational companies emerged as a result; in particular, my interviewees referred to the Grabowski pharmacy, a successful pharmaceutical business based in London. Some people in Poland benefited further through reselling of the medications. Bogna talked about her relatives in Poland who made an arrangement with a local doctor to resell on the black market the medications she received from them.

There was a pharmacy in London; people mainly asked for ointments and medications. The company was called Grabowski. I remember my mother's godmother; her daughter would ask for ointment for impetigo. She wasn't working and was a widow. She was unwell, so me and my husband would help my mother send the medication to Poland. Then my mother went to Poland, in 1964 for the first time. She asked to see the impetigo on the legs. The legs were clear, no impetigo. She was selling the ointment to a local doctor. People were desperate, due to poverty. (Bogna, f, 83, war displacement route)

There are also multiple examples of cultural, social and political flows between the UK and Poland. In addition to local celebrations and cultural events and performances, Polish centres and clubs invited artists and performers from Poland and pre-war Polish territories from the "Kresy" region. There are many records of these events in private family archives, helping to get an insight into activities at that time, including visits by Polish actors, singers and choirs among others. Letters, Polish papers and magazines were circulated, either subscribed by people in the UK, or sent to the UK in parcels by their relatives. Most migrants

in this study maintained high interest in the economic and political developments in Poland throughout their life in the UK. They supported and collected money for the Solidarity movement against the communist government during the time of political change in the 1980s, and more generally followed the political situation in Poland throughout the years, and to the present day. Marzena (f, 86, family reunion) narrates her involvement in Medical Aid for Poland Fund to support Solidarity during martial law as her desire to be 'useful'.

Later on, technological advancements allowed access to Polish television, and most of my interviewees currently watch Polish TV every day. Many comment on the current situation and take pride in having a good understanding of the most recent political debates too, especially as a person looking at these events through the transnational lens:

I have Polish TV channels now. I always watch Polish news at 7 pm. When I go to Poland and tell them about members of the Parliament who are in the government, they are so surprised that I know the names – 'how come you know all this? We don't know their names' (Sabina, f, 89, war displacement route)

In addition to this varied transnational activity maintained by my interviewees throughout their lifetime, transnational social fields could also shrink or become de-activated by individuals too; for example, when their significant transnational other passed away: *My aunt died. I had nobody to visit and no reason to go either. This is the situation till today. (Bronka, f, 91, war displacement route)*. Whereas others activated this space only after the regime change, as Antonina decided to travel only after 'Poland was free' (Antonina, f, 92, war displacement route). For others the space was never activated due to no close family connections in Poland or the movement of the Polish borders after the war which disrupted their territorial link with Poland: *When Poland was divided, this village called Trzcianiec belonged to Russia, so we had nowhere to go. [...] My wife and I have been to Poland only once, in 2001 (Antoni, m, 90, war displacement route)*.

Finally, perhaps the most compelling explanation of how *rerootedness* was constructed can be found in following narrative. Wiktor reflects on his understanding of the reasons why the group representing the dominant narrative did not return to Poland, firstly after the war and then after the collapse of the communist regime in 1989:

This was not our Poland. Ours was from our youth and it was taken, ruled by communists in the second half; and we didn't want to try bread from Siberia again, so there was no option for return. When freedom came - not sure how to explain it; I have tried a few times, so hopefully it is to the point and understandable. It is as if you were invited to a wedding or some party of a girl who had cheated or left you and had married someone else. [There would be] some jealousy when she wasn't well, some sadness when she wasn't well, but I would never accept such an invitation. (Wiktor, m, 95, war displacement route)

The meaning making process captured by this narrative shows how Wiktor reconstructs the reasons not to return; the story of the girl becomes a symbol of rupture and reconfiguration. This was not the Poland they identified with.

Overall, the transnational social fields linking this group of migrants with Poland offer significant insights into the identity formation of the post-WW2 migrant interviewees in the UK. Far from being isolated, many continued their transnational activity in this space. What changed over time was where their identities were situated; the collective *UK-rooted Polish* “we” was further strengthened by their encounters through transnational social fields with Poland, including after the collapse of the communist regime, both through othering processes against the communist other, and strategic choices made based on the capital available in each space.

6.4 Identity construction in the transnational community fields

The third space that became available to this group developed through their wider transnational networks. Transnational families and other transnational social groups emerged through networks connecting migrants in the UK with other Polish people who decided not to return to Poland after WW2 and migrated to other parts of the world. Familial and community bonds developed and were further nurtured based on family ties and shared experiences of displacement during the war and subsequent life away from Poland. Parallel family lives continued across two or more nation-states in some cases (Bruneau 2010), resulting in the formation of ‘communities without propinquity’ (Weber 1963 cited from Faist 1998). Eugenia’s story is not unusual among this group:

I lost my parents in Russia. My brothers left, one to Canada, the other one to America. I visited them more often than I travelled to Poland (Eugenia, 91, war displacement route).

These transnational social networks became an additional and significant source of identity construction for the UK-based Polish group too; at times this space was more active for some participants in this study than their transnational social fields with Poland itself. In this case, Eugenia reflected on how her visits to her family in Canada and America were more regular than her visits to Poland. Transnational formations of this kind (other examples in Van Dijk 2002) live through close familial and kinship links. These spaces become a fertile platform enabling deterritorialised processes of identity formation (Appadurai 1996). The post-WW2 group, who entered this space, built new bonds, new ways of collective practice and new points of reference in a space with no physical territory as such, linked by transnational networks, filled with the cultural, social and financial capital accumulated by these transnational families (Bourdieu 1998). Therefore, based on the narratives of the

participants I observed two types of activities in this space that had specific impacts on this group's identity formation: 1) more personal, family to family exchanges, as in Eugenia's case above, and 2) collective activities through transnational associations, re-constructing collective practices already developed throughout the long transit stage and collective spaces of resettlement camps. Consequently, there are two themes in the narratives about these spaces.

Firstly, the interviewees provide narratives of their close familial bonds, arrangements of financial and emotional support, and cultural exchanges through these cross-border networks of blood relatives and kinship groups – for some cutting across multiple borders of two or more countries. Therefore, this type of transnational families is often explored through the lens of transnationalism. Bryceson and Vuorela define them as '*families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely 'familyhood', even across national borders*' (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002, p.3). Perhaps the most pertinent example to demonstrate this kind of familyhood in the post-WW2 migrants – which I understand as a more individual transnational form of a family as a single unit – was provided by Felicja, whose family network extended to Canada:

My sister's mother-in-law was a seamstress; she embroidered [the folk vest] and her mother-in-law sewed the lining as well. I wore it myself and later I sent it to Canada. My sister's daughter wore it and when she grew out of it, they sent it back and my brother's daughter wore it and then my daughter did. So it travelled in the whole family. When [my daughter] was small, on the 3rd of May [Polish Constitution Day] children wore Polish traditional clothes, so she went to church in the folk costume from the Cracow region. (Felicja, f, 75, war displacement route)

This transnational folk vest, hand made by Felicja's family members in the 1940s, till this day crosses national borders on a regular basis to be passed onto the next child in this transnational family to wear as part of their Polish folk costume at national holidays and folk-dance events. The vest embodies the importance of practising Polish traditions through this family network, as a sign of the family's care for one another and support in nurturing Polish traditions. It is also an example of how nationalism is domesticated through transnational families (Smith and Rochovská 2007), where Polishness symbolised through the folk vest is constructed through everyday lives of a family. This type of transitional familial tie can prove to be stronger than the commitment to the co-nationals occupying the same space in the UK. Felicja rejected the offer for the vest to be donated to a local Polish school to be preserved as part of the community heritage; instead, it is to be used by future generations within her transnational family setting. In this case, the transnational family surpasses allegiance to the

local collective, with the transnational family circle protecting its cultural and symbolic capital to be further transmitted between generations within their own network (Bourdieu 1998).

Secondly, in addition to family networks, wider collective transnational practices emerged as an important part of the post-WW2 migrants' identity building experiences too. I contrast the more personal experiences of transnational families with what could be described as collective transnationalism, where migrants engage in collective practices through their transnational networks, creating communities with a programme of regular activities through a range of transnational community associations. However, in this case this is not about formal transnational formations with political and economic agendas which are often researched by scholars to unravel relations of power and accountability in the era of huge technological connectivity and global influence (e.g. Lindquist, Xiang, and Yeoh 2012, Schillemans and Kremers 2020). Rather the focus is on the informal, social, and cultural encounters in these transnational social fields; in this case this is about the people's need to practise Polishness together, share memories of the past, re-live experiences of exile, and as a result, construct new meanings based on their shared experiences of their lives outside Poland. As a result, Polish people scattered across different countries began forming transnational communities and continued to practise together, with transnational flows of people, capital and ideas, including physical events taking place on a regular basis. Of course, in the pre-internet era, these were not daily encounters but rather meticulously planned annual or otherwise regular events bringing transnational communities physically together for these 'cultural meetings' (Kane 2022). The networks included Polish scouts, and associations of people who shared the same displaced persons camp experiences (e.g., India Association or Africa Association), Sabina's narrative captures her memories of scouting meetings every 6 years:

We organised scouting reunions of all scouts outside the Polish borders every six years. Every time in a different city or country. Once we went to America, where we were between Washington and New York – in a beautiful scouting base of the American scouts. Beautiful large forests with a clearing for the camp for children. There were 1,300 of us. (Sabina, f, 89, war displacement route)

Identities created in these collective transnational activities are built upon identities constructed in the migrants' post-WW2 settlement countries ('American scouts' in the narrative above). People re-constructed their identities as a Polish scout from the UK or a UK-based survivor of the Indian or African camp for Polish people displaced during the war. What follows is that through this process their identities become even more relocated into the UK context, adding a layer to their Polish identity when confronted with their transnational family and kinship co-nationals in these spaces. In other words, their UK

rerootedness fused into the composition of their Polish identity as the result of their interaction with Polish people from other post-WW2 settlement countries.

Furthermore, these transnational social fields became part of the everyday life for many people in this group. As a result, they negotiated different spaces simultaneously, which at times overlapped or competed with each other, with the capital and resources from one transnational network entering or contributing to other spaces activated by migrants. Faist (2010) referred to transnational networks as triangular social structures, linking the country of origin, country of destination and migrants. This narrative below shows that these spaces can create even more complicated structures:

We kept all Polish traditions once we had our own house; the mortgage was very high. Nobody wanted to give him [the husband] the mortgage as he was too old. However, his friend from America lent us money. Later on, we paid him back, as agreed. I also bought him a sheepskin coat in Poland, really nice, as he lived in Chicago, where there were severe frosts, so I gave him the coat as I was so grateful. (Lydia, f, 82, marriage route)

Lydia's narrative of the sheepskin coat symbolises her caring and support relationships through her transnational network. She bought a house in the UK, using money borrowed from her husband's friend who had emigrated to America. The sheepskin coat from Poland, bought to express gratitude, linked the three spaces in a circle of transnational interdependencies, based on reciprocity of social exchange and solidarity (Faist 1998).

Finally, transnational networks can have strong pull factors too and can compete for migrants' allegiances, offering new opportunities for onward migration or on the contrary, re-affirming original settlement decisions. This narrative captures the migrant's agency in terms of the latter, where an opportunity presented through the transnational kinship network was assessed and subsequently rejected, using the information available through this transnational social field:

Everyone was trying to figure out what to do next. My father was in the transportation trade. His friends went to Argentina and opened their transportation business there. So my father was planning to take us and go to Argentina too. However, it turned out that their business was not going smoothly there, so it was useless for us to go there, what for? (Tadeusz, m, 90, war displacement route)

Tadeusz's memories of this initial decision-making period are useful in showing how important these transnational social fields were in settlement decisions made by this group. In this case, the decision to relocate to Argentina is rejected, based on there being little prospect for any economic benefits. The news of the failed business in Argentina was pivotal in this decision-making process for his family through what Faist calls a 'transmission belt' (Faist 1998) distributing both the opportunities and information required to actively negotiate these transnational opportunities and make decisions accordingly.

However, despite active engagement in these fields, with transnationalism lived through day-to-day experiences through family networks of caring and support arrangements, overall transnationalism of this group remains very nationally rooted within the UK context. As shown in this section, they continued engaging in a range of transnational activities, adding layers of experiences and new meanings to their identities (e.g., Polish scouts based in the UK). Furthermore, most significantly for the transnational trajectory of this group, these transnational community fields continued to operate with family members staying in touch and transnational collective groups getting together on a regular basis. These networks survived through both first and second generations; regular visits, letters, phone calls and now the internet and different social media channels still bring these transnational families and kinships groups together. A member of the second generation in the UK reflected on his regular WhatsApp meetings with his cousin in America – it is like “living next door” when they regularly chat and choose topics for their weekly conversations, providing advice and exchanging ideas. The ‘living next door’ transnational families and communities formed initially through dispersed families and kinship groups have survived through to the next generation and continue to provide a space for identity construction as “us” and “our families abroad”; with the us having the UK-oriented *rootedness*.

6.5 Transnational social fields within in the EU

So far, I have discussed fields that opened to the post-WW2 migrants in the initial years after the war. However, their social world and opportunities available to them did not freeze at that point in time. Their identities were ‘not fixed once and for all’ either (Faist 1998). As the political, economic and technological situation was evolving over the years, the migrants actively negotiated their new opportunities, and re-constructing the old and forming new identities as a result.

In the decades that followed, Europe experienced a period of significant political transformations. Unsurprisingly, this had an impact on the people in this study too. Momentous political changes have major social impacts; and those involving interstate relations create opportunities through old political systems disappearing and new interstate alliances emerging. This often leads to the creation of new transnational terrains. The collapse of the Soviet bloc and Poland’s subsequent accession to the EU in 2004 was certainly such a momentous event, creating additional transnational options for Polish people within the European Union. Most recent literature focuses on the impacts of Poland’s EU accession on migration from Poland to the EU/UK. However, the EU transnational context also had impacts on the post-WW2 migrant interviewees, with the EU first forming

and then gradually expanding to different European nations. As noted in Chapter 3, the UK became an EU member driven by the opportunity to reconfigure its transnational networks, necessitated by the decline of its empire. Therefore, this cross generational case study offers not only the platform to compare my participants from these two groups of migrants, but also puts an additional spotlight on transnationalism as a particular individually experienced trajectory throughout people's lives, with transnational social fields opening or closing over time depending on an individual's circumstances and their location politically and geographically.

Consequently, for the post-WW2 Polish community based in the UK, the EU became an additional space available to them well before 2004, with the UK joining the Union's predecessor, the European Economic Community in 1973. As UK citizens, the post-WW2 group navigated this space, gaining access to free movement within the Union. Honorata (f, 80, family reunion route) entered this EU/UK space, through acquiring land, taking a leading role in building her family house and moving to live in Spain. Most notably, she entered this space as part of the UK expats' community; she reflected: "*I quickly became a member of English clubs. There were no Polish people there. I did not meet even a single Polish person in Spain; this was in the 90s.*" British expats provided her with the social and cultural reference point, and her network of support.

Honorata was well established in Spain when the EU opened its doors to Poland in 2004. She experienced the flow of Polish migrants coming to Spain: Polish shops and businesses appeared in her locality, as well as a church with a Polish priest set up by the new arrivals. However, Honorata rejected these new Polish options as on the contrary her "us" was situated within the expat network: *We [UK expats] went to church as a group; it was nice and good fun. The priest would always say something nice. At the end of the mass, he would come to us; he learnt his English from us. We also had our evening meetings every Saturday, in a big group in a restaurant*. She used her Polish cultural capital to support the UK community with her insights into the Spanish catholic church tradition, making her a cultural bridge and a point of contact for the expat group: "*The British phoned me all the time. They kept saying the church bells ring and ring. I explained this was to do with such and such Saint, as we all have our special name days.*" Honorata very much identified as part of the expat community, re-constructing her identity in this space and accessing the capital available to her through this network.

Honorata's transnational experiences bring to the forefront some crucial traits of transnationalism itself, especially in the context of what followed next as she continued on her *transnational trajectory*. With her family situation changing and upon her return to the

UK, Honorata explored her options further, shedding her physical attachments in Spain (property and other possessions – her social anchors in this space, Grzymała-Kazłowska 2016, 2018). At that point she also had at her disposal the new post-2004 transnational opportunities that had emerged between Poland and the UK within the EU. In this new transnational context, she decided to move to Poland to be closer to her family; investing a huge amount of her emotional, social and financial capital into the new space and relying on the new EU driven arrangements between the two countries. She meticulously designed her new apartment using her savings, in the process also forming emotional attachments with the new locality. She narrated this stage through the attention she paid to the garden on her new veranda in Poland:

Everything [building materials] was available in Poland; I spent most of my savings - and then the veranda. It was triangular. First, I got plant climbing frames. Everybody was keen to know what else I will do with it. The apartment hadn't been finished, but I already had my outdoor room. I like living outdoors; when you live in Spain you live outdoors. The house is not important, it can be small, dark and without windows, but you must have a nice garden, with shade and everything done. You spend most of your time there. So, the gardening centre delivered twelve trees. I planted twelve trees there. [...] This was my little veranda; it was my little heaven, not facing the road, but the inner court with a playground. I organised everything in there, even Halloween. They didn't know Halloween; it was not allowed in Poland. I mean, the priests, even here, didn't like it. And I celebrate everything. So I hollowed out a pumpkin and made pumpkin soup for the children. (Honorata, f, 80, family reunion)

Honorata's account of her move to Poland and building a new home highlights a number of processes linked with moving through different localities within the *transnational trajectory* over time. Firstly, the narrative shows that there is a link between space and emotions: 'a structure of feeling' (Raffaeta and Duff 2013, p.341); whereas Ahmed et al. say, 'the works of making home is affective and physical (Ahmed et al. 2020, p.10), emphasising the emotional side of movement to new localities as well as the actual physical construction of a new home. This is reflected in the way Honorata constructs the veranda as her 'little heaven', with carefully chosen plants and location.

Secondly, the veranda reflects Honorata's experiences from previous spaces on her *transnational trajectory*: the Spanish way of outdoor living and the UK's Halloween parties for children. As a physical space, the veranda became a metaphorical junction of her transnational experiences – it is both a 'transnational circuit of culture' (Popov 2016) and a *transnational trajectory*, locking together all transnational social fields experienced by Honorata and resulting in her cultural capital accumulating in her new space from where she could share it with others. There are other examples of migrants from this group maintaining property in Poland. However, expectedly, it is a much smaller group, as the political changes and EU enlargement allowing for this kind of transnationalism did not happen until much

later in this generation's lives. However, it was an option that became open and was actively negotiated by those who chose it - albeit this space is being currently re-modelled outside of the EU context following Brexit (more on Brexit in Chapter 7).

Finally, Honorata's *transnational trajectory* did not conclude in Poland – after six years she returned to the UK. As her narrative below shows, she started to fear for her future due to economic and health care factors such as access to the NHS, fluctuating exchange rates, and her family's needs changing. She came back to spend the rest of her retirement in a Polish care home in the UK.

I was still entitled to the NHS, I hadn't withdrawn from it. I lived there [in Poland], I had an address, an ID card, absolutely everything, but still, I did not give up on my entitlements in the UK. [...] I thought to myself that there could be banks' bankruptcy one day. Banks could face liquidation and I rely on my pension all the time. My pension came and I changed it in an online bank. Alternatively, I went to a cash point and withdraw Polish zloty. From my account over there, it was very convenient. But I felt unsafe. As if I was in some danger. (Honorata, f, 80, family reunion)

This narrative demonstrates that Honorata was able to rely on the capital in two countries simultaneously and choose accordingly. As discussed earlier (Chapter 3), scholars have applied a range of conceptual ideas to capture attachments and settlement through such plurilocal connectivity transnationally, for example simultaneous 'social anchoring' in different countries (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2018, Nowicka 2020), or different levels of embeddedness into a particular locality – 'differentiated embeddedness' (Ryan 2018). In this analysis, the lens is in particular on how migrants construct their identities in their localities. Therefore, Honorata's concern over her financial security for her future in Poland is significant, evidencing her mistrust towards the system in Poland and as a result a lack of longer-term strategy within the Polish locality. This can be linked with the post-WW2 group's legacy of displacement after the war and memories of communism. This narrative also shows the emotional side of leaving a location, with fear of the state being the common factor across all post-WW2 narratives in this study.

Overall, this section has followed one particular *transnational trajectory* which involved the initial migration, onward migration, return migration and double return migration. This example is excellent in showing how individual *transnational trajectories* evolve driven by political developments and how migrants can continually move around these spaces over their lifetime – described by Dahinden (2010) as "transnational ways of being over the course of time". The analysis in this section has shown that the UK locality remains to be the reference point for this migrant, ultimately offering a space of safety for retirement. In this case, upon her return, Honorata moved to the Polish retirement village in Penrhos in Wales.

6.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have shown how a particular set of transnational conditions led to the construction of national identity *rerooted* to a new locality. The post WW2 migrants' memories of the past have shown how this group re-lived the memory of their homeland, and re-experienced trauma of displacement throughout their lifetime. This included a long transit stage of liminality of battle fields and in enclosed camp spaces during the war and in resettlement camps in the UK. These experiences led to the formation of their ritually experienced, sacred Poland (Turner's *communitas*), as well as triggered a particular spatial action resulting in the Polish *communitas*' expansion in the geography of the UK. Overall, protracted encampment experiences came to the fore of the analysis of this group of migrant interviewees. Through these spaces, they brought their past to their present and future; their Poland, re-constructed in their present and for their future, was Poland they knew from the pre-war past; it was separate from Poland within the (post)-communist bloc.

