The Answers You Seek Will Never Be Found At Home
Reflexivity, biographical narratives and lifestyle migration among highly-skilled Estonians
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Abstract
This thesis focuses on issues around reflexivity and highly skilled migration. Reflexivity has been an underused concept in migration studies and incorporating it has been long overdue. By reflexivity this thesis understands the capacity of an actor to evaluate his or her position in relation to social structures, to take action in managing those structures and, finally, to critically revise both the position and action taken.

There are multiple reasons as to why incorporating reflexivity is a useful endeavor to migration studies. On one hand, using reflexive types in order to understand different migration motivations offers an alternative to otherwise mainly class based explanations behind migration objectives. Migration research has long relied on the idea that migration motivations can be coupled with societal and class background. Similarly, return migration has been described almost unanimously as a result of a homing desire. Both positions, as claimed in this thesis, are oversimplifications. On the other hand, I argue that, reflexivity helps to analyze the importance of class or even society on migration in 21th century. This is why I suggest to analyze all three in concurrence – migration, reflexivity and class.

In the following pages I analyze how reflexivity can be operationalized for studying migration. So far, reflexivity has been either used as background concept – mobility studies or for explaining particular kind of migration – lifestyle migration. I argue, that with careful operationalization reflexivity could be useful tool for explaining wide-variety of migrations – family, labour, lifestyle etc. Three articles in this thesis focus on providing such operationalizations, analyzing the relationship between migration motivations and reflexivity. Finally, the first article in this thesis analyzes the background of my particular group of migrants – Estonian highly skilled migrants and positions them in relation to other groups in Estonian society. Moreover, the article also underlines that self-development and lifestyle, if you will, is an important motivation for Eastern European migrants as well.

Keywords: highly skilled migration, Eastern Europe, reflexivity, lifestyle migration.
Sammanfattning
(Summary in Swedish)


Avhandlingen består av fyra artiklar med något olika inriktning. Den första undersöker det empiriska fallet i sin helhet utifrån en surveyundersökning estniska emigranter. Den andra artikeln diskuterar den brittiske sociologen Margaret Archers sätt att analysera migration och argumenterar i hennes efterföljd för ett socialpsykologiskt synsätt på de skiftande motiven att migrera. Den tredje artikeln utmanar tanken på att migranters återvändande i huvudsak kan förstås som saknad efter sociala relationer och känslor av hemlängtan. I den fjärde artikeln föreslås ett sätt för livsstilsmigrancer att hantera frågan om reflexivitet. Här positioneras livsstilsmigranter teoretiskt till andra typer av migranter och hur variationer i
livsstilsmigration kan analyseras. Trots inbördes variation har samtliga artiklar en gemensam nämnhare. Nämligen att påvisa reflexivitetens roll i migrationsbeslut och hur detta konkret kommer till uttryck.
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Papers

Paper I
Individualisation of Migration from the East? Comparison of Different Socio-Demographic Groups and their Migration Intentions

Paper II
Using reflexivity to explain variations in migration among highly-skilled

Paper III
To return or not to return? The importance of identity negotiations for return migration (DOI: 10.1080/13504630.2017.1310038)

Paper IV
Reflexivity beyond lifestyle migration: highly skilled Estonian migrants
Introduction

The end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century are often celebrated as the era of radical social changes. Such accounts are usually inspired by Giddens’ (1991) writings on ontological security, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s (2002) hypothesis of a second modernity and Bauman’s (2013) work on liquid modernity. All these authors argue that the radicalization of modernity has meant – and continues to mean – that people are forced to take individual responsibility for their decisions and invent new strategies to deal with societal instabilities. This, the authors argue, has put increasing stress on individual actors and their ability to make decisions, introducing the necessity of being more reflexive.

