Anglia Ruskin
University

Cambridge & Chelmsford

Longitudinal study of migrant workers in the East of England

Interim Report

A major report compiled by:

Dr Claudia Schneider and Dr Deborah Holman

PPCG
Public Policy Consultancy Group

www.anglia.ac.uk

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Introduction

Claudia Schneider and Deborah Holman of the Public Policy Consultancy Group (PPCG) in the Faculty of Health and Social Care at Anglia Ruskin University were commissioned by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) to conduct a longitudinal study of migrant workers[1] in the region. The study is for three years from January 2008 and is part funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). Focusing on the perspective of migrant workers in the Eastern region (Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambs, Herts, Essex and Beds.) we were asked to study: factors that influence decisions on coming to and length of stay in the UK; barriers to full participation in the regional economy; and, barriers to social inclusion in the local community; how these change over time and whether public policy has an influential role on these decisions.

For this first interim report, we have particularly focused on initial data in relation to the length of stay question for migrant workers. At this stage there is no explicit connection to a review of public policy change (although the economic climate is a feature of some of our participants' reflections as is the consequences of EU membership). A preliminary consideration of the UK public policy context will be included in the second interim report and a final detailed examination of policy initiatives (UK, EU and countries of origin) in the context

The following presents a summary of the first interim report for the Longitudinal Study of Migrant Workers in the East of England. A second interim report will follow at the beginning of 2010 and a final report will be presented at the beginning of 2011.

Methodology

The longitudinal study uses a mixed methods approach combining primary with secondary research and quantitative with qualitative data collection methods. A comprehensive literature review provided the framework for the primary research. A core group of 40 European citizens from A8 and A2 countries were selected for semi-structured interviews, diary and discussion forum contributions. The group will be 're-visited' in 2009 and 2010 to gain longitudinal data on length of stay and barriers to full economic and social participation. A pilot study of migrants' blogs complemented the analysis of interviews and the diaries. Using Polish, Russian and English questionnaires, a survey of 161 migrant workers, covering issues of length of stay and barriers, was carried out to offer a more representative picture of migrants' perceptions, experiences and decision making processes. Participants of the first survey will be invited to contribute to a second survey in 2009. Stakeholder interviews will be conducted in Year 2 focusing on the key findings of the first report, and in Year 3 with questions guided by the key findings from the 2010 report.

Key findings

Ambiguity and complexity regarding intentions on length of stay

The first year of the longitudinal study highlights the ambiguity and complexity of decision-making on length of stay. Migrants themselves seem to be aware of the variety of factors which can potentially affect their decisions which might partly explain why the majority of migrants have a 'let's see attitude' with regard to length of stay. Changes in initial decisions are fairly frequent and those who changed their intention of length of stay are more likely to stay longer than for a shorter time. The survey showed that at least 25% of migrants perceived the following (subjective) factors as important in their decision making processes (although no clear relationship was displayed between these factors and intended length of stay):

- 'I have settled in the UK' (38%)

- 'I like the area where I live' (37%)

- 'I need to earn more money' (28%)

- 'My level of English is not good enough' (28%)

- 'I have a good social life in the UK' (28%)

- 'The economic situation in my home country has not improved' (26%)

- 'I miss my home country' (25%)

A more objective analysis of factors (comparing different variables with length of stay) revealed links between length of stay and:

- marital status (migrants in a partnership were more likely than single migrants to stay indefinitely and less likely to have a 'let's see attitude');

- arrival time in the UK (the longer participants had stayed in the UK the more likely they were to reflect a 'let's see attitude');

- employment barriers (migrants who felt their skills were reflected in their employment position in the UK were more likely to stay long term or indefinitely);

- aspirations (participants with career and educational aspirations in the UK were more likely to stay long term or indefinitely).

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[1] European citizens from A8 (and A2) countries: Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia (Romania and Bulgaria).

A common theme of interviews and diary entries was of family and 'home': particularly, separation from the familiar and distance from loved ones, especially parents. Whilst most interviewees considered that they made their migration decisions independently without influence from family or friends they also noted that returns home would be expedited by concerns for family members. Frequent travel between the UK and home countries, visits from home and frequent communications with family and friends were commonplace. Maintaining personal networks appeared to facilitate a transnational sensibility on the part of interviewees as much as EU membership. Cheap travel costs and proximity to airports in the region have helped sustain participants' connections with family and friends at home and perhaps, also, the general 'let's see' attitude consistent with a much more fluid and open migratory process.

Do long term arrivals necessarily settle?

Possible assumptions about long term arrivals and settlement need to be treated with caution. Participants who had been in the UK for four years or longer did not give the impression that they were necessarily settling. Instead, they were least likely to state that they intended to stay indefinitely, more likely to reflect a 'let's see attitude' and slightly more likely (compared to other migrants) to stay short term.

Migrant workers or European citizens?

Whilst public, political and often academic discourses label people who have arrived from the A8 and A2 countries as 'migrant workers', interviewees did not identify with this concept (or the concept of East European). Instead, a large number perceive themselves as European citizens (in combination with their national identity). This finding appears to underpin the normalisation of living and working in another country, considered as unexceptional as working in a major city in the home country for some interviewees.

A sense of 'Europeanness', however, does not necessarily correlate with voting intentions in the 2009 European elections; 31% of survey respondents said that they would vote which is less than the UK turnout in 2004 at 38.4% – although still relevant, especially considering the 20% turnout recorded in Poland in 2004.

30% of survey respondents indicated that they would vote in a local election. Even though this corresponds to the average voter turnout for local elections since a low of 28% in 1998 in the UK, this is quite a significant proportion. The main barriers to voting cited by interviewees were lack of knowledge of candidates and policies and an insufficient sense of belonging to justify exercising this right.

Local government and political parties can do more to facilitate the democratic participation of this group of European citizens living in the region.

Relevance of political and social factors in countries of origin

There is currently an overemphasis in the migration literature and in the public debate on the economic situation in countries of origin. The political and social situations in these countries are often neglected in discussions on length of stay. Although economic, social and political issues are interlinked our research shows that migrants' perceptions of the social and political situations in countries of origin are very important for their decision making processes.

Relevance of political and social factors in the UK

The research highlights that especially the perception of the social situation in the UK was very positive followed by the economic and political situation. Beyond general economic motives, many interviewees noted the sense of security they felt here arising from the consistency in political, legal and bureaucratic processes underpinning day to day 'normal life'. Knowledge of life in the UK prior to migration was generally patchy and eligibility for benefits and measures to protect rights in the workplace were largely unknown and unexpected positives. These factors, combined with prior and generally met expectations of higher earnings, the opportunity to improve English language skills and self development opportunities, are important incentives to remain in the UK or, at least, to defer decisions to return home. The limited interaction with native English speakers was regretted, however, and language skills were cited as a component of this, although cultural factors, and British perceptions of 'migrants' were also issues.

Is the weakening economic situation ignored?

The findings show that – so far – the deteriorating economic situation has not had a 'shortening' effect on the length of stay anticipated with the majority of migrants who changed their decision deciding to stay for a longer rather than a shorter time. The qualitative and quantitative research highlighted that the majority had a 'let's see' attitude. The relatively small impact this has had suggests that economic considerations are part of a complex bundle of factors which impact on decision making processes and are not always the prime influence on length of stay.

Language, recognition of skills, access to suitable housing and healthcare remain the chief barriers

From survey data, the majority of barriers did not indicate a concrete link to intended length of stay. However, 'reflection of skills in employment' showed a significant link to intended length of stay and those participants who saw their skills reflected were more likely to stay indefinitely. Even though survey respondents confirmed language as a main barrier at 64%, non-recognition of skills in employment was mentioned by 73% of participants.

Other major barriers highlighted in the survey were non-recognition of qualifications, access to suitable housing and healthcare and access to language classes. Overall participants seem to have a good level of social inclusion. However, 17% stated they felt socially isolated. On the other hand, 39% selected that they had not experienced any barriers/problems and it was also the case that barriers were not a core preoccupation of interviewees: issues and problems – such as with landlords, housing and employers – were rarely acknowledged as barriers per se; interviewees were even able to 'make light' of the situations they had experienced (but see 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly' below). However, interviewees noted that the difficulties they had experienced could have been much worse if their competency in English language was at a reduced level or absent.

Survey evidence has highlighted that migrants' employment positions in the UK still fail to reflect their skills. Considering that this factor has a strong impact on length of stay and on the British economy it is hoped that policies can be established to facilitate a better use of migrants' skills.

'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly'

The possibility for career fulfilment and self-actualisation feature very highly in the 'positives' (the good) of living and working in the UK. A trust in political and legal institutions, effective bureaucratic processes and unanticipated social protections were also positive features noted as were some excellent employers and letting agents/landlords who, respectively, recognise and reward skills and treat tenants fairly.

Private landlords and employers however also feature in the bad experiences cited (as do some supervisors and co-workers). Poor quality housing, being asked to move at short notice (sometimes to make way for higher paying tenants), and discovering that prior information about tenure, quality and cost of rental does not correspond to the housing situation once in the UK were some of the experiences recounted. Unfair treatment, direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace were also noted; for example, the most anti-social shifts reserved for migrant labour, illegal deductions made from migrants' payslips, and Polish names suspected as enough to invalidate the skills and qualifications listed on CVs.

The worst experiences (the ugly) related to the range of 'cons' our interview sample had been subjected to, particularly in the first few months of arrival, and involved the mis-selling of goods, illegal pay packet deductions, bullying campaigns, agency scams, unreasonable costs associated with employment (and not disclosed at point of contract) and illegal evictions.

A new national portal of information and support for migrant workers and their employers should provide some protection through easier access to appropriate sources of information. Raising the profile of Trading Standards departments across the region would also be an important step in supporting migrant workers to access the protections they are entitled to, accompanied by a targeted campaign to tackle businesses that specialise in the exploitation of 'green' and sometimes captive consumers.

The print media's negative coverage of migration issues was also noted by interviewees and diarists as an 'ugly' aspect of life. Some participants were quite demoralised by the tenor of press coverage and thought that it contributed to bullying and uneasiness in the workplace, with coverage focusing on a few 'bad apples' making it 'more difficult for those who want to integrate and have a decent life'.

A more measured and responsible reporting of the issues would be welcomed, particularly if, as one diarist fears, 'the recession is making people's attitudes towards the foreigners more radical… Making the discrimination even worse'.

Achieving goals and ambitions

Interview and survey data reveal that migrant workers are ambitious and seek personal development and advancement; 'making money quickly' is not their chief concern. Given that so many migrants, at least initially, downgrade in terms of their qualifications, skills and employment history, and have high aspirations, goal satisfaction may prove to be crucial for the retention of key workers in the region. The survey highlighted that migrants with career and educational aspirations in the UK were more likely to stay longer term or indefinitely than those who did not have these intentions. Interviews underline that, for most interviewees, goals over time become increasingly focused on job satisfaction and status elevation achieved through work and education.

In other words, continuing to plug labour market gaps may not be a sufficient enticement for key workers to come to or to stay in the region, nor the best use of their generally high qualification and skill levels. These findings emphasise the need for concerted action to provide information and make available educational and career development opportunities.

The 'self sufficient' migrant

Both the qualitative and quantitative research findings emphasise a high level of self sufficiency amongst migrants. Interviews, blog contributions and diaries revealed astonishing determination to deal with problems and barriers in the UK and in the country of origin. The survey confirmed this characteristic by finding that 44% stated that they dealt with problems themselves. A large number of migrants did not discuss decisions regarding length of stay with anyone and did not join friends of family in the UK. Although many migrants experienced barriers they showed a strong determination to cope with problems, and barriers did not directly affect their intended length of stay. The only barrier which has a clear impact on length of stay was the 'non reflection of skills in employment'.

These findings, in conjunction with the findings from the IPPR study for EEDA, illustrate how important it is for the region for national and regional policy makers to find ways to release the full potential of this valuable pool of workers.

Conclusion

The literature review demonstrates that our findings are generally corroborated by findings from other studies and we believe form a robust basis for the development and progression of the study in years two and three. The immediate first steps for the next phase of the research will be to use the report to directly inform stakeholder interviews and to establish an expert advisory group for the remainder of the project.

Tracking changes in participants' lives and in their decision-making over the next two years – crucially, in the context of an economic recession and a general volatility in economic policy, a European election in 2009, and in the wake of the new immigration points system and tightened welfare to work policies, and a general election – will prove an interesting challenge.

Introduction

Claudia Schneider and Deborah Holman of the Public Policy Consultancy Group (PPCG) in the Faculty of Health and Social Care at Anglia Ruskin University were commissioned by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) to conduct a longitudinal study of migrant workers[1] in the region. The study is for three years from January 2008 and is part funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). Focusing on the perspective of migrant workers in the Eastern region (Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambs, Herts, Essex and Beds.) we were asked to study: factors that influence decisions on coming to and length of stay in the UK; barriers to full participation in the regional economy; and, barriers to social inclusion in the local community; how these change over time and whether public policy has an influential role on these decisions.

For this first interim report, we have particularly focused on initial data in relation to the length of stay question for migrant workers. At this stage there is no explicit connection to a review of public policy change (although the economic climate is a feature of some of our participants' reflections as is the consequences of EU membership). A preliminary consideration of the UK public policy context will be included in the second interim report and a final detailed examination of policy initiatives (UK, EU and countries of origin) in the context of findings over the three year period will form part of the final report.

Alongside a focused literature review and a pilot analysis of blog sites, interviews have been carried out across the Eastern region in English accompanied by diaries, and questionnaires have been collected from across the region in English, Polish and Russian. A discussion forum was set up to support our participants and encourage discussion of research themes and we also held an information get-together for participants. As with all research involving human participants there have been some slight setbacks in our fieldwork and some, perhaps, unrealistic cultural expectations on our part despite our best plans. However, these have been 'weathered' and we are confident in the quality and relevance of the data produced. We are therefore pleased to present EEDA with the findings from the first year of research of the longitudinal study of migrant workers.

Claudia Schneider and Deborah Holman

January 2009

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[1] European citizens from A8 (and A2) countries: Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia (Romania and Bulgaria).

1 Methodology

Our longitudinal study uses a mixed methods approach combining primary with secondary research and quantitative with qualitative methods of data collection. The study prepared a literature review on current themes of migration and theories regarding decision making processes. The review will be updated for the next interim report (2010) and final report (2011). Internet blog sites were used as another source of secondary data and the first interim report provides findings of a 'pilot project' sampling two weeks of contributions to blog sites in 2008.

For the primary research a core group of 40 European citizens from A8 and A2 countries were selected for semi-structured interviews, diary and discussion forum contributions. Interviewees were recruited via organisations working with and for migrants, ESOL classes and a 'poster campaign' in localities with a high percentage of migrants. The participants of the 'core group' reflect diverse backgrounds with regard to countries and areas (rural/urban) of origin, date of arrival, area of settlement in the UK (rural/urban and different regions within the East of England), skills, educational and employment background, language proficiency, age, gender and marital status. The initial interviews were approximately two hours long focusing on the following areas: personal profile, arrival and reasons for migration, life before migration, perceptions of the UK, perceptions of Europe, expectations, goals, migration decisions, and length of stay; in particular, probing plans regarding length of stay, factors which influence decision making processes, perceptions of economic, political and social situations in countries of origin and the UK and barriers regarding employment and social inclusion.

Following the interview, diaries were sent with instructions to the participants of the core group with a request that these be returned after three months. Engagement with the diaries was fairly limited and by the end of December eleven contributions had been received. Other researchers such as Spencer et al (2007) have encountered similar problems regarding the use of diaries as data collection tools. An initial analysis of the diary contributions is included in the interim report and the research will consult participants in the second year to identify potential barriers – we suspect confidence with written English may be one of issues – regarding the diary contribution.

A discussion forum was set up so that participants could exchange ideas and communicate with the other participants in the core group. In general participants did not take up this form of communication possibly due to, again, confidence with written English, time constraints, use of other chat rooms/forums and/or a feeling that they did not need to identify themselves with the other participants in the research. After consultation with the core group of participants, the research team will decide next year whether the discussion forum should be continued in its current format.

A survey was conducted to complement the qualitative data collection methods with a more representative sample (161 questionnaires). The questionnaire covered similar areas which were discussed in the interview (see above) using closed-ended questions. Questionnaires were distributed via some of the same channels used for the recruitment of interviewees. The team is aware that the sample for the quantitative research is relatively low; however, it has substantiated trends which were identified in the qualitative research and in the literature review.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Overview

Since the accession of eight new states to the EU in 2004, significant concerns have been raised about the potentially negative effects of increased flows of migrant workers to the UK. Recent debates have focused on the likely impact on the national economy, on local labour markets and wage levels – as well as the fiscal contribution of immigrants, and the continued ability of the welfare state to meet the needs of these new arrivals. However, debates are often supported by incomplete or flawed evidence, because of the considerable problems with current methods of data collection[1]. These gaps in the evidence on migration have received extensive publicity, and there are signs that work is now beginning on improvements to data collection[2]. However, while a clearer picture of migration flows and trends is perhaps beginning to emerge, we still have only a vague understanding of the different motivations underlying migration decisions, and still less knowledge of how those motivations change with time.

Although migrant workers are commonly thought of as being motivated primarily by economic concerns – and indeed, many studies do support this conclusion – the factors underlying their decision making processes are in fact *multilayered* and inherently complex. Migrant workers' expectations and intentions can also shift and change with time, and they may adopt different identities, affiliations and commitments at different stages of the migration 'project'. Nor are migrant workers simply passive policy objects or a readily available – and easily exploitable – source of labour for employers. As the literature shows, they are able to exercise their agency in a range of ways, negotiating the numerous constraints which they encounter on a daily basis, and developing a range of coping strategies in response to these difficulties.

The following review examines a range of research addressing these issues, drawing mainly upon both national and regional literature – although with some references to experiences of migrant workers in other European countries, where relevant. Much of the literature focuses specifically on the East of England, but material on other key receiving areas for migrant workers – such as Lincolnshire or the North West – is also included. The literature explored here also refers mainly to migrant workers from Central and Eastern European A8 countries, who are the main target group for this research[3]. Sections 2.2 and 2.2.1 outline a general theoretical framework, within which the evidence gathered from the literature will be considered. Section 2.1 then gives a brief overview of the

extent of current knowledge about migrant numbers, profiles and trends – both at national and regional level. Section 2.3 outlines current policy debates around migrant working, focusing particularly on concerns about the integration of new arrivals – particularly those who only plan to stay in the UK on a short-term basis – and the potential impact on levels of community cohesion. Section 2.3.4 focuses on recent debates around the economic impacts of increased migration. The problems raised by the limited extent of our knowledge about migrant workers, and the failure of data collection methods to capture the complexity and changeability of their motivations, is addressed in section 2.3.5 – together with the potential value of longitudinal research studies in addressing some of these deficiencies. Finally, against this background, sections 2.4 and 2.5 highlight a wide range of factors which have contributed to the development of our interview schedule.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Decision making processes

Migrant workers are often assumed to be motivated by primarily economic considerations, and the desire to maximise their own personal welfare. Indeed, this is often cited in unfavourable or hostile media coverage as evidence of the negative effects of migrant working on local communities and labour markets. However, while economic motivations are often important factors in migration decisions – as is evident from much of the literature reviewed here (see section 2.4) – they are not the only significant influences. As this review will show, migration decisions are both complex and fluid, and can be influenced by a much broader range of considerations. However, before we begin examining the range of factors which can influence those decisions, it is necessary to briefly review some of the literature on decision making in order to provide an overarching theoretical framework.

Simon (1985) highlights the complexity of decision making processes by contrasting *substantive* with *procedural rationality*. Substantive rationality, he argues, is based on the assumption that 'every actor possesses a utility function that induces a *consistent ordering among all alternative choices* that the actor

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[1] Which led to the 'gross inaccuracy' of the Government's pre–enlargement predictions (Ruhs 2006: 24).

[2] However, this debate is far from resolved – and was discussed at length in the recent House of Lords report on immigration (House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs 2008a).

[3] Some of the emerging literature on coping strategies, referred to in the review, examines the experiences of other groups of migrant workers – such as Colombians (McIlwaine 2005). However, despite their different statuses, many of the issues discussed (such as employment discrimination) apply equally to A8 workers, and merit further discussion.

faces, and, indeed, that he or she *always chooses the alternative with the highest utility*' (1985: 296, emphasis added), in the hope of maximising their own individual welfare. Decision making thus becomes a purely objective exercise. Conversely, the procedural rationality approach maintains that decision making is a much more subjective process, and one which depends on individual actors' assessment and interpretation of situations. In order to understand how decisions are made, we must take into consideration a range of factors, such as 'the choosing organism's goals, the *information* and conceptualization it has of the situation, and its abilities to draw *inferences* from the information it possesses' (1985: 295, added emphasis).

According to Simon, individual actors do not choose rationally from a complete range of perfect alternatives. Rather, decision making is an *imperfect* process, based on incomplete searches, uncertain information and partial ignorance. It is more like a form of negotiation or compromise, and is 'usually terminated with the discovery of satisfactory, *not optimal*, courses of action' (1985: 295, added emphasis). Any examination of decision making processes must take into account the external constraints that shape and frame those decisions, and which may present decision makers with only a *limited range of options* from which to choose. Equally important is the influence of individual actors' personal goals on their assessment of situations, and 'the ways in which people characterise the choice situations that face them' (1985: 301). Furthermore, Simon reminds us that these goals are not constant but change frequently, becoming 'functions of time and place'.

Sen (1982: 5) also finds little evidence that all choices in economic matters are guided exclusively by 'the requirements of maximising the respective individual welfares' – contrasting this assumption with the idea that the way in which people *actually* behave is completely different. Decision making is not a simple, unidimensional process. It is multi-layered, and can 'reflect a compromise among a variety of considerations of which personal welfare may be just one' (1982: 189). Sen characterises decision making as an inherently complex interplay between individual actors' goals, normative principles and perceptions of their environment. Here **goals** denotes actors' short-term aims – both egoistic and altruistic – which can change according to shifting structural circumstances and constraints. When he refers to **normative principles**, Sen is

describing individual actors' fundamental value systems – such as their religious beliefs, ideological convictions or definitions of national identity – which are less easily altered by structural changes. Lastly, decision makers' **perceptions of their environment** – which, in the case of migrant workers could include an assessment of their immediate surroundings – such as the availability and quality of housing, employment and education[4], or wider considerations such as the regional, national or international context – are also key factors influencing their choices.