Furthermore, this analysis moved away from the notion of diasporic journeys which conclude or come to an end; instead, the emphasis was on continued journeys through various geographical locations and across national borders. The concept of *transnational trajectories* allowed me to explore national identity formation in all social spaces this group of people entered throughout their lives. I was able to establish that firstly, people's individual *transnational trajectories* evolve over time in size and opportunity driven by politics of nation-states; and secondly that this group of migrants continued to live within the scope of Polish identity, albeit re-directed or *rerooted* to the new locality. What is especially striking in this identity reconfiguration and repositioning process is its immense physical presence in the new spaces, including in the transit stage. It was truly a construction project that needed brick and mortar: a vast network of clubs, churches, schools, retirement homes, commemorative locations, or places of pilgrimage. Their new national construct found its new land in the UK.

In that sense the metaphor of *rootedness*, as a concept and analytical tool, represents continued national way of thinking. *Rerootedness* which emerged through the study of this group of people signals a geographical shift in their national identification as they identify with Polishness at the local level in the UK. Furthermore, this conceptualisation of *rootedness* is capable of capturing national identity formation processes over time through its interactive link with transnationalism and *transnational trajectories*.

CHAPTER 7 – Post-2004 migration: construction of uprooted national identities

7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the identity formation of Polish migrants who arrived in the UK under very different transnational conditions compared to those who arrived in the initial years after WW2. I analyse the differences in this group's transnational conditions to explain why they demonstrate far less collective migratory experiences, with fewer physical attachments in their localities and more individual experiences of Polishness.

This large migratory flow, triggered by Poland's EU accession, has been described as 'new migration' due to its scale, speed, and geographical spread (Harris 2012, Scott and Brindley 2012, White 2011a). It is also set in the context of technological advancements which moved these migrants from telephone box calls in 2004 to free instant messaging via online platforms. Overall, technological developments have significantly compressed time and space over the last few decades (Giddens 1990), revolutionising long-distance travel and communications, and through this giving a helping hand to the transnational and national experiences of this group of migrants on a day-to-day basis. However, based on the sample in this study, this chapter shows that social fields, which extends across borders of different countries, continue to exist first and foremost in the context of the national and the political. This is also in line with literature (for example, Ehrkamp 2020, Dahinden 2017, Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999).

Within this context, the previously introduced concepts of *roots* and *transnational trajectories* remain *useful* to capture the lived experiences and identity construction of my migrant interviewees in this millennium too. Again, I demonstrate that transnational social fields which these migrants negotiate as part of their individual *transnational trajectory* may open, expand, shrink, opening to some, whilst remaining closed to others, as well as new spaces may become available, creating new layers and new alternatives. These paths are inherently juxtapositioned against national containers, politics of international relations and state policies which control flows across borders, contributing to either the expansion or contraction of opportunities as part of their *transnational trajectory*. Thus, through the concept of *roots* I am able to show how migrants' identities become unfixed, open for re-

construction in the new environment and the potentiality of new elements to be included. They are re-positioned, meaning that some of their Polish practices may be either strengthened or lost, with Poland back at home providing the main national reference point. Thus, many participants in my sample are not seeking to construct new collective spaces for national practice; as a result, they are far less collective in their identity building and more individualised in their meaning making in their new localities. This individual *uprooted* “I” is in stark contrast to the collective *rerooted* “we” in Chapter 6, where I observed a shift of post-WW2 informants’ identification reference point from the original nation-state to the new location. I propose that this difference is due to the differences in the transnational conditions which underpinned lifelong experiences of the participants in this study. To analyse this further, the core of the argument is based on the following two main lines of enquiry:

- Identity construction as the uprooted “I” residing in the UK
- The uprooted “I” in transnational social fields

7.2 Identity construction as the uprooted “I” residing in the UK

As presented in the context Chapter 3, Poland’s EU accession triggered one of the most significant population shifts in the UK, with over 922,000 Polish born residents at its peak in 2017. The EU enlargement in 2004 unlocked a new transnational mobility option for Polish citizens overnight, with strong pull factors towards the old EU members and in particular the UK, as one of the three member states which did not introduce any significant transitional restrictions on the movement of Polish workers. Over time this EU-based arrangement continued to grow linking Poland and the UK for another 16 years. This field then ended abruptly for new Polish workers when Brexit took place in 2020, further disrupted by the Covid pandemic and potential impacts of the more recent cost of living crisis. These changes in a relatively short period of time show how transnationalism is deeply situated within the political and national contexts. Transnational opportunities can emerge, grow and continue to be open for some, but closed for others – as they themselves fluctuate with changing political environments between nation-states.

Consequently, the experiences of Polish migrants who came to the UK after 2004 were shaped by this dynamic *transnational trajectory*. However, far from being ‘docile bodies’ (McNay 1994, p.104, quoted in Halls 1996, p.12), the migrants entered these new fields with clear strategies and goals to be achieved individually and for their families. For example, Kasia, a professional, seeking opportunities for her young family in an English-speaking environment, reflected succinctly on this new transnational landscape and migratory options available to her: *We wanted to go to the States, but it was not possible then. But most*

importantly we could go to the European Union as Poland joined the EU (Kasia, f, 50, Birmingham, 14 years in the UK). Throughout the process Kasia was an active social agent, assessing her family's needs, negotiating transnational opportunities, and taking advantage of her new transnational access.

Nonetheless, despite the supportive conditions for mobility within the EU – with some literature suggesting the emergence of a 'mobile lifestyle' (Geldof et al. 2017) driven by 'lifestyle choices' (Luthra et al. 2014) – this was not always an easy transition. My fieldwork revealed many migratory journeys as emotional, and often violent and traumatic, questioning the view of the voluntary nature of the migration of the post-2004 migrant interviewees in this study.

Instead (and in line with literature that rejects the distinction between forced and voluntary migration as artificial, e.g., Popov 2016, Richmond 1994, Voutira 1991), I argue that many of the post-2004 migrants in my sample were pushed into making this migratory decision, as they became unfixed from their locality and entered the new space which emerged in 2004. For example, Igor described his experience in physical, bodily terms '*Poland hurt me (...) throughout my life the country gave me a good kicking*' (Igor, m, 42, Eastbourne, 6 years in the UK); other narratives are also filled with emotions ranging from discomfort to disappointment, or stronger frustration and anger about Poland's political, economic or social situation. Milena, a qualified internal designer, is still emotional about the despair she experienced after her visit to a job centre offering her a cleaning position after months of job searching: '*I left the job centre. I was so angry. I got into my car and started crying because I didn't know what to do.*' (Milena, f, 35, Swindon, 8 years in the UK). The only strategy left was to migrate to the UK to join her brother; described as 'the only livelihood strategy left' in White (2011b, p.63). Furthermore, Jadzia's narrative of her 'severed roots' (the word 'roots' is used metaphorically by the participant herself in this context) captures the story of such an unfixing: brutally severed roots and anger towards Poland for not being able to build a life there and for being forced to leave.

I think that my roots as well as the roots of many Polish people residing in the UK were drastically and sadly severed in the reality of everyday life [in Poland]. You were faced with a shortage of money for essential food and paying bills and you knew it was really bad when you had to choose between doing your shopping and paying your bills. It seems to me that the financial problems initiated a revolt against being Polish. We hate Poland, that is, a part of us hates Poland so much because we were not able to build there what we could here [the UK] in our own Poland. (Jadzia, f, 39, Birmingham, 16 years in the UK)

In a similar vein, another narrative reflects on the views of the post-2004 migrants by the post-WW2 generation. Basia became aware of their perceptions of the more recent

migration as less patriotic, as they had left their homeland voluntarily and for economic gains. This WW2 migrants' internalised dichotomy between the two groups: forced migration (post-WW2) as opposed to voluntary migration of the post-2004 migrants is interrogated and rejected in Basia's story as follows: firstly, the post-WW2 group had a choice to return following political changes in Poland, and secondly, she feels she was left with no choice but to leave to secure her survival, home and employment.

They [post-WW2 migrants] think that the new migration came here for money – this is not true – that they didn't have a choice and we did, that we are less patriotic than them. This is not true; if they had wanted to return, they would have returned a long time ago. Somehow, they are not too keen. They could have gone back a long time ago. About 30 years ago. So if this had been so much against their will, they would not live here now. I don't like this kind of talk – they chose, and I don't have a choice, because you do. They can pack and go; even if they are settled here, many people start a new life somewhere else, so can they too. It is a choice, and it annoys me that the older migrants think that the new migrants come here for money, because I really would not have the mortgage and I would not have my own home, if I had stayed there [in Poland]. In that sense I didn't have a choice. I wouldn't have a job. So this belief that they have better values is very unfortunate. (Basia, f, 37, Birmingham, 12 years in the UK).

Overall, the above narratives are stories of forceful *uprootings* ('severed roots'), and inevitable departures ('I didn't have a choice'); Ignatowicz (2012) also notes that these migrants can be simultaneously agents and feel they have no choice but to leave. The factors behind these unfixings are not limited to economic reasons and unemployment. Migrants strive for a different life, and feel pushed out of their localities, as they are unable to accept the status quo. As a result, strong desires and emotions break their bonds with their original locality. I explain this process through the conceptual framework of the migrant's *roots* being severed or pulled out of their localities. For some this can be demonstrated through an overwhelming desire to set up a life somewhere else: '*I waited until I turned 18 to get my passport and escape from Poland*' says Czesia (Czesia, f, 28, Bournemouth, 10 years in the UK); for others the process is driven by strong and complex feelings of discomfort, disappointment, dissatisfaction, frustration or anger towards the nation-state. Other empirical examples include anger towards the Polish government, Polish politics, the country's economy ("communist legacy" or "brutal capitalism"), bureaucracy and high taxes, the legal system, and the lack of equality and inclusion. For example, a young female wanting to pursue her dream to be a mechanic felt pushed out of her village in Poland (rigid gendering of the Polish labour market also in White 2011b); or a disabled person felt she would not have been able to establish an independent life in Poland without the required support and opportunities for professional employment for people with disabilities, leaving her with no choice but to depart.

The UK is simply more inclusive of disabled people; I soon found out about this during my visits. It was the easiest choice for me. I found a job without any problems. From the very beginning I haven't had any problem with anything. (Basia, f, 37, Birmingham, 12 years in the UK).

Additionally, narratives of migrants, who describe their migration as a voluntary choice, show a level of internalisation of its voluntary nature. For example, Zuzia says “*I came here to live, not to earn money*” (Zuzia, f, 34, Cambridge, 8 years in the UK), with Poland less suitable for ‘living’; or Gabriel states “overall I was looking for my own path in life” after graduation (translated from ‘swojego miejsca’ – ‘my place’) (Gabriel, m, 24, Wolverhampton, 5 years in the UK), with Poland unsuitable as this place. On the surface this would support the ‘lifestyle choice’ interpretation (Luthra et al. 2014). However, deconstruction of some of these narratives suggests a different picture. The following story of six sisters told by a successful professional who originally came to the UK as an undergraduate student reveals the initial triggers for her life plan – the “fight for survival” in the context of her large family and the desire to make a good living, with the move to the UK as her strategy to achieve this.

I knew I could study and start a new life [in the UK]. I always wanted to leave Poland. I don't know why. Maybe because I grew up in a large family. There were six of us, and there always was a kind of fight for survival among the six sisters. Money was always tight. I always felt the need to make my own way in life. I knew this was not possible in Poland. (Alina, f, 30, Birmingham, 12 years in the UK)

Overall, these are stories of *uprootings* triggered by emotional, at times violent and hardly voluntary unfixing processes, leading to the individual's inevitable departure – the *uprooted* “I”, looking for opportunities somewhere else and ready to enter new social spaces linking Poland with other countries. Once *uprooted*, especially in the EU's neoliberal economy, the migratory journey of the *uprooted* “I” was fluid with a range of strategies employed depending on the specific pull factors and transnational networks which transpired through this new transnational reality.

At first, I was in Norway, I was there for six months. I met a new friend. She asked me to go to the UK with her, as the wages were better, and there was no stress like in Norway. I thought why not. I could try. I was in Scotland for 6 months. From Scotland I moved to Peterborough. (Czesia, f, 28, Bournemouth, 10 years in the UK)

As this narrative shows, the *uprooted* condition allows for high levels of fluidity and continued negotiation of available spaces. Some migrants had previous experiences of migration before coming to the UK. They compared countries, living conditions, required language skills, and strategised accordingly. Where needed, they were ready to move onto the next destination without hesitation or a pre-planned route. The EU conditions provided the ideal platform for *uprooted* migrants to explore options and access different transnational opportunities. Within this context, the UK space pulled them strongly both directly and

through networks of family and friends, job agencies and employment schemes – for example bus drivers, or shop, warehouse and factory workers. Transnational structures emerged within this field as a result; within these structures *uprooted* migrants could exercise their agency and make decisions informed by the available opportunities and fulfilling their needs:

There were so many Polish people. Asda's agents for example; I heard English managers talking – 50 new Polish workers are starting tomorrow. 50 more in a week. If you wanted 200 Polish workers for next week, you could have 200 Polish workers you needed, as there were so many people registered with agencies looking for a job (Olaf, m, 43, Coventry, 15 years in the UK).

With time these structures, supported by kinship networks and a range of 'migration industry' (Garapich 2008a, 2016) as in the narrative above, became the key facilitators enabling increased departures of people who needed to leave their localities in Poland. Migration became so established that one of the participants described undertaking of these migratory journeys as 'fashionable' (Olaf, m, 43, Coventry, 15 years in the UK), demonstrating active migration networks which were often specific to different localities in Poland – for example, some regions would rely on family networks more than agencies (White 2011b). These post-2004 *uprootings* became the norm and a common livelihood strategy for many. A 51-year-old businesswoman, after losing her business, researched the UK job market as one of her livelihood options and undertook a healthcare assistant training before departing from Poland. Others in my sample were pressured to leave before their family unit became too established in Poland. Kasia, reflects "*We had to leave before putting down roots in Poland.*" (Kasia, f, 50, Birmingham, 14 years in the UK), with her family story captured below:

We were in cramped conditions in a flat; when [our son] was born we had two rooms. We really needed to either buy or build a house. We didn't want to build as we decided not to put down roots in Poland. [...] we came to this country [the UK] because we had to experience something, and we thought it would be good for our family, as [our son] was a year and a half old. We thought it would be better for him to grow up in a different environment, in a different nation, as well as becoming bilingual. (Kasia, f, 50, Birmingham, 14 years in the UK)

Overall, the migrants in this sample strategised for themselves and their families. Unhappy with their economic situation, or disillusioned or hurt by their nation-state, they felt forced to leave to look for the best outcomes somewhere else. For those who travelled with their families – i.e., the key site for capital accumulation (Bourdieu 1998), the objective was to develop their economic and cultural capital within the UK. Those who left families behind demonstrated more activity through their transnational social fields between the UK and Poland on a day-to-day basis, often leading transmigrant lives in two countries simultaneously (discussed in more details in Section 7.3). Consequently, based on this

sample, the *uprooted* “I” moves as an individual or in family units, with no significant reference to the local collective; benefitting from both the EU’s neoliberal free markets with its free movement, and increased technological connectivity with their home country. Some post-2004 migrant interviewees are unaware of the post-WW2 migrants and the physical spaces they created and financed in the UK; they show less dependency on community ties or physical spaces in the UK to experience Polish identity. There is no strong, immediate desire to physically *put down roots* in collective spaces of either the post-WW2 generation or in new spaces set up by new arrivals. This group builds identities and creates networks within their more private social spaces, using metaphors such as “the home” and “the heart”:

[My home] is where my heart is. Where I am. It doesn't matter whether it is here, in Poland or Canada. Home is where I am. I am fine here. (Jakub, m, 38, Tipton, 15 years in the UK)

Natalia reflects further:

[..] the clubs were too far, and somewhat unnecessary. We went [to places] here; there was a restaurant where we could eat Polish dishes. We didn't cook everything at home so we would go out to eat Polish food. But not clubs, as we really didn't have time. (Natalia, f, 38, Tipton, 16 years in the UK)

The phrases such as ‘*home is where I am*’ and community clubs ‘*somewhat unnecessary*’ are in striking contrast to the post-WW2 group of interviewees’ narrative of ‘Polishness was where we gathered’ in Chapter 6. As shown above, metaphors of Polishness produced at this individual level often refer to the migrants’ biological make up – “*My heartbeat is Polish*” or when watching a sporting event between Poland and the UK “*even one cell in my body does not support the UK*” (Olaf, m, 43, Coventry, 15 years in the UK). Such metaphors to do with the human body (heart and cells) transport easily through spaces and also transnationally, as they are not fixed in any particular physical space in the UK or Poland. This portable quality of migrants’ national identity is also noted by Sassen (1996a) and Vertovec (2001). Furthermore, the narratives focus on smaller social places (e.g., parties at home and barbeques in the garden) away from Polish clubs and Polish churches. These are the main sites of identity formation – important places of practising Polishness, creating memories, and building networks of Polish friends. As a result, the centre of identity building is the house they live in and are proud of - “*My house is different from an average house in England*” (Dominik, m, 50, Coventry, 6 years in the UK). Consequently, new metaphors emerge: the home or house as a more moveable unit, more private and less collective. This physical house does not necessarily symbolise *rerootedness* or putting down permanent *roots*; it is a financial investment for the individual and their family, adding to their capital. It can be activated when needed, for example for return or onward migration. Overall, as a portable asset the house represents the way Polish migrants adjust to the rules of the

neoliberal economy, and how they operationalise or ‘domesticate’ them ‘through practices of everyday life’ (Smith and Rochovská 2007, p.1165):

All my friends from Peterborough were so pleased about 6 years ago. They bought houses, as the economy was weak. Houses were cheap and mortgages available. They made a lot of money on these houses a long time ago. [...] many of those with children have sold their house and have been back to Poland for quite a while. (Czesia, f, 28, Bournemouth, 10 years in the UK)

Indeed, more generally through stories such as the above, and through other fieldwork in ex-Soviet bloc countries (e.g., Bulgaria in Smith and Rochovská 2007), we learn how the harsh reality of neoliberal political economy became part of everyday life for many people – it became ‘domesticated’ by people allowing them to survive the day-to-day hardship and adjust to the new political and economic order (Smooth and Rochovska 2007), often employing skills and understandings they had developed under the communist state and reconfiguring them into the new social reality (Dunn 1999). For migrants in this study, their survival strategy involved leaving the country through the transnational trajectory which opened to Polish citizens in the post-communist era, and subsequent Poland’s EU accession. However, based on the stories in this study, the neoliberal revolution has not produced neoliberal citizens driven purely by economic gains and shedding bonds such as family, friends and national loyalties which would impede their success. On the contrary, my informants have demonstrated their ability to strategise and seek the best opportunities through the new transnational fields, while at the same time forming their identities based on the social bonds and capital available to them within these fields. In fact, the EU’s neoliberal context provided the political reason for these new transnational social fields to emerge, including providing additional layers through which Polish migrants are positioned in the new discourse (e.g. the hard working Polish migrant, contributing to the economy, hence desired and welcome as I discuss further later in this section); whereas Polish migrants, albeit negotiating these fields more individually, utilise these spaces to build personal networks of friends and family, including caring relationships, and staying connected with their home country, if desired. Therefore, although the neoliberal context highlights the importance of the underpinning political arrangements as well as provides a wider context behind the push factors due to outcomes of the “shock therapy” approach in post-communist Poland and continued mistrust towards the state, it is not a sufficient lens to apply in order to explore national identity building within these fields once migrants start to proactively negotiate them.

Hence, my focus remains on the social spaces themselves, where in addition to the individual private spaces such as homes and gardens, which are both places of identity formation and economic assets, the narrative shows that the Polish language provides the social glue for these communities; Jakub explains why they predominantly stay in touch with

other Polish people in the UK: *'This is to do with the language as we can communicate without any barriers'*, and also *'So I see this as a question of our language. Maybe similar worldviews; not sure how to describe this – similar approaches to life.'* (Jakub, m, 38, Tipton, 15 years in the UK). For these reasons, some migrants also decide to engage with certain Polish collective spaces in the UK which meet their particular needs, especially to replenish their Polish cultural capital, including Polish shops and schools for young families. As discussed in Chapter 3, there is a vast network of Saturday schools on the register of Polska Macierz Szkolna (Polish Educational Society) (Małkosa 2022, Young and White 2022). As important sites of identity formation for families (White 2011b), Young and White's study of eight selected schools considers the impacts of the Covid pandemic on their operations (Young and White 2022); despite the operational difficulties (and more generally, other tensions and structural inequalities in the UK educational system), they managed remarkably well, continued teaching and also building new networks with the heads of other Saturday Schools in the UK and beyond.

In addition to Saturday schools, others in my sample engage with collective places such as Polish churches that allow them to continue their identity formation practices and traditions they know from Poland, in particular, the Polish church and a range of groups supporting the Polish church community in the UK. For example, the Polish church in Birmingham has new groups and associations reflecting activities in churches back in Poland: Home Church (Wspólnota Domowy Kościół), Mothers in Prayer (Matki w Modlitwie), or Waters of Jordan (Wody Jordanu). In the narrative below, Olaf talks about his need for familiarity (he says it is "like in Poland"), giving him comfort and the support he seeks to maintain his Polish national identity:

For me for example, going to church is very important; it helps me with maintaining my Polish identity. It is like being in a centre of Polishness, like in Poland. The fact that it is not different at all, it is like going to a Polish church in Poland, this helped me psychologically. Our Easter: baskets with food to be blessed, the Christmas Eve Mass, all religious holidays." (Olaf, m, 43, Coventry, 15 years in the UK)

Ryan (2010) identifies similar quests for continuity through her research into Polish migrants in London, using Goffman's conceptualisation of establishing normality in the new location (Goffman 1986 cited in Ryan 2010). In line with Ryan, my findings also show that establishing a new normality does not mean this kind of continuity in all cases. It is a time of re-configuration too, including disconnection from Polish Catholic churches for some.