What does the concept of reflexivity mean and how should it be understood in the context of such societal changes? In this thesis, reflexivity is understood as the capacity of an actor to evaluate his or her position in relation to social structures, to take action in managing those social structures and, finally, to critically revise both the position and action taken. However, the carrying idea in this thesis is also that reflexivity cannot be understood as being either present or absent; rather, reflexivity can exist in varying degrees and take different shapes. This definition of reflexivity aligns with a significant body of scholarship (Archer 2003; Bottero 2010; O’Connor 2012), which tries to overcome the habitus-reflexivity dichotomy that has dominated reflexivity studies. Whereas some authors, such as Beck and Giddens, claim that reflexivity is ever-present, others, such as Bourdieu, insist that habitus and structure control our everyday life, with reflexivity being a tool that is used only in crisis situations. Hence, my view on reflexivity falls somewhere between these approaches. I consider that reflexivity can take on different shapes: it can function as a tool for strategically planning our daily activities, or it can work as a means to solve our identity-related struggles.

Reflexivity is not a significant concept in migration studies to date. Although some studies have used reflexivity (Kesselring 2008b; Scheibelhofer 2009; Corcoran 2003; Ní Laoire 2008), this usage has occurred mainly in passing. One of the research fields in migration studies that has been making more use of the concept of reflexivity is that of lifestyle migration (LM)
research (Benson and O’Reilly 2009). Unlike many other paradigms in migration research, LM focuses on migrants’ individual, non-economic motivations for migrating; thus, it offers an alternative view of the migrant’s agency. LM addresses how structure and agency work together on an individual level of decision making (through reflexivity) – a concept that is also the primary focus of this study. However, this thesis departs from LM research by focusing on a group that has not yet been included in LM studies: Eastern European migrants. Although some authors have included groups other than the Western middle class, LM has predominantly been focused on this group. This thesis finds that the prevalent discussions in LM scholarship on reflexivity, life quality and individualization should be widened in scope by being extended beyond Western societies. Furthermore, this thesis argues that LM scholarship itself would benefit from an analysis of migrants from outside the ‘West’, as such an analysis can help to position scholarship in relation to other fields and to give a better overview of the use of reflexivity by LM migrants. Until now, it has not been possible to determine whether the reflexive practices seen in lifestyle migrants are an emancipation from a Western middle-class habitus, or whether they are, in fact, a part of it.

This thesis examines the relationship between class and reflexivity. By drawing on the case of highly skilled Estonian migrants, it aims to investigate and discuss the role of reflexivity in migration decisions. As previously mentioned, this thesis uses LM studies as its main point of departure, and critically evaluates LM in light of recent research in reflexivity studies and from an Eastern European context. It is relatively common to separate research on Western and Eastern (here used to refer to Western versus Eastern European) migrants. Concepts such as highly mobile people, transnational middling migrants, expatriates and even career migrants have mostly been applied to Westerners all over the world (see Kennedy 2012; Favell 2011). These Western migrants are usually depicted as highly educated, either career- or lifestyle-driven and relatively ‘free’ (i.e. from economic drivers) in their migration. One can contrast this image with what has been the prevalent perception of Eastern Europeans for decades: low-skilled, economic migrants who are mostly pushed to move by structural constraints (Drinkwater, Eade, and Garapich 2009). Although this discourse is changing, and several authors focusing on Eastern European migrants have challenged this distinction (Drinkwater and Ingram 2009; King et al. 2014; Parutis 2014), there is still something of a split between two migration currents inside Europe. The development of a new concept for describing Eastern Europeans – liquid migration – further supports the opinion that we need different
terms to describe Easterners. Even though this concept has a great deal in common with descriptions of highly mobile EU citizens, it is still nevertheless applied solely to Eastern Europeans.