Although it is beyond the scope of this review to become deeply involved in questions of the psychology of decision making, it is nonetheless worthwhile considering Plous's assertion (Plous 1993) that there is no such thing as purely rational, unconstrained, context-free decision making. Plous is particularly critical of the notion that decision–makers behave as rational actors with a fixed set of preferences, who seek purely to maximise utility or self benefit (1993: 77). The idea of decision makers systematically ordering all the alternatives and then making their calculations accordingly, is based on the (false) assumption that they possess complete information about the options available to them. However, Plous argues that individual actors' often make imperfect decisions based on *incomplete information*[5] (1993: 95). Moreover, all judgements and decisions rest on our *selective interpretation* of situations, and are also frequently 'subject to *social influences*' (Plous 1993: 204, added emphasis) – causing individual actors' to tailor their behaviour to accommodate others[6]. Differences in individuals' motivations and expectations can also have a significant impact on their decisions (Plous 1993: 21).

2.2.2 Structure, agency and circuits of power

Clegg (1989) develops and expands the various ideas previously set out by other theorists of power[7], moving away from a more simplistic structure-agency dichotomy and proposing instead a more complex and dynamic model of *circuits of power* – which shows it as a 'far less massive, oppressive and prohibitive apparatus than it is often imagined to be' (Clegg 1989: 17–18). *Episodic* power forms the simplest level of Clegg's model, and the 'most apparent, evident and

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[4] Or the barriers they face in accessing such services.

[5] Decisions can also be affected by other imperfections such as memory biases and misunderstood consequences (Plous 1993: 95).

[6] The influence of others on migration decisions is a common theme throughout the literature and will be considered in greater detail (see section 3.3).

[7] Clegg discusses at length the one–dimensional view associated with Dahl's (1957) formal model of episodes of agency power and also Lukes' (1974) extension of the 'two faces of power' into a three–dimensional view (Clegg 1989: 91).

[8] Clegg uses 'agencies' or 'agency' to refer to the organizational capacity of individuals or groups: 'Agency is something which is achieved' (1989:17).

economical circuit of power' (Clegg 1989: 215). Within this circuit, agencies employ the varying resources at their disposal to organise the standing conditions and 'produce consequential outcomes for their own and others' agency' (1989: 215). However, episodic power is set within two further circuits, of *social and system integration* (see appendix A for details), and is arranged within a field of force which is 'fixed, coupled and constituted in such a way that, intentionally or not, certain 'nodal points' of practice are privileged in this unstable and shifting terrain' (Clegg 1989: 17). Agencies are able to fix this field of force, by enrolling other agencies which must then traffic through these 'obligatory passage points'. In the context of this research, employment agencies could be considered examples of nodal points.

According to Clegg's model, power is not a monolithic entity but is highly **contingent** and **dependent on relations of meaning and membership**. Power is inscribed within the rules of the game, which both enable and constrain action. However, those rules are also liable to undercutting and interpretation. Thus apparently less powerful agents – such as migrant workers – are able to *manoeuvre* themselves into more advantageous positions. Clegg (1989: 227) notes that in order to secure resources from the environment, agencies 'may well have to conform to those rule practices which the nodally positioned agencies in that environment require before they will ensure that the resources are forthcoming. If agencies want certain resources then they will have to do certain things, adopt certain practices'. This is certainly true of some migrant workers who, rather than simply becoming passive policy objects, are able to manoeuvre within immigration controls to gain an advantage – for example, through their *semi-compliance* with employment requirements which is seen as *bending rather than breaking the rules* (Ruhs and Anderson 2006).

2.3 The current policy context

2.3.1 Migrant worker numbers and profiles

Since the accession in May 2004 of eight new states to the EU, migration has been increasingly recognised as a key driver of population change, the speed and scale of which has been disproportionately felt in Lincolnshire and across the East of England (Horsfield 2005; Audit Commission 2007). This marked trend is predicted to continue, and 'population projections, based on projecting current fertility, mortality and net migration trends, suggest that migration will remain an important element of UK population change in the future' (Horsfield 2005: 117). This impact has been felt across the UK, but in the East of England in particular (Holman and Schneider 2008). McKay and Winkelmann-Gleed's 2005 study estimated a total regional migrant worker population of between 50,000 and 80,000 at *peak seasonal periods*. However, since then the picture has undoubtedly changed considerably, and migration to the region appears to have increased further still. Hence, Paraskevopoulou and McKay (2007) have recently revised these figures, estimating that the total is more likely to be somewhere between 143,000 and 173,000.

The region has experienced the second highest inflow of A8 migrants, after London and the South East, which are more established as migration destinations (Gilpin et al. 2006: 18). Government data shows that the Anglia region has recorded the highest number of WRS registrations, representing 15 per cent of the national total between May 2004 and September 2008 (Home Office et al. 2008: 17). Moreover, despite the overall drop in total applications for the first three quarters of 2008 (34,895 in Q3 2008, compared with 57,310 in Q3 2007) and a corresponding decline in the total number of applications in the Anglia region, the *proportion* of registrations has remained constant at 15 per cent (Home Office et al. 2008: 18). Total registrations in the Anglia region for the first three quarters of 2008 remain considerably higher than those recorded in London (14,020 or 11 per cent of total registrations) and the South East (11,735 or 9.4 of total registrations)[9]. More fine-grained sub-regional data[10] confirms this overall picture. A recent report on migration data for Essex (Essex Trends 2007) stated that the county has seen an increased number of registrations – and that Braintree is now the migrant 'capital' of the county, with migrant workers now making up 0.88 per cent of total population (well above the national average).

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[9] The other region recording a similarly high number and proportion of registrations is the Midlands.

[10] Although the authors of this report (Essex Trends 2007) emphasise the need to use their data with caution, as they are not derived from national statistics but rather suggest local trends.

Data also suggests that the majority of migrant workers tend to be relatively young and predominantly of working age (Horsfield 2005; Schneider and Holman 2005; Drinkwater et al. 2006). Between May 2004 and September 2008, the number of WRS applicants aged between 18 and 34 years had remained relatively constant at around 80 per cent; in the twelve month period ending September 2008 the proportion was 79 per cent, compared with 82 and 81 percent in the two preceding twelve month periods (Home Office et al. 2008: 10). Migrant workers are often single, and arrive with few dependants. Spencer et al. (2007: 21) noted an average of 0.48 dependants per A8 migrant among respondents in their recent study[11].

Between May 2004 and September 2008 only a small minority (8 per cent) of officially registered migrant workers declared any dependants on their WRS applications, with a national average of 1.5 dependants (Home Office et al. 2008: 11). There are indications of a *slight* rise in the twelve month period ending September 2008, with 10 per cent of registered workers declaring that they had responsibility for dependants 60 per cent of whom were under 17 years of age (compared with 55 and 57 per cent in the two preceding twelve month periods. A recent survey found however that 30 per cent of respondents reported an *intention* to bring their families and children over to the UK (or that they had already done so) – indicating that these figures may change further still. Official figures have also shown a slight gender imbalance in favour of male workers, at 57 per cent compared with 43 per cent in the period between May 2004 and September 2008 (Home Office et al. 2007a) – although the most recent data (for Q3 2008) indicates that the ratio was now 50:50 male to female (Home Office et al. 2008: 10). However, it should be noted that while this data can give broad indications of migration trends and the characteristics of migrant worker populations, it *cannot* offer any indication of the processes underlying their decisions, and their personal motivations.

2.3.2 Recent policies: managing migration and promoting integration

The UK government has remained ambivalent about the benefits of labour migration to the UK, on the one hand highlighting it as a driver of economic growth (see section 2.4) while also maintaining their focus on the apparent integration failures of migrant workers, and the negative implications for

levels of community cohesion (see section 2.3). The brief review of recent policies here underlines this ambivalence, summed up by Pearson (2007: 137) who argued that the Government's current focus is 'primarily on managing entry at the borders. There is no comprehensive policy framework to support the integration of migrants, leaving integration as a responsibility of the individual, supported by a range of selective services and voluntary groups'. Recent initiatives, such as the introduction of a points based system and establishment of a Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to produce an accompanying 'shortage occupation list'[12] indicate an increasingly selective/restrictive approach.

Alongside this, the Government has also recently undertaken a comprehensive review of current policy arrangements for promoting the integration of migrants – and to decide whether it should play a greater role in this, through the creation of an Integration Agency (CLG 2008; see also House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee 2008). The review concluded that there was no need for such an agency, given that existing arrangements were considered sufficient and that any new body would simply duplicate existing input. It also emphasised the Government's commitment to the principle that to 'integrate is not to assimilate or absorb but to bring together and harmonise' (pg. 1). However, it can also be argued that their overall approach continues to focus on the failures of *individuals* to integrate into UK society, and the problems this causes in relation to community cohesion.

2.3.3 Policy debates: integration 'failures' and the effects on community cohesion

Despite an outward emphasis on upholding British traditions of tolerance and inclusiveness – and an ostensibly positive stance in policies relating to migrant workers[13] – recent debates have focused on the potentially negative effects of increased migration flows on levels of social cohesion (see for example Hugo 2005; Berkeley et al. 2007; JRF 2007). Migrant workers are often seen as simply *taking* from the UK without adding anything to the areas in which they settle, and are criticised for coming here purely to capitalise on the generous levels of welfare provision and high quality public services. However, as many commentators have noted, these concerns are prompted more by the underlying fears and insecurities of indigenous

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[11] The recent statistical information on migrant workers in Essex (Essex Trends 2007) records a similar picture.

[12] Published in June 2008 (see also Migration Advisory Committee 2008).

[13] Seen by the current government as an economic benefit.

populations about their own position. These anxieties mean that migrant workers can be seen by local communities as competition for scarce resources – such as employment or housing (Hudson et al. 2007; Roney 2008). This is particularly true in monocultural areas with little history of receiving migrants (Robinson and Reeve 2006). Perceptions of preferential treatment can raise 'strong feelings of economic injustice' among residents, and generate complaints about 'procedural unfairness' (Pillai et al. 2007: 18–19).

Migrant workers can quickly become the focus of these existing fears and resentments – with potentially damaging consequences for levels of community cohesion (Markowa and Black 2007). As Threadgold et al. (2008: 15) note, 'common sense understandings' of migration (and the different statuses and entitlements involved) are often misinformed. Their respondents[14] often equated all migrants with asylum seekers – with all the negative associations the term can often imply – and failed to recognise that migrant workers made a net contribution to the regional economy. However, as Pollard et al. (2008: 29) note, 'although the arrival of new migrants to areas with no history of immigration may in a limited number of cases create some short-term issues for local authorities to address, it is clear that the movement of post-enlargement migrants to some parts of the UK has brought significant economic benefits and assistance to regional development'[15]

Tensions are further fuelled by unfavourable press coverage, and consequently the 'multiplicity of media panics about new immigrants maintains a public perception of perpetual crisis about immigration policies and social problems' (Berkeley et al. 2007: 30). Zetter et al. (2006: 4) observe that the Government appears to have become increasingly concerned at the implications of these tensions and the apparent *integration failures* of new migrants, adopting a more *assimilationist* stance. It is widely acknowledged throughout the literature that many migrant workers cluster together in order to maximise the benefits of informal social networks in terms of access to employment or accommodation, or to enjoy solidarity with fellow nationals as a way of countering their experiences of isolation and disadvantage (see section 3.3). However, Robinson and Reeve (2006: 12) note that policy makers see this apparent 'self-segregation' as a problem to be solved (Robinson and Reeve 2006: 12), and prescribe integration as a potential 'cure for the perceived crisis of social cohesion' (2006: 13). Similarly, Castles et al. (2002: 114) argue that

recent policies have been based on the assumption that integration is a one-way, linear process, requiring individual migrants to conform to the desired patterns of behaviour – rather than a two-way process of 'reciprocal adaptation' on the part of the institutions and populations of the host society[16]. This was further highlighted by a recent IPPR study (Rutter et al. 2008: 17) which noted the strength of Polish respondents' views on current integration debates. Polish interviewees complained that migrants were typically blamed, by the media and by government, for *failing* to integrate. They argued that there was little recognition of the fact that the unfriendliness and sometimes outright hostility of receiving communities was a significant barrier to their integration.

However, policy-makers' concerns about the apparent lack of attachment among migrant workers to the communities in which they settle fail to recognise the complexity of their motivations. Indeed, many *do* retain stronger links to their country of origin – despite living and working in the UK for what can become considerable periods of time. Many migrant workers consider their stay in the UK, however long, to be a purely temporary episode and plan ultimately to return home (see section 4.2). Increasing numbers of migrants are also now 'shuttling' between places, adopting *transnational* lifestyles and 'multiple category memberships' (Vertovec 2007: 5, see section 4.3). However, this continued attachment to country of origin does not necessarily mean that migrants will fail to integrate into receiving communities. As Vertovec (2007: 5) argues, 'belonging, loyalty and attachment are not parts of a zero-sum game based on a single-nation state or society'. Similarly, Zetter et al. (2006) maintain that migrant workers can cohere simultaneously to different social worlds – and that policy makers need a more nuanced approach which takes account of this notion of cohesion with separateness.

2.3.4 Debates on the economic effects of migration

There has been considerable controversy and dispute over the economic benefits of migration to the UK – which, with the recent publication of a report from the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs (2008a), shows little sign of resolution. Debates have often failed to acknowledge the positive economic contribution made by migrant workers (Hugo 2005).

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[14] The research was carried out in South Wales, certain areas of which are both economically depressed and have little history of migration – both factors which are likely to affect attitudes towards migrants to the area.

[15] Particularly in rural areas which may be experiencing acute labour shortages; see also Commission for Rural Communities (2007).

[16] It is important to acknowledge here that while the term 'integration' is widely used, there is no real consensus among academics or policy makers on its meaning (Spencer et al. 2007: 5).

There is a lingering suspicion of the motivations underlying migration decisions, and migrant workers remain marginalised in public discourse and policy (Datta et al. 2006: 2).

There is emerging evidence that migrant labour is making a significant contribution to the development of regional economies. For instance between 2002 and 2007, the contribution of migrant workers to the regional economy in the South East rose from 11 to 15 per cent (Green et al. 2008: 86). While the region has seen a period of relative prosperity, and the overall gross added value (GVA) has increased by £19,726 million over the same period, £9,476 million of this increase was attributable to migrant workers (Green et al. 2008: 87).

Migrant workers make comparatively few demands upon welfare provision and are in fact *net contributors* to the UK economy compared with the indigenous population. Hence in 2003/4 migrant worker contributions accounted for 10.0 per cent of tax receipts, yet migrant worker claims represented just 9.1 per cent of government expenditure (Sriskandarajah et al. 2005). Berkeley et al. (2007: 26) also note that the current 'media–assisted political dynamic' is flatly contradicted by research findings, which have shown that migrant workers make a clear economic and social contribution by adding significantly to the UK tax base, and enhancing both employment opportunities and skills among UK workers. Migrant workers are also seen as compensating for the effects of emigration by plugging key labour market gaps (Ruhs 2006), particularly in the health and social care sector. Migrant workers are often accused of benefit shopping or draining welfare provision despite there being very little evidence to support these claims (Gilpin et al. 2006). For instance, Spencer et al. (2007: 32) reported a very low take-up of health entitlements, and no obvious displacement of the indigenous population. Only 10 per cent of migrant worker respondents in their study had reported having attended an emergency department in the previous 12 months, and only 3 per cent reporting having been a hospital inpatient.

Take up of benefits is also extremely low; indeed, Sriskandarajah et al. (2005: 26) reported that the numbers they recorded as receiving income related benefits were so low as to be statistically insignificant – a claim which is strongly supported by official statistics (Home Office et al. 2007a; 2007b; 2008). The most recent Accession Monitoring report (Home Office et al. 2008) found that the majority of benefit applications submitted by A8 nationals are made in respect of Working Families Tax Credits or Child Benefit rather than Job Seekers Allowance or Income Support[17], the total number of claimants for which (although rising slightly) remains low in relation to the total number of claimants in the UK. In the first three quarters of 2008 45,259 applications for Child Benefit were submitted, 29,489 of which were approved (over 65 per cent)[18]. During the same period 26,381 claims were submitted for Tax Credits, 19,180 of which were successful (65 per cent). This is in contrast with the data relating to claims for other benefits; for example in the first three quarters of 2008, 3657 Income Support claims were submitted by A8 nationals – almost 80 per cent of which were disallowed on failing the Right to Reside and Habitual Residence Test.

Despite widespread concerns that an influx of migrant labour depresses wages and has a negative effect on local labour markets, several studies have noted a 'modest, but broadly positive economic impact' (Gilpin et al. 2006: 6, see also Gott and Johnston 2002; Dustmann and Fabbri 2005; Dustman et al. 2005; Anderson et al. 2006; Green et al. 2007). Dustmann et al. (2008: 1) maintain that 'evidence that immigration does in fact depress wages or leads to large negative employment effects is at best mixed'. Similarly, Lemos and Portes (2008: 1) concluded that there was 'no statistically significant impact of A8 migration on claimant unemployment, either overall or for any identifiable subgroup' – such as young or low–skilled UK workers. They also argue that there is 'statistically significant impact on wages, either on average or at any point in the wage distribution'[19]. In the West Midlands, despite a steep rise in unemployment rates between 2005 and 2006 – a period which also saw a sharp increase in numbers of migrant workers coming to the region – Green et al. (2007: 107) conclude that 'this increase may be due to many possible causes *and does not imply cause and effect* (i.e. it may not be indicative of involuntary displacement of UK nationals)' (added emphasis).

Migrant workers are often highly valued for their flexible attitudes and superior work ethic[20] by employers, who are becoming increasingly dependent on them as a reliable source of labour – particularly in rural economies (CRC 2007: 18).

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[7] The majority of which claims are disallowed.

[18] Interestingly, the proportion of claims for child benefit which have been successful have fallen progressively throughout 2008 (from 75 per cent of all claims in Q1 to 64.5 per cent in Q2 and just 52.7 per cent in Q3).

[19] Although this conclusion is drawn with the caveat that the data on wage effects is less complete.

[20] However, the recent report from the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs (2008) makes the valuable point that arguments highlighting the superior work ethic of migrants can be seen as somewhat of an oversimplification. Nonetheless, data shows that on average A8 and A2 nationals work four hours longer per week than UK nationals (46 compared with 42 hours) (Pollard et al. 2008: 5).

Taylor and Rogaly's study of migrant working in Norfolk noted that, 'the simple fact is that the foreign migrant workers are filling a gap in the labour market that is not, and will not, be filled through local labour sources. Without their labour a significant part of the local agricultural economy would be in major difficulty' (2004: 37). These findings were echoed in Lanz and Holland's interviews with Hertfordshire employers, who reported that recruiting migrant workers had enabled them to fill unpopular and 'historically difficult' vacancies (2007: 60). Datta et al. (2006: 4) also argue that migrant labour has become increasingly important to the functioning of global cities, providing an 'indispensable workforce'. However, a recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation argued that this perception of migrant workers as somehow superior was becoming an area of conflict with UK workers, who were becoming angry at the implication that they are 'expensive and lazy' (Bailey 2008: 3) and criticising migrant workers for their lack of fiscal contribution, and the fact that their lower living costs[21] mean that they are able to afford to work for less – thereby *undercutting* UK workers.

This positive economic contribution is beginning to be recognised and celebrated by policy-makers, but only in relation to *certain groups* of migrants. Hence the recent green paper on citizenship (Home Office 2008: 10) acknowledged the advantages of migrant labour in filling skills shortages, meeting both employer and consumer demands, stimulating the economy by creating new jobs and businesses, and bringing complementary skills to the workplace – thus enhancing the productivity of the native population. However, this refers primarily to the upper *tiers* of the migrant workforce as is apparent from the statement that 'highly skilled, high-earning migrants are key to the continuing development of the UK as a high value economy' (Home Office 2008: 2). *Lower-skilled* workers are less valuable (and therefore less welcome), and are consequently discouraged from coming to the UK for anything other than *temporary stays*. As a result, some commentators have noted signs of an apparently 'increasing polarisation or bifurcation' of outcomes between different groups of migrant workers (Hugo 2005: 5). Policy-making can often appear ambiguous and contradictory; discouraging lower–skilled migrant workers from coming to the UK (and blaming them for causing problems of community cohesion) but equally relying on their labour to prop up regional economies – *particularly* in areas such as the East of England. As Sriskandarajah et al. (2005: 12) note, while policy–makers may acknowledge that 'migration can help fuel economic dynamism, capital formation

and labour market flexibility', they are still failing to take a sufficiently sustained and sensitive approach to integration (Sriskandarajah et al. 2005: 12).

The question of migrant workers' economic contribution remains a subject of intense debate (see for instance Home Office and Department of Work and Pensions 2007). Most recently, the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs (2008a; 2008b) has been highly critical of the economic justifications offered by the current government for allowing increased immigration – and what is seen as their 'analytically weak' argument that migrant labour is indispensable to fill labour and skills shortages. This report concludes that there is little 'systematic empirical evidence' (2008a: 26) of any sustained or significant economic benefits to the UK population from migrant labour – and that while immigrants and their employers may be *winners*, there are also *losers* – particularly those in lower–paid jobs and direct competition with migrant workers, such as previous immigrants and other minority ethnic groups (2008a: 32). The TUC report on vulnerable employment in the UK also argued that while the 'overall economic impact of immigration is positive', with migrant workers making a net contribution to the tax base, the increase in numbers 'has not been without local pressure on services and on some jobs and wages' (TUC 2008: 12).

2.3.5 Measuring migration: predicting trends and tracking changes

The problems and pitfalls of collecting data on migrant workers have been widely acknowledged[22], most recently by the House of Commons Treasury Committee (2008) which recognised the lack of information on migrant *outflows* as a particular issue, making any attempt to measure *change* (and inform service planning) almost impossible. As noted in the Audit Commission's report, Crossing Borders, 'knowing how many [migrant workers] there are in a local area at a particular time, *and predicting future change*, is inherently difficult' (Audit Commission 2007: 14, added emphasis). Lanz and Holland (2007: 83) also observe that there is a 'general paucity of accurate data and information that can be used to understand the size and characteristics of the migrant worker population'. More recently still, the report published by the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs (2008a; 2008b)

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[21] The result of practices such as hotbedding and multiple occupancy.

[22] The unreliability of data, and the serious underestimation of the number of migrant workers who came to the UK post–enlargement, has generated 'alarmist predictions' in the media – and heightened the sense of a migration crisis (Guardian 2004: online).

acknowledged these difficulties, and argued that the 'significant unknowns and uncertainties' in the existing data make estimating the scale, nature and impact of migration particularly problematic – causing considerable difficulties in the provision and planning of public services (2008a: 5)[23].