Overall, there is a lot of fluidity in the migrant interviewees' behaviours towards larger collective spaces as these spaces are not always essential for their identity formation and can be replaced by other spaces, including private houses, a plethora of online UK-based

Polish communities via Facebook and other platforms, or other alternatives that are geographically closer (local shops or English Catholic churches for example). Consequently, some of the migrants in my sample enter these collective spaces including Polish churches and clubs for a particular reason or to meet a particular need; others try to engage and then leave; there are also those who never enter through either choice or lack of interest. In this story, Emil chooses an English catholic church which is closer than the nearest Polish church:

Our children had their first communion in an English church. Firstly, it is closer geographically and secondly less complicated than the Polish church in the city centre.” (Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK).

Emil's story reveals that it is the geographical barrier that stops his participation in this Polish space; it also provides an indication of emerging tensions in this group too. As shown above, migrants can choose the 'less complicated' alternatives and stay away from Polish communities to avoid tensions, finding other ways of fulfilling the same purpose and the need to be part of a collective. Furthermore, the post-2004 group is diverse in terms of age, gender, educational backgrounds, language skills or labour market experiences. This kind of demographic complexity-brings focus on migrants and their in-group diversity too. As a result of these differences, there are intra-group othering processes visible across this group. Their social groups and social spaces do not always overlap. Furthermore, there are also tensions around the division of migrants into skilled and non-skilled workers. With this constructed and internalised difference by skilled workers, prejudice towards Polish people is perceived to be targeting only the uneducated and the unskilled, who themselves are unkind and ruthless towards other co-workers, particularly towards their co-nationals.

I have read that many people have complained about racist incidents. I haven't experienced anything like that; I haven't experienced any discrimination. On the contrary, Polish skilled workers are valued here, and at times they are trusted with additional important tasks. It is due to the fact that my knowledge is much broader compared to local engineers. Broader. That's all. I think that they value our specialists here. [...] Uneducated people are not treated very well. I've had the opportunity to observe this. I've worked in production companies; have seen some sad things. Increasing targets, rushing workers. Especially when a Polish person got promoted, looking down on other Polish people. But skilled workers are valued a lot here. I think these are two different worlds. (Dominik, m, 50, Coventry, 6 years in the UK)

As expected, and shown in the examples above, the sheer volume and, related with it, the diversity of the post-2004 migrants are inevitably a source of tensions within my sample, including class tensions. This can cause disengagement from spaces shared with other co-nationals as well as more individual engagement with a closer circle of immediate friends and other Polish people living in the same locality. Gabriel keeps in touch with his Polish friends via a Facebook group who meet weekly to play football: 'Only Poles' (Gabriel, m, 24,

Wolverhampton, 5 years in the UK), or Maciej and his fiancée started a dog walkers group for Polish people living in their neighbourhood, attracting up to 15 dogs in their local park during Covid (Maciej, m, 29, Swindon, 11 years in the UK). Sometimes specific interest groups can have a wider reach; Polish car rallies were mentioned in particular. More typically, however, Emil reflects on such locally oriented networks, with his main social group consisting of a few Polish families living in his neighbourhood. His entertaining, holidays and celebrations take place with his co-nationals living locally.

It is inevitable that our friends are Polish. There are quite a few Polish people on our estate, so we mainly have Polish friends. The British as well. Although with the British it is normally for parties or when you're invited through work. I started playing tennis 10 years ago, so I know people through this too, but we don't stay in touch outside of the club. We arrange to meet to play tennis. So, we mainly have Polish friends. We have barbeques, Polish parties, a few Polish families. We go camping. New Year's Eve. Mostly in Polish company. (Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK)

In the narrative above, Emil also becomes a member of his local tennis clubs and creates networks with other British people, recognising however that these are less personal, occasional encounters, with his in-group being situated among other Polish people who live in his area. On the whole, however, the Polish people in my sample do not feel discriminated against nor unwanted, although many of them have experienced some form of prejudice, including at work or in other social settings (the pub, the NHS, at work or by passers-by in their localities). According to the interviewees, these incidents are occasional, and do not make them feel insecure or wary. On the contrary, they talk about feeling safe in their neighbourhoods, “[*The neighbours*] treat us like one of them” (Jakub, m, 38, Tipton, 15 years in the UK); or “*We have super neighbours, very friendly*” (Paulina, f, 32, Wolverhampton, 9 years in the UK), and “[*English people*] have always been caring towards me and showed me understanding” (Julia, f, 43, Petersfield, 15 years in the UK). They also feel appreciated at work – their identities are constructed as the good worker and the hardworking Pole as part of the wider discourse in the UK in the context of the neoliberal economy. McGhee et al. (2019) also points to the idea of ‘earned citizenship’ and ‘stakeholder identities’ which become internalised in this process based on neoliberal principles of hard work and economic contribution. This discourse of Polish migrants being economically valuable often takes place against other nationalities and ethnic groups contributing less and hence being less desirable – this is also shown in literature, for example research into Polish and Lithuanian migrants by Parutis (2011), and research into the newspapers’ representation of Polish workers in Drzewiecka et al. (2014). This construct is internalised by the migrant interviewees in a number of the narratives, for example – ‘*A Polish worker could do as much work as three non-Polish workers*’ (Natalia, f, 38, Tipton, 16 years in the UK). More generally, migrants are confronted with stereotypes of themselves, with versions of their

Polishness ‘reflected back at them’ (Ryan 2010, p.365). Thus, stereotyping of Polish workers emerged in my participants’ narratives of their employers, affirming the construction of their distinctiveness and superior value as workers, as well as contributing to their othering against other workers, other nationalities and other ethnicities: *“My new [British] boss when he wants me to do something well, he always says “do it in the Polish way. [...], it is only recently that I started to be proud of being Polish.”* (Zuzia, f, 34, Cambridge, 8 years in the UK). Natalia reflects on this as follows:

We were always used because we work well. When we have a job to do, we do everything to complete it. It was obvious and I experienced this myself. They gave us more and more and more, but they were pleased. This was not because you were not doing well. Thanks to this, we got permanent contracts and made connections. Later everyone wanted a Pole on their team, because they knew that would help them meet their deadlines. We won't be lazy or moan. (Natalia, f, 38, Tipton, 16 years in the UK)

Furthermore, due to the fact that these Polish migrants are constructed as good workers, the attitudes towards them are susceptible to changes in the economic and political environment. Events which make the local in-groups feel insecure or threatened by outsiders, will increase the othering processes by the in-groups (Tonkiss 2013). Such two key events identified by the post-2004 group of migrants were the economic crisis in 2008, and the Brexit vote in 2016. The importance of these two events is twofold. Firstly, they reinforce the othering processes, trigger hostility towards the Polish migrants at these times, and make them feel unsafe and question their migratory decision as a result. Secondly, they demonstrate the fluid nature of the migrants’ *transnational trajectory* itself, vulnerable to the politics and the economic situation in the host country; thus, contributing to the sense of the temporary nature of their presence in the UK. Transnational social fields can be terminated abruptly and as quickly as they emerge. The Brexit vote took place only 12 years after Poland’s EU accession, closing this space for new Polish workers, hence exposing the fact that migrants’ agency sits within the structures of spaces that are available to them (Dahinden 2017, Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999). Moreover, the outcomes of my fieldwork show that even where the interviewees do not experience any direct or violent prejudice, these are significant factors impacting on their sense of belonging, disrupting bonds with their locality (for example, losing friendships within the local in-group) and unsettling their confidence about their future in the UK; for example, Emil’s worry about eggs being thrown at his car:

There was nothing directly. Maybe one or twice, some silly jokes by stupid colleagues, some digs. No physical violence, nothing like that. But I started to worry that they would throw eggs at my car or something like that. There were some incidents. There were articles about it. One Polish lad died. Soon after the Brexit vote, one or two months after, they were in a restaurant, sitting outside and speaking Polish. They were beaten by a group of teenagers; they were beaten so badly that one of them died in hospital. In

Cornwall or Yorkshire, Polish people's fence was set on fire, and they were shouting 'Polish go home'. There were some anti Polish sentiments then. (Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK)

In addition to the wider national and political level, other processes captured in my interviews that impact the positioning of the *uprooted* "I" in the new spaces are driven by the localities they arrive into, and in particular the levels of diversity in their location. As presented in the context chapter, the UK's immigration trends have undergone significant changes over the last three decades, with unprecedented numbers and a large variety of migrants' origins. Consequently, literature tells us that there are different conditions for identity constructions and othering processes in different parts of the UK, with increasingly superdiverse environments especially in big cities (Vertovec 2007). The following story captures the lived experiences of superdiversity as opposed to less diverse locations:

London is an ethnic and multicultural pot, so you didn't feel any different. There was no prejudice. In my first job I could count no more than 10 white English people I met and spoke to. The majority of the people I worked with were 40% Polish, 40% Brazilian and the rest were a mixture from other countries: the Czech Republic, Portugal, Indonesia, so I felt no prejudice, no anti Polish sentiments. It is normal in London that everybody is different. So, I felt more of this here in Coventry. One of my first jobs here was with mainly white English people. [...] I remember that it was in a jokey way. One English person kept laughing and saying Borat, calling me and [Polish co-worker] Borat; there were two of us from an agency recruiting Polish people. He kept mocking the Eastern European accent; this was annoying but also funny. (Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK)

The story of Borat contrasts the experience in superdiverse London against a predominantly white British workplace in Coventry. Superdiverse locations such as the capital provide a multinational and multi-ethnic environment with high levels of non-British workers; whereas the predominantly white British work environment in Coventry triggered othering processes towards the Polish migrants – in this case fun is being made of their Polish accent. However, what is apparent through this research is that these types of othering processes are not limited to less diverse locations nor that the othering process takes place solely against the white British majority. In locations perceived as less diverse, my informants also experienced high levels of diversity due to the nature of the job market and the sectors they work in. Julia's story shows her experience of tensions with other national groups in her workplace in Petersfield, a smaller location but with high numbers of non-British workers in the healthcare sector. She constructs the British in-group as understanding and supportive, whereas other nationalities are constructed as unhelpful and hostile:

I was so lucky with people around me who always showed me care and understanding. I have never experienced any prejudice at work. The greatest prejudice came from other nationalities [...] I've had the opportunity to work with women from the Philippines; there were also girls from Latvia and Romania. I had a lot of ill feelings from them. (Julia, f, 43, Petersfield, 15 years in the UK)

Findings from research by other scholars tells us that some Polish migrants may navigate these new experiences of greater racial and ethnic diversity by constructing their identities as separate and superior in relation to other migrant and ethnic groups (Parutis 2011). For the purpose of this research, it is an important theme contributing to the understanding of the position of the migrants taking part in this study within their new social space and their increased identity construction against other out-groups too.

Therefore, overall, what emerges through the above analysis is a composite picture of identity construction of the post-2004 migrant interviewees against in and out groups, as well as through significant economic and political events which happen as part of the migrants' *transnational trajectory* (e.g., the 2008 economic crisis, and the Brexit vote in 2016; more recently also the pandemic and potential longer-term impacts of the cost of living crisis). This is captured through the concept of *uprootedness* – a forcefully and at times brutally *uprooted* “I” arriving in the UK individually or as a family unit through new transnational social fields between the UK and Poland, triggered by the new political situation in Europe. Upon arrival in the new social space, they experience complex layers of othering through contacts with other groups – the white British groups, other ethnic and national groups, and co-nationals. Through these tensions, the migrants in this sample establish their relationships and position themselves within the social spaces locally. Their social interactions are very much driven by encounters at these three different layers of diversity across the UK. Perhaps, the most pertinent reflection of their relationship building processes and positioning against different social groups in the UK is provided by the narrative below:

I find it easier to get along with Hindus and Italians, sharing the same values, for example hospitality. [...] My contacts with Muslims are very positive. They are so oriented on their family and friends, and their religion. They respect their elders. They are more open to build stronger bonds. They are very helpful too. If I needed anything [...] I would ask Pierre because he is Italian, my colleague Umar, who is a Muslim, or Natalia who is Polish; with the English I always think, they need to plan, 3 weeks ahead. (Basia, f, 37, Birmingham, 12 years in the UK)

In this story, Basia is able to create cultural connections and support networks with other out-groups, but not necessarily with the main in-group.

So far, a lot of my analysis focused on the initial migratory journey starting with often forced *uprootedness* from the migrants' localities in Poland. I then looked at their limited or selective engagement in Polish collective places in the UK, where the emphasis is on the individual experience with home as the centre of national identity formation. I also recognised the importance of a range of othering processes from both the in and out groups in the receiving country. In the case of the post-2004 migrant interviewees, these processes have led to the

construction of Polish migrants as good workers, as they meet the needs of the economy. I have also demonstrated that this construct is susceptible to economic and political turns. As a result, the in-group's perception of Polish migrants as desired or undesired members of the society fluctuates depending on the circumstances at a particular point in time. I will now address the question of what happens next with the unfixed *uprooted* "I" over time. Do the migrants in my sample continue transnational activity linking Poland and the UK, or do they shift their lives and day-to-day practices towards their new social space completely?

Unquestionably, once in the UK space, migrants become increasingly attached to the localities (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2018, Ryan 2018, White 2014), also shown in my findings especially for families with children and through the economic capital they build, for example their employment history, having a bank account and acquiring property in the UK, and the cultural capital they gain through this new space, including increased knowledge of the culture and traditions in the UK, navigating a range of institutions and regulations, becoming members of local networks and neighbourhoods, developing relationships and participating in other British collective spaces (clubs, societies, associations, Trade Unions, local pubs, mainstream schools in case of families, UK television, shops, churches, just to name a few). These are significant places of identity re-building following the initial *uprooting* from Poland. Gradually, they gain cultural competences and become more confident in this new social space:

[British people] are very positive, very helpful and kind. We occasionally exchange good morning, goodbye. Both men and women. It irritated me to start with, as I go to shops, supermarkets to do my shopping and pay, that's it. And there is a British person in front of me in the queue, retelling their whole life story. People talk to each other, and I am here to do my shopping; if they want to chat, they can go to a coffee shop. I used to have this Polish mentality. I don't like to talk about nothing. For them it's compulsory. I noticed this straight away in the first year following my arrival. They think that if you don't engage in a conversation – and then I had language problems; I wasn't confident with my English; that's why I didn't want to chat – I noticed that I was perceived as rude and unmannered. I was seen as mean because I didn't chat 'bla bla bla' about anything and nothing when buying three products in a shop. But I get it now. They are being kind. (Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK)

The above narrative of casual encounters in his local shops shows Emil's initial inability to engage in small talk or banter with the locals was perceived as rude and a marker of difference. With time he became more confident with his English and started to engage and recognise small conversation as an accepted and important norm of social interaction in his locality. His story also shows his identity formation journey; he no longer has the 'Polish mentality', he has acquired new norms from the locals in the UK.

Another example is Iwona's story which shows that in addition to learning the local code and norms, migrants increase their cultural capital through exchanges with different groups in society too. She found the local sports pub the best way to learn more about the British culture, as a place that brings together people from different parts of the world, learning through her interactions with local people in a sports pub:

There are many different people from different parts of the world coming to pubs. But I think that a pub is the best place to learn Britishness, and despite the fact that it took me two years I finally know what cricket is. I love playing cricket and play all the time. (Iwona, f, 31, Guildford, 9 years in the UK)

The above stories are just two examples showing how migrants accumulate new capital as they navigate the different social spaces in the UK. They become competent agents, comfortable in their new localities. Some find British partners and start families, triggering even deeper insertion into the UK space – this group shows the strongest attachment to the UK. However, it is also clear that at the same time migrants constantly re-evaluate their spaces and their positionality is not fixed. Emil says – '*There are pluses here and there, but there are more minuses over there*' (Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK); for now, the fine balance of 'pluses and minuses' keeps these migrants here (fitting the traditional frameworks of push and pull theories), including economic benefits and emotional factors (also White 2011b). Others for whom the balance has changed have already left, with the numbers of UK residents born in Poland dropping from 922,000 in 2017 to 682,000 in June 2021. Those who stay in the UK stay because they assess their lives in the UK as better than anywhere else at this particular moment in time. The economic aspects are important to them as well as the quality of life in the UK, with migrants listing less stressful jobs, better opportunities for their children, a more tolerant society, and a more moderate climate as some of the pluses.

Furthermore, the migrants are aware of the increased numbers of Polish people returning to Poland post-Brexit. Jerzy stays in touch with his friends who have returned:

I had great friends. My close friend is leaving. Even my Russian friend is leaving. My cousin is leaving too. My ex is finishing her studies and will leave for Poland as soon as she gets her award. So, I don't know, if everybody leaves and I will be on my own, maybe I will also make this decision. But I don't know yet. (Jerzy, m, 49, West Bromwich, 16 years in the UK)

However, for now Jerzy is not considering returning himself as he believes his life in the UK is less stressful. He compares his experiences with his returnee friend who now has a well-paid job in Poland, but no time for his family or weekend activities; Poland is seen as '*a different world*' where '*You have to work and fight hard*'. However, even Jerzy reflects on his return options, especially if his current network of friends – the individual, more personal

spaces so typical of this group of migrants – disappears with time. With few connections with the wider Polish collective space in the UK, he is worried he will be on his own. This basic need to belong is a ‘powerful, fundamental and extremely pervasive motivation’ (Baumeister and Leary 1995, p.497), and therefore, it could be a significant factor for further departures of the post-2004 migrants; for example the migrants in my sample, like Jerzy above, who have not created larger communities in the UK geographies, may feel isolated when their close network of friends vanishes. Therefore, apart from those with British partners and settled families who have stronger bonds with their locality, the more fluid *uprooted* “I” could be relatively easily pulled towards one of the emerging options with Poland’s economy growing stronger and the EU keeping their doors open too. However, even those with the strongest attachments in the UK recognise the shift in opportunities.

We won't go back to Poland because my husband is British. He only knows a few Polish words. [...] However, I understand people who are considering returning to Poland. Poland is developing quickly, Warsaw, Cracow, Wroclaw are very attractive cities. It does not surprise me at all. (Alina, f, 30, Birmingham, 12 years in the UK)

Thus, with new opportunities emerging, these migrants can move without too many obstacles. For now, the migrants in this study see their lives in the UK, despite Brexit and the closure of this field to future Polish workers. However, if the balance of ‘pluses and minuses’ changes economically and in terms of their family needs and emotional attitudes, the *uprooted* “I” may be drawn to other destinations through the spaces available to them on their *transnational trajectory*. Therefore, the migratory strategy of the *uprooted* “I” remains fluid with all options kept open, including returning to Poland or onward migration. Two people were in the process of moving to their next destination during this research already, including a move to Ireland and to another location in the UK. This shows that the next move may not necessarily be a return to Poland; indeed, those traumatised by the initial *uprooting* from Poland will assess their options bearing this trauma in mind – Jadzia says ‘Poland means fear to me, as I grew up in fear’ (Jadzia, f, 39, Birmingham, 16 years in the UK). The refugeedom literature shows us that those who are affected most violently by their state of origin sever their allegiance to the state of origin (Leitner and Ehrkamp 2006).

Overall, however, there have already been increased levels of return migration to Poland since 2017. Equally, there is also evidence through a number of narratives in this study that these returns are not always permanent; Jerzy reflects on some cases of double return in his area: *Some left and then they came back. They couldn't cope [in Poland]* (Jerzy, m, 49, West Bromwich, 16 years in the UK). More generally, it is apparent through this research and through other initial empirical studies that changes in status and mobility due to Brexit (and also Covid) are not fixed (Mogilnicka 2022). These changes can be undone by migrants

using the transnational social fields that continue to link the UK and Poland for this group of migrants, in particular those with settled status through the EU Settlement Scheme or British citizenship. As a result, these migrants continue to demonstrate high levels of fluidity and the ability to continue to move freely through their transnational social fields. In order to understand this better, the next section will focus on the nature of the transnational social fields between the UK and Poland, and within the EU to provide a better understanding of their impacts on migrants' practices and their identity formation.

7.3 The uprooted "I" in the transnational social fields

Although not all migrants live true transnational lives (i.e., in two different countries simultaneously), the transnational social fields between the UK and Poland remains active for this group of migrants despite the longer-term impacts of Brexit. Some informants develop a bifocal view of their identity:

If somebody asks I say I am from Poland. I have Polish and British citizenships. This got blurred within the EU. I like to talk about Poland: food, places you can visit etc. Here I am more English. (Milena, f, 35, Swindon, 8 years in the UK).

Overall, migrant interviewees in this study continue transnational activities through their transnational social fields, activated by them as and when needed. Some migrants in this study engage less and less over time due to the cost of travel or their everyday lives becoming more UK-oriented; whilst others never leave this dual way of living between the two national spaces, especially those whose families are split between the two countries.