The distinction between East and West Europeans in migration studies, however, should not be seen as a merely class-related problem. It would be easy to brush off this distinction as one that is mainly related to poor versus rich countries, and to assume that it is logical that migration from the richer country is less a result of structural constraints than migration from the poorer country. However, in this thesis, I also intend to look at how societal values and culture have been used to motivate the separation between East and West Europeans in migration studies. For example, LM researchers have occasionally argued that seeking authentic identity and making lifestyle a priority are characteristics of Western middle-class culture (Osbaldiston 2014). This may well be the case, just as Western middle-class culture may encourage people to be reflexive. However, this view does not necessarily provide any information about the migration motives of Eastern Europeans or about their being less reflexive than Westerners. Even though previous literature has given no explicit reasoning exists as to why Eastern European migrants are not researched as lifestyle migrants, one potential reading could be that the distinction made between lifestyle migrants and others is not solely based on economic differences. Rather, other factors are used as grounds for distinction – such as the factor of cultural background, which pushes lifestyle migrants to see their migration as an identity project.

Therefore, this thesis aims to overcome a perceived split between the studies focusing on Western Europe and those focusing on Eastern Europe. By using a theory inspired by Western migrants to examine Eastern migrants, this thesis tests the validity of the theory in a different context. I reach the conclusion that, in fact, the discussions in LM research have a great deal to offer in an Eastern European context. The specific group studied in this thesis is highly skilled Estonian migrants. In some ways, Estonia is an odd case, mainly because of its highly neoliberalist orientation and its active efforts to rewrite the country as Western. Many of my interviewees challenged the idea of Estonia as Eastern European altogether, and argued that it is a well-developed, high-tech country. Thus, Estonians’ self-image does not necessarily correspond to the categorization that is placed on them from the outside. This ambivalence, however, makes the case of Estonian migrants an extremely interesting one for the application of a concept that has been oriented towards Western migrants. Furthermore, this ambivalence may also allow a challenge to the East-West distinction, at least regarding how
migrants make their decisions and what motivations lie behind these decisions.

The specific research questions discussed in this thesis are:

1. How can we operationalize different reflexive practices used by highly skilled Estonian migrants?
2. What is the relation between class and reflexivity in the case of highly skilled Estonian migrants?
3. Based on the answers to the above questions, what do these findings indicate for a theoretical understanding of reflexivity in migration decisions?

The first question is motivated by the lack of empirically founded suggestions on how to study reflexivity. In this thesis, I review the two schools of migration studies that have paid the most attention to reflexivity. One of them – mobility studies – has built a very good groundwork for a more abstract analysis of reflexivity and its role in migration. The other – LM research – focuses on the role of reflexivity for lifestyle migrants who mainly belong to the Western middle classes. Neither of these research fields offers a clear suggestion for how to categorize different reflexive practices among migrants. Mobility studies view reflexivity in a more abstract manner, using the concept to describe more general changes in society, whereas LM examines the reflexivity of one particular type of migrants. However, we currently have little data that can be used to compare lifestyle migrants’ reflexive practices. By analysing the reflexivity of highly skilled Estonians, this study suggests several potential ways to analyse reflexivity in a manner that is ‘close to the field’.

The second question is motivated by a distinction in migration studies that has prevailed for a long time: it is common to talk about ‘high’ and ‘low’ skilled migrants (Koser and Salt 1997). Even this thesis uses this distinction between different skill levels, and defines ‘highly skilled’ based on both education and profession. The fact that this distinction hides a hidden class bias is much less discussed. The ‘highly skilled’ are automatically assumed to belong to either the middle or the upper class, whereas the ‘low skilled’ are expected to originate from a working-class environment. With the current development of the migration field, researchers mainly discuss highly skilled middle-class migrants who move for reasons other than work or economics. LM research almost exclusively studies middle-class migrants, and sometimes refers to the fact that the Western middle-class culture supports the
development of reflexivity (Benson and O’Reilly 2009). This issue is still under discussion. However, it is not uncommon for different studies in the migration field to assume that middle- and upper-class migrants are somehow more ‘free’ in their decision making and are therefore able to make more reflexive decisions. Furthermore, groups such as refugees and economic migrants are pictured as responding to what is considered the forced nature of the migration, and are thus seen as lacking any agency or reflexivity in their migration decisions. Comparing this perspective with reflexivity studies, in which several scholars have pointed out that, at least in the Western world, the working class may be more reflexive than the middle or upper classes (Laughland-Booÿ, Mayall, and Skrbiš 2014), such a depiction is problematic and should be questioned. Although this thesis uses interviews with highly skilled migrants, several of these migrants have a working-class background, due to the nature of Eastern European class structure. Studying migrants with a wide variety of backgrounds provides a good ground for seeing how class and reflexivity co-operate in migration decisions.