WRS and NINo registration data can also *underestimate* migration inflows, because there are exemptions (such as for the self-employed[24]) and gaps (where migrant workers fail to register). Rabindrakumar (2008: online) also notes that while NINo registrations are used as a proxy of economic activity rates among migrant workers, they do not consider *de*registrations or those leaving the UK (either indefinitely or on a temporary basis), meaning that there is no measurement of *out*flows. Futhermore, he argues that the practice of registering migrant workers by their area of residence rather than their place of employment means that the resulting data cannot account for those migrant workers who frequently move between jobs – as many do in the early months after arrival (Cole 2007; Spencer et al. 2007) – or those who travel in from outlying areas, where accommodation is cheaper or more readily available (Matthews 2006; Zaronaite and Tirzite 2006; Audit Commission 2007).

Current methods of data collection fail to capture the complexity of migrant worker populations (Lanz and Holland 2007: 86)[25]. Migrant worker populations are highly *fluid* and *transient*, meaning that measurement, prediction and the formulation of evidence–based policy responses become particularly problematic (Byrne and Tankard 2007: 12, see also Castles et al. 2002: 182). As Garapich (2007) notes, it is important to take into account this 'dynamism and circularity' when trying to estimate and plan for migrant worker populations. Much of this type of employment is seasonal – particularly in the agricultural or horticultural sectors, and in rural areas such as the East of England – and migrant workers may only remain in the UK for short periods at a time. Consequently, there is often a seasonal peak in registrations (CRC 2007; Garapich 2007). McKay and Winkelmann-Gleed (2005: 68) have also noted that this seasonal work adds to the complexity of collecting accurate statistics. Migrant worker identities are becoming *increasingly complex* and *transnational* (see section 4.3), with many maintaining strong links with their countries of origin and making frequent return trips – despite

intending to remain employed in the UK for some time. The length of time migrant workers intend to stay in the UK is also unclear. Their plans and expectations are not necessarily firmly fixed, and can change frequently according to their personal circumstances and experiences of success (Spencer et al. 2007: 89) – or alterations in the social or economic conditions in their country of origin.

Policies often fail to take into account the complexity of migrant workers' motivations and decision-making processes. Migrant workers are not simply passive policy objects – a common assumption which fails to capture the dynamic and *negotiated* nature of migrant workers' agency (see section 1.2). As White and Ryan (2008: 1497) note, while some migrants – particularly those with families – have a more 'limited freedom of manoeuvre' the majority are agents, who mould their own livelihood strategies: they are not just at the mercy of economic structures'.

Migrant workers can employ a range of coping strategies[26] to deal with the limitations of their status. Harney and Baldessar (2007: 192) draw our attention to the 'creativity of the migrant subject, even within structures that limit the social field'. Similarly, Schuster (2005) argues that while migrants' choices are often severely constrained, they continue actively to negotiate and exercise agency *within those constraints*. Hence Schuster talks about migrants as 'mobile actors, people who make choices about where they go and under what title, but people whose choices are limited by a range of factors including migration regimes, social networks and social and economic capital' (2005: 757). Similarly, Kosic and Triandafyllidou (2003: 997) maintain that migrants operate within a 'context of limitations and opportunities which they actively integrate into their migration experience'. Again, migrant workers are seen not as passive policy objects – but as 'social actor(s) in possession of social, economic and cultural resources that s/he mobilises in order to achieve her/his aims' (Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2003: 998).

Castles et al. (2002: 186) have highlighted the potential benefits of conducting longitudinal (rather than cross-sectional) research with migrants, arguing that this method is critical for evaluating policies and gauging their long-term effects – as well as providing insight into different stages of the migration/

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[23] Hence one of the main recommendations of the report was the need for a 'clear commitment to improving migration statistics' (2008a: 21).

[24] Self–employment is a significant aspiration for many migrant workers, and an important coping strategy for some.

[25] They also argue that nationally aggregated data are not sufficiently sensitive to inform local policy responses.

[26] Until fairly recently, there has been a relative lack of research into migrant workers' coping strategies – and there is still little information on how migrant workers cope *emotionally* – rather than practically – with their experiences.

integration process[27]. Spencer et al. (2007: 78) note that including more of a longitudinal element would have benefited their research on migrant workers' lives beyond the workplace, which could only provide a snapshot of their experiences – rather than giving a more rounded picture of respondents' 'adjusted intentions over time'. Robinson and Reeve (2006: 41) have also argued that future research needs to examine migrant workers' *aspirations for the future* (specifically with reference to housing, but also more generally), as well as the multiple (and *shifting*) factors influencing their settlement patterns. A longitudinal design – such as that used in this study – consequently aims to capture richer detail on complex questions including;

- what effect policies might have on migrant workers' decision making processes

- how migrant workers' plans can change, and what factors effect these changes – including *unexpected* events

- what aspirations migrant workers have for the future, and how these are achieved or amended

2.3.6 Migrant workers returning home: a new phenomenon?

Since the initial literature review for this project was written, a further trend in patterns migration has become increasingly prominent. Many commentators have argued that (for a range of reasons, which will be explored below) patterns of A8 and A2 migration to the UK are undergoing radical changes, and that after a period of expansion, trends are now *slowing down* – and even reversing in some areas. Using data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and WRS, Pollard et al. (2008) have estimated that over half the migrant workers who arrived in the UK after May 2004 had left by December 2007. They also state that the number of A8 migrants arriving in the UK has started to *slow substantially*, with 17 per cent fewer WRS registrations in the second half of 2007 than during the same period of 2006. We estimate that some 30,000 fewer migrants arrived in the second half of 2007 as did in the second half of 2006' (Pollard et al. 2008: 5)[28].

A number of potential reasons are given for this emerging trend. The previous strength of the UK economy relative to those in migrant workers' countries of origin has been cited as a major push/pull factor in migration decisions (see section 3.1). However, it has been suggested that as economic conditions in sending countries improve, migrant workers' economic motivations for coming the UK will weaken (Pollard et al. 2008). Unemployment rates in sending countries are steadily decreasing, wage levels are rising[29] and the pound sterling is no longer as particularly strong in relation to A8 and A2 currencies. For example, the pound has already fallen by roughly a quarter relative to the Polish Zloty since early 2004[30], and it is predicted that 'further devaluation will narrow the gap between potential earnings in Britain and Poland, reducing the incentive for new migrants to come to the UK, and *increasing the incentive for those in the UK to go home or elsewhere*' (Pollard et al. 2008: 6, added emphasis).

However, as with the decision to migrate, economic considerations are not paramount in the decision to return hoe, and family or personal reasons are more often cited as the main reason for leaving the UK (White and Ryan 2008; Ryan et al. 2008; 2009). Pollard et al. (2008: 44) also found that financial factors were not the main motivation prompting a return home 'even among the lowest paid migrants' (Pollard et al. 2008: 44). Instead, 36 per cent of their survey sample (n=135) cited the fact that they 'missed home' as the main reason, while 29 per cent (n=107) reported that they had left to 'be with family members'. A significant proportion (16 per cent) had always intended to return home after a fixed period, once they had saved enough money (see section 4.2). Nonetheless, migrant workers' plans remain strikingly flexible, and although the majority of respondents (70 per cent) in this particular study felt that their return home had been successful, their options often remained open regarding future migrations. Hence while 37 per cent of their sample intended to remain in Poland, 33 per cent intended to leave Poland again[31] – and 30 per cent were unclear as to their future plans. Similarly, White and Ryan (2008: 1467) maintain that 'in mid-2008 it is impossible to be sure whether large numbers of Poles will eventually return to Poland with the intention of staying for good (White and Ryan 2008: 1467).

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[27] However, notwithstanding the arguements in section 4.3, it is important to note that unlike migrants into the EU discussed by these writers, EU citizens as migrant workers in EU member states are not likely to encounter as intense and closed a migration experience given the greater possibility of an easy exit from the host society (cheap flights, relative proximity to the home country or more mogration alternatives within the EU). This suggests that agents' embeddedness in the migration experience is more fluid and negotiable.

[28] This issue has becoming increasingly prominent in media coverage of migration issues during 2008.

[29] Pollard et al. (2008) cite figures provided the British-Polish Chamber of Commerce which indicate that between February 2007 and February 2008, wages in Poland (private sector) rose by an average of 12.8 per cent.

[30] A situation which could potentially increase, given the current financial climate.

[31] Of those intending to leave Poland, 61 per cent though they would come to the UK.

2.4 Factors influencing migrant workers' decision making

2.4.1 Employment and economic factors

Numerous studies have cited economic motivations as a *key driver of migration decisions* (e.g. de Lima et al. 2005; McKay and Winkelmann-Gleed 2005; Pemberton and Stevens 2006; de Lima et al. 2007). Sriskandarajah et al. (2004: 15) argue that the *main* determinants of migration decisions and destinations are migrants' assessments of the economic and political conditions in their countries of origin, coupled with a calculation of the economic and social prospects in their likely destinations. As Pollard et al. (2008: 41) note, 'having emerged from totalitarian regimes less than 20 years ago, all the new accession countries continue to have significantly lower standards of living than in the UK'. Experiences of socioeconomic disadvantage at home can act as a powerful *push factor* (Dustmann et al. 2003; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005)[32].

Conversely, the comparatively 'favourable macroeconomic climate' (Blanchflower 2007: 6) of receiving countries such as the UK is often given as a major *pull factor*. For instance, Blanchflower observes that many migrant workers come from countries with much lower rates of GDP – such as Lithuania (1.60 per cent), Latvia (1.25 per cent) and Slovakia (0.92 per cent). According to Eurostat data in 2004 the GDP per capita of Latvia, the poorest accession country, was just 44 per cent of the EU25 average – and the GDP of the richest – Slovenia – was only 85 per cent of the average (cited in Pollard et al. 2008: 41). The GDP of the three A8 countries from which the largest numbers of migrant workers arrive in the UK (Poland, Lithuania and Slovakia) have three of the lowest GDPs per capita of all the new accession countries[33]. The strong performance of the pound is also seen as a key consideration (McKay and Winkelmann-Gleed 2005: 104, see also McIlwaine 2005: 16)[34]. Moreover, the East of England region may have become a particularly attractive destination for

migrant workers due to the fact that it is experiencing a period of relative economic growth and prosperity – especially with its proximity to London and the recent expansion of Stansted Airport (Paraskevopoulou and McKay 2007: 4).

High rates of unemployment and a lack of suitable, well–paid job opportunities can often prompt a decision to find work abroad (Dustmann et al. 2003; Kupiszewski 2006; Anderson et al. 2006; Gilpin et al. 2006; Blanchflower 2007; Spencer et al. 2007). McKay and Winkelmann-Gleed's (2005) study of migrant workers in the East of England found that many were attracted to the region partly by the wide range of job opportunities, as well as higher wage levels and improved working conditions[35]. Similarly, recent research into the effects of migrant working on the Mid/West Essex labour market (Paraskevopoulou and McKay 2007) found that the buoyancy of the local labour market, with a low unemployment rate of 2.3 per cent (compared with a regional average of 2.6 per cent and a national average of 3.3 per cent), acts as a clear pull factor for new arrivals – particularly those from A8 countries. Drinkwater et al. (2006) also argue that high levels of unemployment in sending countries have contributed to increased migration to more successful EU member states, including the UK. For example, in 2003 unemployment in Poland had reached almost 20 per cent (in Slovakia it was slightly over 16 per cent) – compared with the UK which had the lowest rate in the EU, at 5 per cent[36]. Wage levels are also a significant factor in many migration decisions, and even *professional* jobs often attract lower wages than less highly-skilled employment in the UK (Ruhs 2006: 25). In 2002, the average hourly wage for engineering work was 4.80 DM (West Poland) and 2.70 DM (East Poland) compared with 28.50 DM in Munich (Sinn 2002 cited in Drinkwater et al. 2006). Moreover, *youth* unemployment in the accession states has been relatively high, and in Poland had reached 40 per cent by 2004 (Pollard et al. 2008: 43) – perhaps accounting for the large number of young migrant workers arriving in the UK[37].

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[32] It will be important to consider how the socioeconomic conditions in sending countries change throughout the project, and what effect this has on migrant workers' decision-making – especially with regard to length of stay (see section 4.2 (this is being monitored at EU level).

[33] Pollard et al. also note that the differences in GDP compared with the UK may not be sufficiently large for migrant workers from the richer accession states (Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic) to make the move to the UK.

[34] However, for a reversal of this argument see section 2.6.

[35] Zaronaite and Tirzite's study (2006) of migrant workers in Lincolnshire reported similar findings. De Lima et al. (2005; 2007) also report that many migrant workers arriving in Scotland are motivated by high levels of unemployment and low wages in their countries of origin – as well as fierce competition for the jobs that are available.

[36] Again, it may be that the *lower* unemployment rates in richer accession countries such as Hungary (6.1 per cent in 2004) and Slovenia (6.3 per cent) are insufficiently high to motivate migrant workers to find work in the UK.

[37] White and Ryan (2008: 1471) refer to this group – who often cite the pursuit of adventure as a motivating factor behind their migration (see section 3.2) – as 'transition losers'.

Migrating often provides new employment opportunities for groups which may be marginalised in labour markets – such as women. Coyle (2007:41) has suggested that the 'very high social costs of economic transformation' in Poland – with heavy job losses following a period of economic restructuring and the privatisation of state-run industries – have particularly affected female employees. Employment rates among women have fallen in all A8 countries, but especially Poland where it has dropped from 52.2 per cent (1994) to 47.9 per cent (2003)[38]. Women are also overrepresented among the *long-term* unemployed (over 12 months), and many older women (50 plus) have no choice but to withdraw from the labour force completely. Coming to the UK can allow women to earn a wage, and can also offer them new freedoms[39]. McKay and Winkelmann-Gleed (2005: 91) also found that *older* workers – who may be squeezed out of the labour market in their home countries in favour of younger employees – also benefit from the increased employment opportunities in the UK. Similarly, Zaronaite and Tirzite (2006: 52) found that many older migrant workers moved here because it meant being able to continue working past 50, and because employers were less likely to discriminate against them on the grounds of age.

Much has been written about the disadvantage experienced by migrant workers in the UK labour market, many of whom are employed in low–level, routinised jobs for which they are often vastly over-qualified. For example, Schneider and Holman (2005) reported significant downgrading of skills among migrant workers to the Breckland area of Norfolk, whose qualifications were often mismatched with the employment opportunities available to them. Many migrants work very long hours in poor conditions – often fitting in extra shifts or multiple jobs which leave them little leisure time – and despite favourable comparisons with wage levels in their home countries they remain poorly paid (JRF 2007; Spencer et al. 2007). Pollard et al. (2008: 37) have argued that despite a small increase in the number of highly skilled jobs for migrant workers, the majority remain low-paid, with 89 per cent of A8 and A2 nationals earning less than £400 per week (before tax)

in 2007[40] – and concluded that there is 'a significant pool of untapped high-skilled labour in the UK that is being wasted'.

A report recently published by the TUC's Commission on Vulnerable Employment (TUC 2008) concluded that the weak position of migrant workers in the labour market and their restricted rights to benefits[41] leaves them particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Despite their more secure immigration status (compared with illegal immigrants), 'even if registered many cannot risk losing a job if destitution is the only alternative' (TUC 2008: 53). As Craig et al. (2007: 22) argue, this means that many are subject to 'slavery or slavery-like working conditions', forming part of a disposable workforce in insecure jobs – and with very poor pay and conditions[42]. As the TUC report observes, 'many low–paid migrant workers cannot leave an exploitative job as the alternative is destitution' (2008: 53), and are consequently reluctant to complain about pay or conditions – particularly where they are not confident expressing themselves in English.

However, many migrant workers see themselves as making a series of 'tough choices and trade-offs' (Spencer et al. 2007: 23, see also Holman and Schneider 2008)[43], and are prepared to tolerate low-level employment because of the continued economic advantage it offers them. Eade et al. (2006: 12) suggest that migrant workers' *main* strategy is to 'maximise earnings and minimise the time needed to achieve this'. Similarly, Grzymala-Kazlowska (2005: 678) has argued that migrant workers in Brussels 'want to accumulate the highest possible material profit in the shortest period of time'. Qualitative research with Polish workers in London carried out by the IPPR found that those who *did* stay in the long-term often moved into jobs more suited to their level of skills and qualifications, particularly once they had attained the necessary proficiency in English language (Pollard et al. 2008: 38).

Low-paid, low status jobs are consequently seen by migrant workers as a purely temporary measure (Ruhs 2006; Spencer et al. 2007) and a means of accumulating savings before either moving on to a better job[44] or *returning home*. Many migrant

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[38] This trend is particularly marked in some regions such as the industrial area of Lödz.

[39] Coyle also argues that there has been an increasing emphasis on women's *traditional* role within the home, which has weakened their position in the Polish labour market, and that working abroad can be an *emancipatory* experience.

[40] This data was obtained from the Labour Force Survey.

[41] Particularly those from Romania and Bulgaria.

[42] Weishaar (2008) has argued that the long hours many migrants work, and the poor conditions they experience, are beginning to lead to increased levels of stress and depression. However, this evidence is based on a very small sample (n=8) and would need further investigation.

[43] Datta et al. (2006; 2007) also discuss the various income-maximising strategies used by migrant workers, such as working long hours and multiple jobs.

[44] Many migrant workers move frequently between jobs, particularly in the early months after their arrival (Spencer et al. 2007; JRF 2007).

workers do not see their move to the UK as indefinite, but maintain a strong attachment to their countries of origin – and the long-term goal for many is to return once they have earned enough to finance projects in their countries of origin. Wages earned in the UK are commonly re-invested at home – often in property, but also in new businesses or in the education of children (Drinkwater et al. 2006). Hence Pemberton and Stevens (2006: 10) reported that many migrant workers were paying off mortgages on properties in Poland. Eade et al. (2006) also found that 70 per cent of migrant worker respondents maintained economic and social interests in Poland often by buying land or property, but also by looking for jobs. 26 per cent had already bought, or were *planning* to buy, property with money earned in the UK.

2.4.2 Multilayered motivations

Economic considerations and the availability of employment are key factors in migration decisions, yet there are other factors which are perhaps equally significant. Recent research on migrant working in the East of England (Holman and Schneider 2008) concluded that while economic calculations *were* important, migrant workers did not systematically assess the relative prosperity of the region before arrival[45]. Respondents' motivations were more complex, and were also likely to change over time. Similarly, Paraskevopoulou and McKay (2007: 24) argue that motivations are 'multi-layered' – and suggest that for some, working abroad may be an important stage in their personal development. Many migrant workers are keen to access opportunities of improving their English language skills (McKay and Winkelmann-Gleed 2005; Zaronaite and Tirzite 2006; de Lima et al. 2007). Some migrant workers are motivated by a desire to enter higher education (Schneider and Holman 2005; Pemberton and Stevens 2006) – particularly where fees in their home countries are prohibitively high. The desire to achieve a better future or quality of life – particularly for their children – can also be a key motivation for migrant workers (Spencer et al. 2007: 76; Holman and Schneider 2008). Among younger migrant workers, the desire for adventure or new experiences can also be important, and

moving abroad can open up 'new perspectives and ambitions' (McKay and Winkelmann-Gleed 2005: 114)[46] – and 'broaden horizons (Pollard et al. 2008: 43)[47].

2.4.3 Influence of others on migration decisions: social networks, family and friends

Several studies have highlighted the importance of social networks in migration decisions[48]. For example, it is widely recognised that assistance from family and friends can be an invaluable source of help to migrant workers in finding both employment and accommodation (Evans et al. 2005; Robinson et al. 2007; Spencer et al. 2007; Roney 2008). Datta et al. (2008: 14) found that migrant workers drew on the prior knowledge and experiences of family and friends before leaving their home countries, to ensure that they were sufficiently prepared. Only one in five respondents in Spencer's et al. study (2007) accessed information on employment, accommodation or available services from official sources, compared with one in three who relied on family, friends or co-nationals for this information. Similarly, Ryan et al. (2009: 74) have highlighted the 'importance of transnational family networks as on-going sources of practical and emotional support, facilitated through the availability of cheap phone calls, e-mails and texts', and found that 'migrants' planning and decision-making are often implicated in complex family relationships and considerations'[49].

McKay and Winkelmann-Gleed (2005) also noted that migrant workers in the East of England tended to be attracted to areas where there was an existing chain of migration, providing resources on which they could draw – what Epstein and Gang (2005: 652) have described as 'beneficial network externalities'. The availability of support from family and friends is a key factor in migration planning, and networks can thus become a survival mechanism and 'an important element in lowering [the] costs of migration' (Epstein and Gang 2005: 664). Vasta (2004: 10) has also suggested that migrant networks can provide a 'positive flow of information, resources

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[45] Despite accusations leveled against migrant workers (see section 2.2), there is little evidence in the literature to suggest that their decision to come to the UK is motivated by a desire to access services such as health or educational provision.

[46] Indeed, there is some evidence that younger people from Poland have come to see moving abroad not as a momentous decision, but as part of a 'natural European mobility' (Strategic Advice Centre 2008).

[47] The diversity and increased tolerance of alternative lifestyles has also been cited as a motivating factor for young migrants to the UK (Pollard et al. 2008).

[48] Indeed, as patterns of migration become increasingly complex with frequent returns home followed by further migration – either back to the UK or to another country – it is predicted that these networks will proliferate even further (White and Ryan 2008; Ryan et al. 2008).

[49] For example, younger migrants were found to be more likely to be influenced by siblings or cousins – rather than family members of a different generation.

and links' and can construct protective 'spaces of solidarity' for new arrivals (pg. 13) – mediating between individual actors and structural forces[50]. Similarly Robinson and Reeve (2006: 9) argue that the tendency of migrant communities to settle in clusters – rather than posing an integration problem (see section 2.3) – is prompted by the need for this support. Hence clustered communities can represent a 'vital resource for people faced with a whole host of problems and challenges meeting their material needs, integrating into British society, coping with hostility and exclusion, engaging with key agencies and service providers, satisfying their cultural requirements and asserting their own identity'[51]. Conversely, many migrant workers enjoy few opportunities to interact with local communities – for instance, Spencer et al. (2007: 58) found that while social networks did expand over time, after two years one in four migrant workers reported spending no time with British people.