What stands out in my findings is the emerging theme of discomfort in the state of being suspended or having to continually operate in the transnational social field. This finding of the feeling of discomfort of permanent transmigrants matches up with findings by other transnational scholars (Geldof et al. 2017, White 2011b). Fluidity without full *rerooting* into the new localities is unsettling, as seen in this narrative of a migrant who planned and then gave up on his next move to a different EU country:

Sometimes I feel like something was wrong; as if something was not quite right; as if something was bothering me. Overall, everything seems fine. I have work, my house and health. Theoretically, I have everything I need, but I still feel as if something was not quite right. (Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK)

Once unfixed, the *uprooted* "I" is torn between the two different spaces as well as looking for a place of belonging and a group they could be part of, as is the natural human disposition (Baumeister and Leary 1995). This feeling of discomfort may be at two different levels, either physically having to lead parallel lives in two different countries for prolonged periods of time,

or emotionally having to strategise for the future for themselves as individuals or for their families. This conundrum transpires through two types of narratives.

Firstly, there are examples of migrants' physical stretch between the two countries with regular travel and fixed attachments in both countries - the quintessential transmigrant. These are narratives of those who have strong attachments in both Poland and the UK and as a result, are physically and emotionally stretched between the two countries. They have their families or other close relatives still in Poland and need to remain connected to fend for their needs and provide support financially but also through caring responsibilities. Initially, migration to the UK might have been their short-term strategy, but with time this transnational way of living has become a more long-term arrangement for the family. Filip, who has been in the UK for 16 years, feels stuck and forced into this way of life, unable to leave due to financial commitments and a bank loan to pay back in Poland, and therefore living under constant pressure with his mental health strained by the situation. This type of transnational way of living is particularly susceptible to any disruptions in their individual *transnational trajectory*, such as the Covid pandemic, as captured in the following story told by Filip during the pandemic:

In 2005, 2006 and 2007 there were around 100 Polish bus drivers [in each garage]. Now there are around 20, as they have left either for London or for Poland. They simply couldn't cope with the pressure, being separated from Poland, from family; and those who stayed can be divided into those who have a bank loan to pay off (like me), and those who brought their families here, have children who go to schools here, they have settled here, some bought a house, some rent so they can just work with no worries. Their children go to schools; and they work 5 days only. They have a normal life. Unfortunately, I have to slave away to pay for everything, in Poland the bank loan, and here accommodation, electricity, gas and food. Before the pandemic I used to go to Poland every month for a few days. It was wonderful, and now there is such a huge stress. Let's hope this will stop soon. So that we can go back to normality. Everything was going well, but men have weaker mental health than women and it is very difficult to bear. (Filip, m, 50, Birmingham, 16 years in the UK)

There also are migrants in my sample who live this kind of in-between life at a different level. Whilst they may not be stretched physically between the two geographical locations on a regular basis, their lives are disrupted at a more emotional level. Rozalia regrets coming to the UK, feels unhappy and misses her hometown. Similarly to Filip, she feels trapped, having failed to meet her original migratory objectives (unable to buy a house, working in a lower level job and not entirely happy with the education she wanted for her children) – and most significantly for her family situation, having to wait until her husband retires:

We both know we want to go back to Poland. We know this for sure. We don't know when, as he claims he will need to work here until retirement. So unfortunately, a long road ahead of us, I hope we somehow won't go crazy until then, and will function here somehow. I don't know what we will have to take back to Poland and how much money

we will have to buy a house. But the plan is to return. (Rozalia, f, 52, Birmingham, 14 years in the UK)

After 14 years in the UK, Rozalia narrates failure much more directly than the participants in Nowicka's study a decade ago (2014); it is no longer a risk constructed as 'success to be', but rather part of the narrative of the present. Furthermore, Rozalia also has additional pressures coming from her relatives in Poland; Goździak (2016) highlights tensions in Polish families arising from caring obligations, especially of daughters who are traditionally expected to care for their elderly parents. This can be a highly emotional space for Polish families; for example, this tension is visible in Rozalia's narrative: '*I am also constantly made feel guilty by my mother – unfortunately – that I moved away and left her on her own*' (Rozalia, f, 52, Birmingham, 14 years in the UK).

Thus, migrants may become anxious about the future, or feel unsettled, having to plan ahead and keep all options open within their transnational spaces. They become transnational strategists, being practical and keeping this field open as a potential way of living when needed as a strategy for the future. Edyta, as a single person, keeps the field open to be able to find a partner – '*I am of certain age, so I should meet somebody. Will I be able to?*' (Edyta, f, 38, London, 16 years in the UK); whereas Maja who arrived in the UK in her early 50s knows her pension will not be sufficient to support her in the UK when she retires, as shown in her narrative:

Recently I sold my flat in Poland. The council rent was £50 per month. Whereas here it is £500 for a room. Financially this does not make sense. I don't know what my pension will be; and I won't stay here as I won't be able to afford it (Maja, f, 58, Bournemouth, 7 years in the UK)

Others, like Rozalia above, are anxious about their elderly parents and other family members left behind, questioning the migrants' longer-term presence in the UK, and contributing to their transnational way of thinking. Therefore, this may be just a feeling of uneasiness about not being fully attached into their localities, or about being torn between two localities. Consequently, the migrants strategise and are prepared to move if required.

Often, they apply for British citizenship, as their strategic citizenship (Godin and Sigona 2022, Harpaz and Mateos 2019) to further protect their legal status in the UK and their right to move freely in the transnational field between the UK and Poland. At the same time, they continue building their capital within the Polish borders through the transnational field, in that sense using their newly acquired nationality instrumentally (Harpaz and Mateos 2019). For example, Edyta was going through the British citizenship process at the same time as she was acquiring a new property in Poland:

For me it was nothing special. 'Amazing joy and handshake by the chair' in inverted commas. I had a photo together with the Queen taken – with the Queen's poster. I went with my British friend to get the certificate. We then went for a coffee. I didn't feel anything. It was simple. I did cost me a lot. At the same time as I was getting my citizenship, I was buying a flat in Poland too. (Edyta, f, 38, London, 16 years in the UK)

In this sense, contextualised through the comparison with purchasing property back in Poland, British citizenship becomes a financial investment - part of Edyta's economic strategy for her future. Aligning with this instrumental, pragmatic approach to citizenship, Szewczyk (2014) proposed the notion of go-stop-go migration, where Polish graduates seek a British passport as a gateway to other countries outside of the EU (e.g., the Commonwealth). This is also reflected in Oliwia's narrative:

I will be applying for British citizenship. I don't feel I am betraying Poland. I will always be a Pole. Simply, British citizenship is an invitation to the whole world, or rather an open ticket to the world. (Oliwia, f, 50, Okehampton, 17 years in the UK)

Thus, for the purpose of this study, the above demonstrates how additional transnational networks may be proactively unlocked through British citizenship.

Overall, as presented above, the informants in this study actively engage in the transnational social fields to plan for the future. However, these spaces allow for much more than survival strategies. They offer opportunities for regular economic, social, cultural and political exchanges, becoming therefore an important place of identity formation for those who are active in these fields. Increased connectivity through technological advancements in terms of communications and travel, as well as the Polish state's interventions, make this space very accessible for this group of migrants. These conditions are in sharp contrast to the transnational conditions experienced by post-WW2 migrants described in Chapter 6. In particular, the role of the Polish state has been visible over the last two decades. Literature provides us with a plethora of examples of nation-states engaged in 'nation-building abroad' (Ehrkamp 2020, p.1206) through 'transnational public spheres' (Gamlen 2006, Smith 2002), including different types of state interventions and attempts to control citizens outside of national borders. In this case, the transnational public field is achieved through dual citizenship, voting rights available to Polish citizens in the UK, and the Polish government's direct dialogue with Polish people abroad through social and political debates within this field, via both online social platforms, networks of Polish embassies and consulates, and state visits to the UK. These are two examples of the latter: extracts from speeches addressed to Polish citizens living in the UK during the Polish Prime Minister's visit in 2018, and his earlier visit in 2014:

'We are happy about the fact that they found a new home, however, as our economy is blooming, we would like to encourage our citizens to consider returning to Poland, although

we respect everyone's personal choices.' (Mateusz Morawiecki, Polish Prime Minister's official state visit to the UK, Dec 2018)²⁵ OR *'Please come back. If you stay in Great Britain too long, you will become more British than Polish, and this will be a mistake. [...] If you come back to your homeland, you will become our elite. In Great Britain most probably you will always travel second class.'* (Mateusz Morawiecki, then President of WBK Bank, Polish Economic Forum in London, March 2014)²⁶

These political discourses, 'launched by politicians' (De Cillia et al. 1999, p.153), are known in literature as effective tools for ensuring that the link between citizens outside national borders and the nation-state is maintained. In this discourse, the state offers an invitation for Polish citizens to return²⁷, constructing them as undervalued cheap labour for the UK, but an important source of skilled professionals for Poland ('the elite'). Similar state discourses of welcoming migrants back are also discussed by other scholars (Ehrkamp 2020). In this case the state message also comes with a warning to migrants of becoming more British than Polish the longer they stay in the UK, adding to the sense of urgency to these decisions: those who stay will lose their Polish identity. These are powerful discourses surrounding the construction of identities by the *uprooted* "I", especially for those who are ready to move when they deem it appropriate or desirable. Paulina's narrative provides a good example of this type of *uprootedness*, with no longer-term desire to remain in the UK, hence a receptive audience for political discourses too.

We don't want to stay here [the UK]. We are here because it is working for us at the moment. But we don't know what is going to happen in 10 years. Will it be better here, or in Poland? We may be able to live better in Poland, work and earn more. This is a difficult question. We will see how this works out. (Paulina, f, 32, Wolverhampton, 9 years in the UK)

Consequently, as the migrants continually re-assess their options, their transnational social fields between the UK and Poland provides for their needs. These needs are met on a number of levels: culturally (Polish TV, holidays or weddings in Poland), economically (shopping in Poland, maintaining or acquiring property in Poland, or using Polish health services), and socially (visiting family and friends, finding a partner; relying on support networks, including childcare, and using Polish services such as hairdressers or beauticians during visits to Poland). This wide range of transnational engagement allows for continued national identity building in the Polish context. As the migrants strategise, they construct Polish options as more desirable or better. For example, Edyta values Polish health service

²⁵ Metro newspaper, 21st December 2018: <https://metro.co.uk/2018/12/21/polish-prime-minister-tells-oles-living-uk-return-poland-brexite-8272171/>

²⁶ Online 'Na Temat', 2nd March 2014: <https://natemat.pl/491675,lily-rose-depp-nepo-baby-czy-talent-corka-johnny-ego-deppa>

²⁷ "Polskie Powroty" schemes have been launched by the Polish government to offer support with returns: <https://powroty.gov.pl/>; in specific cases there are funding opportunities (e.g., scientists, including job/funding information: <https://www.gov.pl/web/oecd/polskie-powroty-nawa>)

over services available to her in the UK space: *Last year I was in Poland for 6 weeks. I had surgery which I decided to have in Poland. (Edyta, f, 38, London, 16 years in the UK).*

Finally, similarly to processes analysed in Chapter 6, the transnational social fields of the post-2004 migrant interviewees are by their very nature circular with circular movement of people, capital, goods and ideas. This inevitably triggers changes at both ends of the fields, which is evident in the narratives of the post-2004 migrants too. Social, cultural and economic remittances in both directions equally affect migrants and non-migrants. The example below demonstrates two-directional impacts of these fields using the example of cider becoming increasingly popular in Poland:

I haven't lived in Poland for 16 years. When I visit, I can see how much has changed since the EU enlargement. I have noticed how many ideas from the UK have been implemented in Poland. [...] So new ideas from the UK are also introduced in Poland. People travel and talk. Or they started to do cider in Poland out of the blue. Why cider in Poland? I think this is the influence of the large 'Polonia' on the isles [the UK]. (Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK)

Emil's narrative recognises the impact of exchanges between the two countries; cider represents the cultural exchange that was possible as people move within these transnational social fields, as they 'travel and talk'.

Overall, the above analysis of the transnational social fields between the UK and Poland has shown this space as an active site for identity formation, including migrants' proactive engagement in these fields, the role played by the Polish state, and impacts on both migrants and non-migrants as exchanges continually happen through the transnational circuit (Popov 2016). Furthermore, the origin of these fields themselves is within the structures of the EU, and therefore, the positioning of the *uprooted* "I" within the wider EU space is an important consideration too. Therefore, in addition to Section 7.2 with a specific focus on Brexit as a disruption to the transnational social fields for some people (leading to return migration) and a reason for more intense othering process by the in-groups in the UK, it is also essential to look specifically at impacts of Brexit on migrants' personal circumstances and their positioning within the EU space.

As shown in Section 7.2, throughout the migratory journey, the post-2004 migrant interviewees have been proactive, tapping into transnational networks linking the UK and Poland. Once *uprooted* and pushed to leave the homeland, they chose the UK out of all options that became available following Poland's accession into the EU; however, by making this choice they did not disrupt their access to the EU through the wider EU transnational political arrangements. Some continued revisiting their original choice, including moving to other EU member states or used their EU networks to reach out to other Polish migrants

who left Poland too; for example, one of the migrants found a girlfriend through Polish migrant networks with Germany, where the relationship developed using cheap ‘2p per minute’ phone calls via O2. Additionally, Emil’s story shows how transnational networks across the EU were also providing ongoing opportunities for onward migration; in his case the move to Norway, where his sister is based, was rejected at the last minute, showing the family as the ultimate decision-making unit and often the main factor in limiting the fluidity of the *uprooted* “I” and their settlement or citizenship decisions (Godin and Sigona 2021):

In 2010 I started selling my belongings and I was determined to move to Norway - where my sister lived. My son was only 4 or 5, and my daughter one; but my wife didn't want to go and she kept crying that she would have to start everything from scratch. We had been here for four years, and with small children. I changed my mind at the last minute. I had the driving route planned, started selling my stuff, my motorcycle, sofas were on eBay. But I gave up on this idea. (Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK)

On the day-to-day basis, the EU is not a significant space for the migrants in my sample. They enjoy holidays in the EU and have networks of family and friends there. Overall, however, there is no evidence of any substantial attachments of the UK-based migrants within this space in their daily lives. Furthermore, Brexit which ended the connection between the UK and the EU space, is recognised as a significant event with multiple and complex impacts, but contrary to some initial conclusions from a pilot study done by Mogilnicka (2022), the group of migrants under this study is not anxious about their future and their right to stay in the UK. Some construct Brexit as a positive event for the UK with no impacts on their personal lives (*‘As far as I am concerned, nothing happened’* (Maciej, m, 29, Swindon, 11 years in the UK); *‘This is not something that I would lose any sleep over. In my opinion nothing happened’* (Maja, f, 58, Bournemouth, 7 years in the UK); others talk about their worries immediately after the Brexit vote, initially disoriented by the uncertainties of the new situation and potential changes to their status in the UK. This is visible in the following:

I felt the worst then. Blimey, a bit unwanted, although nobody said anything to me personally. (Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK)
What I have worked here for so many years, and they want to get rid of us? [...] suddenly my world changed, not that it collapsed, but I didn't know what it was about. It was very strange. (Edyta, f, 38, London, 16 years in the UK)

On the whole, once the initial uncertainties were gone, the participants in this study are not concerned about or threatened by Brexit in terms of losing their legal status, right to stay in the UK, and ability to retain their access to the EU:

‘Not too much. Maybe it is to do with the fact that we simply are here, we live here now. What influence did we have over them leaving? None. We have Polish passports so we can travel freely. We also applied for the settled status which we got with no issues.’
(Anastazja, f, 45, Eastbourne, 15 years in the UK)

However, this attitude is linked directly to the citizenship or settled residence strategies employed by these migrants. Undoubtedly, the UK's departure from the EU posed a threat to them and their family's status initially, hence 'defensive' and 'protective' narratives triggered by Brexit (Godin and Sigona 2021) emerged in a number of narratives in this study too:

Until I got my passport, I was worried a little. But not anymore. Now, I have the passport, so there is no need to worry at all. From the perspective of being a British person, I think it was a stupid decision, but am I worried about my specific situation? – No. (Basia, f, 37, Birmingham, 12 years in the UK)

I have settled status. [My son] has a British passport, so does [my daughter]. Both have British passports, so nothing to worry about. (Czesia, f, 28, Bournemouth, 10 years in the UK)

Future research (albeit outside of the scope of this study) will be needed to understand the longer-term impacts of the differences between the full British citizenship and the migrants' EU settled status. Although not concerned at this stage at all, a few migrants reflected on potential discrimination on the basis of their settled status; for example, there could be limitations on their access to some rights in the UK (e.g., mortgages). Igor says: *Some agencies demand the code to confirm the settled status, but I haven't experienced any major issues.* (Igor, m, 42, Eastbourne, 6 years in the UK)

Of course, the finding that the migrants in this study are not anxious about their future status in the UK should be viewed in the context of the sample, with the selection criterion of migrants who had lived in the UK for the minimum of 5 years. Additionally, it needs to be noted that the interviews were conducted in 2020 and 2021 after the initial impacts of the Brexit vote had been already mitigated by the migrants. In contrast, for example, the study of young people from accession countries conducted in 2016-17 by Sime et al. (2020) found that, despite their strong sense of belonging to the UK and no immediate plans to leave, they demonstrated a high level of uncertainty in their imaginations of the future in Britain, imagining the possibility of having to leave and many planning to move to a more attractive and often unfamiliar destination. By 2020/21 when this research was conducted, that level of uncertainty is not visible. Additionally, the fact that the participants were more established in the UK meant that they would have struggled with the UK government's settlement process the least. Therefore, it is not surprising that although they are aware of increased levels of return migration, they themselves do not plan to return in the foreseeable future (also in line with findings by Mogilnicka 2022). Additionally, as the right to stay is perceived as a question of entitlement, some narratives of the EU Settlement Scheme construct the process as the migrants' deserved entitlement as good citizens to legal right to stay in the UK. In this narrative, this is contrasted against those who were unable to obtain their settled status due to criminal convictions back in Poland:

Nobody has left from my close circle. Some more distant acquaintances told me something about this but.... yes, there is one colleague who returned to Poland. He had been hiding here for 10 years, as he had been convicted in Poland. So, either the conviction had expired or something else. He didn't even have a passport. He was here for 10 year and returned after 10 years. (Dominik, m, 50, Coventry, 6 years in the UK)

Furthermore, although these migrants feel that their own status in the UK is not threatened, that is not to say that they are not anxious about the negative impacts of Brexit and the disruptions it will cause to their transnational social fields on a day-to-day basis ('*Brexit means difficulties*' says Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK); for example, the migrants are anxious about disruptions to travel from Poland to the UK, more expensive travel, high taxes preventing easy flow of goods between Poland and the UK, unfavourable currency exchange rates, the EU sanctions leading to higher cost of living, more expensive goods, inability to do business with Europe, or concerns over stronger right wing nationalist movements in the UK. In particular, parcels emerged as a theme, including difficulties around significantly higher costs and complicated paperwork required to send parcels in both directions; these narratives are particularly telling in terms of caring relationships in transnational families – *My mom used to always send me parcels and medications. Before we used to send and receive parcels a few times a year, now not as much* – says Paulina (Paulina, f, 32, Wolverhampton, 9 years in the UK). Oliwia describes difficulties in sending parcels to her parents as a shock and a significant disruption to her established caring routines:

*And then suddenly it turned out that after 1st January [2020] courier companies (such as DHL and UPS) started to have issues. They have been waiting to see how this will work. And then it turned out that whatever “****” you send, there are 50 forms to complete. Ridiculous; like what is the parcel, each item has to be described individually, including weight and price. Unbelievable. So, for me personally this was a shock, a problem. Will this normalise? I don't know, maybe I will get used to this. I often send parcels to my parents, and now I have a problem. (Oliwia, f, 50, Okehampton, 17 years in the UK)*

Additionally, this story also demonstrates how transnational social fields can not only grow and expand as it was in the case at the time of Poland's EU accession, but they can also shrink and contract over time, limiting what is possible for those who are active in the field – as this is shown in the example above, where post-Brexit arrangements impact on the flow of goods between the UK and Poland/the EU.

On the whole, across the narratives there is a sense of getting on with their lives in the UK, as for now this is where the migrants live and work. As Milena reflects on Brexit impacts – *'I think that [the British] have realised that they depend on us. The British don't like to work on a farm or pick strawberries'* (Milena, f, 35, Swindon, 8 years in the UK). As a result, within the UK's neoliberal political economy, they continue to construct their identities as hard-

working Polish migrants, contributing to the economy and therefore needed, irreplaceable and as a result entitled to the legal status. It is business as usual for them, with no intentions to leave the UK in the near future. They are driven by their feeling of security that comes with their status as a Polish national residing in the UK, protected by both the UK's post-Brexit commitments and their EU status which allows them access to different types of transnational social fields simultaneously and at any point – conceptualised as ‘intentional unpredictability’ by Garapich (2016). Unsurprisingly, the EU space continues to feature in these migrants’ imagined future, including onward migration, retirement in the EU, or family plans for their children and their education, as shown in this narrative.

We are considering if it wouldn't be better for [our son] to study for example in Sweden, France or Germany, for his development, language skills, learning new cultures. University is free there, and here he will need to pay. So, we are considering these options. [Kasia, f, 50, Birmingham, 14 years in the UK]

Yet again, Kasia's narrative demonstrates the EU space as an option offering opportunities to her and her family, for now calmly observed from the UK space. This composed and practical approach is possible for this group of informants in this study, as they are aware of their rights and benefits that come with the status of being a UK-based Polish migrant having multiple options across their transnational social fields.