Finally, the different uses of reflexivity seen in two aforementioned scholarships (LM and mobility studies) have resulted in different kinds of theoretical approaches and dissimilar results. Mobility studies generally argue that reflexivity is always present in all kinds of migrations, but do not analyse its influence in individual decisions. Rather, such studies use the concept to explain abstract societal changes. On the other hand, LM examines the development of a new type of migrant – the lifestyle migrant, who is said to be primarily interested in migrating for quality-of-life purposes (O’Reilly and Benson 2009a). Thus, LM scholars use reflexivity as a potential tool for explaining the emergence of a new kind of migration, and offer as a potential explanation the idea that Western middle-class culture encourages people to look for authentic identity and to question themselves. Different ways of viewing reflexivity have been developed that align with these two strands of reasoning. However, the point of departure for this thesis is that a comprehensive analysis of how reflexivity enters into migration decisions is still lacking. On the one hand, mobility studies present a rather abstract description, while on the other hand, LM studies present a more specialized understanding of the reflexive practices of one particular type of migrant. Therefore, this study aims to analyse a wide variety of migrants (in terms of their migration motivations) and to examine the use of reflexive practices in these migration decisions.

The next chapter provides an overview of reflexivity studies. In the chapter following it, these concepts and theories on reflexivity are used to examine
how the mobility turn and LM studies have understood reflexivity. The subsequent chapter examines the question of how migration and reflexivity have been analysed in an Eastern European context. The chapter on methodology then moves back to theoretical grounds, and highlights how my ontological standing – critical realism – translates into methods. Finally, the last chapter gives a short overview of the four articles in this body of work. The thesis concludes with considerations of potential future directions for reflexivity research in migration studies.
The changing nature of migration

Several scholars have argued that the nature of migration, including both the motivation to migrate and the groups that are migrating, has been changing rapidly due to societal changes that are occurring mainly in Western societies (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006; Rojek and Urry 1997; Scheibelhofer 2009). First, migration is viewed as being accessible to more people than before. Many geographers refer to time-space compression (Harvey 1999), whereby geographical distance is overcome by new communication and transport technologies. Scott (2006) argues that skilled migration is no longer a domain that is dominated by the elite, but has become a normal middle-class activity. Second, scholars discuss changing migration motives. For example, Kennedy (2010) notes that many young, educated individuals see migration as a vehicle for pursuing their project of self-realization, whether this project is imagined in terms of promoting their careers or whether it involves a search for adventure and cultural variety. He adds that, for certain types of individuals, migration offers a flexible lifestyle, thus enhancing the capacity to pursue a self-fashioning project. Several others have mentioned changes in migration motives (Corcoran 2003; Scheibelhofer 2009). Urry (2007) suggests that migration has become a way for people to model their identity.

Such changes, as mentioned earlier, can be traced back to structural transformations such as globalization, neoliberalization and, more generally, the changing face of the labour market (Kennedy 2004, 2004). Even though these structural transformations play a key role in the changing face of migration, this thesis is more focused on transformations that take place at the individual level. As noted before, for skilled individuals, migration motives are now tightly connected to self-fashioning. However, several scholars have noted that even self-fashioning can be understood in different ways (Elliott and Urry 2010) – hence Scheibelhofer’s (2009) argument that migration from Western Europe has become diversified and individualized. In addition, the problem with the studies that refer to individualization and diversification is that most of these studies offer no tools for describing these changes on a micro level. There is very little discussion on whether individual subjectivities and their reflexive practices are related to external structures, and if so, then
how. The underlying question is: will certain societal structures help to describe such individualization?