2.5 Individual decision making processes

2.5.1 Individual migrant workers' goals

Eade et al. (2006) offer a useful four-fold typology which illustrates the considerable differences between individual migrant workers' goals. While it is not certain that all migrant workers will fall into one of the groups they identify, it does provide a useful starting point for discussion – and an illustration of just how wide the range of individual migration goals is. The first group they identify is the *storks* (20 per cent of their sample) who are frequent or *circular* migrants, often coming to the UK for seasonal jobs. They are mainly concentrated in low-paid occupations, and usually stay for short periods only (between two and six months), relying on working abroad to raise vital income. Storks also see the economic situation at home as *improving*, and migration as a short-term solution to their poverty – albeit one which can be repeated as often as necessary. *Hamsters* (16 per cent of the sample) treat migration as a one-off activity, which allows them to generate sufficient capital to reinvest in the Polish economy and improve their social mobility at home. They stay for longer and more uninterrupted periods than the storks, but like the storks they tend to cluster in lower-paid occupations where job opportunities are easily available.

The largest group identified by Eade et al. are the *searchers* (42 per cent of their sample), which predominantly consists of 'young, individualist and ambitious migrants' (2006: 10–12). Searchers are represented in a range of occupations, from low-earning to highly-paid and highly-skilled. They deliberately keep their options open, and their migration plans are marked by a clear 'intentional unpredictability'. This group is tuned into what Eade et al. describe as an increasingly 'flexible, deregulated and increasingly transnational, post-modern capitalist labour market' (2006: 11), and their plans and aspirations are highly adaptable. Searchers are prepared for every opportunity, including a potential return to Poland if the economic situation improves – or further migration. Moreover, unlike the storks and the hamsters, their main focus is on accumulating social and economic capital both in the UK *and* Poland. The fourth group identified by Eade et al. is the *stayers* (22 per cent of their sample). Stayers are the only group to identify particularly strongly with the UK, seeing their migration as a means of achieving social mobility – and expressing a desire to establish themselves here more indefinitely.

2.5.2 Length of stay

Migrant workers' intentions regarding length of stay are often unclear, and it can be a 'source of frequent reflection and discussion' (Holman and Schneider 2008: 17)[52]. Spencer et al. (2007: 86) argue that migrants 'frequently adjust and readjust their plans, deciding to stay for longer periods than they originally intended'. The in-depth interviews they conducted produced clear evidence of migrant workers 'weighing up the pros and cons of staying or returning to their home country, a balance they recognised could shift decisively over time' (2007: 81). Intentions changed significantly between the two data collection phases, with a significant proportion of respondents planning further stays in the UK – and only 13 per cent stating that they would never return. McKay and Winkelmann-Gleed (2005) found migrant workers' motivations regarding length of stay in their

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[50] (Boyd 1989 cited in Vasta 2004: 9).

[51] Vasta (2004: 22) also sounds a cautionary note, arguing that social networks can also marginalise or exclude some migrants, restricting their scope for action.

[52] Holman and Schneider (2008) reported a wide range of intentions among migrant workers, ranging from six months to seven years.

study differed widely. A majority of their interviewees had long-term plans either to return home or move on to a third country, and there were also significant numbers with *no* definite plans. Research carried out by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2007) has also reported that migrant workers' goals regularly change, and that experiences of economic success may prompt higher earners to stay longer. Garapich (2006) has also commented on this 'intentional unpredictability'[53], arguing that Polish migrant workers commonly adapt their expectations according to their assessments of the flexibility of the UK labour market and the socioeconomic situation at home. A recent survey of Polish nationals (CRONEM 2006) also found that 30 per cent of respondents did not know how long they would stay[54], suggesting that a 'relatively high proportion of recent migrants are adopting a 'wait and see' approach to the duration of their stay'.

Similarly, Spencer et al. (2007: 85) found that a prolonged lack of job opportunities at home meant that migrant workers were often staying for longer than they had originally intended. Conversely, experiences of unemployment and economic disadvantage – particularly in the first year after arrival in the UK – can mean that migrant workers are *more* likely to return home (Jensen and Pedersen 2007). Rutter et al. (2008: 20) argue that the isolation often experienced by migrant workers, and their lack of interaction with local communities, can make an early return more likely. McKay and Winkelmann-Gleed (2005: 117) also conclude that negative experiences can lead migrant workers – who may be 'overwhelmed' by the high cost of living or the irregularity of their employment – to consider returning earlier than planned. Incorrect information can raise false hopes among migrant workers and often does not match the reality of low wages, and poor living and working conditions (McKay and Winkelmann-Gleed 2005: 103). Pollard et al. (2008: 46) found that although only 18 per cent of returned Polish migrants found their experiences in the UK 'worse than expected'[55], a significant majority of these (68 per cent) cited low pay and long hours as a major reason for their disillusionment. Several interviewees stated that the long hours many work act 'as a barrier to forming new relationships beyond those with colleagues and the people with whom they live, whom are often other Poles'. However, returning home is not guaranteed to succeed – and migrant workers may become disillusioned, subsequently moving back again to the UK (Holman and Schneider 2008).

2.5.3 Transnationalism and super diversity

Various commentators have highlighted an increasing transnationalism among migrants (Vertovec 2001; 2004; 2006 and 2007, but see also Castles 2002; Garapich 2006; Harney and Baldessar 2007; Spencer et al. 2007; Rutter et al. 2008). Hence Vertovec (2007: 19) argues that 'the degrees to and ways in which today's migrants maintain identities, activities and connections linking them with communities outside Britain are unprecedented'. This trend is maintained by new and readily available communication technologies, and cheaper air travel (Vertovec 2004: 971; Berkeley et al. 2006: 20; Vertovec 2007: 19), meaning that migrant workers in this country are able to preserve existing attachments to 'families, communities traditions and causes *outside the boundaries of the nation state to which they have moved*' (Vertovec 2001: 574, added emphasis). Increasing globalisation has thus shifted the nature of migration 'away from long-term settlement towards increasingly short-term, pendular 'shuttle' mobility' (Coyle 2007: 42). The most significant difference from previous patterns of migration has been this 'large increase in temporary and circular migration' – particularly among A8 migrant workers (Rutter et al. 2008: 6). Garapich (2006) reports that 80 per cent of Polish migrants in his sample made frequent return trips to Poland (up to ten times per year) to visit family and friends, and assess the current socioeconomic climate[56]. Similarly Coyle (2007: 42) argues that migrant workers often act more as 'long-distance commuters' who *shuttle* between their place (country) of work and the country they consider to be home.

Migrant identities are currently marked by a 'level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the country has previously experienced' (Vertovec 2006), with many migrants now citing 'multiple category memberships' (Vertovec 2007: 5). Likewise Garapich (2007: 2) has noted the 'internal diversity of contemporary Polish migrant groups. This increased diversity and the clear trend towards short-term rather than indefinite migration poses a significant challenge to policies which are still based on the 'orthodox assumption that integration is promoted by naturalisation' (Rutter et al. 2008) – and for the community cohesion and integration policies discussed in section 2.2. Rutter et al. (2008: 5) thus argue that these 'new patterns of temporary and circular international migration' are

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53 Garapich also highlights the fact that the WRS question on length of stay is often not completed.

54 Particularly those aged between 24 and 34.

55 Compared with 24 per cent who had found life in the UK 'better than expected' and 46 per cent who reported that it had been 'about the same as expected' (Pollard et al. 2008: 46).

56 There are also reports of migrant workers returning to Poland for other reasons, such as medical treatments.

challenging commonly-held assumptions about what government can and should do to promote integration through naturalisation – which is becoming 'less relevant than ever before given emerging patterns of super mobility' (Rutter et al. 2008: 25). Hence many respondents in their research, the majority of whom were young, expressed only a *mild* attachment to Polish national identity. They preferred instead to see themselves as cosmopolitan European citizens with multiple identities and affiliations, *only one of which* is their

Polish nationality. Few expressed a strong interest in applying for indefinite UK nationality – apart from possibly as a pragmatic route to accessing bank loans or starting a business (Rutter et al. 2008: 15). However, White and Ryan (2008: 1497) found in *their* research that Polish migrants often expressed a 'strong desire to keep their national identity intact' – motivated in part by a feeling that 'Polishness had to be kept safe for when or if it was taken back home again'[57].

2.6 Conclusion

As this focused literature review has shown, migrant workers' motivations and aspirations are often more complex and more subject to change than policy-makers acknowledge. It has been used as a basis for the development of the interview schedule and questionnaire, and will continue to be updated on an

annual basis to accommodate new confirmatory and contradictory findings as further research reports and other data emerge over the course of the study – as is to be expected in such a highly topical and rapidly developing area of policy-making.

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[57] They also note that many migrant worker parents expressed a strong desire to educate their children in Polish, meaning that they would be able to 'slot back into the Polish school system when necessary' (White and Ryan 2008: 1497).

3 Findings from qualitative research

3.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with migrant workers (chiefly A8 nationals) living and working in the six counties of the Eastern region. The interviews aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of interviewees' lives both here in the Eastern region of the UK and in their home countries before migration, and to expose the manifold factors contributing to individuals' decisions to migrate and to the length of stay envisaged and experienced. Year 1 interviews will be followed up with further shorter interviews in years 2 and 3 with the same interviewees. Interviewees were also asked to complete questionnaires and to keep a diary for three months for each year of the study. Anticipating a process of attrition over time as a result of economic factors or various personal and professional issues – which may see some participants return home, move out of the region or to a third country – the first year's interviews include a 'buffer' of an additional ten interviewees with an expectation that thirty individuals will sustain their involvement with the research[1].

Interviewees have arrived in the UK at different points in time spanning just prior to accession to early-2008 and have been grouped according to whether they are early arrivals, mid-term arrivals or late arrivals[2]. On this basis (and cognisant of issues related to country of origin, gender, socio-economic background, level of English language, age, location, skills, economic and policy impacts) some appreciation of the commonalities as well as the diversity of experiences affecting these migrant worker cohorts across the migration process and over the period of the study can be established.

Interviews were conducted in English, although the level of interviewees' standard of English varied, with one interview carried out with a translator present. In the majority of cases, interviewees' competence and confidence with spoken English is much greater than with written English. However, even where the level of English was considered excellent by the interviewers, practically all interviewees expressed a desire to improve their English and to study towards that end regardless of length of stay intentions.

3.1.1 Profile of interviewees

Over half of the interviewees are Polish, followed by Slovakians, Czechs, Lithuanians, Latvians, Hungarians and one Romanian. There are slightly more women than men in the sample[3]. The age of interviewees range from 18 to 53 with the majority aged between 22 and 34. Most are single and of the twelve married, six have children currently living with them in the UK. At the time of interview, residential locations included Peterborough, Cambridge, St Neots, King's Lynn, Braintree, Bishops Stortford, Luton, Bedford, Thetford, Great Yarmouth, Bury St Edmunds and Wisbech. As primarily occupants in the private rented sector many had experienced several changes of address within the region and few worked in the areas they actually lived. It was noted that whilst the housing situation in countries of origin was mixed – spanning a minority 'very good' to 'very poor' with a high number of interviewees having to share their parents' homes or service high rents – the availability and quality of housing in the UK was often a disappointment.

The dominant occupational areas of interviewees were care work, factory and warehouse work, the service and hospitality sector, cleaning, retail, office work, motor mechanics and maintenance, with the majority of interviewees 'downgrading' in terms of their qualifications, skills and previous occupations[4]. However, at the same time, a number of interviewees had taken up educational opportunities in the UK (or distance learning) and were studying whilst working. Not including English language classes, interviewees were studying in further education colleges on IT and Access courses, and for degrees in the higher education sector, and, in one case, for a PhD. Those not engaged in formal education were divided between those aiming to progress through the workplace or planning to set up an independent business, those planning to take up educational opportunities at a later date or those content to settle with low-skilled work (the main reason for this choice relates largely to an intended short stay in the UK or consciously opting for the safe option: 'a simple life with no worries').

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[1] The recent downturn in the British economy and declining value of sterling against the Euro, however, was not anticipated at the planning stages of this research project.

[2] **Interviewees' first arrival dates**
Pre-accession: September 2003, January 2004, March 2004 (who went home and returned in 2005)
Post-accession: nine in 2004 (with two returning home and coming back to the UK in 2005 and 2006 – respectively, after a few months and two and a half years in the UK); eleven in 2005; three in 2006 (with one returning home after a year and a half, coming back to the UK in 2008); six in 2007 (including one A2 national); two in 2008.
'Early arrivals' = 2004 (12 interviewees); 'Mid-term arrivals' = 2005 and 2006 (14 interviewees); 'Late arrivals' = 2007 and 2008 (8 interviewees). (Five 'buffer' interviews require completion.)

[3] Final interviews will produce an even gender balance.

[4] Occupation areas in home countries ranged from elementary to professional level, including small business owners (and excluding a minority of full-time school and university students). Qualifications ranged from Masters level qualifications to a High School pass, with the majority holding university degrees (MAs, MBAs and BA/BSC's) or Diploma level qualifications.

The majority of interviewees characterised themselves as being organised but also open, spontaneous and flexible and this self-identification is borne out in their migration narratives. With very little hesitation, they responded to questions on identity and coping strategies indicating a high level of self-awareness and that this was not the first time they had reflected on such issues[5]. A high degree of reflexivity is perhaps not an untypical characteristic of being a migrant.

A sense of belonging was probed in this section revealing an interesting diversity of responses. National identity with a secondary European identity was the most common response. However, some interviewees were more insistent on a European identification rather than drawing on a national identity, and a small minority preferred to identify themselves as British (i.e. interviewees planning to apply for British citizenship). For some, location had an impact on their sense of identity highlighting a change in their original identity to, for example, 'Polish living in the UK'.[6] No interviewees identified themselves as 'East European'. On the whole, interviewees were very critical of this term and felt that the English population associated the concept with negative images (such as being less developed than Western Europe and with communism).

"[W]e know that we are very similar in backgrounds to the Western Europeans. But the problem is that the Western Europeans don't think we are. If you don't know something, you think it is inferior to you. (Interviewee from Poland)"

A question on personal ambitions to prepare the ground for later more detailed questions revealed an array of projects – often termed 'dreams' – and gave the sense that the UK provided a good environment to progress and realise these ambitions.

The final question in this section asked interviewees to reflect on their coping strategies in response to problems in the UK and in relation to their countries of origin. In home countries, whilst ease of communication, familiarity and family and friendship networks facilitated and provided coping mechanisms for interviewees, other intractable deep-seated political and economic issues presented severe challenges to the resolution of 'personal' problems (see 3.1.4). Strategies deployed in the UK can be summarised primarily as self-help or self-reliance but mutual aid and formal support also figure in discussions on difficult situations and ways of coping.

Table 1: Overview of coping strategies

SELF-HELP/SELF-RELIANCE	EXAMPLES
Denial	'What stresses?'; 'No problems.'
Avoidance	Ignore/'avoid problem areas'
Distraction	'I keep it inside… listen to music, watch films, take a day off, a good bottle of wine.' Find a favourite place or thing to do.
Consolation	Console yourself with improved material circumstances (the trade off).
Faith	Religious belief, 'God will provide'; 'it takes time'.
Stoicism	'Get over it.' 'Who said it would be easy?' 'I came to this country so I need to cope with different way of life, but this is my problem not other people's problem.'
Comparison	Compare with what life would be like at home if had remained.
Revisualisation	Problems are opportunities; alter focus to the future – to medium or long-term objectives.
Challenge	Talk directly but politely to colleagues about their behaviour or attitudes.
Complain	To Employer, Agency, Unions, Council, Police, CAB, and Landlord.
Change	Change yourself; learn and improve your English.
Plan	Plan to move on or return home.

[5] The interview questions were not given out in advance.

[6] Sadly, one Czech interviewee identified himself as a 'fucking foreigner' reflecting the abuse he had received in his area of residence and in his workplace.

MUTUAL AID	EXAMPLES
Talk	Talk with family, friends and colleagues in the UK; family and friends at home; use chat rooms and blog sites.
Support	Seek support and offer it: friends, co-nationals, work colleagues.
	'I can't manage especially official letters – you don't know the words. Sometimes I take letters to work and even English people don't understand!'
Consult	Consult early arrival migrant workers who 'know the ropes' including informal support groups.
Combine	Work together in difficult situations irrespective of national divides.
	Set up support groups /integration groups (e.g. PBIC).

FORMAL SUPPORT	EXAMPLES
Consult	New Link, META, Business Link, Community Development Workers for migrant workers, CAB, Neighbourhood Police Team and Hate Crime Officers, Council, Inland Revenue, HO website.

3.1.2 Length of stay implications and key issues

Only three interviewees had fixed plans as regards length of stay and were planning to return to their home countries at a set point. For three recently arrived interviewees the question was premature. Fifteen interviewees, however, had changed their minds on length of stay opting to stay longer, and a larger number still had decided on an open, flexible approach to this issue from the start, typifying the overall attitude of the majority of interviewees.

Our interviews strongly suggest that there is little correspondence between anticipated length of stay and actual length of stay. Interviewees' actual experiences of the advantages and disadvantages of life in the UK (including absence from the familiar) and how these are perceived and managed at different points of the migration process have greater resonance. Interviews also suggest that actual length of stay does not necessarily indicate a greater ability and fluency in English language; instead, the key factors are availability and flexibility of language classes, opportunities to mix with English speakers and, especially, 'personal' motivating factors.

Key issues emerging from this initial section of the interview relate to level of English language comprehension, the quality of housing and instability of tenancy as well as interviewees' own positive qualities such as flexibility and self-reliance and their perception of opportunities for self-development in the UK. In Years 2 and 3, therefore, the identification of how perceived opportunities are exploited, and any changes in perception of life in the UK (in a changing economic environment) alongside English language skills development will be pursued.

3.1.3 Arrival and reasons for migrating

This section produced some hair-raising stories particularly from early arrivals, two of whom parted with £500 each in their respective home countries for travel costs, transport, a guaranteed job and accommodation to find themselves abandoned on arrival and with very little money (and with limited English language fluency). In each case the response was to pool their resources with the other individuals affected, find transport, travel to the 'intended' destination, find a recruitment agency, and arrange shared/stop-gap accommodation and jobs as quickly as possible. As one interviewee dryly noted, 'I would prefer another way to come to the UK!'.

Other stressful arrival situations requiring resilience and tenacity concerned the practice of one person coming over from a family to test the feasibility of life in the UK. Again, limited proficiency with English had an impact on the degree of stress experienced, although it is important not to underrate the emotional and system-based stresses involved in migrating alone to a new country irrespective of language issues. First arrivals from our interview sample in this situation were just as likely to be women as men. For example, one interviewee from the Czech Republic was motivated to migrate by boredom and frustration as work opportunities narrowed. In the UK, juggling three jobs, her long working hours left very little time to prepare for the arrival of her husband and son, sister-in-law and friend just a few days later. She was able to find a suitable but unfurnished house for them all just a few hours prior to their arrival – before returning to work. In a different scenario, another interviewee planned to work for a few months in the

UK before returning home, but her growing concern about her son's health and Lithuania's political and economic situation prompted a change of plan: she stayed and her son joined her in the UK. Migration as a tentative and emerging strategy rather than a premeditated and fixed strategy helps to explain changes in length of stay decisions and the variability in the length of time partners, children or other family members join relatives in the UK.

Arrivals are not always stressful and a number of interviewees report a very positive arrival and first few months in the UK. Here interviewees talk a lot about 'good luck' such as: meeting the well-informed couple on the plane; finding a job immediately; ending up in a nice neighbourhood; meeting knowledgeable and experienced co-nationals and other migrants; exceptional employers, landlords and so on. They also talk about the excitement and adventure of the first few months and the discovery of new and unanticipated opportunities or, tellingly, as our last arrival termed it, 'the honeymoon period'. However, particularly at this time, it is also clear that new migrants (not exclusively with limited English) are vulnerable to exploitation and scams. As well as the 'trafficking' described above, far too many interviews included revelations of the illegal and exploitative (at best, misinformed) actions of employers and landlords towards migrant workers, and cons involving the mis-selling of goods.

The reasons for coming to the UK generally note an economic basis to the decision to migrate to the UK. Yet, even so, reasons are multi-layered and much more complex than the initial response to this question suggests. The social determinants of migration often go unrecognised or are given insufficient consideration in research on A8 workers, but it is important to understand that migration is not simply initiated by favourable exchange rates. A number of determinants (including facilitative factors) underpin this very specific migratory response to the economic disparities between the UK and interviewees' countries which are detailed below. At the same time, not all interviewees professed to an economic motivation for their decision to come to the UK. A minority came for the adventure and experience, to 'follow their dreams', to support a partner studying here and discovering new opportunities in the process, or to achieve some independence from over-protective parents. Moreover, practically all interviewees saw the acquisition or improvement of their English language skills as a key 'pull' factor whether or not they acknowledged this as an economic asset.

3.1.4 Home country 'push' factors

There was a significant degree of despondency expressed by a large number of interviewees in relation to the political, economic and social situations in home countries and their negative impacts on interviewees' personal situations.

Political Situation

• The majority of interviewees from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic were very critical of the political situation in their home countries and distrusted politicians. Some also criticised the close link between the media and the government in countries of origin.

"Sometimes we feel shame that we are Polish, especially with the politicians." (Polish interviewee);

"…Communist people government in power and so this is in fact keeping economy very weak so I have no trust in this." (Lithuanian interviewee)

• A large number of interviewees noted how corruption, discrimination and ponderous bureaucratic practices combined to make life very difficult for individuals without connections: 'I couldn't do that much in Poland – you always need contacts. I gave up doing anything there.' (Polish interviewee)

Economic Situation

• Interviewees highlighted the lack of job opportunities and job flexibility in their home countries which they often saw closely related to political problems, including extant political cliques.

• The majority of interviewees felt that the economic and political situation in their countries was worsening (although some interviews carried out in the latter part of 2008 with Polish participants were slightly more positive).

• Regional economic and developmental disparities were noted as likely spurs to migration. Whilst the majority of interviewees felt that their migration decision was a real choice – in theory, they had alternatives – other interviewees commented that for some, particularly in rural regions, migration had become the only option. One Polish interviewee commented that the east of Poland was now relatively wealthier because of the remittances sent home by its emigrants.

- Interviewees highlighted that the economic situation at home created dependency on parents. The majority of interviewees could not afford to further their education and live away from their parents. The long hours of study per day and the unavailability of flexible and part-time work were reasons why interviewees could not combine study with independent living.

- Interviewees who had spent anything from 5 months to 2.5 years in the UK and had returned to home countries came back to the UK on average three months later because they had seen no improvement in the economic and political conditions at home, despite assurances to the contrary.

Social Situation

- Several interviewees (from Hungary, Poland, Lithuania and Romania) perceived the social situation in their home country in a critical way highlighting the 'unfriendliness' people showed towards each other and lack of 'community feeling' or contact with neighbours. Interviewees mentioned frustration and anger with the economic and political situation as a cause for the negative social climate in their home country.