7.4 Conclusions

In this chapter I have shown that the transnational conditions which emerged following Poland's EU accession resulted in an *uprooting* of this group from their localities in Poland, often triggered by strong emotions such as discomfort, disappointment, dissatisfaction, frustration or anger towards the nation-state, but with a weak *rerooting* process in the UK space. The migrants in this study demonstrate less tendency to engage with larger national collective spaces and low collective mobilisation, with more focus on personal spaces and close family and kinship networks. The *uprooted* “I” (rather than the collective “we”) is more individual in their new spaces. Their tendency to stay away from larger collective spaces is due to a combination of factors, including mistrust towards co-nationals and organised collective spaces, coupled with 21st century instant connectivity with their homeland with decreased need for local references, especially for the quintessential transmigrant.

Although undoubtedly affected, the migrants do not feel that their legal status in the UK is threatened by the political changes due to the UK's departure from the EU. Their *transnational trajectory* has not been broken up by Brexit as they continue to have access, where activated, to a range of transnational social fields through the UK/Poland and the EU spaces. However, I have argued that despite considerable transnational activity of this group

and being fully embedded into the EU mobility context, national identity remains important for the identity construction of migrants in this post-2004 sample. Apart from cases where the emotional bond with the Polish state has been severed due to fear, frustration or anger towards the Polish state, they continue living within the scope of the national, albeit experienced more individually.

Furthermore, this chapter has also shown that the 'national order' of things is not disrupted by the new neoliberal environment these migrants navigate either; despite the EU's neoliberal political economy and Poland's fierce implementation of the neoliberal ideology with its market led individualism and self-sufficiency during its transition to capitalism (Barawoy and Verdery 1999). The individual "I" in this analysis does not equal a neoliberal individual, who is driven purely by market forces and disregards social bonds (Esposito 2019).

Overall, for now, the migrants in this study feel safe in the UK space, protected by the EU Settlement Scheme or by their newly acquired British citizenship as well as their EU citizenship. As a result, they have no immediate plans to leave. Their identities continue to be constructed in their localities where the *uprooted* "I" is affected by othering process by diverse local groups, including in-groups and other out-groups. As a result, the hard-working Polish migrant is constructed in many of these migrants' narratives and public discourses, also very much set in the context of the wider neoliberal economic discourse in the UK driven by the prioritisation of those migrants who are constructed as contributing to the economy and therefore more valued.

Unsurprisingly, the *uprooted* individual "I" discussed in this chapter has a very different lived experience of the national space from the *rerooted* collective "we" analysed in Chapter 6. As the next step in this enquiry, Chapter 8 compares these two ways of national being. In particular, I focus on what the differences between these two groups of interviewees tell us about their national identity formation, with a particular focus on the role of emotions in transnational mobility.

CHAPTER 8 – Comparison: emotions and construction of national identity in different transnational conditions

8.1 Introduction

Building on the findings in Chapter 6 (the *rerooted* “we”) and in Chapter 7 (the *uprooted* “I”), this chapter offers a comparison between these two different migratory flows from Poland to the UK, separated by time, political transformations in Europe, huge technological advancements, and, most significantly for the purpose of this research, different transnational conditions which – as demonstrated in the first two findings chapters – are ‘deeply tangled with the politics of nation-states’ (Ehrkamp 2020, p. 1207).

However, this comparison chapter goes beyond purely the political. It investigates the findings through the lens of emotions uncovered in the narratives of the migrant interviewees in both groups. A whole range of emotions such as love, trust, pride, security, anxiety, fear, suspicion, disappointment, frustration, disgust, anger and others weave throughout the previous chapters, underpinning the interviewees’ actions and experiences of migration, different transnational conditions, their relationship with the national and new localities, and ultimately the construction of their national identity. Thus, the concepts of *re-rootedness* and *uprootedness* are re-framed, with a focus on the migrant interviewees’ lived experiences constructed through their emotions.

More broadly, from the conceptual Chapter 2 as well as through findings in Chapters 6 and 7, we already know that identities are constructed through practice. Therefore, this concluding chapter takes this analysis further – or rather a step back – by providing an insight into the interactive and relational link between emotions and the migrants’ practice, where emotions are understood as ‘ways of knowing, being and *doing*’ (Anderson and Smith 2001, in Pile 2010, p.6 – emphasis added).

To set the scene for this comparison, the first section of this chapter (Section 8.2) considers the difference in meaning making linked with emotions around the idea of a Polish home. This section also introduces the theories of emotions supporting this discussion. Subsequent sections map and compare the emotional geographies of the two groups of interviewees, dividing them into three main themes of actions related with performing different emotions:

Section 8.3 focuses on departure and avoidance due to fear, disgust, anger, mistrust and frustration; Section 8.4 on desire linked with emotions of love and pride; and finally, Section 8.5 on protection and defence driven by the need to feel safe and secure.

8.2 Polish Home and theories of emotions

Emotions have been extensively interwoven in the analysis throughout Chapters 6 and 7, repeatedly identified by the interviewees as the key drivers behind their migratory decisions, transnational activity and life experiences in the UK. For example, in Chapter 6 war experiences caused long-lasting traumas and continued impacts on how the interviewees interacted with their localities, co-nationals and transnationally. They feel fear and mistrust towards the Polish state, hence so many decided not to return after the war. These feelings continue throughout their lifetime – Wanda (f, 89, war displacement route) talks about her disgust when priests arriving from post-communist Poland sold Fawley Court, their centre of the Polish community in the UK since 1950s. In terms of emotional alignments in the UK, Antoni (m, 90, war displacement route) says it hurts to be called a bloody foreigner by the in-group in his neighbourhood. Felicja (f, 75, war displacement route), on the other hand, demonstrates her love and emotional attachments to her transnational family through sharing the family's folk costume across different generations in Canada and the UK. Emotions also have continued impacts on the interviewees' transnational mobility in later years. Firstly, Honorata (f, 80, family reunion) returned from Poland as she felt unsafe there; and secondly, Wiktor (m, 95, war displacement route) is both jealous and sad as he feels the post-communist Poland, although no longer in the Soviet bloc, is not the same Poland, hence return is not an option. Chapter 7 provides a myriad of examples in the post-2004 group of migrant interviewees too. For example, Milena (f, 35, Swindon, 8 years in the UK) describes her anger and tears of frustration which triggered her departure from Poland. Jadzia (f, 39, Birmingham, 16 years in the UK) talks about her fear and hatred towards Poland for being forced to leave and would never consider going back. On the other hand, Zuzia (f, 34, Cambridge, 8 years in the UK) only recently started to be proud of being Polish through her experiences with the in-group in the UK; whilst Olaf (m, 43, Coventry, 15 years in the UK) found the feeling of safety and continuity through attending Polish church, helping him 'psychologically', and Maciej (m, 29, Swindon, 11 years in the UK) dealt with emotional impacts of social isolation during the Covid pandemic by starting a Polish dog walkers' group in his neighbourhood.

8.2.1 The Polish home

Overall, the emotional aspects of these migratory experiences stand out throughout the narratives, including personal and social lives. More broadly, scholars comment that migrants of the same nationality often try to collaborate for 'emotional or practical reasons' (White 2018, p.208); for example, through various in-person and online networks and organisations of support, practical information, common interests or specific causes (ibid, p.208-11). Literature also tells that creating a new home is physical as well as emotional (Ahmed et al. 2020). However, based on the findings from Chapters 6 and 7, it is clear that these two groups of migrant interviewees do not develop the same emotional attachments in their localities, nor do they have the same understanding of the concept of a Polish home. The following comment from Sabina demonstrates how hugely different these two groups are in their emotional relationship with their localities, collective spaces and co-nationals. Their definitions of a "Polish home" simply do not align:

A few people [post-2004 migrants] came to our office [Polish Club] to look for work, but the first thing they asked about was how much we could pay them. I thought to myself – if you want to work in a Polish home, how about doing it for free? (Sabina, f, 89, war displacement route)

For Sabina, the "Polish home" represents the collective space for Polish people that all Polish people, including the newcomers, should love, look after and care for. Overall, in a number of post-WW2 narratives, the term "Polish home" is used to refer to Polish clubs. In contrast, post-2004 migrants do not have the same emotional connection with larger Polish community spaces in the UK. As shown in Chapter 7, it is smaller family units that have become the key spaces of capital accumulation, emotionally, culturally and economically. For example, Czesia is proud of her home, encapsulating Polishness and Polish traditions in the following narrative:

Everybody who visits us says we have a Polish home. Even our friends who have lived here for a long time and they themselves don't use too many English products; it is because we always serve tea with lemon. [...] They say 'Only people in Poland drink tea with a slice of lemon'. (Czesia, f, 28, Bournemouth, 10 years in the UK)

The "Polish home", the object of love and care, is embodied by the Polish club for the post-WW2 interviewee in the first quote, whilst for the more recent arrival, it is the slice of lemon served in a cup of tea in their private home, representing emotional attachments to Polish customs and traditions. These differences in emotional attachments – and especially towards the concept of home, the most important place for identity formation geographically, and as an idea (Bielewska 2012) – signal something very fundamentally different in the way these migrants apprehend the world. In fact, Hochschild states: "*From feelings we discover*

our own viewpoint on the world" (Hochschild 2012, p.17). However, there is much more than just the worldview at stake here – emotions lead us to act in a certain way. Therefore, the key question for this chapter to address is how these emotions shape the migrants' actions and their social realities; or in other words, how the migrants' world 'is constructed and lived' through these emotions in their personal and social life (Pile 2010, p.6).

8.2.2 Theories of emotion in the Polish home

These questions are situated within a body of literature on emotions which offers a range of theoretical models to explain the work of emotions (for example, overviews provided in Ahmed 2013, Hochschild 1983, and Pile 2010). At its core, the debate is split in terms of what we understand the location of emotions is in relation to the self (the subject of emotions). On the one side of the debate, emotion is understood as a bodily sensation, a biological process, or the brain's reaction to visceral changes (e.g. Darwin's instinct and James' perception of a psychological process, as discussed in Hochschild 1983). However, these organismic models based on the bodily orientation of emotions fail to provide sufficient understanding of how social worlds are constructed through emotions, influenced by culture, politics and continued interactions with other people and objects. For example, the passionate construction of the Polish home in the form of the post-WW2 migrant's Polish club was collective, thus constructed in interaction both emotionally and physically over time; whereas the post-2004 migrant's pride of her Polish home is influenced by cultural expectations shared with other co-nationals (i.e. tea served with a slice of lemon). Therefore, the other side of the theoretical debate is more relevant – it rejects the notion of emotions as 'a sealed biological event' (Hochschild 1983, p.27), instead tying them to cognition and interaction. Using this approach, it is possible to demonstrate how emotions enter social lives and as a result, 'how emotional relationships shape society and space' (Anderson and Smith, 2001 cited in Pile 2010, p.6).

Additionally, the focus on cognition and interaction also highlights further theoretical tensions initiated by the need to understand how emotions shape what individuals do as well as how emotions are shared with others and are themselves changed through these contacts. It is clear from the two definitions of a Polish home that emotions involve prior expectations, past histories and social norms. Thus, as Ahmed aptly observes 'emotions are both about objects, which they hence shape, as well as are shaped by contacts with objects,' building on prior expectations and past histories of the contact (Ahmed, 2013, p.7). Accordingly, the differences between the two definitions of a Polish home are due to their different 'emotional under-wiring' (Pile 2010, p.8): the Polish club is the object of love for the post-WW2 migrant based on prior contacts and previous histories, triggering passionate desire to care for these

spaces; whereas this kind of 'emotional under-wiring' towards Polish clubs does not underpin the migratory experiences of the migrant interviewee from the post-2004 group.

Different theories of emotions set out to define the link between emotions and this underlying experience. For example, in his social theory of emotions, Hochschild (1983) recognises that emotions are a sense oriented towards action as well as that they are related to cognition. For the latter, Hochschild employs Freud's notion of the signalling function, whereby emotions are a clue. They are an agent that conveys information about inner and outer environments through comparing the new reality against the template of prior expectations. At this level emotions are also permeable to cultural influences and can be managed, which in turn contributes to their creation (ibid, pp.211-234).

Other theories use the notion of affect to further develop the separation of cognitive emotions from the non- or pre-cognitive. Pile (2010) defines affect as non-cognitive, interpersonal, and non-representational. It is inexpressible and unable to be brought into representation such as speech, text or through visual means. Pile also contrasts two approaches: emotional geography versus affectual geography. It is an important distinction as the former treats affect as a psychological object and studies the human body as the site of emotion, whereas the latter goes beyond the human body itself, with the focus on interactions between bodies. Thus, within this affectual non-representational theoretical framework, although spatially located below cognition and consciousness, affects emerge in encounters between bodies, and connect them by flowing between them. They constitute the 'radical openness to other bodies', 'prior to the representational translation of an affect into knowable emotion' (ibid, p.8). Thus, 'emotions are expressed and experienced in the body', but it is 'affects that define what a body can do' (ibid, p.11). Seen from this perspective, the affect surrounding the Polish club is developed through layers of encounters between the post-WW2 migrants and prior histories of different transnational experiences. These prior experiences underpin their emotions and actions in the present. At the same time, they are socially constructed through language and practice (ibid, p.9) which in this case emerged in the narrative of the Polish home that needs to be loved and cared for by all Polish people. The post-2004 migrants were never part of this experience, and therefore, these affects do not have an effect on this group.

Furthermore, any framework which is based on the idea of non-cognitive affect that emerges through contact between bodies needs to also address how affect travels between bodies to allow for this contact to happen. Pile states that we simply do not know how the space in-between works, but refers to three potential conceptual ideas such as circulation, transmission and contagion previously identified in the literature (Pile 2010, p.15-17). Ahmed

(2013), on the other hand, has come up with the concept of affective economies to explain how affect is transferred from one body to another, and how it accumulates value. In her model, affect is produced as an effect of its circulation and is a form of capital. It does not reside in any object, sign or commodity. Bringing together psychoanalytic emphasis on relationships of difference and displacement, and Marx's capital theory, Ahmed explains that 'objects of emotions circulate or are distributed across the social and psychic field' (ibid, p.45), and through this movement and exchange they accumulate capital – their affective value. As objects of emotions circulate over time, they become saturated with affect. In Ahmed's words: "Signs increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate the more affective they become." (ibid, p.45)

Within this framework, an individual is 'neither origin nor destination' (ibid, p.46), but one of the elements in the affective economy. Thus, emotions are not about individuals. They are located in the space in-between bodies. However, emotions cannot be separated from bodily sensations as they are performative. They are relational in the sense of moving towards or away in relation to the object of emotions (ibid, p.8). As a result, they create social and cultural practices, binding social worlds together and becoming sites of personal and social tension. Furthermore, emotions are the effect of repetition; hence they accumulate over time creating social norms. Here Ahmed refers to insights from psychoanalysis which help to see that emotions are about movement, associations and prior impressions understood through different levels of signification. It is recognised, however, that not all of these associations will be visible in the present, bearing in mind layers of accumulation, previous histories of contacts and impressions, and repetition over time.

The Polish club representing the Polish home for the post-WW2 migrant interviewee is an excellent example of how the accumulation of its affective capital has taken place through circulation over many years. The clubs were passionately constructed, financed, cared for and regularly used for national celebrations by many of the post-WW2 migrants (more analysis on the migrant interviewees' drive to construct Polish clubs and churches can be found in Section 8.4). These actions towards the club, the object of their emotions, were performed continually by the migrants, at the same time becoming part of a wider network of social practices as well as tensions which emerged around these spaces. By contrast, the club is of little affective value for the post-2004 informant for whom it has never been an object of emotion, nor has it been part of their prior experience or part of the space they shared with others (the space in-between). Their home making practices, though affective too, have emerged through emotions directed at other objects (e.g. tea with a slice of lemon), absorbing different cultural influences and creating different social practices and norms away from the clubs.

Overall, the example of the Polish home has provided an excellent platform to outline the theoretical foundations underpinning this chapter. In particular, this section explained how objects gain affective value and through this underpin what migrants do – or what they do not do, depending on the object's affective value for the individual. Next, the analysis will focus on emotions associated with negative feelings (fear, disgust, anger, mistrust and frustration); i.e., emotions that move people away from their object of emotion through the actions of departure and avoidance. The section will include the analysis of the initial trauma of departure and impacts on migrants' subsequent practice and experiences in different transnational conditions. This will be followed by two sections on positive emotions triggering actions towards the object of emotion: firstly, love and pride, thus actions of desire and care for the nation and national collective; and secondly, the need to feel safe which is related with actions to protect the security and status of individual migrants, their transnational lives and the nation itself.

A short methodological note before I proceed; I recognise that studying non- or pre-cognitive emotional affects presents a challenge for social scientists. Therefore, to support my analysis, I follow Tonkiss and Cabrera (2022) and Ahmed (2013) by recognising that we can get insights about emotions from people's stories through their use of words to express emotions, metaphors or 'figures of speech' (Ahmed 2013, p.12); for example "I was angry", "I felt disgusted", "I am shamed", "I am proud", as well as "Poland hurt me" or it "was a paradise." I also noted any signs of emotions during my fieldwork, for example Wanda's tears as she was sharing her memories of her deportation experiences in Section 8.3.

8.3 Departure and avoidance: fear, disgust, anger, mistrust and frustration

The previous section presented life experience as layers of multiple collisions with objects and bodies, through which we gain a sense of ourselves in relation to these objects and bodies (Ahmed 2013, p.26). The Polish club accumulated affective value by drawing the post-WW2 migrant interviewees through their emotional movement towards the club as a space of their national collective. This section investigates how individual people come into being through these relations, thus, through their 'alignment with the collective' (Ahmed 2013, p.71). However, in contrast to the Polish club, the focus is on the complexity of these national alignments and how they change where the emotional movement takes people away from the object of their emotion due to fear as well as disgust, anger, mistrust or frustration, triggered by the national and the migrants' transnational experiences.

Interviewees in both groups experienced turbulent and life changing events as part of their *transnational trajectory*: impacts of WW2 on the one hand, and individual struggles and often bold and emotional decisions to leave Poland on the other. For some migrants, trauma suffered in the transit process had long-term impacts, generating strong feelings such as fear, anger and resentment which continued to impact their practice, and therefore their identity construction in the new setting (Leitner and Ehrkamp 2006, Hutchison and Bleiker 2008). Chapters 6 and 7 framed the migrants' departures in terms of movement as *uprooting*: brutal and unexpected group *uprooting* of the WW2 migrants as opposed to, at times also violent, but pre-arranged individual *uprooting* of the post-2004 migrants, often in defiance against the state and their lives in Poland. Overall, the key difference between the two groups of migrant interviewees was the way the trauma was experienced and incorporated into their identities.

Literature tells us that collective memory of trauma is not the same as individual memory of trauma (Hirschberger 2018, Matoba 2022), and therefore, differently experienced traumatic events will produce different memories, impacting migrants' identity building in different ways. In particular, cultural collective trauma is defined as occurring 'when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways' (Alexander 2012, p.1). The affective theory of emotion helps us to understand this further. The pain and trauma experienced by the individual becomes the pain shared by this group, but not as a human feeling but rather as an affect and a call for action (Ahmed 2023). Thus, the impacts encompass the community, binding it together, though the actual suffering and pain is felt on the skin of the individual (ibid, p.34).

This can be observed in the post-WW2 group's experiences in the transit space, which marked their collective memory forever. In particular, the trauma suffered by those who were deported from the 'Kresy' region triggered this 'fundamental and irrevocable' change to their identities – this group is often referred to as "Sybiracy"²⁸. As discussed in Chapter 6, many narratives of this dominant group of the post-WW2 migrants start with "the knock at the door" in the middle of the night, followed by long deportation journeys to labour camps in the Soviet Union, starvation and death, including loss of their loved ones and others travelling with them. They experienced their own trauma and witnessed the suffering of others. In a

²⁸ The term 'Sybiracy' is a derivative from the word Siberia, where the majority of the Polish people from the Kresy region were deported to by the Soviet Army between 1940 and 1941. The name itself is significant in showing the group's identification through traumatic memory and victimhood.

labour camp in Uzbekistan, Wanda's family shared a mud hut with a mother with four children, whose father had died at the very start of their deportation:

We were allocated to a mud hut together with a woman who had four children. Previously, we had been together on the same sledge taking us to the cattle wagons. Her husband had been on the sledge, but he had been very ill and had died. We had had to stop to bury him by the road. So, this woman and her four children lived with us in the mud hut. One day my mom got a little flour, so she made little cakes, with water and flour. There was no oil. She gave me these cakes, but the woman's youngest child kept looking at me and the cakes. I couldn't eat. He kept looking at me and my mother guessed why I wasn't eating and gave some to the little boy too. [...] I would have a small piece of the cake on my tongue, not biting, not swallowing, to make it last longer. [...] But the woman's four children who lived with us, two of them died of hunger, [the little boy] and his brother. (Wanda, f, 89, war displacement route)

Wanda was still visibly upset when re-telling this story over seven decades later. Her distressing story of starvation and death of two young children, and many other stories of trauma caused by mass deportations and combat during the war became their shared story, creating new social bonds, new meanings and adding layers to their Polish identity. This pain and suffering can no longer be felt, but we are moved by these narratives. They became embedded in the group's collective memory, re-constructed and re-lived on many occasions through *communitas* style rituals and everyday practice, gaining its affective value through layers of experiences and practices through the network of Polish clubs; as discussed in Section 8.2 the club provided the Polish home, the space in-between the migrants used to share and re-share these stories through an annual programme of events and national celebrations. The cycle of repetition was instrumental for the acts of emotion to accumulate extensive affective value of the initial trauma, extending beyond the bodies and the lives of the direct survivors (Hirschberger 2018, p.1). Over decades, they constructed and re-constructed these memories through community events and national celebrations in their physical spaces built specifically for this purpose in the UK.