- A number of interviewees spoke of the dispersal of friendship networks. One young interviewee commented on having only two friends remaining in her home town as the rest had migrated to other European countries or relocated to cities.

Personal Situation

- The economic and political situations in home countries had unequivocal impacts on individuals' personal lives. The majority of interviewees' experiences were variously affected by political and economic insecurity, a high cost of living, high taxes and low pay, inequality, age, gender and ethnic discrimination, inflexible educational provision, unwieldy bureaucratic systems, a lack of autonomy and of meaningful choices, and a sense of helplessness resulting in a belief that, without significant and rapid change, there would be no future for them in their home countries.

  "There was a time when we couldn't even buy a newspaper every day… we were [professionals]! …we were living from hand to mouth."

  "It got to the point where I felt so helpless I had to leave…" (Polish interviewees);

  "Every day was a struggle." (Slovakian interviewee, reflecting many interviewee responses)

- Families are very important to the majority of interviewees and were characterised by mutual emotional, practical and financial support. These represented a key element in interviewees' reflections on their lives and their personal ambitions in contexts of persisting economic and political insecurity. Common issues raised by interviewees were enforced dependence on parents, (the possibility of) having children and the ability to adequately provide for them, as well as concerns for the well-being of older relatives. Many interviewees are sending remittances home to support parents and/or intend to return to care for ageing or ill parents. Interviews reveal that migration is clearly a strategy to avoid repeating the hardships and struggles of the previous generations as well as achieving better pay and realising blocked ambitions: "Just for the beautiful view outside my window, I'm really going to work like that and then have nothing?!" (Polish interviewee).

3.1.5 UK 'pull' factors

- Overall, pre-migration knowledge of the UK was patchy. Fifteen interviewees had no or limited knowledge of the UK and what life might be like for them once here. Interviewees were generally aware of the more favourable economic situation in the UK and, in theory, that they could travel, live and work in other parts of Europe as EU citizens. They were also aware that initially their non-visa options were limited to UK, Ireland and Sweden (until the derogation period opted for by other countries had elapsed). There was also a sense that life would be easier, freer here. Because of this relative lack of knowledge about the UK – beyond a vague impression that migration would result in a better economic outcome – it is perhaps more accurate to consider 'stay' rather than 'pull' factors for the majority of research participants.

The extent of knowledge prior to migration is not associated with year of arrival (i.e. 2004 arrivals were not necessarily less informed than later arrivals) nor with English language competence. The most important factors appear to be contact with migrants: friends who have migrated to the UK, partners and other family members who have migrated, indefinitely or temporarily returning migrants (e.g. for health checks); or, their own earlier migration experiences and pre-accession visits to the UK. These factors suggest that informal networks play an important facilitative role in relation to the initial decision to migrate.

Political Situation

- Interviewees expressed general trust in the political situation and political actors in England. Such sentiments were often accompanied with expressions of relief as interviewees' recounted examples of reliable institutions and considerably reduced levels of bureaucracy.

- For many, a sense of security was expressed as a very positive aspect of life in the UK.

  "A developed country, well organised, procedure based… so I feel secure here" (Polish interviewee);

  "I feel secure" (Polish interviewee);

  "Maybe it is not logic but I feel more safer here" (Polish interviewee);

  "More freedom here… I feel more safe" (Czech interviewee);

  "Life in England is better organised" (Polish interviewee);

  "A more liberal country than Slovakia" (Slovakian interviewee);

  "Cultural plurality and freedom… law and government are organised and a trustworthy political system…" (Slovakian interviewee);

  "The government protects workers here" (Polish interviewee).

- At the same time, very few interviewees had specific knowledge about policies in place for migrant workers or immigration rules. The EU freedoms (i.e. the freedom to live and work in other EU member states) and the British Government's Workers Registration Scheme were the only policy areas directly referred to. Knowledge of benefits and entitlements was very patchy, although for the few interviewees with children the receipt of child benefit often opened up information about other entitlements such as the working families tax credit.

- Some interviewees were aware – a few before arriving in the UK – that they could vote in local and European elections in the UK, but, overall, only a small number of interviewees felt they would exercise this right. The reasons given for not voting were: they had insufficient knowledge of local politics and of candidates and policies in general; as impermanent residents it would be improper to do so; they had no interest in politics.

- Prior to migration, the majority of interviewees were unaware of the UK's body of legislation protecting workers' rights, promoting equality, anti-discriminatory practice and other protections, or of union support in the workplace. Notwithstanding the limitations for workers employed through agencies, this has proved to be a very attractive and unexpected feature of working in the UK for interviewees, comparing very favourably with the limited protection for workers in home countries.

Economic Situation

As noted in section 3.1.3, the reasons for coming to the UK generally note an economic basis to the decision to migrate; the relationship to employment is therefore the focus here.

- Variously anticipating a better life, an adventure or a necessary course of action to endure, interviewees found employment in the UK through a range of economic routes: directly employed in their countries of origin through newspaper advertisements, recruitment drives, and dedicated internet sites; news of jobs from friends or family already working here; finding employment on arrival via employment agencies; finding employment on arrival though direct applications; on arrival finding employment in addition to the opportunity to study in the UK; following partners to the UK and subsequently finding employment; or, essentially 'trafficked' to non-existent jobs and accommodation.

- The majority of interviewees initially took up employment in the UK that required lower skill and qualification levels than required by previous jobs in home countries[7]. Interviews with early arrivals indicate a tendency to move on to better paid and more highly skilled jobs fairly quickly – and out of employment agency contracts – particularly for those who are open on length of stay or who have determined to remain for the long term. However, this is not always the case as some participants also strategically choose to remain in low skilled occupations in order to combine employment and higher education, for example, or to live an 'easy life' and enjoy fairly good earnings at the same time; or, less positively, because they feel their English language skills still present a considerable barrier to upgrading.

- There is a complicated relationship between anticipated and actual length of stay and employment type and it is not possible to simply read off a 'typical' employment pathway from an interviewee's skills and anticipated length of stay. Mediating factors – i.e. 'whole' individuals, relationships and 'real life' – give rise to scenarios where, for example, highly qualified, bilingual professionals choose not to develop their careers in the UK because of anticipated future caring responsibilities in the home country. Instead, they choose to remain in relatively low-skilled, low paid employment because the workplace is decent, people appreciate what they do and, for a while, they can save some money, enjoy hobbies and other, now affordable, small pleasures in life. On the one hand, then, such quality of life and relational issues indicate that raw economic calculations do not capture the complexity of migration and migrants' lives; on the other hand, across the range of interviews, it is clearly the case that well-educated and bi- or multi-lingual migrants are better placed to choose such strategic trade-offs.

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[7] 24 out of 35 interviewees downgraded.

- For interviewees who did not downgrade, the reasons were sometimes a matter of youth or full-time university study preventing prior employment and sometimes a matter of discriminatory employment practices on the basis of gender and age in the home country. Women who had children were particularly affected by discrimination as reported in interviews with Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian participants.

- Overall, interviews demonstrate that socio-economic background (co-related with regional disparities) is a crucial determinant in the education and employment pathways of participants in countries of origin, whereas UK employment agencies, intent on filling labour gaps only, are less concerned with the qualification level and background of applicants. However, even bearing in mind that the majority of interviewees gained employment through agencies, it is clear that prior experiences shaped by socio-economic and educational backgrounds and discriminatory labour market policies, influence the scope of choices interviewees perceive to be available to them in the UK – and the confidence to exercise those choices (particularly for those with stronger English language skills). For example, whilst the majority of interviewees were positive about discovering the range of possibilities in the UK – 'we just have a choice, we feel we have a choice, language classes, university and so on' – and many had opted to explore these opportunities for 'self-development' (a common theme), a small minority of intended open or long-stay female participants, with less confidence in their English language skills, who had not downgraded (and were not in education in the UK), with a disadvantaged socio-economic background and having experienced gender discrimination, appeared to have a reduced perception of 'choices' in the UK and were less ambitious in their aims, happily settling for work, any work, and 'a normal life'. Across the three cohorts of interviewees, length of stay as open or fixed varies and it is not necessarily the case, as the above illustrates, that remaining in low skilled employment indicates a shorter anticipated length of stay in the UK.

- The trustworthiness of the employment system and the quality of treatment in the workplace was generally seen as an unexpected improvement to that experienced in home countries. Fair treatment in the workplace cannot always be guaranteed, however, and interviewees also gave examples of sexual discrimination, discrimination perceived to be based on the migrant status, and, in one case, a sustained campaign of bullying by a shift supervisor.

"You can trust employers to pay you at the end of the month, it is more professional, there is more respect for workers, it is easier to get work here" (Polish interviewee);

"I can have a normal life without worrying what the next day will bring" (Polish interviewee);

"You can change here: jobs, skills. A different way of thinking here, where age is not an issue." (Polish interviewee);

"You are well treated in the workplace here" (Romanian interviewee).

But:

"Work for migrants is low grade; you cannot go higher no matter what your qualifications" (Polish interviewee).

Social Situation

- Interviewees have established themselves in a variety of networks structured along work, family, friendships and children's contacts. There is often a difference between work, friends' and children's networks. For example, interviewees could have contact with Philippine nationals at work (care sector), other A8 migrants via their friends and international networks via a toddler club.

- The UK was cited as 'the only option' by some interviewees looking for 'a different cultural experience' and the optimum way of improving English language skills. However, the majority of interviewees did not have English people as 'friends' and mentioned that a language barrier and, to some extent, a cultural barrier was probably the main reason (even if they were fairly fluent in English they could not interact in the same way as at home and felt excluded).

- Several interviewees also perceived the concept of 'friendship' as somewhat looser to that in their home country. Friendship for interviewees implied 'support' while friendship in England was perceived as 'having a drink together': "The idea here is that everybody is with his own business. We can't really talk with them about your problems" (Romanian interviewee).

- Despite noting that the attitudes of local people were not always as positive as would be liked – English people 'kept their distance' – interviewees thought the social climate in England was generally friendly with regard to work colleagues and neighbours. Where particularly difficult or hostile situations were discussed, most interviewees contextualised these: too much alcohol, misleading and negative press coverage, stereo-typing and ignorance for example, and empathised with the feeling of competition and threat experienced by some British citizens. For one interviewee the intense hostility experienced at work and in his 'community' precipitated plans to leave the UK as soon as was viable: "I cannot live in the UK like a full human being" (Czech interviewee).

- A greater sense of community, or connection to the local community was voiced as a desire by some (open and long-stay) interviewees, particularly by those who had experienced a good community life in countries of origin. Interviews suggest the possibility that for those migrants with children there may be more opportunities to develop community links. For example, one interviewee, based in a small market town, comments on how the neighbourhood's children, from all different nationalities, play together on the local playing field.

Personal Situation

- Amongst those interviewees who wanted to further their career prospects, the discovery of a flexible system of higher education provision had a significantly positive impact on their expectations of life in the UK.

- A good deal of optimism was expressed in relation to experiences of life in the UK. Quality of life was reported as generally satisfactory with occasional small frustrations – reported as problems with setting up bank accounts, the complications of renting property, the standard of housing and British plumbing, official letters and some occasional verbal abuse – distinct from the more serious difficulties noted (largely at the beginning of the migration experience in the UK), and those linked to English language competency.

"I moved here because I want to change my life. I want a future and I see a good future in England."
(Lithuanian Interviewee)

"I didn't expect anything fabulous – a normal life, job and money. Now, actually, I am really happy."
(Polish Interviewee)

"Here I can develop myself as I want to not in the way I am forced to because I don't have the contacts or the money."
(Polish Interviewee)

3.1.6 'Push' and 'pull' factors and implications for length of stay

- The widely perceived long-term political and/or economic problems in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Czech Republic, Slovakia Hungary and Romania contributed both to decisions to migrate and to remain in the UK for a longer period of time.

- 'Migration'[8] is largely viewed as a flexible and medium to long-term strategy, made possible by EU membership.

- EU membership has not yet facilitated a greater adherence to the protection and rights of workers in some countries of origin and some interviewees are convinced it will take another generation to affect the necessary changes.

- Except in the case of family emergencies, returning home in the short-term is not generally anticipated, although some interviewees are considering moving to other countries in the short to medium term to further their careers and opportunities for self-development.

- National governments' attempts to convince people to return to their countries of origin have not been favourably received by our sample of interviewees: 'They are cheating people to come back but people leave again after two months' (Lithuanian interviewee).

- 'I miss my family', 'I miss home' was a common lament of interviewees and noted as a potential factor by many in eventual decisions to return home or, alternatively, to send for children or partners. For example, one interviewee's experience of a first few dreadful homesick months stands out. Encouraged and supported by her British work colleagues, she returned home to convince and bring her family back with her to the UK to 'start again'.

- Interviewees deciding to bring close family members to the UK after a few months here – especially their children – indicates an extension to the length of stay originally anticipated.

- A sense of safety and of trust in legal and political institutions in the UK is a common feature of the majority of interviews and a positive background influence on the length of stay of interviewees.

- Interviews document that, once in the UK, the freedom and flexibility to achieve various aspirations is discovered, ranging from economic independence and achieving 'a normal life' to work combined with university study combined with developing a business. The enjoyment of these options indicates a lengthier stay in the UK than originally considered.

- The discovery of a largely properly observed set of workplace rights and protections in the UK also has a positive influence on length of stay, particularly for women, women with children and older workers.

- Simply 'being comfortable', 'an easier life', 'a normal life' is a very positive feature of life in the UK for many interviewees.

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8 Several interviewees, especially identifying as Europeans, do not refer to migration but to working in another part of the EU as is their right.

- Although generally positive relationships with British citizens, primarily through work, are a feature of most interviewees' lives, very few report close friendships with British people even though these, and greater community involvement, are desired.

Table 2: Overview of interviewees short-term, medium-term and long-term goals

GOALS (at time of interview)	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
Open/ don't know	✓✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Take a holiday/ travel/ check out home situation	✓✓	✓	✓
Earn money quickly	✓✓✓✓✓		
Find a job – f/t	✓✓✓✓✓✓	✓	✓
Find/buy a home, settled accommodation in UK	✓✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓
Send remittances/invest at home	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Save/increase savings	✓	✓✓✓✓✓✓	✓
Improve job situation/career prospects/promotion	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓
*Find jobs for family members	✓		
*Buy home essentials	✓		
Buy a car		✓	
Focus on child/ren	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓
Learn/improve English	✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
Set up business in the UK	✓	✓	✓✓
Set up business in home country			✓
Travel to third country		✓	✓
Education in the UK	✓✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓✓✓	✓
Education in home country	✓✓	✓	
Stay in the UK/achieve British citizenship			✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
Return home		✓	✓✓✓
Travel between UK and home/balance	✓		

✓ = specific goal indicated.
*Some interviewees had very few possessions on arrival and were literally 'starting from scratch'.

3.1.7 Goals, Eade et al. (2006) and the length of stay question

We asked interviewees to describe their goals in the short-term, the medium-term and the long-term in the UK. The table below sets out the responses interviewees gave to this specific question.

This table has been produced from the responses to a specific section of questions and does not incorporate 'goal-like' reflections raised in other parts of the interview. In part, this explains the emptiness of some categories as sometimes interviewees did not return to ruminations on setting up a business, for example and other, perhaps, similar blue-sky projects. Interviewees' responses tended to break down into three main categories:

1 They had a very specific set of issues classified as goals and clearly demarcated off from other issues which appeared to be considered as the precursors to the setting of goals (like the improvement of English language skills, for example)

2 They included just about everything – especially for those individuals who had spent longer in the UK and were able to reflect on their experiences and adjustments made to their original medium and long-term goals in response to these

3 They emphasised the difficulty of pinning down specific goals noting the impact of different experiences in the UK, the potential discovery of new opportunities, and expressing a desire to be receptive to a range of possibilities:

"I have discovered myself, learnt about myself much more, but that was one of the aims as well. The world is changing around us so we just need to be more flexible and learn how to cope with it." (Polish Interviewee)

The selection of multiple goals[9] set in the context of the wider interviews, suggests how open the situation is perceived to be by interviewees and how flexible they are prepared to be in response. This is also reflected in the majority choice of either, or between, searchers and stayers of the Eade et al (2006) migration typology discussed below (see section 2.5.1).

Despite the variable nature and fluidity of goals reflected here, a clustering of responses is apparent in eight policy-relevant areas: in the short-term – open, earn money quickly, find a job, improve English and education in the UK; in the medium-term – to save/increase savings, to improve career prospects/promotion and education in the UK (again); in the long-term – to stay in the UK. Medium term aims to improve job situations/career prospects as well as opportunities to study in the UK are particularly notable and, although not derived from generalisable data, suggest that policy makers, employers and educational institutions ought to be thinking about how to raise awareness of existing opportunities for these workers as well as the potential benefits to be had in creating new opportunities.

In a 2006 study of Polish migrants in London, Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich constructed a four-fold typology of migrant goals: hamsters (one-off migrants) accounted for 16 per cent of those questioned; storks (circular migrants) accounted for 20 per cent; searchers (open options) 42 per cent; and, stayers (self-explanatory) 22 per cent (see section 2.5 of the Literature Review for more details). Using the same typology descriptions (minus the 'potential-to-cause-insult' labels!) we asked interviewees to identify their own broad migration goals. In line with Eade et al's findings, the majority of our interviewees (32 out of 35) located themselves in group 3 or group 4 (searchers and stayers), and *between* groups 3 and 4. In addition, some interviewees were also able to recount how their goals had changed, shifting from group 1 (hamsters) to group 3 (searchers) and then, in four cases, to group 4 (stayers). No interviewee self-identified as a stork.

- If these open and flexible patterns on length of stay are indicative of the wider A8 migrant worker population, which we think they are, the gap between the anticipated and the actual length of stay (the projected and the mediated) will further distort the capacity of policy makers to accurately meet employers' needs, and anticipate social need and appropriate housing and service provision.

Specific reflections on length of stay in the interviews revealed that discussions on length of stay in the UK is a relatively minor occupation amongst our sample of interviewees, usually prompted by family in home countries asking when they will return[11]. For some, discussions with friends and family on length of stay were fairly constant; for others, length of stay only assumed importance at different times, perhaps the passing of a key date initially set for return or a change in circumstances for the interviewee or family members at home. Interviewees related a range of factors likely to precipitate a return home or a move to another country, such as strong pressure from the family, health reasons, vulnerability as a result of a worsening economic situation, or lack of job satisfaction (an important aspect for career-driven interviewees). The serious nature of these factors underlines the largely flexible or long-term approach the majority of interviewees hold in relation to length of stay. Seemingly, then, whereas length of stay may be a preoccupation 'we' in the UK hold in relation to A8 workers, it is certainly not something that is pored over daily by our interviewees. As with many of the decisions made to come to the UK in the first place, leaving the UK may well be similarly characterised as a maturing issue, but in practice fairly speedily achieved.

3.1.8 Emergent issues for investigation in years 2 and 3:

- **The significance of informal networks and environment (place) beyond the initial decision to migrate**
  Our study should permit the exploration of how migrants' networks change over the migration period and what effect, and how, these and identified environments have on decisions to return home, move to another country, or remain in the UK.

- **The attainment of more effective English language skills**
  Tracking social relations over the next two years will help explore whether improved language skills act as a precursor to stronger social relations with British people.

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[9] Multiple goals can appear contradictory, particularly when interviewees are asked to project where they want to be in five years' time. For example, a long-term goal for some interviewees was to return home – and/or stay in the UK and apply for British citizenship. This, again, underlines the flexibility of participants where multiple possibilities are held together pending emergent conditions ('wait and see').

[10] However, revealing information about actual decisions made is consistently done for the majority of our interviewees whether discussing with families, friends or officialdom.

- **The ability to meet employment and educational aspirations**
Tracking the careers of participants over the period of the study will yield useful information about employment and educational trajectories and the interrelationship with length of stay decisions.

- **Monitoring decision making – and continuing to monitor how interviewees are monitoring changes in the UK and countries of origin**
At this stage the impetus for migration overall, facilitated by EU membership, is more clearly a response to painfully familiar home country 'triggers' or 'push factors' (macro, meso and micro) for the majority of interviewees rather than precise knowledge of economic or cultural 'pull factors' of the UK. As economic conditions alter and political priorities shift in the UK, what will be the felt impact of these for interviewees and how will interviewees interpret and respond to these changes? Correspondingly, the way they view situations in their home countries and the EU more widely will be important to track. Will 'push factors' away from the UK begin to assume greater clarity, for example, and home or third country 'pull factors' grow in significance? What are the likely triggers or combination of triggers involved?

3.2 Migrants' diaries

Introducing a diary element into the research was always going to be a risky strategy given the limited success with this method encountered in previous studies (see Spencer, Ruhs, Anderson and Rogaly, 2007). In their 600 strong survey and interview sample, Spencer et al asked 'some migrants to keep diaries' for six months from October 2004 (ibid: 2007). Only twelve were persuaded to submit diaries: six men and six women consisting of two Czechs, two Poles, three Slovaks, three Bulgarians and two Ukranians.

We have experienced similar problems in engaging interest in this aspect of the research programme which we believe lies chiefly in the lack of confidence interviewees have in their written English (we suspect the same issue affects contributions to the English language discussion forum)[11]. However, from our three cohorts of interviewees, eleven detailed 3 month diaries have been received from interviewees for Year 1 of the study containing some illuminating entries[12].

3.2.1 Profile of diarists

The three male and eight female diarists are aged between 20 and 36 and consist of Polish (5), Slovakian (4), Lithuanian (1) and Latvian nationalities (1). Four have MAs, three have degree level qualifications, three diploma level and one a school certificate level qualification. Diarists have arrived in the UK at different points with four categorised as early arrivals, four as mid-term arrivals, and three as late arrivals. Seven had changed their minds on length of stay, two were open and two thought it was too early to say.

3.2.2 Content of diaries

The earliest diary entry began on the 31st of May, the last from the 22nd of September onwards. The style of diaries ranged from the brief and straightforward to the fulsome and poetic. The content has been organised into two main categories: the home country with reflections on practicalities, adjustments, negative and positive aspects; the UK with reflections on practicalities, adjustments, negative and positive aspects, with an additional encompassing category drawing together transnational identifications and processes – so casually discussed in the diaries.

The Home Country

Common themes are:

- Frequent visits home to see family and friends and for medical treatment, and reflections on missing home ('I've come back from holiday in Poland a week before. I always feel down after coming back from there.' But, 10 weeks later, 'I went to Poland for one week holiday, what I do often. This time I feel fine after coming back.')

- Whether to return (stay or move to another country)

- The negative aspects of life in the home country such as politics ('it justifies my feelings about moving from the country') and the rising cost of living

- Positive and future prospects such as paying off the mortgage, inheriting land, buying or building a new home.

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[11] The diaries and the discussion forum elements will require some revision to encourage more participants to take part in Years 2 and 3.

[12] Interestingly, as with blog participants, the majority of our diarists are women.

The UK

Common themes are:

- Everyday aspects like using banking services, sending remittances home, job searches, work, language issues, English classes, positive and negative relationships with British citizens, child's first day at school, the rising cost of living

- Negative issues that relate to housing (poor quality housing, finding suitable accommodation, problems with landlords), the tabloid's representation of migrant workers ('writing the worst things about Polish') and the rising cost of living (two diarists specifically referred to 'the credit crunch' and the possible consequences including one lengthy reflection weighing up the pros and cons of choosing to remain in the UK for the next few years.)

- Pleasures in life – moving in to a new flat, music, visiting places, visiting friends, looking forward to new jobs and to university study, holidays and visits home, football, 'when it stops raining', helping friends and relations new to the country, and the freedom to do what one pleases when one pleases.

Transnationalism

A number of references are made to the diarists' networks of friends and families sometimes scattered across different countries; co-nationals and other friends moving to other parts of the country, returning to their home countries or coming back to the UK again (and their experiences); and family members visiting or joining from home countries. Continuous links with the home country are demonstrated in diaries in the form of:

- sending home remittances

- receiving friends and family coming to the UK for holidays or in search of work

- visits home

- telephone and email contact with friends who have migrated to other areas and countries

- land or property ownership in the home country

- career reflections (home, the UK or another country).

3.2.3 Next steps

At this point we would not venture to make assumptions in relation to the three cohorts' periods of time in the UK and the specific content of diaries as, clearly, some diarists are much happier with the medium than others and are able to reflect on 'small' issues (where other diarists might conclude 'nothing much has happened' or 'my life is not very interesting'). However, it is interesting to note the casual normalisation at work in the diaries where life-changing decisions are embedded into the minutiae of everyday activities and where borders and distance simply melt away as 'Mom visits this week'.

From these eleven diaries with their corresponding interviews and questionnaires, we will select a proportion of the participants – with their permission – to go forward as specific illustrative case studies. In this way we can focus on *resources, environment, constraints* and *opportunities* and begin to explore the usefulness of the theoretical and analytical contributions of Clegg, Simon, Sen and Faist as regards the relationship between structure, networks and agency.

3.3 Polish internet blog sites

An additional secondary research method was deployed in order to gain a more general 'grassroots' view of life for migrant workers. Our Polish bilingual research assistant scoped fifteen Polish language internet blog sites (via www.blog.onet.pl) and settled upon five sites as having the most relevant content for the purposes of our study. In particular, we wanted to gauge the level of reflections posted on length of stay and 'push' and 'pull' factors including social, economic or employment related barriers encountered. As the year progressed and economic conditions faltered in the UK we decided to split the blog analysis into two groups visiting the same sites to establish any changes in the tone or content of discussions, with a first phase concentrated in the first half of the year and a second phase in the latter part of the year.

The general trend noted across the sites is that the anonymous authors are mainly women (or adopting female pseudonyms) and between the ages of 22 and 29. As blog authors tend to treat the sites as e-diaries many entries are about personal problems and emotions rather than events: they write of their lives 'in exile', but are unspecific about the time envisaged 'in exile'. The, usually, economic factors that brought them to England rather than the factors that encourage them to stay tend to be emphasised. Many of the blogs express longings for home, family and friends and are littered with complaints about the Polish government, broken promises, 'fake changes' and disappointments. However, they also write about the people they work with in England, people they have met, feelings about living here and changes they have observed in themselves such as becoming more tolerant, more open and happier (corresponding to the process of reflection engaged with by many of our interviewees). The topic of the media representation of Poles is also a matter for reflection as is the 'shaming' behaviour and ignorance of some compatriots.

Our research assistant reports that some postings literally emanate frustration, disappointment and fear in relation to Poland, yet there are also some extreme views expressed about England: one author claiming life in the UK is little more than 'vegetation' and another the obverse, that 'England is paradise on Earth'.

SITE 1: 4/05/2008 'Mood changes – should I stay or should I go'

I get these thoughts that it would be the best for us if we could go back to Poland for good.
[...]
I'm fed up with stupid England! I hate the English, I hate their fake politeness, falseness, I hate my job! I don't want to be an emigrant. I don't want to feel like I am worse than the English. It's not because they impress me, no! They are no better than the Poles. But, for sure, in their eyes we, Poles, are only a cheap workforce and this hurts me☹

They think we come to their brilliant country to make a fortune, go back to Poland and live like gods. But it's not like this at all! GBP is so low that it is less and less profitable to live here. As a matter of fact, this is not life this is vegetation. We work to give majority of our earnings to landlord, who gets rich, because we get poor. And what's left we use for food and living, so we cannot save that much. It's good, if we manage to save ANY money...

Why we should vegetate here, amongst strangers, while we can go and vegetate in our own country? There's one main fear – will we be able to find any job in Poland? At the moment I wouldn't have any chances to get a job – child on the way, then few months of maternity leave. I am disqualified.

In relation to length of stay, blogs reflect the 'let's see attitude' of migrants.

SITE 2: November 2007 – 'It's been two years!'

Now I am wondering... how long I'm going to stay here. I used to think: 'yeah, I'm gonna stay for a year or two and I'm going back', but you know what I can't tell you? At the moment I haven't got an idea for life in Poland...and that worries me. Everyone is talking about changes, Poles who live abroad say they will come back [to Poland] when it gets better [in Poland]. I used to think this way too, but now I realized that I don't really know what kind of changes and improvements they have in mind. How much our country would have to change to hold people back from leaving?!

SITE 2: 3/04/2008 'What's going on?'

For me coming to England was a chance to improve my English. Contact with a totally different world. And now it is also a life without stress, loutishness at every turn and grumbling about everything. I'm not saying I am the better one because I live here. This is how fools would feel. But at the moment I think this is the best option for me.

Unsurprisingly, blogs also highlight the findings from the survey that 'missing home' is a significant factor with regard to migrants' decision making processes.

SITE 2: 16/04/2008

I miss Warsaw. A little bit less Lublin, but still... I miss home. Miss Poland. Wasn't there since November...

4/11/2008 'It's been three years!'

And another year just passed since I came to England. Third year in my private – as I call it – school of survival. Last 12 months were a lot better than the previous 24.

[...]

I still miss Poland a lot, especially now, when the Christmas is coming, I miss POLISH Xmas holiday mood. Sometimes I am invaded by this type of depressing thoughts... Sometimes I could just let it all go to hell and go back. But there's still that stupid question – what for? To what???

SITE 3: 24/10/2008 'Short note'

It's good to be close to the family. It's so cool to go shopping with mom, go to the pub with brother. It's good to switch the TV on and hear only Polish language, watch 'Wojewodzki Show' and 'Na Wspolnej'.

BUT on the other hand, if I didn't leave my dreams would never come true. I am here and now, living my life the way I want to. I am in a foreign land, so what?! It suits me, doesn't have to suit everyone...

The blogs also demonstrate that migrants are critical of the situation in their home country (reflecting our findings from the interviews and survey) which impacts on their decision making.

SITE 4: 1/03/2008 'I envy you'

I envy you this courage to stay. I envy you that you stayed. But one cannot live with envy only... what is waiting for me in Poland?

[...]

They say Poles are coming back. But not those with education [well-educated], because they calculate. Talk, consult. And are afraid of going back. They don't know what they can expect.

[...] yes, I want to come back, but my motherland is not ready for me yet. It has to wait for me. Waiting till things become clearer, so I could get off the plane and have my feet firmly fixed on the ground. So I wouldn't have to go to sleep with my head full of thoughts of how to survive for another month. So I wouldn't have to wonder if my mom has enough money to buy medicines.

SITE 5: 5/02/2008 'Feeling bad? Go back to Poland.'

This is the statement I have recently met with. And honestly, first question that comes in to my mind is: where this would bring me? Everyone's got their problems, whether in Poland or in exile. Yes, we do have problems here in exile, but it doesn't really induce me to go back. Some may say that we are here only for money...that money is more important than family and motherland. But after some thinking I know it is not only money, because here in England you also have to work hard for every single pound. Life is not cheap here. Over a half of our earnings goes for rent, taxes and bills, but I'm still not drawn to Poland. Yes, it's great to go there with a short visit, but coming back for good? It's fine, money in England don't lay in the streets, but I prefer to be here...

I know few people who believed in alleged changes and improvements in Poland and came back. Unfortunately, money they saved in England ran out quickly and earnings [in Poland] turned out to be much lower from assumed. Life in Poland has gone up in price. Property prices increased, the same with media [electricity, gas etc.] and not mentioning the prices of food. Well, European prices... And the earnings? Still around 1500 zloty.   >>

> Therefore, my friends came back to England. They had to start everything from scratch, but they said: 'We've learnt the lesson. We are not going back to Poland. We got our fingers burnt again'.
>
> England has got its drawbacks, but which country doesn't? Generally speaking, life in England is exactly the same as in Poland. Some schools are better, some schools are worse. For some people NHS is better to stick with, others still go back to NFZ [Polish national health service]. It's the same with people...we know these nice and these not nice. But it's exactly the same in Poland, isn't it?

The reasons for coming to the UK generally note an economic basis to the decision to migrate to the UK. However, comments that cover the UK's economic crisis are extremely limited and do not suggest an anticipation of additional problems or barriers this could introduce. Only one author alluded to the decreasing profitability of working in the UK with the drop in the value of sterling. Authors appear not to feel destabilised or threatened by the condition of the British economy and continue to complain about the Polish economy – 'a hopeless situation', 'no stability' – and the inflexibility of Polish employers when it comes to maternity leave, children and family responsibilities.

As the effects of the recession are still developing the next two years of the longitudinal study will reveal to what extent the economic situation has an impact on migrants' decision making processes. This will continue to be the focus of our exploration of Polish blogs in year 2.

4 Findings from quantitative research[1,2]

4.1 Profile of Sample

- The majority of the 161 respondents were from Poland (67%), followed by Lithuania (15%), Slovakia (9%), Latvia (8%), Czech Republic and Romania (1% each).[2]

- More women replied to the survey than men (63% female, 37% men).

- The age distribution clustered around the 20 to 29 year olds (44%) and 30 to 39 year olds (39%); followed by 40 to 49 (10%), 50 to 59 (5%) and 18 to 19 (1%).

- A large number of participants had good or very good English skills (41% for written and 48% for oral English skills); interestingly, there was not a huge discrepancy between written and oral skills for those who felt confident in the language. Although the majority of survey participants had good language levels, the sample also captured the experiences and perspectives of those who were less proficient in English. 58% were less confident with their written English skills (of which 24% indicated 'bad' or 'very bad' written English) oral English skills were fairly similar with 51% showing less confidence in their language skills.

- The majority of the sample had been employed in their home country (75%).

- 80% of the sample were in employment in the UK.

- A large proportion of the sample had received a university education (47%), followed by 28% with 'professional education qualifications' such as NVQs, apprenticeships etc.; 13% had the equivalent to A-levels and 10% had an equivalent to British GCSE qualifications.[3]

- Confirming previous research reports the majority of the sample did not feel that their skills and qualifications were reflected in their current employment in the UK (73%).

- The majority of the sample (56%) had lived in semi-rural areas before they arrived in England followed by 27% from urban areas, 11% from semi-urban and 7% from rural locations.

- Nearly half of the participants (48%) had arrived in the medium term (2005/6), 31% in the short term (2007/8) and 21% in the long term (2004 or earlier).

- A large number of migrant workers were married (31%) or single (29%); followed by a fairly large number of divorcees (19%) and 15% who were cohabiting.

- A fairly large number had children (58%) who were mainly living with them (78%) indicating a change from previous studies where a higher number of children were living in the 'home country'.

- The majority of the participants of the study lived in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, followed by Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire; 40% described their living area as urban, 36% as semi-rural, 18% as semi-urban and 6% identified the area where they lived as being rural.

4.2 Intended length of stay

- The majority of respondents were open with regard to length of stay with 59% selecting 'I have no specific plans, let's see'; 12% indicated to stay for up to 3 years, 11% intended to stay indefinitely, 10% indicated that they wanted to stay longer than three years and 7% intended to stay short term (up to one year, see fig 1).
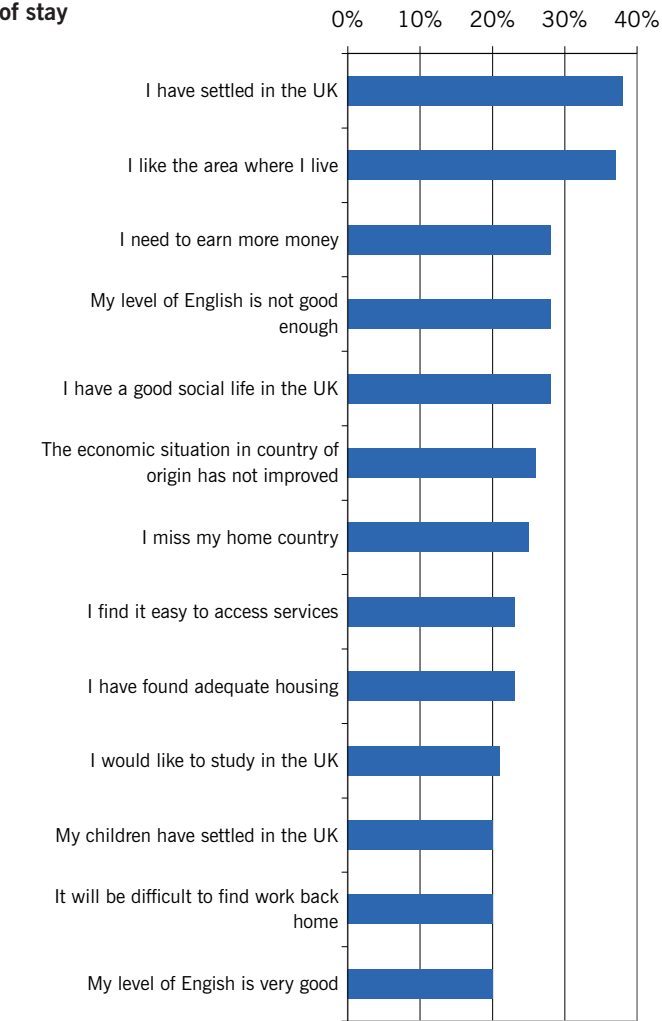
Figure 1: Intended length of stay

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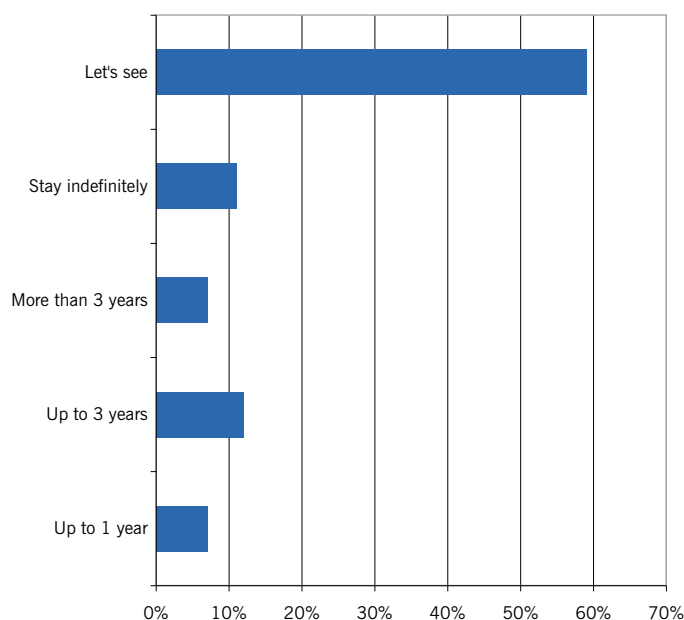
[1] Although the sample was of a reasonable size for a small scale project (N=161), some of the sub-groups were very small making any generalisation of findings to the wider population of migrant workers questionable. Although weaker and stronger links were found between different factors and length of stay they were seldom significant. Relationships between factors will be presented on the basis of percentage differences which cannot be necessarily generalised to the wider population of migrant workers but give an indication of possible trends which will be investigated further in the next two years.

[2] When we asked for nationality some of the respondents from Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic stated that they had Hungarian nationality (7%).

[3] Qualification levels could not be linked with intended length of stay as the sub groups were too small.

- Half the respondents stated that they had changed their decision on length of stay since their arrival in the UK whereby 79% indicated that they wanted to stay longer than originally planned while the other 21% intended to leave earlier. Although nearly half of the participants said that they had changed their decision on length of stay it was not highly volatile: 28% changed it 'very seldom' and 30% 'seldom', 22% 'occasionally' and only 15% changed it 'often' and 4% 'very often'.

- Generally the findings show that 'length of stay' is not in the centre of migrants' discussions with family members back home or friends (at home and in UK). Only 24% indicated that they discussed length of stay with their family in their home country; this was also reflected in our interview findings where participants highlighted that it was a sensitive area for their parents which may explain the reluctance to discuss it with them. Length of stay was also not very often discussed with friends (16%). 42% of survey respondents stated that they were more likely to discuss their intentions with family members in the UK (possibly more likely to be siblings).

- The survey indicates that the decision on length of stay is a very 'personal issue' with 35% indicating that they do not discuss length of stay with anyone.

- Figure 2 represents subjective factors which respondents identified as influencing their decision making (presenting factors which were selected by at least 20% of the participants). It highlights that participants were more likely to select factors which supported a stay in the UK rather than a return to their home country; only the factors 'my level of English is not good enough' and 'I miss my home country' corresponded potentially with a return.

- Figure 3 presents the link between prominent subjective factors (two factors which would be consistent with a stay and two which correspond with a return) selected and intended length of stay. There is no clear link between intended length of stay and the selected factors; not surprisingly those participants who said that they had settled in the UK were more likely than others to stay indefinitely (although over 50% still had a 'let's see attitude'). Although some participants had selected 'my English is not good enough' over 10% opted for a indefinite stay and none for a short term stay.

Figure 2: Subjective factors influencing decisions on length of stay

Figure 3: Subjective factors by intended length of stay
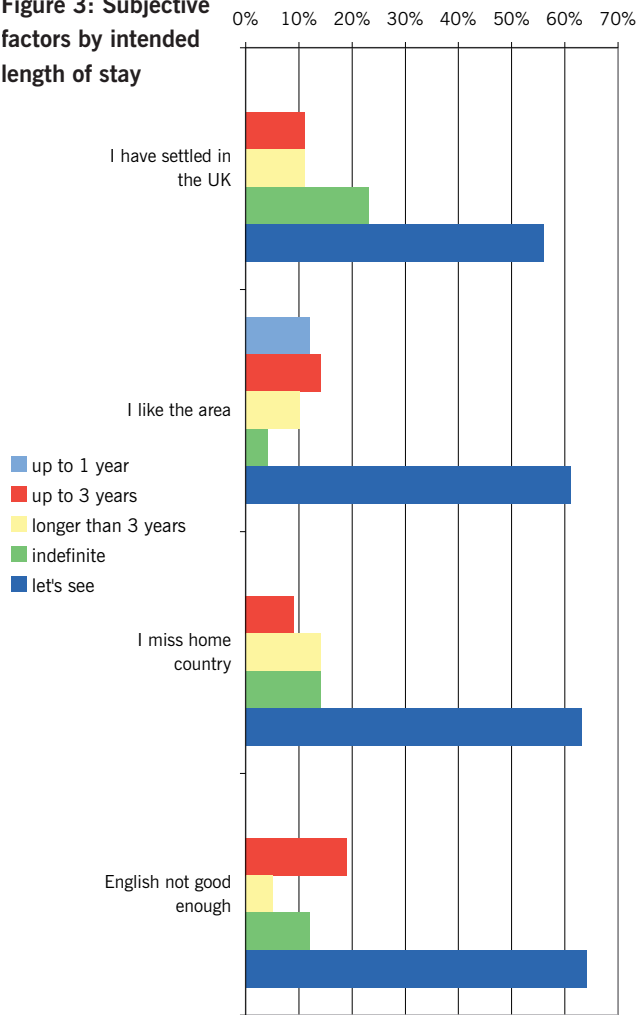
# 4.3 Profile of migrants and its influence upon intended length of stay

- In general there was no significant difference between women and men with regard to length of stay; men (69%) were slightly more likely to have a 'let's see attitude' than women (54%, see figure 4).

Figure 4: Gender by intended length of stay

- up to 1 year
- up to 3 years
- longer than 3 years
- indefinite
- let's see
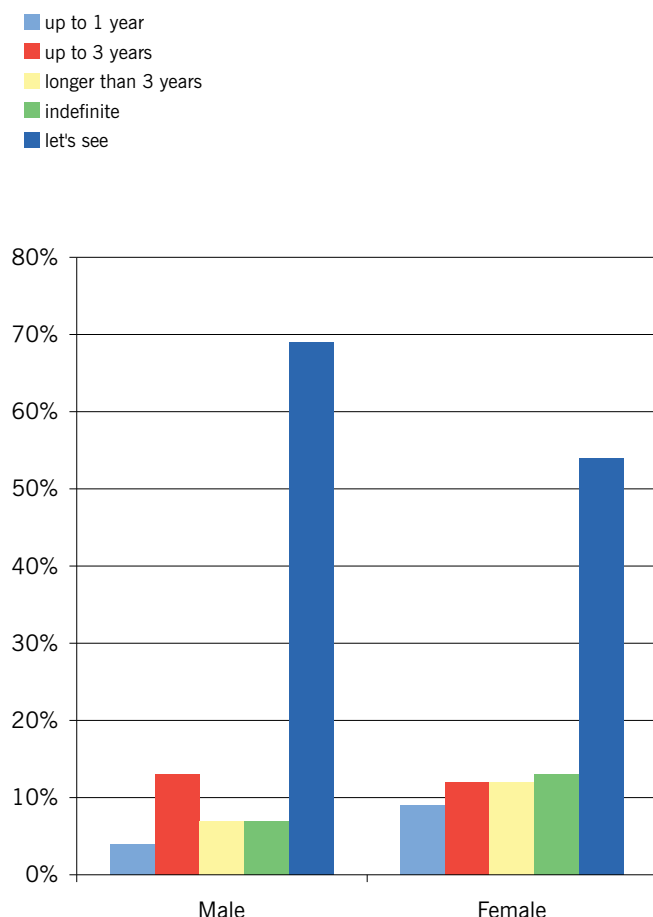
- There was no difference between the older (30–39 years old) and younger (20–29 years old) migrants with regard to length of stay.