These memories are their story they want to carry on; they are the memories of their experiences of violence and trauma which have a historical and moral value, and therefore gain a new meaning in the present – they are also a call for action (Ahmed 2013, Farmer 2005, Rylko-Bauer 2005). More recently there have been academic projects funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education – Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, (Chudzio et al. 2016), community projects (Midlands Polish Community Association 2011) and online platforms maintained mainly by the first and second generation, allowing for these affects to continue circulating and for the collective trauma to

continue to be shared and carried on to next generations - for example, the 'Kresy' Family website, created by the second generation.²⁹

Furthermore, Ahmed makes a very important observation which provides further insights into affective processes; trauma and pain do not produce a homogeneous group of people who are in pain or suffer together (Ahmed 2013, p.31). These performative emotions enter the social and political world through particular narratives, political speeches or even compensation schemes (Ahmed 2013, p.31-2). In addition to this, they also trigger different emotional actions in people. I will demonstrate this through the example of Polish people who also experienced the trauma of the war and deportations but whose subsequent actions and life trajectories differ the post-WW2 migrant interviewees in this study. Thus, in addition to the people who remained in the UK after the war (i.e., the focus of Chapter 6), the post-WW2 narratives also refer to those who decided to return to the People's Republic of Poland which emerged within the Soviet bloc. Indeed, the decision whether to return to Poland, or remain in the UK or another country was very much part of the transnational options that opened to them after the war. Difficult decisions related with being separated from the homeland, and for some from their families in Poland had to be balanced against the new political situation and deep mistrust and fear towards the Soviet Union. For some the trauma of war and the new post-war situation was too much (Winslow 1999, Zubrzycki 1956). The local parish priest reported an increased level of suicides among the community which came to Birmingham (Polish Catholic Community in Birmingham, *Księga Pamiątkowa 25-lecia* 1972, p.23). However, others did return, encouraged by the UK government (Ernest Bevin, 1946 - *Message from the British Foreign Secretary to all members of the Polish Forces under British Command* cited in Kaczmarek 2020), with little or ambiguous promise of support and hostile attitudes toward Polish people after the war. There was a group of over 100,000 who decided to emigrate further or return to Poland (Kaczmarek 2020, Zubrzycki 1956). In particular, those who returned demonstrate an alternative emotional response towards communist Poland, or perhaps they were drawn by other stronger emotions in response to their personal or family situation after the war.

Likewise, the post-2004 migrant interviewees also experienced various intense feelings, for some including trauma related with the hardship of Poland's transition to the neoliberal system and longer-term impact of the 'shock therapy' economic plan implemented by the Polish government in the 1990s. However, unlike the post-WW2 migrant interviewees, whose suffering had been recognised in history books with a particular discursive framing

²⁹ [Kresy Family Home page](#)

which condemns their deportation, the post-2004 group's trauma does not have an equivalent discursive framing. This brings attention to what Ahmed labelled as politics of emotions (Ahmed 2013), where emotions can be brought into public discourses for particular reasons and agendas. Some stories may be given voice, whilst others fade away, denied the circulation needed to accumulate more affective power. This was the case with the post-2004 migrant interviewees who left Poland due to anger, disappointment or frustration with the economic, political or social situation in the country. These journeys through their traumatic experiences were more individual without any particular discursive regime that would help them to articulate these experiences. As shown in Chapter 7 (Section 7.2) the migrants who took part in my study articulated their reasons why they felt forced to make the decision to leave through feelings of discomfort, disappointment, dissatisfaction, frustration or anger towards the nation-state. In addition to unemployment, other examples include anger towards the Polish government, Polish politics, the country's economy ("communist legacy" or "brutal capitalism"), bureaucracy and high taxes, the legal system, and the lack of equality and inclusion, including for women and people with disabilities. Overall, these migrants were not *uprooted* unexpectedly, and their nation was not under any threat in terms of its survival (as it was the case in WW2), thus, their transit stage started well before the actual physical departure. Above all, these were quick journeys either by plane or coach, with no significant transit stage linking the pre-departure and arrival stages, and for many also relatively linear through their undisrupted transnational networks which emerged after Poland joined the EU. However, they were not always easy transitions either. Consequently, their narratives were varied, ranging from comfortable transits of bus drivers through the UK's recruitment schemes (Chapter 2 – Section 3.2.5), offering relocation and accommodation packages, to cases of difficult transits as in Misia's story:

My mother met this woman; I am not sure how. She said she lived in Blackpool in the UK, the land of milk and honey. [...] She organised everything. She told my mother to buy coach tickets, and that she would be waiting for us with a key to a house with a garden. This shows how intelligent my mother was to believe this. In the end, somebody lent us money for the journey and to start us off. I remember we left on 22nd September 2011 and arrived in the UK on 23rd September. [...] The woman was to pick us up from Manchester. She wasn't there, but she sent another man instead. [...] We got to his house, and it turned out that the woman was not there, no keys either, and she was away working somewhere and couldn't come. [...] My dad worked in [this man's] business. My mom got benefits. The man cheated my father financially. The beginnings were toxic, so I stay away from Polish people. It was a bad start. (Misia, f, 25, West Bromwich, 10 years in the UK)

Misia's story demonstrates how the transit space she experienced resulted in her moving away from other co-nationals, with her family brought to the UK by an unreliable agent under false pretences in human trafficking-like conditions. Her transnational transit experience meant abuse, danger and anxiety caused by co-nationals, resulting in her either avoiding or

not entering UK spaces occupied by other Polish people later on in life. Misia's case is one example amongst a wide range of the transit experiences of the post-2004 group; for some smooth and easy, for others more problematic and stressful, and for some also including periods of homelessness in the UK (Garapich 2014, also Olaf in this study experienced a period of homelessness). This is linked with the diversity of Polish people arriving in large numbers in the UK in the post-2004 period, including different class, education, age, family status and language skills, hence plurality of experiences and migratory outcomes are not surprising. Bearing this diversity in mind, there were two main responses towards the national in this group of migrants within my sample.

Firstly, one type of responses is in line with Kai Erikson's definition of individual trauma as "a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defences so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively" (Erikson 1976, 153-154, quoted in Hirschberger 2018, p.3). This blow triggers the break from Poland which can be seen in Jadzia's narrative of her fear and disgust and ultimately, causing rebellion against her experiences in Poland.

On the one hand I miss home so much, but on the other hand there is this revolt and fear inside me; feeling disgusted by the fact that I as a relatively intelligent person was not able to create my own little imperium in Poland, the place where I was born and brought up. (Jadzia, f, 39, Birmingham, 16 years in the UK)

Jadzia's story is consistent with findings by other scholars stating that trauma can be also caused by lack of traditional resources (Hoffman and Kruczek 2011, p.1089). Therefore, stressors include fear and loss of employment as this was the case in the narrative above. Jadzia was left in a position where she had to choose between paying for food or paying bills; her individual trauma led to her complete *rerooting* from Poland, with both anger, deep resentment and fear stopping her from considering a return to Poland in the future. This narrative is also a great example to show how the love for the nation (i.e., the nation as the object of emotion that people move towards – more details on this in Section 8.4), can turn into a negative emotion, triggering the desire to depart and avoid. In Chapter 7 (Section 7.2) Igor's narrative described his trauma in very bodily terms – '*Poland hurt me (...) throughout my life the country gave me a good kicking*' (Igor, m, 42, Eastbourne, 6 years in the UK). This brilliantly captures the experience of pain as a social notion, not physical, although experienced in individual bodies (Ahmed 2013, p.34). Additionally, in her conceptualisation of a nation, Ahmed (2013, p.131) talks about the perpetual failure of return behind the concept of a nation; thus, it is based on the idea of a continual extension of one's investment and deferral to the future. This means that love towards the nation functions as 'the promise of return' (ibid, p.131); however, based on the interviewees' experience discussed in this

section, I would suggest that where the trauma is severe and return is none, movement away from the nation happens too – as presented in Jadzia’s narrative above.

Other examples of a complete break experienced by the migrants in my sample further demonstrate the political underpinnings of national identity construction itself. If the state and its policies are not providing what is required or deemed as right by the individual, they will free themselves from the state’s control, and in extreme cases also from their national context for their identity formation. This can be observed in Bogdan’s narrative of his critical view of the Polish conservative government:

I am from Poland; I am not Polish. This is a great difference. I am not proud of this. When we travel, and we travel a lot, and somebody asks where I am from as it is evident from my accent, or I don’t know from what. I don’t feel proud when saying I am from Poland. I don’t feel any pride. It is uncomfortable, as I don’t identify with this nation, and in particular with the last five years, when it’s just a great reason to be ashamed of the fact that you are Polish – for example that you are against separation of powers into three branches or the LGBT community. A Polish person is usually devout catholic who does not understand anything, a religious fanatic, and I am not like this at all. I cannot identify with a nation that is so different to me. (Bogdan, m, 50, Birmingham, 14 years in the UK)

Bogdan is not proud of being Polish, instead he feels uncomfortable as he is unable to identify with the dominant construct of a Polish national, politically and culturally. As his case shows, state politics and policies can trigger strong feelings and can lead to a complete break, the same way experiences of deep trauma do. Bogdan’s complete unfixing from Poland was his way of removing himself from the Polish national space, including the national identity formation context and the government which supports policies in line with the Catholic church’s doctrine he strongly disagrees with. Again, strong feelings and inability to accept this type of Polish identity have led to his complete departure. Where a complete break from the Polish construct takes place, other identities may become stronger as exemplified in Kasia’s narrative (during her joint interview with Bogdan): *I am European or even a citizen of the world. This world understood as our planet. We care about climate change, environment protection (Kasia, f, 50, Birmingham, 14 years in the UK).*

Furthermore, Bogdan, one of the older migrant interviewees in the post-2004 sample, also reflected further on his emotions towards the Polish state, including his life in communist Poland:

I experienced life behind the Iron Curtain. [I know] what it means to live under socialism, what it means to go to the shop, buy nothing but queue half a day, what socialist schooling is, and the socialist approach. Now I am fully immersed in capitalism, economic dependencies, where there is competition. [...] It is great that I have this toolkit, which I

wouldn't have if I had been born in the Netherlands as I wouldn't understand. But I understand what it means, I know how people can be controlled. (Bogdan, f, 50, Birmingham, 14 years in the UK)

Bogdan's "toolkit" captures the continuity of life experiences as well as layers of emotions, practices, and particular social and cultural understanding which have accumulated over time. There is clear continuity between this interviewee's experiences before and after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc – a historically coherent continuum (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Dunn 1999, Zbierski-Salameh 1999). This historical continuum provides further context behind the more individual experiences observed in the post-2004 group of migrants. As discussed in Chapter 3, apart from Yugoslavia, Poland was the only state in the Bloc that had failed to implement a mass collectivisation programme (Hann 2006, Hann and Scheiring 2021), initially due to unrests in 1956 caused by the rural communities' deep mistrust towards the communist state with its centrally controlled economic programmes. Over time, the movement against the communist state united all social groups, culminating with the Solidarity movement which at its peak in 1981 reached 10 million members in opposition to the communist government (Hann and Scheiring 2021). Furthermore, in the early post-communist period, the new programme of economic reforms introduced far less market control by the state and significant reductions in the social support in order to meet austerity objectives to join the EU (Hann and Scheiring 2021). As a result, the harsh implementation of the 'shock therapy' programme over a short period of time resulted in high tensions across the country, further contributing to the mistrust towards the central state and collective institutions. Thus, the change of the ideological framework did not change people's relationship with the central state – it deepened their affective mistrust, with reluctance towards central collective formations, and with self-reliance and individualism still framing everyday lives in the reconfigured political situation. Here the theory of emotions and the circulation of affect towards the national helps us to understand how the mistrust towards the central government has been accumulating in its value through layers of experiences and history of prior contact. This mistrust towards the state and its institutions is further demonstrated in the following narrative of applying for a Polish passport in the UK:

The thought that I will have to apply for my passport next year makes me consider applying for British citizenship instead. Even the staff in embassies are so rude that the thought of going through the process makes me feel unwell, registering for the queue for the passport, having to prove that I am not a camel and why I want to apply for a passport. Why do I need all this? They treat people like a nuisance [...] They treat people like rubbish. (Dominik, m, 50, Coventry, 6 years in the UK)

Moreover, this story makes another direct reference to the historical continuum between the communist and post-communist periods, by using a Russian saying (Потом доказывай, что

ты не верблюд³⁰ - 'then you will have to prove that you are not a camel'). This saying, used to mock communist institutional bureaucracy, helps Dominik to explain his attitude towards Polish institutional collective spaces he continues to mistrust in the post-communist times and wants to avoid. Overall, in the post-2004 group this mistrust extended further to organised national collective forms (also in White 2011b). In this case study, it manifests itself in a wide range of narratives of mistrust towards the state due to historical repressions during the communist times, more recently the post-communist transformations, subsequent governments, and often suspicion towards other co-nationals too; the latter processes are also noted by Grzymała-Kazłowska (2005) and Ryan (2010), explaining this by strong in-group competition in Grzymała-Kazłowska's pre-EU accession study, and more broadly by Polish history in Ryan's study. Another saying repeated in the narratives in this study helps to further describe this cultural context in the Soviet bloc: '*Człowiek człowiekowi wilkiem*' or '*Polak Polakowi wilkiem*' (Dog eat dog world – 'Pole eat Pole' world / Poles are like wolves to one another (White 2011b, p.185), for example:

You cannot trust Polish people, we have something like this in us, it's like 'Pole eat Pole' world. [...] it's true that you must be very careful with other Polish people. Poles are jealous towards one another. (Olaf, m, 43, Coventry, 15 years in the UK)

This hostility towards other co-nationals and mistrust towards strangers is also identified by other scholars (Garapich, 2016, White 2011b). Consequently, the daily lives of Polish post-2004 migrants are structured around self-reliance and self-determination, and more individual family and kinship networks. These private spaces are considered safer or more comfortable than the collective spaces which can be controlled by the state or other authorities. This stance can be also linked with the previously mentioned narrative; with Bogdan stating '*I know how people can be controlled*' which would also drive him away from spaces where this control is exercised.

Secondly, and in contrast to the actions taking people 'away' from other people and objects of emotions listed in this section so far, the second type of responses towards the national identified in my sample is exemplified by the balance of "pluses and minuses" between the UK and Poland as discussed in Chapter 7. This group of post-2004 migrant interviewees keep their options open and are prepared to consider return to Poland if the balance changes. Their trauma of departure has not led to their complete break from Poland. The migrant interviewees in this study who demonstrate this response predominantly strategise their future in binary terms – i.e., either in the UK or Poland. As shown previously, it does not mean that these are easy transnational ways of being (Chapter 7, Section 7.3). These

³⁰ [15 Funny Russian Sayings \(thoughtco.com\)](https://www.thoughtco.com/15-funny-russian-sayings/)

spaces can also become stressful and emotional, where making choices between two countries, in terms of time commitments, daily routines, physical presence, national belonging and caring responsibilities can lead to tensions and feelings of discomfort longer-term. Similar tensions are captured in Bell's study of Polish migrants in Belfast (Bell 2015), which concludes that shifts in migrants' loyalties may be due to migrants' individual situation, personal abilities and the characteristics of the receiving society. I would extend Bell's list to include the role of emotions too, with her findings also showing disruptions to transnational activities due to homesickness, growing emotional distance with friends and family, or feeling of missing out, among others. Bell concludes that 'emotional suffering caused by transnational communication' can 'lead to almost complete disconnection of the two worlds', widening 'the gap between 'here' and 'there' (ibid, p.85). Additionally, research into return migration provides further insights into the role of emotions in transnational migration; for example, King's study of literature on return migration demonstrates that emotional reasons are more common than economic ones in return migration decision making (King 2000, cited in White et al. 2018).

Overall, this section has brought a spotlight onto the central role of emotions in transnational movements of the migrant interviewees in this study. In particular, the focus has been on the movement 'away' from the national, from its various spaces, other co-nationals and the Polish state. It is a movement which is positioned against complex relations between people and the objects of their emotions, negotiated through various histories of previous experiences, prior expectations, and influences culturally and politically.

The next sections will consider the movement 'towards' the object of emotions such as love and pride. The analysis will explore the impacts of different transnational conditions on people's alignments with the national collective, introducing the notion of *togetherness*.

8.4 Desire: love and pride

Within the theory of emotions, love is recognised as essential for the formation of group identities (Ahmed 2013, p.130), where love for the nation is understood as movement of bodies towards the nation. This movement pulls and bonds people together through acts of emotion and the accumulation of these acts, prior histories of contacts and expectations, and cultural and political influences. Thus, below I investigate how the movement towards the nation differs between the two groups of interviewees depending on the affective value that has accumulated throughout the migrants' initial transnational transit and their continued life experiences.

In particular, intense physical togetherness became an all-encompassing part of the transnational movement for the post-war migrant interviewees, followed by their passionate desire to create physical spaces for their collective in the geography of the UK. They were prepared to collectively finance these buildings and work with no remuneration, and where needed, engage through social action to eliminate any obstacles to their construction projects. Sylwester describes his community's petition to overturn the decision not to build a new church made by their Polish parish priest in Nottingham.

It was very late but Nottingham secured its church in the end. Other cities, London, Birmingham or Manchester; they all had their churches. [...] Our [parish priest] simply didn't want to. He didn't want [to build] a church. We talked to him, we explained that all other centres had their own churches, and we didn't. In the end we decided to run a petition. We collected 500 signatures for our church, to build a church ourselves, and against the will of our priest. (Sylwester, m, 95, war displacement route)

This quote exemplifies how significant these physical community places were for this group of migrant interviewees; in the case above the obstacle was the Polish priest who was otherwise very much part of their Polish national construction project in the UK. I argue that this overwhelming and unstoppable desire for physical spaces of this group is intrinsically connected with their experiences in their transit spaces, which extended for decades starting from army spaces and displaced persons camps to resettlement camps in the UK as part of their *transnational trajectory*. In fact (as already discussed in Chapter 6), this in-between state of these transit spaces can be also described using Turner's conceptualisation of a rite of passage, with the focus on the liminal stage linking the old (pre-ritual) with the new (post-ritual) stage (Turner 1969). The liminal in-between space is where a particular type of *communitas* emerge, bringing people together to share experiences through passionate ritual practice as a group. Indeed, Polish migrants, who were suspended in this kind of liminal stage for a long time, created an ideal representation of Poland that needed protecting and was experienced through daily ritual. In a similar vein, Malkki's (1992) study provides additional insights into liminality of camp spaces through contrasting two groups of Hutu refugees: those who lived in camps were compared to refugees who dwelled in a town setting. The camp refugees constructed a categorically distinct, collective identity, locating their lives in the past, creating 'heroized national identity', whereas town refugees were located more in the present, less collective and demonstrating a 'lively cosmopolitanism' (ibid, p.36). What is significant in the Polish case study is that once in the UK, this group of migrant interviewees became part of a rapid expansion of Polish physical spaces of clubs and churches. These places replaced the army and camp spaces, providing the site for the ritual to carry on and a home for the *communitas* to continue in some form following the liminal stage. Likewise, Nahum-Claudel, who studied the Enawenê-Nawê, an indigenous

people of Brazil, also concluded that *communitas* can exist permanently, 'woven into ritualized everyday life' (Nahum 2019, p.13), whereas Turner himself (1969, p.109) demonstrates how *communitas* can exist outside the liminal using smaller nations as an example - 'upholders of religious and moral values' such as the Hebrews in the ancient Near East or the Swiss in modern Europe (1969, p.109).

Furthermore, the affectual theory helps us to further understand this passionate desire to build clubs and churches which allowed the people to stay together – this is a desire carried from the spaces of liminality in army and displaced persons camps. We know from Pile that proximity is important, and it is affect that 'connects bodies and makes them proximate by flowing between them' (Pile 2010, p.8). Thus, I would suggest that this intense togetherness is a form of affect floating within this group. It allows for their memories of the transit to be re-lived, with layers of emotions added over time, and for the national ritual to be continually repeated, creating new experiences, expectations and cultural and social norms. For example, the latter can be observed through the obligation – as a social norm within this group of interviewees – for all Poles to look after Polish clubs, including supporting them financially and working for them without any remuneration (the idea of the Polish club as a Polish home discussed in Section 8.2).

Furthermore, inspired by Nancy's conceptualisation of community and togetherness (Nancy's work 1986 and 1996 cited in Illeris 2015), for Illeris togetherness is the exposure to others through the *praxis* of being together, where the essentialist notion of community is replaced by the fragile possibility of togetherness ('being-in-common of togetherness') (ibid, p.80). Additionally, Nowicka studies *communitas* which emerge through the liminality of circle dances of Buryatia and Yakutia Republics in Russia's Far East, looking specifically at the psychological experience of 'being together' physically during a ritual dance. Physical proximity is central in this experience, 'overcoming 'the isolation of being an individual', providing 'a feeling of communality and group strength', and producing 'an experience of the sacrum'; this would not be possible without close physical togetherness (Nowicka 2018, p.256-257). In fact, as Nowicka points out, the outcome could be either strong or ephemeral, depending on the degree and durability of the experience. Thus, combined together, the affectual conceptualisation and the physicality of *communitas* help to explain why the Polish national construct of the post-WW2 group did not have the same pulling power for the subsequent generations and arrivals directly from Poland; the next generation and new arrivals were not part of the initial intensity of togetherness – understood as affect produced through physical proximity.