- Marital status had an influence upon length of stay. Participants who were in a partnership (either married or cohabiting) were more likely to stay indefinitely (20% and 18% respectively) than those who were single (0%). Generally migrants who were in a partnership were more likely than single migrants to have concrete plans with regard to length of stay and less likely to reflect a 'let's see attitude' (see figure 5).

Figure 5: Marital status by intended length of stay

- Indefinite
- Let's see
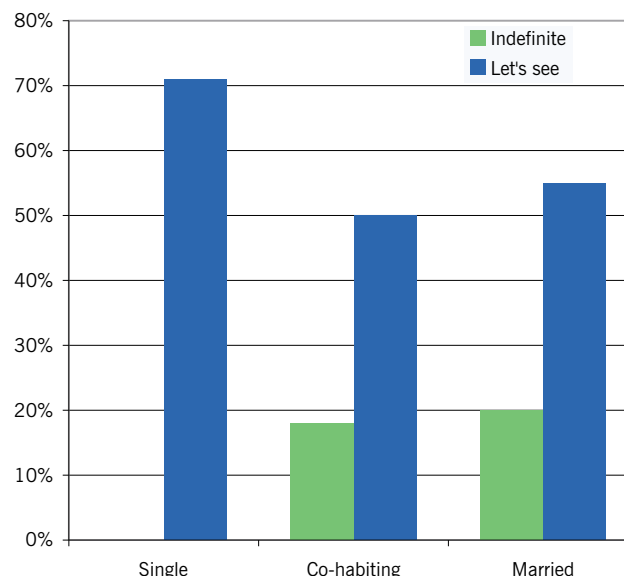
- Participants with children were more likely than other migrants to stay indefinitely in the UK (16% compared to 5% without children) and were less likely than migrants without children to stay short term (i.e. up to one year).

- Survey data indicate that there was a link between arrival time and length of stay. The longer participants had been in the UK the more open and flexible they were with regard to their plans regarding length of stay. Participants who had been long term in the UK (2004 and before) were most likely to state that they had 'no specific plans – let's see' (71%), followed by participants who had arrived in the medium term (2005/6) with 59% and those who had arrived in the short term (2007/8) with 49%. The likelihood of staying up to three years decreased with length of residence while intentions to stay short term increased with length of residence. The findings show that a longer term stay does not necessarily lead to an indefinite stay (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Arrival time of respondents by intended length of stay

- up to 1 year
- up to 3 years
- longer than 3 years
- indefinite
- let's see
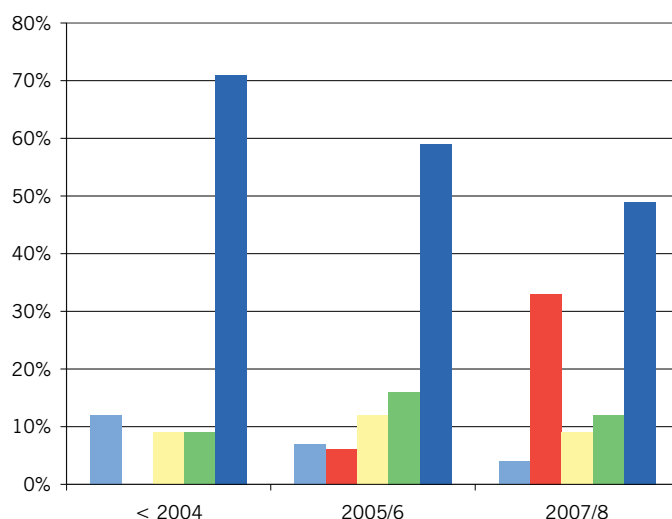
- Irrespective of area of settlement within the UK the majority of participants indicated a 'let's see attitude'. The majority of respondents lived in semi-rural or urban areas and there was no marked difference between both groups with regard to length of stay although migrants from urban areas were less likely to stay short term (up to one year).

4.4 Intended length of stay in the context of migration motives, identity, perceptions and ambitions

The next section looks at the following factors and their impact on length of stay: reasons for migrating, identity and sense of belonging, perception of situation in country of origin, perception of situation in the UK, future aspirations and coping strategies.

**Reasons for migrating
(more than one option could be selected)**

- The majority of participants stated that they migrated 'to get a better job' (73%) and 'to learn English' (55%); 21% migrated 'to have an adventure', 28% 'needed a change', 21% migrated 'to join family' and 21% indicated that they migrated 'to earn money quickly'. A surprising finding was that only 6% migrated to join friends. Migrants who said that they 'needed a change' were more likely than other migrants to have a 'lets' see attitude' while those who joined the family were more likely to stay indefinitely. The motive of 'adventure' was more likely to relate to other motives to a short term stay. The main motives (i.e. getting a better job and learning English) did not reflect major differences with regard to length of stay. 'Learning English' was slightly less likely to lead to an indefinite stay and slightly more likely to relate to a short term stay (see figure 7).

Figure 7: Reasons for migrating by intended length of stay

- up to 1 year
- up to 3 years
- longer than 3 yea
- indefinite
- let's see
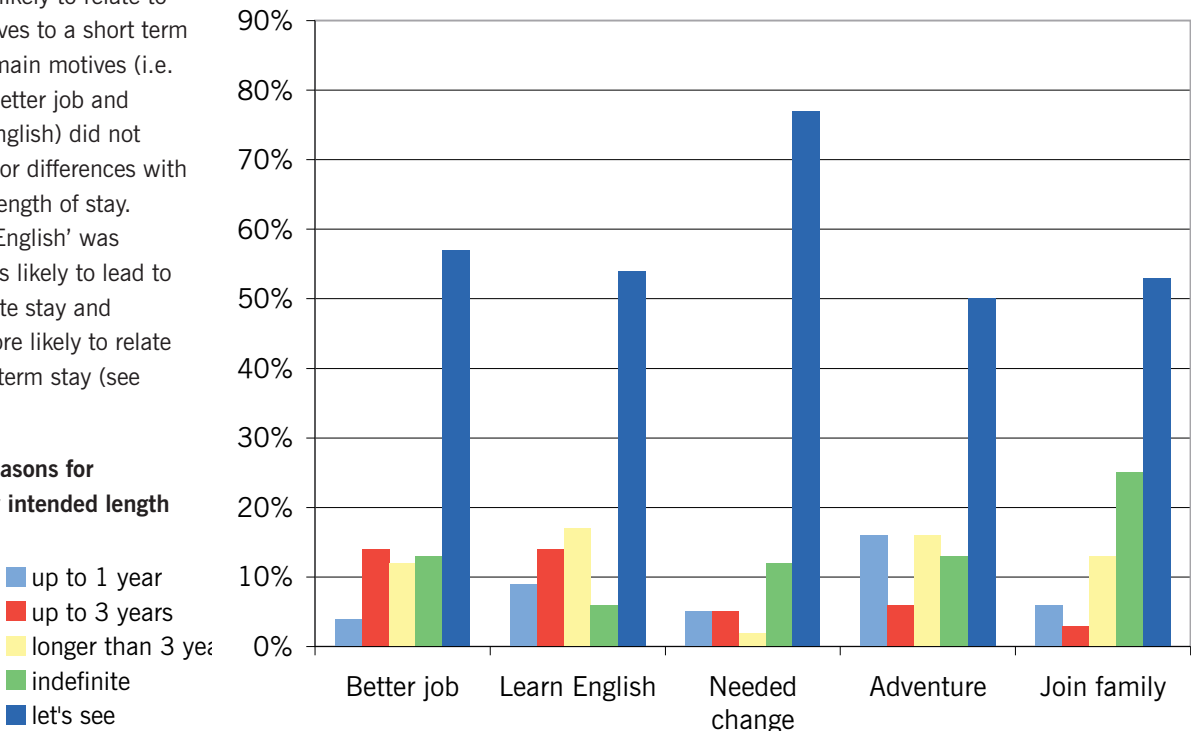
**Identity and sense of belonging
(more than one option could be selected)**

- 47% of participants saw themselves as citizens of their home country and 58% perceived themselves as European citizens emphasising the discrepancy between the labelling of participants by the receiving state as 'migrant workers' and their own identification as European citizens. 22% felt a sense of belonging to the UK. Sense of belonging was also reflected in the participation rate in local elections in the UK; 30% indicated an intention to vote in the next local election. The identification of participants as being European citizens was partly reflected in the fact that 31% intended to vote in the European elections in 2009. 77% of migrants who reflected an European identity intended to stay longer in the UK than initially anticipated.

Perception of home country situations

- Respondents were very negative regarding the political situation in their home country with 58% indicating that they had a 'negative' or 'very negative' perception of the political situation in their home country; 10% thought it was 'positive'; (30% thought it was neither good nor bad).

- Participants were also very concerned about the social situation in their home country with 55% perceiving it as 'negative' or 'very negative'; 11% thought it was 'positive' or 'very positive'; (27% viewed it as neither good nor bad).

- Migrants' perception of the economic situation in their home country was slightly less negative than their perception of the political and social situation with 48% ranking it as being 'negative' or 'very negative'; 14% thought it was positive; (33% selected neither good nor bad).

- Migrants who intended to stay longer in the UK than initially planned had a negative or very negative view of the social, economic and political situation in their home country (54%, 52% and 58% respectively); only a small number had a positive or very positive view of the social and political situation in countries of origin (15% and 11% respectively). However, 20% of those who intended to stay longer had a positive perception of the economic situation in their country of origin indicating that migrants do not necessarily consider returning even if the economic situation in their country of origin is regarded as being good (see figure 8).

Figure 8: Views on the social, economic and political situation in countries of origin by migrants who intended to stay longer than initially planned
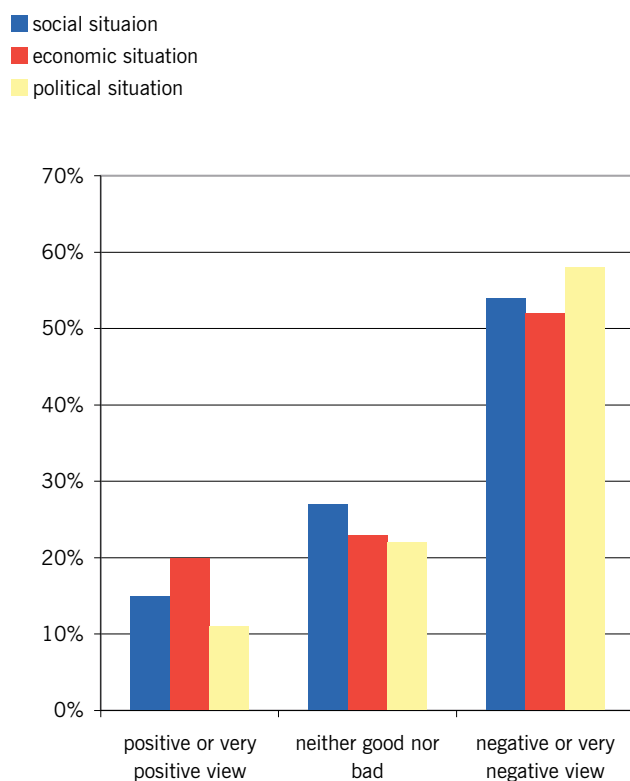

Perception of situation in UK

- Survey respondents had a positive perception regarding the political situation in the UK with 39% selecting 'positive' and only 7% finding it 'negative' or 'very negative'; (30% indicated 'neither good nor bad').

- 47% thought the economic situation in the UK was 'positive' and only 8 % perceived it as 'negative'; (36% viewed it as neither good nor bad).

- The social situation in the UK was viewed as being especially positive with 52% indicating 'positive' and 15% 'very positive'; only 5% thought it was 'negative' or 'very negative'; (22% thought it was neither good nor bad).

- Migrants who intended to stay longer than initially planned had an especially positive view of the social situation in the UK (77%), followed by the economic situation (55%) and the political situation (46%, see figure 9).

Figure 9: Views on the social, economic and political situation in the UK by migrants who intended to stay longer than initially planned
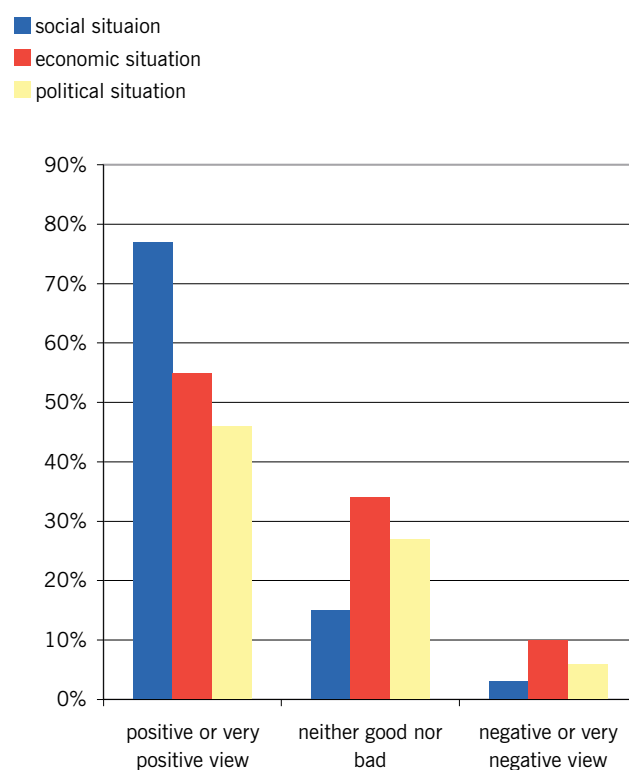
4.5 Barriers and coping strategies

**Figure 10: Ambitions and aspirations**
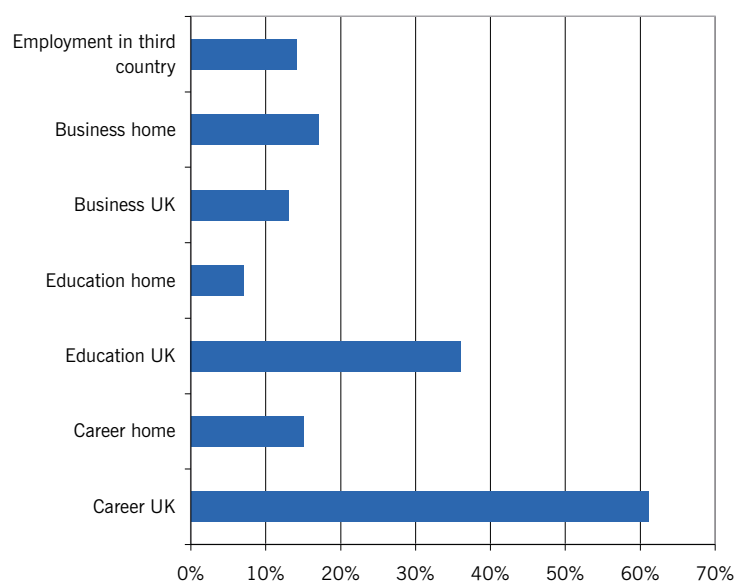
Ambitions and aspirations
(more than one option could be selected)

- 61% stated that their future ambition was to further their career in the UK compared to 15% who saw their future career in their home country. 36% intended to further their education in the UK compared to 7% who wanted to further their educational ambitions in their home country. A similar number of participants intended to set up a business in their home country (17%) or in the UK (13%). 14% stated that they intended to seek employment in a third country.

- Survey findings showed a link between ambitions and intended length of stay. Migrants who had career ambitions in the UK were more likely to stay indefinitely (14% compared to 7% who did not indicate these ambitions) and were less likely to stay short term (1% compared to 17% who did not have career ambitions). The same findings were reflected in the context of educational aspirations in the UK. Migrants who intended to further their education in the UK were more likely to stay longer than 3 years or indefinitely (19% and 15% respectively compared to 7% and 8% for migrants who did not show educational aspirations in the UK). With regard to business ambitions the impact on longer stay was less clear. Migrants who had business ambitions in the UK were not more likely to stay long term or indefinitely than those who did not have these ambitions. However, business aspirations had a clear impact on short term stay; none of the respondents who indicated business ambitions wanted to stay for short term (i.e. up to 1 year).

4.5.1 Employment barriers

- 73% of participants thought their qualifications were not reflected in their employment in the UK. Figure 11 below shows a clear link between the reflection of skills and length of stay (sig 0.003). This is one of the few factors which shows a significant link to length of stay, highlighting the importance of utilising more effectively their skills' potential (see also section 5).

Figure 11: Reflection of skills in employment in the UK
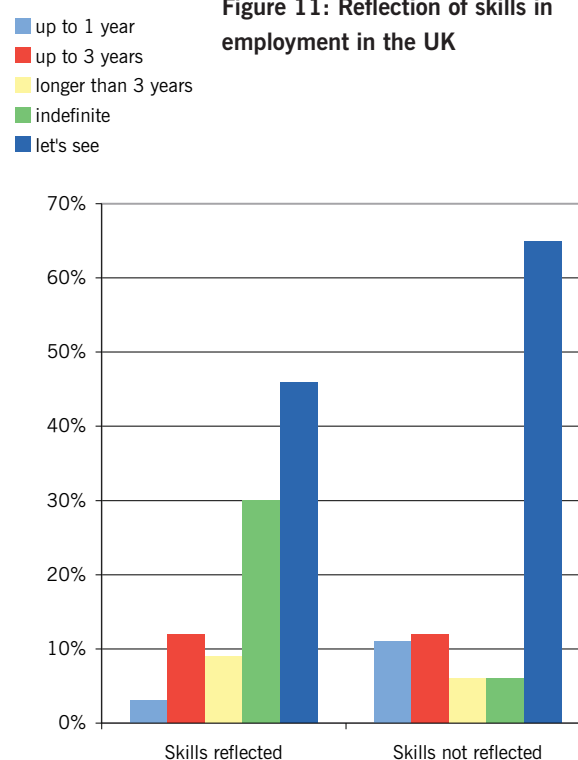
- 64% perceived language as an employment barrier followed by non recognition of qualification (33%), lack of promotion (19%), lack of career opportunities (17%), indirect discrimination (13%), lack of training opportunities (8%) and direct discrimination (5%). Figures 12 and 13 show that migrants who identified a language barrier or a problem regarding their recognition of qualifications did not necessarily intend to stay shorter than those who did not experience these barriers; both groups were similarly likely to stay longer 3 years or indefinitely (see figure 12 and figure 13).
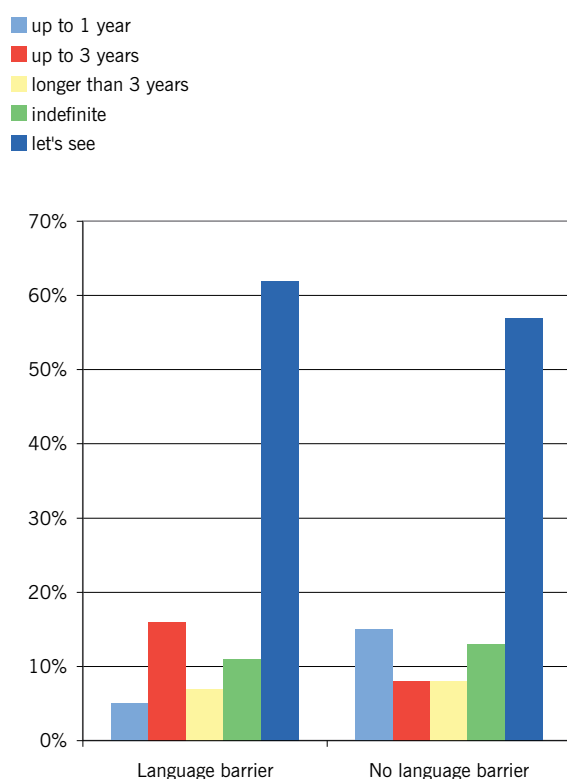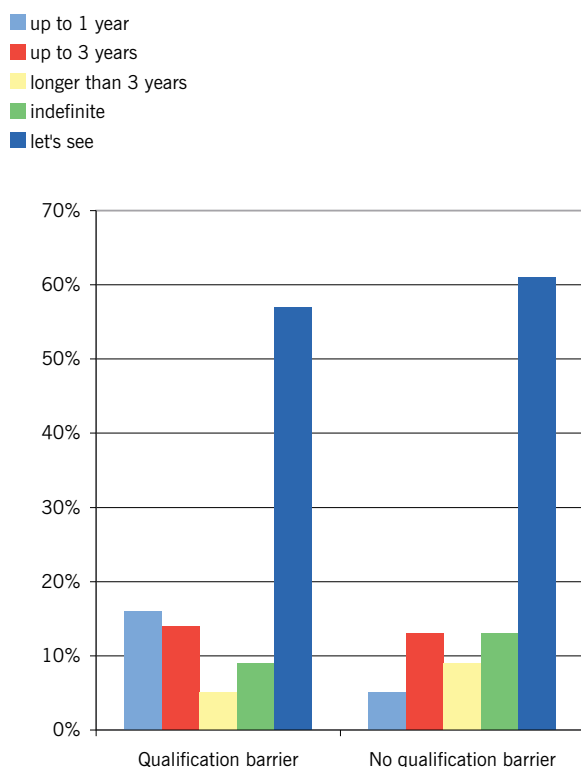
Figure 12: Language barriers by length of stay

- up to 1 year
- up to 3 years
- longer than 3 years
- indefinite
- let's see

Figure 13: Barriers regarding recognition of qualifications by length of stay

- up to 1 year
- up to 3 years
- longer than 3 years
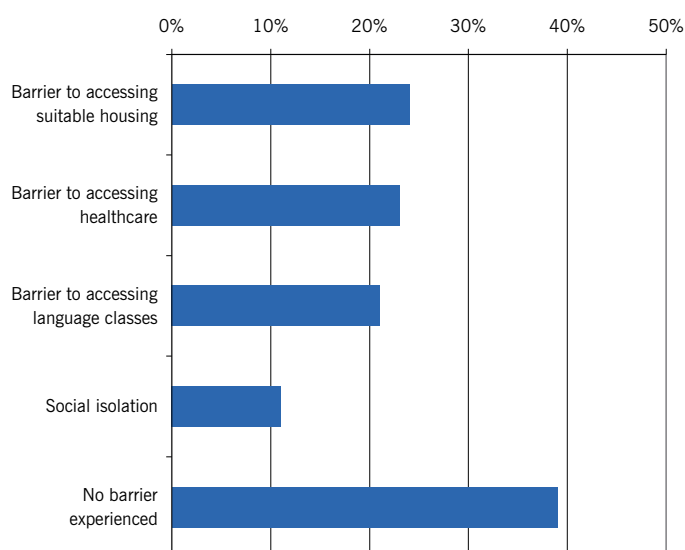- indefinite
- let's see

4.5.2 Barriers to social and community inclusion

- The majority of participants rated their social life in the UK as positive with 11% describing it as being 'very good' and 42% as being 'good'; only 9% rated it as 'bad' and 37% thought it was 'neither good nor bad'.

- With regard to seeing friends, the majority of participants managed to meet up with friends on a fairly regular basis with 38% responding of seeing friends 'often' and 14% selecting 'very often'; a fairly large number (33%) said 'occasionally' and 15% indicated 'seldom' or 'very seldom'.

- Friendship networks developed mainly around co-nationals with 77% stating that they have co-nationals as their friends although, it needs to be stressed that 23% did not have co-nationals as friends.

- Participants were more likely to be friends with migrants from other countries (60%) than with the British ethnic majority or the British ethnic minority (27% and 17% respectively).

- The 'social/ educational activities' which participants were most likely to follow in their free time was the visit to 'sports facilities' (56%) followed by going to the cinema/ theatre/ museum (54%), 'place of worship' (51%), 'pub' (43%), 'café' (40%), language school (34%) and voluntary organisations (16%).

- 13% of participants had experienced barriers/ problems regarding 'the attitude of the local population'.

- Although the majority of participants did not indicate a major problem regarding their social relations in the UK 11% stated that they had experienced 'social isolation'.

4.5.3 Barriers regarding housing, healthcare and education

- Nearly every fourth person stated that they had problems finding suitable accommodation and accessing healthcare (24% and 23 % respectively). 21% said that they had experienced barriers/ problems with regard to accessing language classes. Although language and recognition of skills and qualifications were perceived by more migrants as barriers, accessing housing, healthcare and language classes continues to be problematic for migrants. No barriers/ problems were perceived regarding access to schools. 39% stated that they had not experienced any barriers. Fig. 14 (over) gives an overview of different barriers experienced.

Figure 14: Migrants' experience of barriers relating to housing, healthcare and education

- There is no clear link between barriers regarding housing, healthcare and education and intended length of stay (see figures 15, 16 and 17). Migrants who did not experience these barriers were slightly more likely to stay indefinitely. However, participants who had experienced barriers were also very likely to stay long term (more than 3 years).

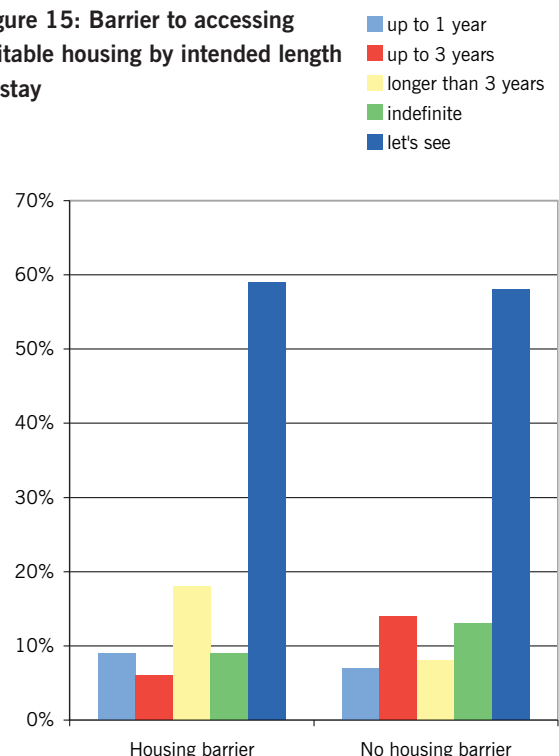## Figure 15: Barrier to accessing suitable housing by intended length of stay

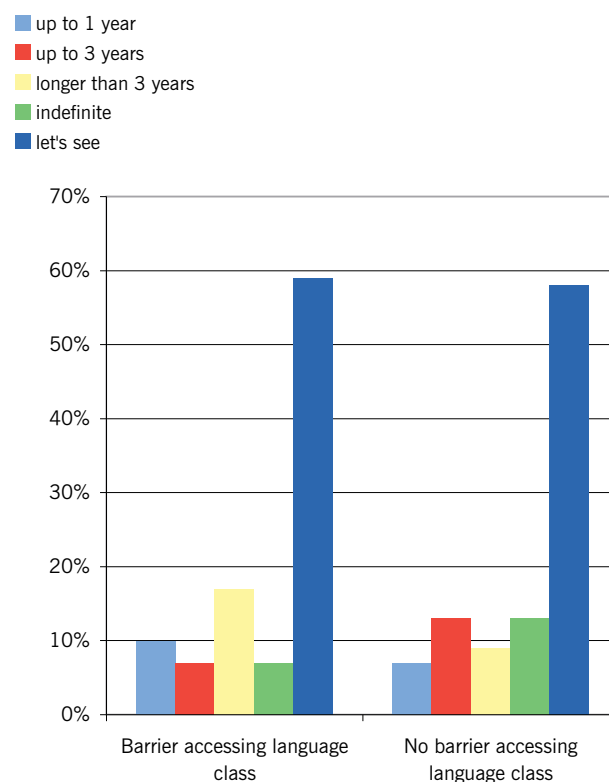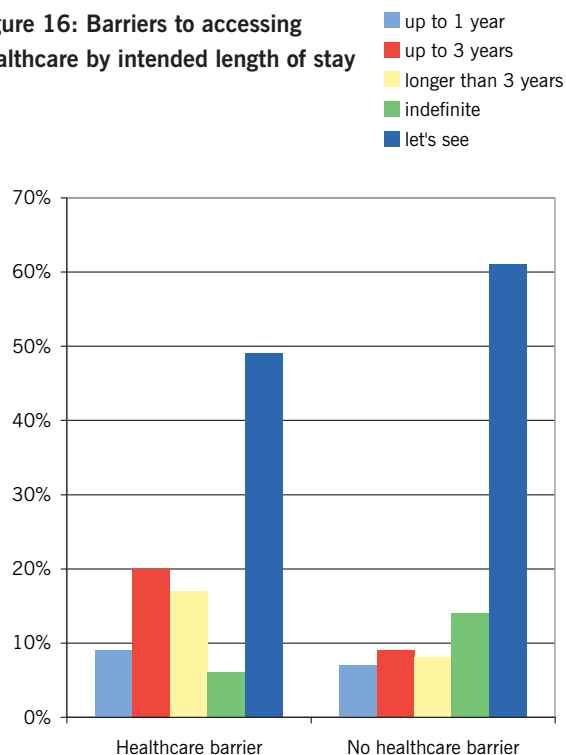## Figure 16: Barriers to accessing healthcare by intended length of stay

Figure 17: Barriers to accessing language classes by intended length of stay

- In general gender and age did not affect the experience of barriers. However, migrants who lived in semi-urban areas and those who had arrived in the medium term (2006) were more likely than other migrants to state that they had encountered barriers regarding accessing housing, healthcare and/or education. Only 8% of participants who lived in semi-urban areas indicated that they had not experienced any barriers (compared to 44% from rural areas, 47% from urban areas and 50% from semi-rural areas).

4.5.4 Coping strategies and support networks

- Although a number of barriers/ problems were encountered by participants the majority thought that they were coping 'well' (57%) or 'very well' (9%) with the situation. 31% selected 'fairly well' and only 4% said that they were coping 'badly' or 'very badly'. Similar to the findings regarding social isolation, it needs to be acknowledged that the small number who stated that they coped 'badly' and the relatively high number who stated 'fairly well' might be at risk of experiencing situations which may affect their mental health, aspirations and length of stay.

- 'Friends' were listed as the most common support network (64%) followed by family (58%), agency in UK (26%) and place of worship (6%).

- 41% mentioned that they dealt with problems themselves; confirming the assumption that a large number of migrants are 'self sufficient' as reflected in the findings above on decision making on migrating and length of stay.

- Coping strategies showed a link to intended length of stay (although some of the sub groups were very small except for the 'well' and fairly well' categories mainly selected by migrants – see figure 18); those who indicated that they were coping 'fairly well' were slightly less likely to stay longer than 3 years or indefinitely than those who were coping well.

Figure 18: **Coping by intended length of stay**

Legend:
- up to 1 year
- up to 3 years
- longer than 3 years
- indefinite
- let's see
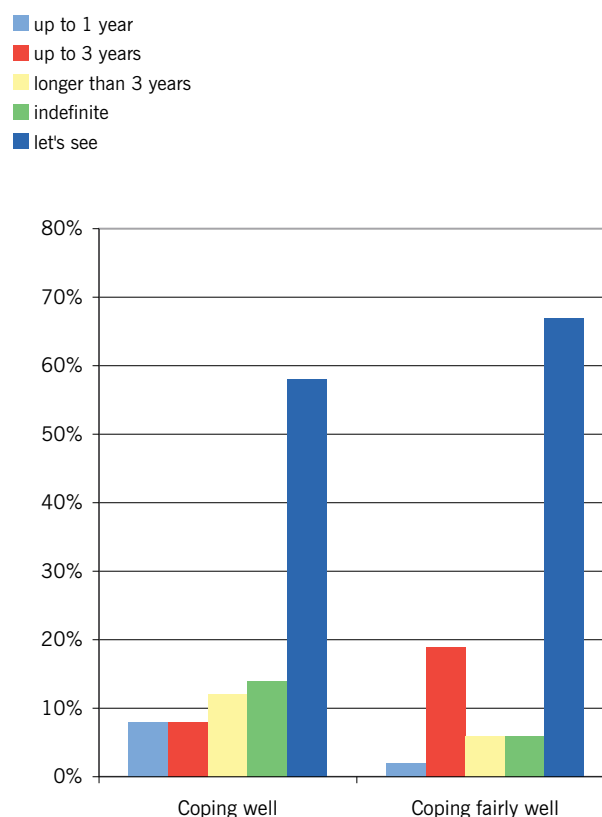
4.6 Conclusion

The survey findings highlight the complex bundle of factors (such as migrants' perceptions, goals, interactions and identities) which impact on migrants' decision making processes on length of stay (confirming findings from the literature review and the qualitative research of this study). Although relationships between these factors and intended length of stay were not necessarily significant, factors such as marital status, length of residence in the UK and aspirations displayed some stronger links. One factor which especially impacted on length of stay was whether migrants' employment in the UK reflected their skills or not. This survey found that the employment situation of migrants had not changed when compared to a survey carried out in 2005 (Schneider and Holman); the majority of migrants were still downgrading in their employment in the UK in 2008 highlighting an important policy area which should be addressed (see also next section on Key Findings).

5 Key findings

5.1 Ambiguity and complexity regarding intentions of length of stay

- The first year of the longitudinal study highlights the ambiguity and complexity regarding decisions on length of stay. Migrants themselves seem to be aware of the variety of factors which can potentially affect their decisions which might partly explain why the majority of survey respondents have a 'let's see attitude' with regard to length of stay. Changes in decisions are fairly frequent and those who changed their intention of length of stay are more likely to stay longer than for a shorter period of time.

- The survey showed that migrants perceived the following (subjective) factors as important in their decision making processes (listed in descending order and representing those factor which were selected by at least 25% of respondents): 'I have settled in the UK' (38%), 'I like the area where I live' (37%), 'I need to earn more money' (28%), 'My level of English is not good enough' (28%), 'I have a good social life' (28%), 'The economic situation in my home country has not improved' (26%) and 'I miss my home country' (25%). Further analysis of other factors revealed links between intended length of stay and:

  – marital status (migrants in a partnership were more likely to stay indefinite and less likely to have a 'let's see attitude' than single migrants);

  – arrival time in the UK (the longer participants had stayed in the UK the more likely they were to reflect a 'let's see attitude');

  – employment barriers (migrants who felt their skills were reflected in their employment position in the UK were more likely to stay long term or indefinite);

  – aspirations (participants with career and educational aspirations in the UK were more likely to stay long term or indefinitely).

- Assumptions about long term arrivals and settlement need to be treated with caution. Participants who had been in the UK for four years or longer did not give the impression that they were necessarily settling. Instead, they were least likely to state that they intended to stay indefinitely, more likely to reflect a 'let's see attitude' and slightly more likely (compared to other migrants) to stay short term.

- A common theme of interviews and diary entries was of family and 'home': particularly, separation from the familiar and distance from loved ones, especially parents. Whilst most interviewees considered that they made their migration decisions independently without influence from family or friends they also noted that returns home would be expedited by concerns for family members. Several were planning to eventually return to care for ageing or ill parents and it was also common for interviewees to send home remittances to help support parents. Despite the, perhaps, inevitable homesickness, distance was not necessarily a barrier to the continuation of family relationships and close friendships as interviewees were able to take advantage of cheap travel and communication costs and returned home frequently, welcomed family members and friends to the UK, and kept in contact my phone, email and other forms of communication.

- The maintenance of personal networks appeared to facilitate a transnational sensibility on the part of interviewees as much as EU membership. Self-identification, first as a national of a particular country and second as a European or purely as European[1], underpinned the normalisation of living and working in another country, which was sometimes considered as unexceptional as working in a major city in the home country (especially if quicker to travel home from!). As such, for these interviewees, the label of 'migrant' or 'migrant worker' neither accorded with their sense of identity nor framed their perception of experiences in the UK[2].

5.2 Relevance of political and social factors in countries of origin and the UK

- There is currently an overemphasis in the migration literature and public debate on the economic situation in the UK and countries of origin. The political and social situations are often neglected in discussions on length of stay. Economic, social and political issues are interlinked and our research shows that migrants' perceptions of the social and political situation in their home country and the UK are relevant for their decision making processes.

- One needs to distinguish clearly between decision making processes which influence migration and those which impact on decisions on return or stay. While decisions to leave the home country were influenced by economic, political and

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[1] This is consistent with (admittedly variable) Eurobarometer data on 'Europeanness'; overall, younger people are more likely to self-identify as European rather than state a single national identity (the majority of our interviewees were under 39).

[2] Interestingly, only 31% of survey respondents said they would vote in European elections. This compares unfavourably with the turnout for the UK in 2004 which was 38.4% – up from 24% in 1999 – and much higher than the 20% recorded in Poland in 2004 (Mellors-Facer et al, 2004). A sense of 'Europeanness' and intentions to vote in EU elections are clearly not mutually compatible processes.

social 'push factors' in countries of origin the 'pull factors' relate to economic and language motives. Although economic factors play an important role in decision making processes regarding stay or return, migrants who intended to stay longer than inially intended had in particular a positive perception of the social situation in the UK (77%). Many interviewees noted the sense of security they felt here arising from the consistency in political, legal and bureaucratic processes underpinning day to day 'normal life'. Knowledge of life in the UK prior to migration was generally patchy (often garnered through informal networks as well as the internet), and eligibility for benefits and measures to protect rights and counter discrimination in the workplace were largely unknown and unexpected positives. These factors, combined with prior and generally met expectations of higher earnings, the opportunity to improve English language skills as a future asset, self development opportunities and a discernible future, are likely to be key 'stay' incentives. They also go some way in explaining the self-selection of interviewees as chiefly 'searchers' or 'stayers' (Eade et al, 2006), or settled between 'searcher' and 'stayer' categories.

- Perhaps reflecting the 'let's see' or 'let's stay' attitude expressed in interviews and the survey, 30% of survey respondents said they would vote in local elections, which is quite interesting when compared with the low turnout at local elections averaging 30% since 1998 (only rising when general elections and local elections coincide) (Rallings and Thrasher, 2007). Reservations against voting cited by interviewees included lack of information, not knowing the candidate and policies, and an insufficient sense of belonging to justify exercising this right. Local council activities to encourage greater democratic engagement of local populations could usefully include an information campaign aimed at migrant workers and, for political parties, a concerted effort to engage new communities is recommended.

5.3 Achieving goals and ambitions

- Interview and survey data reveal that migrant workers are ambitious and seek personal development and advancement; 'making money quickly' is not their chief concern. Given that so many workers, at least initially, downgrade in terms of their qualifications, skills and employment history and have high aspirations, goal satisfaction may prove to be crucial for the retention of key workers in the region.

- Interviews from the first year suggest that goals are quite broad and across the short-term, medium-term and long-term encompass much more than the narrow financial concern of 'making money quickly'. Over time (as suggested by the results of the first year of questions on expectations and goals – see section 3.1.7), goals will become more focused and specific and we expect increased job satisfaction and status elevation – through work and education – to figure more concretely in the majority of participants' reflections on their general satisfaction levels. In other words, continuing to plug labour market gaps may not be a sufficient enticement for key workers to come to or to stay in the region, nor the best use of their generally high qualification and skill levels.

- The survey confirmed the high level of career and educational ambitions by migrant workers and highlighted that migrants with career and educational aspirations in the UK were more likely to stay longer term or indefinitely than those who did not have these intentions. These findings emphasise the need for provision of, and information about, career and educational opportunities for migrant workers.

5.4 Is the weakening economic situation ignored?

- The findings show that the changing economic situation did not have a 'shortening' effect on the length of stay anticipated; the majority of migrants who changed their decision decided to stay for a longer rather than a shorter time. The qualitative and quantitative research highlighted that the majority had a 'let's see attitude'. The relatively small impact of the worsening economic situation on migrants' decision making processes (so far) suggests that economic considerations are part of a complex bundle of factors which impact on decision making processes and are not always the prime influence on length of stay.

5.5 Language, recognition of skills, access to suitable housing and healthcare remain the chief barriers

• Interviewees noted how important English language skills were and speculated that the difficulties they had experienced could have been much worse if their competency in the language was at a reduced level or absent. The limited interaction with native English speakers was regretted and language skills were cited as a component of this, although cultural factors, and British perceptions of 'migrants' were also issues. Barriers were not a core preoccupation of interviewees; issues and problems – such as with landlords, housing and employers – were rarely acknowledged as barriers per se and often interviewees were able to 'make light' or 'write off' the situations they had experienced. One interviewee noted that 'the only barrier is me', summing up the general demeanour of interviewees.

• Although survey respondents (64%) confirmed language as a main barrier, non-recognition of skills in their employment was also an important issue and mentioned by 73% of participants. Other major barriers highlighted in the survey were non-recognition of qualifications (33%), access to suitable housing and healthcare (24% and 23%, respectively) and access to language classes (21%). On the other hand, it needs to be highlighted that 39% selected that they had not experienced any barriers/ problems. The majority of barriers did not indicate a concrete link to intended length of stay. However, 'reflection of skills in employment' showed a significant link to intended length of stay and those participants who saw their skills reflected were more likely to stay indefinitely. This survey has highlighted that migrants' employment positions in the UK still fail to reflect their skills. Considering that this factor has a strong impact on length of stay and on the British economy it is hoped that policies can be established to facilitate a better use of migrants' skills (see also 5.3).

5.6 The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

• Findings from the interviews, diaries and blog sites have been especially informative in what participants perceive is good about the UK and what is bad and, at the extreme of experiences, what the researchers would view as unacceptably ugly.

• The possibility for career fulfilment and self-actualisation feature very highly in the 'positives' of living and working in the UK. A trust in political and legal institutions, effective bureaucratic processes and unanticipated social protections were also positive features noted as were some excellent employers and letting agents/landlords who, respectively, recognise and reward skills and treat tenants fairly.

• Unfortunately, private landlords and employers also feature in the bad experiences cited (as do some supervisors and co-workers). Poor quality housing, being asked to move at short notice (sometimes to make way for higher paying tenants), and discovering that prior information about tenure, quality and cost of rental does not correspond to the housing situation once in the UK – multiple occupancy housing and a shared room at twice the price, for example – are some of the experiences recounted. Unfair treatment, direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace were also noted; for example, the most anti-social shifts reserved for migrant labour, illegal deductions made from migrants' payslips, and Polish names suspected as enough to invalidate the skills and qualifications listed on CVs.

• The worst (ugly) experiences and the impact these had on interviewees were extremely dispiriting. The range of 'cons' our interview sample had been subjected to (sometimes not even recognised as such), particularly in the first few months of arrival, was shocking and involved the mis-selling of goods, illegal pay packet deductions, bullying campaigns, agency scams, unreasonable costs associated with employment – and not disclosed at point of contract, and illegal evictions. A national portal of information and support for migrant workers (Holman and Schneider, 2008) would provide some protection through easier access to appropriate sources of information. Raising the profile of Trading Standards departments across the region would also be an important step in supporting migrant workers to access the protections they are entitled to, accompanied by a targeted campaign to tackle businesses that specialise in the exploitation of 'green' – and sometimes captive – consumers.

- The print media's negative coverage of migration issues was also noted by interviewees and diarists[3] as an unpleasant aspect of life here and with real impacts on individuals' lives. Some participants have reported feeling quite demoralised by the tenor of press coverage, have felt it contributed to bullying and some uneasiness in the workplace, and that coverage tended to focus on a few 'bad apples' making it 'more difficult for those who want to integrate and have a decent life'. A more measured and responsible reporting of the issues would be welcomed, particularly if, as one diarist fears, 'the recession is making people's attitudes towards the foreigners more radical … making the discrimination even worse'.

5.7 The 'self sufficient', ambitious and determined migrant

- Both the qualitative and quantitative research findings emphasise a high level of self sufficiency amongst migrants. Interviews, blog contributions and diaries revealed astonishing determination to deal with problems and barriers in the UK and in the country of origin. The survey confirmed this characteristic by finding that 44% stated that they dealt with problems themselves. A large number of migrants did not discuss decisions regarding length of stay with anyone and did not join friends of family in the UK. As highlighted before, the vast majority of participants had high ambitions (regarding career, education and/or opening up their own businesses).

- Although many migrants experienced barriers, they showed a strong determination to cope with problems and barriers did not directly affect their intended length of stay. The only barrier which had a clear impact on length of stay was the 'non reflection of skills in employment'. These findings illustrate how important it is for the region for national and regional policy makers to find ways to the full potential of this valuable pool of workers.

5.8 Conclusion

The literature review demonstrates that our findings are generally corroborated by findings from other studies and we believe form a robust basis for the development and progression of the study in years two and three. The immediate first steps for the next phase of the research will be to use the report to directly inform stakeholder interviews and to establish an expert advisory group for the remainder of the project.

Tracking changes in participants' lives and in their decision-making over the next two years – crucially, in the context of an economic recession and a general volatility in economic policy, a European election in 2009, and in the wake of the new immigration points system and tightened welfare to work policies, and a general election – will prove an interesting challenge.

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[3] These reflections were not a result of direct questions and tended to emerge from other discussions. The Year 2 survey will probe this element with some direct questions.

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