Therefore, I propose that the fragile possibility of real togetherness and the duration that leads to strong outcomes and structural change was achieved through the Polish *communitas* experiences of battle fields and camp spaces. For those in the post-WW2 group who found their way to camp spaces during and after the war, this affective and all engrossing feeling of being with others also meant being united with others in reassuring safety of shared spaces following their traumatic exile and war experiences. Understandably, the comparison to ‘paradise’ appeared in a number of narratives, for example in Bronka’s narrative about her experiences in a cadet school in Palestine:

In Nazareth; it was a cadet school. [...] Palestine, Palestine was a paradise. No war, not even one bomb or not even one shot. War was raging in Europe, but not there. Really a safe haven. Beautiful weather, lots of food. Fruit everywhere. We were picking oranges from trees, shrubs or trees. And of course, the school, we had fantastic teachers. General Anders took the best from the army, the wisest. Even professors from universities. Often, we were not at their level, and they couldn’t get to our level, but overall fantastic teaching body. Our Commander and all teachers installed patriotism in us, there were not bigger patriots than us. (Bronka, f, 91, war displacement route)

For Bronka Palestine was a place of safety and recuperation from hardship and trauma but above all a place for being together with others, through shared experiences, constructing national identities through schooling and daily practices within her cadet school. This was the place where national rituals were being formed through teachers and national leaders – General Anders used to visit the army, camps and cadet schools on a regular basis, ‘installing patriotism’ in the people. As a result, their *communitas* started to emerge, growing stronger and ready to be inevitably moved to the next stage. New happy memories were built and new emotional experiences were accumulated, bonding the group in the national context of these camps. Therefore, referring to the state of *togetherness* as the most intense form of collectivity which unifies people through closeness and affection (away from the social structures and established notions of communities), helps to explain the group’s tenacious drive to stay physically together. This is the kind of prolonged togetherness that emerges in the process of the formation of a *communitas*, which then demands physical spaces in order to reconfigure their *communitas* into their next transit space, which in this group ultimately resulted in a vast network of clubs and churches constructed in their UK space. This is reflected in the group’s narrative of their relentless drive to construct new buildings for social interactions and religious practices (*We built and built, and we all contributed financially, and we built* as discussed in Chapter 6), undeterred by any difficulties to their building projects and removing obstacles as a group together, as this was in the case of the petition discussed at the beginning of this section. The new physical spaces provided a home to re-construct their national identities, at the same time sealing the *rerooting* processes of the group identity as the *rerooted* “we” – a national formation that became

separate from Poland itself. The following narrative from Wanda captured the emotional separateness of this *communitas* formation, which is more Polish than Poland itself:

People who worked in Poland earned very little. You could earn more in the UK and therefore, Polish people kept coming. Some of them missed Poland a lot, but then there was organised Polonia in each city, and we are 100% Polish. I believe we are more Polish, I emphasise Polish, I am more Polish than Polish people in Poland. (Wanda, f, 89, war displacement route)

As the narrative demonstrates, the notion of the ideal Polish identity emerged through this prolonged affective togetherness and experiences of consecutive liminal spaces which were then re-created through memories and rituals in the network of Polish clubs and other community spaces. However, contrary to Wanda's belief in the narrative above, the "sacred" Poland the post-WW2 migrants constructed in the UK only occasionally offered the Poland the post-2004 migrants wanted. Instead, whilst retaining connectivity with other co-nationals and Poland, if desired or needed, the new arrivals set up functional networks, often to exchange information and capital that enabled them to navigate the new locality. A large network of Polish shops and online spaces emerged through social media, for example:

I use this one Polish [facebook] group for Darlington in our region. But I've heard that in cities - there is a group in each city [...] I am into IT, so I used the group to advertise computer repairs – I don't do it for British people, as I don't feel the need to advertise among British people – so if somebody had issues with their computer, I shared my phone number so people could call and consult with me; so it was helpful for me too. Sometimes people want to sell things, or other services are advertised. Removal vans or taxis, a range of things. It is very useful as you can find things that you need. (Konrad, m, 23, Darlington, 13 years in the UK)

These online spaces show a high level of functionality, transactionality, and anonymity, without the potential to create an intense collective in the UK. Therefore, overall, the post-WW2 group's close passionate physical togetherness of a Polish *communitas* is juxtapositioned against the more recent migrants' far less collective experiences and more fluid *uprootings* over time. What is significant, however, is that the lesser collectivism and more individual self-reliance of the post-2004 migrants are not simply the opposite of the post-WW2 migrants' ritualistic collectivism due to different transit experiences. The two groups are also separated by Poland's communist past and experiences of the post-communist transformations – i.e., experiences which the older generation was never part of and above all rejected as a hostile political ideology for their imagined Poland. Therefore, it is not surprising that the interviewees from the older generation showed mistrust towards the post-2004 group, constructing the new arrivals as uneducated and suspicious due to their communist past and lacking patriotism as they left Poland for economic reasons:

Their mentality is different. Their patriotism is financial. This is economic migration, but this is because they haven't been through the war, thank God. They are mainly groups of people from lower classes which were promoted by communists. (Alicja, f, 89, family reunion)

In this narrative, Alicja also identified war experiences as necessary to experience true patriotism which is in line with the group's dominant national narrative of combat and trauma suffered during the war period. Poland from the post-communist era is not part of their affectual relations in this group. Therefore, as the opposite to this narrative, the construct of the post-2004 migrant as an uneducated, lower-class product of communism emerged in such post-WW2 narratives (Garapich 2016 highlights more broadly the reconstruction of Polish identities excluding people based on class). As discussed in Chapter 7, this view was rejected by the post-2004 migrants themselves, as well as also being firmly disputed in the research of Poland's post-communist period (for example, Buchowski 2006). The migrants are not frozen in time homo sovieticus (as propagated by Zaslavsky 1994, Tischner 1991, Sztompka 2004), but they negotiate their new opportunities and build their social, economic and political capital using their (post)-communist experiences (see discussion regarding Bogdan's "toolkit" narrative discussed in detail in Section 8.3). Consequently, their alignment with the national is underpinned by affects which emerged through the continuum of exchange and circulation among people who experienced (post)-communism, including social norms based on mistrust to central governments and self-reliance.

As a result, apart from those who completely moved away from the national due to their trauma of departure (discussed in Section 8.3), the post-2004 migrant interviewees are also pulled towards the nation but through very different affective processes accumulated over time. In contrast to the togetherness of the post-WW2 participants, their national collective does not preoccupy itself with practising collectively as a key element for their identity formation in the UK. White's concept of Polish society abroad is helpful here to highlight that often migrants in this group 'feel themselves part of Polish society in Poland' (White 2018, p.211), 'hence a strong sense of collective identity' among co-nationals in this group abroad 'should not be taken for granted' (ibid, p.190). In fact, Jerzy's example (m, 49, West Bromwich, 16 years in the UK) discussed in Chapter 7 (Section 7.2) is helpful in showing that his emotional alignments with co-nationals within the UK are limited. He is anxious about being on his own, with his closest network of friends decreasing due to return migration and as a result, he keeps this option open too. Furthermore, as this group can be considered to some extent as a 'microcosm of Polish society in Poland (White 2018, p.186), the concept of Polish society abroad yet again brings attention to their diversity 'based on cultural capital, income, age, gender, sexual orientation' (ibid, p.188). This also helps to explain why their experiences as a community in the UK do not always align.

Overall, this section has explored the love for the nation and togetherness of the post-WW2 migrant interviewees as a form of affect circulated in this group throughout their *transnational trajectory*. It is very much in contrast to the post-2004 group whose more diverse make-up and far less affective relations with other Polish people in the UK mean that their emotional movement towards the national will be towards Poland itself (including return migration as in the case of Jerzy described above). Next, the final stage of this analysis considers this further in the next section, looking specifically at how migrants' deal with anxieties about the future, universally underpinned by their need to feel safe.

8.5 Protection and defence: feeling safe and secure

This final comparison section investigates how the migrant interviewees navigate different transnational conditions and politics of the nation states to feel safe and secure the best outcomes for their future. These are important considerations when exploring migratory experiences as emotions such as feeling safe and being confident about the future have significant impacts on migrants' life experiences and practices. There are two considerations to make here: firstly, actions protecting the individual and their transnational access, and secondly, actions protecting the national. Therefore, this section provides an opportunity to explore actions to protect and defend, as well as to consider what happens to the emotional alignments with the national and more broadly with the construction of national identity where the nation itself is not perceived to be under threat and hence it is not in need of protection or guarding.

It is evident from my fieldwork that all migrant interviewees navigate their individual *transnational trajectory* proactively and strategise accordingly, always in response to opportunities that become available, change, or disappear in the context of evolving political developments. In this context, security is one of the key drivers in terms of their daily lives and considerations for the future – Basia says “*I simply feel safe here [the UK]*” (Basia, f, 37, Birmingham, 12 years in the UK). For many, feeling safe also involves maintaining access to all capital and opportunities within the transnational social fields they choose to occupy. However, maintaining access is strongly driven by the political structure within these spaces, and therefore, the migrants need to continually negotiate changes introduced by the nation-states and caused by the wider politics in the region (e.g., the political divide into Western and Eastern blocs in Europe after WW2 or Brexit more recently). The need to guard their transnational positioning is visible through extensive narratives of passports, citizenship and residency rights. These narratives can be either defensive or protective (Godin and Sigona 2022), as different states adopt different approaches to their national spaces that spill over

their physical national border. This post-WW2 narrative of obtaining British citizenship represents both: the defensive narrative (defending against the communist state) and the protective narrative (protecting rights within the UK):

We took British citizenship so that we could travel to Poland [...] as I got the citizenship in 1967 or 1968, we travelled in 1968, so we went. [...] So later we travelled a lot. (Sylwester, m, 95, war displacement route)

It is only when the balance between their need to protect and their need to defend their transnational positioning is reached that Sylwester and his wife decide to travel to Poland on a regular basis. The fear of the communist changes and persecutions of returnees from the West, coupled with the Polish communist state's lack of interest in maintaining connections with Polish people outside of the Eastern Bloc led to the contraction of transnational activity between Poland and the UK in the initial years after the war.

On the other hand, the post-2004 migrants have never experienced this kind of political disruption to their transnational networks. As shown in Chapter 7, despite Brexit, they feel safe covered by a combination of their UK passport or settled status, Polish passport and EU citizenship. However, even within this relatively seamless space between the two countries, migrants continue to proactively plan the best ways of guarding their transnational position longer-term. Iwona considers the advantages of applying for a British passport to avoid queuing at borders and to have the option to leave the UK for a longer period of time without losing her settlement rights in the UK:

More recently when I travelled back to London, I had to wait in a different queue at the border. I concluded that I needed to do the test for the British passport, as it would be quite useful. The British passport would be useful if I wanted to move back to Poland and then decided to return to the UK after 2-3 years, so the British passport would be useful then. (Iwona, f, 31, Guildford, 9 years in the UK)

Iwona focuses on protecting her future status in the UK, but her transnational social field itself has not been disrupted at any stage. As shown in Chapter 7, the current Polish government proactively reaches out to Polish nationals abroad with dual citizenship being recognised as well as the Polish state encouraging returns to Poland. Additionally, despite the cost, there is a clear immigration path for people holding the EU settled status to obtaining a British passport in the future. As a result, these are not considerations of significant concern or tension for the post-2004 group. This can be contrasted with Lucyna's post-WW2 narrative. She was deprived of this type of agency in terms of her citizenship choices:

We went to Poland by car. This was 1960 before my father's death or maybe earlier because after my father died, we went for the second time. But we couldn't attend my father's funeral because they wouldn't give me a visa. I went to the embassy in London

and this witch said to me no, you need to give up your Polish citizenship and then you will get a visa to Poland. I said how can I give up my citizenship, I will never be English, I will always be Polish. She told me to stop disputing, so rude, so mean. I had to pay £5 or £10. I then say 'Are you after my money or is your aim to take my citizenship away? She told me to stop questioning her. 'If you want to go, give up your citizenship, sign and that's it. I had to give up my citizenship, and I did. (Lucyna, f, 82, marriage route)

The requirement to give up the Polish passport in Lucyna's narrative yet again brings to focus the role of the state in either disrupting or facilitating transnationalism over time and through this, adding layers of emotions and new histories of contact that will contribute to the affective relations accumulating over time. In this case, stripping Lucyna off her passport added to the disruption of her transnational social field, causing distress and the feeling of betrayal by the state's officials. Therefore, national *rerooting* processes are stronger where transnational social fields contract or are disturbed by both state actions and a person's emotional response to the state's actions – for example fear or anger towards the communist state in the post-WW2 group. By contrast, more fluid and less *rooted* responses occur where states facilitate transnationalism or otherwise proactively engage with their national communities abroad – for example in Iwona's narrative above, her return to Poland is one of the options in her strategy for the future and so is the subsequent return to the UK (double return).

Feeling safe gives the interviewees much more than just the legal and immigration status; it allows the migrants to hypothesise or calmly consider their potential actions in the future. It is a feeling of comfort and confidence that comes with a particular alignment with the political and national. This is visible in both groups as they continue to navigate alternatives; for example, in the following two narratives of the "temptation" to explore further transnational opportunities (i.e., onward migration); firstly, Emil and Maciej from the post-2004 more individual perspective:

I have been so tempted, maybe a different country, even if not Europe, maybe Australia or Canada – to emigrate further. (Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK) - or - [I would not consider going back to Poland]. I would aim to go somewhere else. Ireland is the most similar [to the UK], but we have also discussed Canada and New Zealand. (Maciej, m, 29, Swindon, 11 years in the UK)

Secondly, from the perspective of the post-WW2 interviewee, Kazia with her husband who considered joining other post-WW2 Polish national collectives in other countries:

So my husband told me about his friend who had moved to Chicago and opened a theatre there. And [the friend] said to him 'Please come. Please come together [with your wife]. You will be performing in the theatre. We will be working together'. So we had everything sorted to leave. Then one day we went to church where a man approached us: 'What are you doing here?' It turned out that this was our parent's good acquaintance, professor from the University in Lvov; they had lived in the same street. He knew our

parents, he knew [my husband] – after he'd listened to our story he said 'What will you do if the theatre closes down'? Sweeping streets? You must do something. You have always been clever. I will help'. And he helped him get a place at the London School of Economics. (Kazia, f, 96, war displacement route)

In this narrative the opportunities in the UK outweighed the move to the USA. However, many others did choose the opportunities through other post-WW2 transnational social fields, with nearly 60 countries listed in the National Archives 1947 (Kaczmarek 2020). Whilst this data is not easily available for the more recent migration, my fieldwork shows onward migration does happen too (for example, Jadzia who has moved to Ireland since the original interview in 2021).

Finally, the intensity of the affect bonding the community in the UK does matter. The post-WW2 migrant interviewees' experience was the experience of a group bonded together by the desire to protect their sacred Poland that was in danger from war and communists. This idea of Poland was preserved through the spaces of liminality during the war and then in their reincarnation in the form of clubs and churches after their arrival in the UK. As discussed in Section 8.4, collective alignment through *communitas* like experiences meant that their actions and through this, their identities were continually constructed and re-constructed mainly within Polish national spaces in the UK. Thus, the affective capital of these spaces was significant. Additionally, the process was driven by more binary and also emotional othering processes locally: the Poles and the local British white majority. In fact, Bielewska very aptly compared their social world to a 'bipolar world where things can be identified as Polish or English' (Bielewska 2012, p.97). This added to the post-WW2 arrivals being initially pushed towards Polish national spaces and their transnational networks, with fewer opportunities to engage with the local in-groups. This meant that they had fewer opportunities to more reflectively de-construct and re-construct identities in the context of their new localities. Their social bonding was underpinned by the affect circulating in the Polish national spaces in the UK, commanding a strong pull, emotionally but also in terms of social bonds and collective alignments physically. Dobrawa described her situation as being impossible to "tear herself away" from the Polish collectivity in the UK:

Yes, I come from a family that has been Christian and Polish for many generations, nobody has changed this. Me and my siblings, always the Polish country, Poland. Being Polish is something that is sublime. We met in churches. So many Polish people, so many going to church, as always, as a catholic. Together with my husband we used to meet others, we were invited frequently to [Polish] clubs, many different clubs. There were Poles, Poles and Poles everywhere. How could I move away, tear myself away from being Polish; this was not possible. (Dobrawa, f, 94, marriage route)

Thus, the interviewees from the older generation bound together through the affect surrounding the need to protect their 'sublime', sacred nation – with very physical

consequences in the form of extensive networks of properties in the UK, is in sharp contrast to the experiences of the post-2004 migrant interviewees. Poland of the 21st century is not perceived to be in need of saving or guarding. This means that affects underpinning the movement and actions of the more recent migrants' actions in relation to the idea of Poland do not produce the same emotional intensity. Thus, they become more open to other emotional experiences, building new layers of expectations and practices in relation to the new national collectivity. For Garapich, this is a sign of them being able to absorb new meanings into their Polishness (Garapich 2016), in this study exemplified through narratives of "losing the Polish mentality". Furthermore, this kind of critical reflection is a "reflexive process" (Tonkiss, 2013); there are increased reflexive identity re-construction processes in the post-2004 group, especially in the context of more varied local others and less intensive othering processes. Basia specifically refers to making choices of which traditions to bring into the new local spaces:

For me this is a great thing, firstly in Poland all people are religious, as this is the culture there. But nobody questions why, and here once you leave this pre-dominantly Polish-catholic country, you have to make your own conscious choices, which is super. Secondly, you also need to make conscious choices as to which traditions you want to uphold, and which ones you don't want, and why not, as it would be easier to leave them behind. As a result, you are a more conscious Pole, and this is a good thing, as I don't consider myself as a patriot and I don't want to be. I don't regard this at all. I want to be a good person, not a patriot. [...] When it comes to nationality, I am Polish, always. It is a shame that the UK hasn't got this distinction that the States have. It allows people to keep their identity more. Everyone can say they are American and something else. (Basia, f, 37, Birmingham, 12 years in the UK)

This more "conscious" or reflexive process as described in Basia's narrative triggers a range of responses in this group of interviewees. As a result, during this de-construction and re-construction process, elements of their Polish identities become reconfigured or lost as well as new layers added over time. A number of narratives refer to migrants losing the "Polish mentality" constructed by different people in a different way (discussed in Chapter 7); for example, inability to engage in small talk with strangers in their UK localities, or as limited and backward thinking for a female migrant who was unable to pursue her dream to become a mechanic in her village in Poland. Others stop attending Polish church as part of their weekly practice or quite the opposite start attending church more "consciously" as part of their identity re-construction in the new context. Yet again, this narrative demonstrates this reflexive process which takes place in the context of the non-Polish locality:

I think I have become even more religious since I moved to the UK. [...] I think in Poland the situation is different, as there are so many churches and we are all Catholics, so we take it for granted, as it is normal. When I moved to the UK, I saw that the British are not religious and that they were surprised by my mass attendance on Sundays, I started to

wonder then, and felt an increased need to maintain my religion to protect it. (Zuzia, f, 34, Cambridge, 8 years in the UK)

On the whole, this identity reconfiguration process in Basia's and Zuzia's narratives is much more prominent in the post-2004 group of interviewees. This is due to the fact that their *uprooting* as part of their *transnational trajectory* is focused on the protection of their individual livelihoods in the UK and their transnational access; whereas their affective relationship links them back to Poland. There is no immediate danger to their nation; thus, the affect circulating within the post-2004 interviewees' social world is not accumulating any additional or significant value in the UK context. By contrast, the post-WW2 interviewees' affect around the nation is so saturated that it is not possible for them to engage in more reflexive identity re-construction in the UK – as Dobrowa aptly described: it was not possible for her to tear herself away from being Polish.

8.6 Conclusions

This chapter has shown that emotions are at the core of the migrant interviewees' transnational experiences and their construction of national identity. Their stories are saturated with emotions, as they narrate their experiences of transnational lives through a wide range of emotions. Thus, emotions emerge as an integral part of their social world. In fact, in this approach, I have aligned with Ahmed who disagrees with a 'model of social structure that neglects the emotional intensities which allow such structures to be reified as forms of being' (Ahmed 2013, p.12); consequently, attention to emotions helps us to understand why people invest in particular social structures and identities.

Therefore, in order to build a more in-depth understanding of the social world of the two groups of interviewees, in this chapter I intensified the findings around *rerootedness* and *uprootedness* from Chapters 6 and 7 by applying the lens of emotions. This approach was underpinned by the affectual theories developed by Pile (2010) and Ahmed (2013), and in particular Ahmed's concept of affective economies. Using the example of the Polish club, I demonstrated that non-cognitive affects accumulate value differently in the social worlds of these two groups of interviewees. As a result, they bond differently, connected by affects of different content or of different intensity.

Furthermore, as emotions are about movement and action, I focused on three groups of performative emotions directed 'towards' or 'away from' the nation. Firstly, the focus was on emotions such as fear, disgust, anger, mistrust and frustration surrounding the migrants' initial departures from Poland and continued life experiences, in some cases resulting in a complete break from the national. Overall, I demonstrated that the intensity of affect depends

on the proximity of people and layers of their continued contacts, expectations, and social, cultural and political influences as well as on the discursive and political framings that allow or prevent further circulation of that affect. Secondly, the emotions of love and pride enabled me to explore the proximity of people and the movement towards the nation in more detail. Passionate *communitas* like togetherness of the post-WW2 migrant interviewees was contrasted with far less intense affective processes of the more recent migrant interviewees whose life experiences also include Poland's communist past. Thirdly and finally, I demonstrated that the need to feel safe is central for all migrants in this study, triggering actions to protect and defend both their individual status and their nation – especially where the nation is perceived to be under threat. I was able to show that the affect circulating in the older generation's national spaces commanded a strong pull, resulting in fewer opportunities for the post-war migrant interviewees to reflectively de-construct and re-construct identities in the new country. By contrast, we can observe a range of identity reconfiguration processes in the post-2004 migrant participants, allowing their identities to absorb new meanings from the local context.

Overall, the lens of emotions has strengthened the findings from previous chapters: both *rerootedness* and *uprootedness* are lived through the actions of emotions towards the national. The intensity of performative emotions such as fear, disgust, anger, mistrust and frustration explains why the *rerooted* "we" seek a national break or simply want to stay away; whereas, the emotions of the *uprooted* "I" do not disrupt their continued movement towards the Polish nation-state itself.

CHAPTER 9 – Conclusion

9.1 Thesis aims

This thesis sought to make a contribution to the literature on national identity construction by migrants who cross national borders under contrasting conditions, politically, socially, economically as well as in the context of huge technological advancements. Anchoring this study in the transnational framework, my aim was to explore how constantly evolving, dynamic transnational conditions experienced by migrants through their transnational social fields impact their identity construction over time; hence the following central question underpinned my research journey:

- How does national identity construction evolve in the context of continually changing transnational conditions?

I chose a qualitative approach based on a two-case study design, looking into two very different flows of Polish migrants to the UK. Thus, my sub-questions focused my attention on each case study individually. In particular, I investigated the differences in the lived experiences, practices and meanings ascribed to national identity by migrants in the context of current more politically open and more technologically connected transnational social fields following Poland's EU accession in 2004, compared to the previously more isolated conditions during the Cold War era experienced by Poles who came to the UK soon after WW2. This national context offered an ideal setting to study the construction of identities across two generations of migrants who navigated a rich variety of transnational conditions in their respective time periods.

9.2 Summary of findings and contributions

My findings showed that firstly, transnationalism is not a new phenomenon and is inherently linked with the existence of modern nation-states; and secondly, that despite new trends in contemporary societies which are more connected globally with people's identities becoming progressively deterritorialised (Appaddurai 1996, Sassen 1996a, 1996b), national identity remains important to the way migrants re-construct their identities following their initial departure and over time. Thus, the national continues to live transnationally.

Additionally, and most significantly for this study and its original contributions, my findings brought to the forefront the emotional aspects of migratory experiences, underpinning the interviewees' actions and experiences of migration, different transnational conditions, their relationship with the national and new localities, and ultimately the construction of their national identity.

Therefore, I adopted a two-pronged analysis approach to the findings, with Chapters 6 and 7 focusing on national identity construction in various transnational conditions, whereas Chapter 8 intensified the findings from the previous chapters by applying the lens of emotions to better understand the interviewees' practices and interactions in their social worlds.

Overall, I demonstrated that the way migrants' identities are re-constructed in new localities is very much driven by the transnational conditions they experience over time. These are continually evolving spaces where the political comes to the fore and where nation-states exercise their control, creating options, extending alternatives, and adding new layers, but also closing spaces, cutting off access or shrinking opportunities. My findings chapters demonstrated that these conditions have profound impacts on how migrants re-construct their identities and their relationship with their new localities and the country of origin. My findings also showed that each migrant has their own individual path through spaces that link their nation-state of origin with the new location. This is a highly proactive and emotional process where movement across borders constitutes a potentiality through which migrants re-construct their identities.

Therefore, in order to study these dynamic processes, I developed two guiding concepts to support the analysis (Chapter 5). The concept of *roots* represents the complex relationship between continued national thinking, national identity, migrants' agency and their emotional as well as physical relationship with their localities and the nation-states. Thus, the idea of *roots* is about the individual who is positioned vis à vis the political, which in this study is captured through the concept of *transnational trajectories* understood as the totality of an individual's transnational experiences controlled by the nation-states.

Within this analytical framework, Chapter 6 demonstrated how *rerooted* national identities are constructed through communitas-like experiences of prolonged transit and liminality in consecutive transnational experiences. The *transnational trajectory* kept the post-WW2 group together as the collective "we" throughout their path to the UK through battle fields, cadet schools and displaced persons camps, and also within the borders of the UK. I showed that their experiences in transnational activity linking them with Poland, their transnational families and the EU space contributed to the gradual *rerooting* process over

time. They constructed and re-constructing their identities through a continued ritual, creating 'permanent condition of sacred "outsiderhood" (Turner 1969, pp.112-128) situated within the UK. A national identity that is 'more Polish than Poland itself' (Wanda, f, 89, war displacement route) emerged in the new locality.

Chapter 7 focused on the construction of *uprooted* national identities, defined by the continued state of potentiality (*uprootedness*). The *uprooted "I"* of the post-2004 group negotiates their transnational alternatives more individually and has the option to remain connected with their nation-state of origin through modern instant communications platforms and relatively cheap long-distance travel. Complete departures or total *rerooting* can happen too, especially where migrants' strong emotions cause the initial departure and then prevent return, including fear, anger or disappointment towards the original nation-state. Although for many, their identity building is situated within the national, they show much less dependency on community ties or physical spaces in the UK to experience national identity. This group of interviewees often rebuilds identities more reflexively and against the local others, absorbing 'new meanings and ideas of Polishness' (Garapich 2016, p.314), as well as creates networks within their more private social spaces; whereas their long-term strategies acknowledge the potential to move again if this becomes the preferred or necessary option, including both return and onward migration. Despite Brexit, their *transnational trajectory* has not been disrupted.

Finally, Chapter 8 built on the findings revealed in Chapters 6 and 7, by delving deeper into the emotional foundations underpinning the interviewees' practices and actions towards the national. Their narratives demonstrated that emotions are performative as well as bound up in other people's emotions, and layers of prior experiences and histories of previous contact. Thus, this is not only about what is felt by the individual in the present, but also about the non-conscious affect underlying their social relations (Ahmed 2013). In this study, the analysis showed that the accumulated affect towards the national that binds the respective social worlds of the two groups of interviewees is different, both in terms of intensity and content. Furthermore, the intensity of performative emotions does matter, and these actions have consequences. For example, the intensity of performative emotions such as fear, disgust, anger, mistrust and frustration explains why the *rerooted "we"* seek a national break or simply want to stay away; whereas, the emotions of the *uprooted "I"* do not interrupt their continued movement towards the nation-state itself.

Overall, this thesis aims to make a contribution to the literature on transnationalism and more specifically, the understanding of identity construction of migrants who cross national borders. In particular, its original contribution is about the role of emotions and affective

dimension of Polish migrants' subjective experiences of transnational mobility, shaping their practices and identity construction throughout their lives.

9.3 Opportunities for further research

This study offers a wealth of opportunities for further research. For Polish migration to the UK, especially post-2004, future research will explore the national identity building of this group over decades to come. Will there be more return migration in the future despite the migrants' doubly protected status through the EU Settlement Scheme and their EU citizenship (albeit this is not happening for migrants in this study at the point of writing of this thesis)? Future research may also help to understand the longer-term impacts on identity construction of the differences between full British citizenship and the migrants' EU settled status. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 7, the basic need to feel safe and belong is a 'powerful, fundamental and extremely pervasive motivation' (Baumeister and Leary 1995, p.497), which could lead to further departures of the post-2004 migrants, as these migrant interviewees did not create larger communities in the UK and may feel isolated when their close networks vanishes, or on the contrary they may seek new collective spaces in the UK geographies which are emerging in the form of Community Interest Companies (CIC), as discussed in Chapter 3. The latter is also linked to further research into the post-WW2 migrants' property, their legacy in the UK and its potential to continue in some form. These spaces will continue to be areas of tension, with more potential for research in terms of if and if yes, in what form these Polish spaces will remain in the UK in the future.

Finally, more broadly, both in theoretical and empirical terms, the processes of *uprooting* and *rerooting* viewed through the lens of emotions can be a useful framework to apply to transnational migration outside of the Polish case studies. As shown in this study, migrants' national identities are lived and constructed through the actions of emotions towards the national. Despite the current increasingly global and interconnected world, the power of nation-states is pervasive, where spaces between nation-states can open or close suddenly, wars erupt unexpectedly, and economic and other societal inequalities continue – and all this is set against the backdrop of 'the global proliferation of camps' (Maestri 2017). Thus, migrants continue to experience these volatile, dynamic and often brutal transnational conditions through a myriad of emotions, binding their social world together through interaction with others and the accumulation of affect over time.

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Appendix 1 – List of Participants and socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Informants who arrived in the UK after 2004 – in-person and virtual interviews

| Pseudonym, gender, age, location, duration in the UK | Interview date |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Bogdan, m, 50, Birmingham, 14 years in the UK (in-person) | Joint interview |
| Kasia, f, 50, Birmingham, 14 years in the UK (in-person) | 10th February 2020 |
| Jakub, m, 38, Tipton, 15 years in the UK (in-person) | 13th February 2020 |
| Zuzia, f, 34, Cambridge, 8 years in the UK (in-person) | 16th February 2020 |
| Alina, f, 30, Birmingham, 12 years in the UK (in-person) | 5th March 2020 |
| Jadzia, f, 39, Birmingham, 16 years in the UK (in-person) | 11th March 2020 |
| Edyta, f, 38, London, 16 years in the UK (virtual) | 8th May 2020 |
| Julia, f, 43, Petersfield, 15 years in the UK (virtual) | 9th July 2020 |
| Rozalia, f, 52, Birmingham, 14 years in the UK (in-person) | 30th September 2020 |
| Olaf, m, 43, Coventry, 15 years in the UK (virtual) | 8th May 2021 |
| Filip, m, 50, Birmingham, 16 years in the UK (virtual) | 17th May 2021 |
| Basia, f, 37, Birmingham, 12 years in the UK (virtual) | 2nd June 2021 |
| Natalia, f, 38, Tipton, 16 years in the UK (in-person) | 20th July 2021 |
| Oliwia, m, 50, Okehampton, 17 years in the UK (virtual) | 23rd July 2021 |
| Igor, m, 42, Eastbourne, 6 years in the UK (virtual) | 29th July 2021 |
| Maja, f, 58, Bournemouth, 7 years in the UK (virtual) | 30th July 2021 |
| Jerzy, m, 49, West Bromwich, 16 years in the UK (virtual) | 2nd August 2021 |
| Gabriel, m, 24, Wolverhampton, 5 years in the UK (virtual) | Joint interview |
| Paulina, f, 32, Wolverhampton, 9 years in the UK (virtual) | 3rd August 2021 |
| Misia, f, 25, West Bromwich, 10 years in the UK (in-person) | 5th August 2021 |
| Czesia, f, 28, Bournemouth, 10 years in the UK (virtual) | 5th August 2021 |
| Konrad, m, 23, Darlington, 13 years in the UK (virtual) | 6th August 2021 |
| Milena, f, 35, Swindon, 8 years in the UK (virtual) | 18th August 2021 |
| Dominik, m, 50, Coventry, 6 years in the UK (virtual) | 20th August 2021 |
| Anastazja, f, 45, Eastbourne, 15 years in the UK (virtual) | 20th August 2021 |
| Emil, m, 41, Coventry, 16 years in the UK (virtual) | 21st August 2021 |
| Maciej, m, 29, Swindon, 11 years in the UK (virtual) | 23rd August 2021 |
| Iwona, f, 31, Guildford, 9 years in the UK (virtual) | 7th September 2021 |

Informants who arrived in the UK after WW2 – all in-person interviews

| Pseudonym, gender, age, route to the UK | Interview date |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Sabina, f, 89, war displacement route | 24th January 2019 |
| Lucjan, m, 92, war displacement route | 24th January 2019 |
| Antonina, f, 92, war displacement route | 24th January 2019 |
| Marzena, f, 86, family reunion | 24th January 2019 |
| Antoni, m, 90, war displacement route | 25th January 2019 |
| Honorata, f, 80, family reunion | 25th January 2019 |
| Alicja, f, 89, war displacement followed by marriage route | 25th January 2019 |
| Kazia, f, 96, war displacement route | 25th January 2019 |
| Bogna, f, 83, war displacement route | 26th January 2019 |
| Bronka, f, 91, war displacement route | 26th January 2019 |
| Florentyna, f, 90, family reunion | 31st March 2019 |
| Wanda, f, 89, war displacement route | 6th April 2019 |
| Dobrawa, f, 94, marriage route | 24th April 2019 |
| Bernadeta, f, 87, war displacement route | 18th May 2019 |
| Tadeusz, m, 90, war displacement route | 18th May 2019 |
| Eugenia, f, 91, war displacement route | 21st July 2019 |
| Jagoda, f, 93, war displacement route | 22nd July 2019 |
| Sylwester, m, 95, war displacement route | 24th July 2019 |
| Stefania, f, 82, marriage route | 25th July 2019 |
| Lucyna, f, 82, marriage route | 15th September 2019 |
| Cecylia, f, 80, marriage route | 18th January 2020 |
| Felicja, f, 75, war displacement route | 23rd January 2020 |
| Tomasz, m, 91, war displacement route | 26th June 2021 |
| Wiktor, m, 95, war displacement route | 18th July 2021 |
| Aldona, f, 86, war displacement route | 31st July 2022 |

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

| Characteristics | Post-WW2 migrant interviewees (where disclosed) | Post-2004 migrant interviewees (where disclosed) |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gender | 6 male and 19 female participants | 12 male and 16 female participants |
| Age | 1 participant - 70-79 years old; 12 participants - 80-89 years old; 12 participants - 90+ years old | 5 participants - 20-29 years old; 10 participants - 30-39 years old; 6 participants - 40-49 years old; 7 participants - 50-59 years old |
| Location in the UK | 6 participants Birmingham 1 participant Bournemouth 1 participant Kidderminster 2 participants London 14 participants Penrhos 1 participant Reading | 7 participants Birmingham 2 participants Bournemouth 1 participant Cambridge 3 participants Coventry 1 participant Darlington 2 participants Eastbourne 1 participant Guildford 1 participant London 1 participant Okehampton 1 participant Petersfield 2 participants Swindon 2 participants Tipton 2 participants West Bromwich 2 participants Wolverhampton |
| Place of origin in Poland | 17 participants - Eastern Borderland (Kresy) 8 participants - other (including Kraków, Warszawa, Oświęcim, Zamość, Częstochowa, Leszno) | 10 participants - small towns and rural areas (including near Jaworzno, Sochaczew, Belarus border, near Zgorzelec, Podkarpacie, Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Piekary Śląskie) 12 participants - cities (including, Wrocław, Szczecin, Poznań, Gdańsk, Warszawa, Lublin, Żywiec) |
| Marital and parental status | All participants - married to a Polish spouse, with children (at the point of interviews, including widowed and divorced) | 15 participants - Polish spouse/partner, with children 2 participants - Polish spouse/partner, with no children 2 participants - British spouse/partner, with children 3 participants - British spouse/partner, with no children 6 participants - single, with no children |

| Characteristics | Post-WW2 migrant interviewees (where disclosed) | Post-2004 migrant interviewees (where disclosed) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Occupation | 3 participants Administrative occupation 3 participants Director and senior official 4 participants Factory / production worker 1 participant Health professional 3 participants Hospitality manager 6 participants Housewife 2 participants Sales and customer service 1 participant Skilled trades occupation | 3 participants Administrative occupation 1 participant Bus driver 2 participants Director and senior official 6 participants Factory / warehouse worker 2 participants Health professional 2 participants Healthcare worker 4 participants Highly skilled professional 1 participant Hospitality manager 2 participants Hospitality worker 1 participant Housewife 1 participant Sales and customer service 3 participants Skilled trades occupation |
| Education | 5 participants – Higher/Further Education 1 participant – Professional qualification 13 participants – Secondary 6 participants – Primary | 14 participants – Higher/Further Education 13 participants – Secondary 1 participant – Primary |
| English language knowledge | 5 participants – Proficient English 18 participants – Basic or conversational English 2 participants – No English | 15 participants – Proficient English 12 participants – Basic or conversational English 1 participant – No English |

Appendix 2 – Volunteer Information Sheet

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SHEET

Dear

You are invited to take part in my PhD research on the experiences of national identity by Polish migrants in the UK. Please read this letter carefully. If you need any clarification please do not hesitate to ask me before giving your consent to take part.

The aim of my research is to compare the differences in the experiences of Polish identity in two groups of Polish people: one group who came to the UK after WW2 with a second group who came to the UK post EU-accession of Poland in 2004. I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study as a Polish migrant who belongs to one of the groups. In total I will be interviewing 60 people. The interview will be recorded and will take between one to two hours.

Through your participation, I hope to understand the essence of Polish national identity as it reveals itself in your experience. You will be asked to describe your feelings around your identity as a Polish migrant in the UK. I am seeking a vivid and comprehensive description of what Polish national identity means to you: your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, as well as situations, events, places and people connected with your experiences.

I would be also very interested to see any documents, photographs or other objects selected by you to illustrate your understanding of 'Polishness'. Please prepare these before the interview.

If you wish to remain anonymous, you are guaranteed that your personal information will be treated confidentially and anonymised. The usage of any information or visual materials that could reveal your identity will be agreed with you in advance and appropriately recorded on the consent form.

The content of your interview, your visual materials and any other personal information will be securely stored in password-protected areas. The information and materials that you will provide will be used exclusively for the purpose of my research.

You are free to withdraw your participation from this study without any consequences at any time prior to the submission of my final thesis in September 2022.

This study has been approved by Aston University's Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns please contact Dr Katherine Tonkiss, my supervisor (k.tonkiss@aston.ac.uk).

I value your participation and thank you for your commitment of time, energy and effort. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me (woottom2@aston.ac.uk).

With warm regards

PhD Candidate, Małgorzata Wootton

Appendix 3 – Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Name of Researcher: Małgorzata Wootton

Name of Participant:

I agree to participate in a research study of 'Migration and National Identity in Transnational Social Spaces: Comparative study between post-WW2 and post-2004 migration from Poland to the UK.'

I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I can confirm I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the chance to consider the information and ask any questions. I understand I am free to withdraw from this study at any time and that any responses given will only be used for academic purposes and my confidentiality will be upheld throughout with the use of pseudonyms, unless I give explicit consent to suggest otherwise.

I grant permission for all data I decide to provide, including written documents and visual materials, to be used in the process of completing a PhD degree, including a dissertation and any other future publications. I agree to transfer my copyrights to the researcher of this study with regards to visual images of which I am the legal owner, including photographs or other visual artefacts and objects selected by me to illustrate my understanding of 'Polishness'.

I agree to meet for an interview lasting between one to two hours. If necessary, I will be available at a mutually agreed time for a follow-up interview to provide additional information for any points requiring further clarification. I also grant permission for the interview(s) to be recorded.

Having considered all this information I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant's signature: Date:

Researcher's signature: Date:

Appendix 4 – Interview Topic Guide

1. Tell me the story of how you left Poland and started your life in the UK

- Prompts: why did you leave? how old were you? how did you travel? who did you travel with? What was the journey like? Why the UK? How did you feel when you arrived in the UK?
(Where available, use of prompts selected by the participants themselves before or during the interview; e.g. personal possessions, documents, photos or any other visual materials)

2. Tell me about your life in the UK

- When you first lived in the UK, in the time since, currently?
Time periods to help participants break down their memories, as for example family/friendship networks might have changed radically over time.
- Prompts: what were your experiences when you arrived in the UK? where did you live/ do you live / why in this particular location(s)? what was/is your occupation? what did/does your life look like on a daily basis? What events, celebrations, traditions did/do you take part in? What family and friendship networks did/do you have?
(Where available, use of prompts selected by the participants themselves before or during the interview (e.g. personal possessions, documents, photos or any other visual materials)

3. What does being Polish mean to you?

- When you first lived in the UK, in the time since, currently?
Time periods to help participants break down their memories.
- 1) what does it mean, in general, to hold a Polish identity?, and 2) what does it mean to you to be Polish?
- Prompts: What does it mean to be Polish? How do you feel about Poland? What do you miss most? What are your day-to-day experiences of Polish identity? Describe any activities, events, practices or rituals that you ascribe to Polish identity. What activities, events, practices or rituals do you get involved in (e.g. Polish school, Polish church, Polish clubs, Polish scouts or any other organisations and activities)? Has anything changed in your understanding of what it means to be Polish as a result of your life / experiences in the UK? Is it difficult to stick to your Polish identity?
- For those who prepared their own prompts before the interview: why have you chosen this object? what is the document/image of, what is its content? who took it or made it, when and why? And – if the image was taken/made by somebody else - how do you come to have it, how do you read it, what do you do with it? (Banks 2003, p.7)

4. Tell me about your life as a migrant?

- Prompts: How they feel about the UK? What are the differences between the UK and Poland? How do you feel about the differences? Do you stay in a regular contact with Poland? How / who with do you stay in touch in Poland?
- For post-WW2 migrants: have these feelings changed over time? Prompts could also be helpful here (e.g., photographs reflecting early life in the UK)

- For post 2004 migrants: Are you planning to live in the UK long-term / short-term? Do you plan to go back to Poland? Brexit?

5. What are your experiences of the Polish people / community in the UK?

- Prompts: Have you been / are you involved with the Polish community? Did / do you feel a welcomed member? Did / do you feel that the experiences of national identity of other Polish people in the UK are the same as yours? Are there any differences depending on age or time spent in the UK? What are your experiences with the “old” or “new” migrants?