This thesis suggests using the concept of reflexivity as a potential means to describe the diversification and individualization in migration decisions. Under the second modernity, migration is seen as connected to an individual’s needs and to a desire to conduct a life of one’s own. Reflexivity is argued to play a key role during current changes, as individuals must refer back to their own resources in order to make life decisions (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 2002). Surprisingly, few migration scholars have used the concept of reflexivity thus far, although there has been some discussion around the concept of reflexivity among LM scholars (Korpela 2014; Benson 2014), scholars such as Corcoran (2002), and – fleetingly – Scheibelhofer (2009). Indeed, transnationalist scholars, who engage more with criss-crossing identities, have been much more interested in the current developments in reflexivity studies (Amelina and Faist 2012). Transnationalist studies have also focused more on researching reflexivity and how the lack of reflexivity has resulted in methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Schiller 2003) – an argument that could be useful for analysing LM research as well. However, as yet, relatively little is known about how the research objects – the migrants themselves – reflect and apply reflection to plan their migration.

This thesis argues that reflexivity can function as a useful concept for analysing the influence of structural changes (i.e. globalization, neoliberalization) at the individual level. Reflexivity is seen as playing a key role in the migration decision-making process, thus providing a means to understand the relation between structure and agency at the individual level. On the one hand, it is seen as a tool that allows one to negotiate structures by questioning them (thereby bringing agency into the process) and working out strategies to manage those structures. On the other hand, reflexivity can function within structures, by helping an individual to work out the means to sustain the surrounding structures. However, even when reflexive deliberations support the maintenance of structures and function inside these structures, reflexivity can still be considered as a sign of agency to some degree, since the individuals involved are choosing not to challenge their surroundings. Thus, reflexivity is seen here as a tool for individuals to make calculated decisions that are in accordance with their identity and position in the world. Even though discussions around structure and agency are very common among migration scholars, few debates focus on the tension between the two on an individual level. The relationship between structure and agency is more often dealt with on a societal level, by questioning the influence of social policies,
the rate of poverty, structural values, and so forth, on an individual’s migration motives.

Not only is reflexivity underused in migration studies, but also studies focusing on Eastern Europe rarely mention reflexivity, which is odd. Most studies on reflexivity focus on class travellers in Western European contexts (Threadgold and Nilan 2009; Laughland-Booÿ, Mayall, and Skrbiš 2014; O’Connor 2012). Mrozowicki (2009) is one of the few scholars who has explored reflexivity in the context of Eastern Europe. Other studies in the Eastern European context that could be related to reflexivity studies focus on broken biographies and biographical learning; these studies claim that, due to the fall of the Eastern block, an entire generation of Eastern Europeans had to become extremely resourceful in handling unknown circumstances. There is a great deal of overlap between how Alheit (1994) uses biographical learning and how Archer and others use reflexivity; so much so, that Alheit’s findings could be translated as referring to a heightened use of reflexivity among Eastern Europeans. Therefore, including Eastern Europeans in reflexivity studies is an important step in the further exploration of how reflexivity is used in times of crisis.

The following chapter on theory provides an overview of key discussions in reflexivity studies, and explains my own perspective on reflexivity. Next, I review the field of migration studies, giving precedence to the two schools of thought that are most significant for this thesis: mobility studies and LM studies.

**Discussions around reflexivity**

As noted by Farrugia (2013), the concept of reflexivity has become a central theoretical problem for sociological accounts of subjectivity. Farrugia points out that the issue of reflexivity touches upon core discussions in sociology, such as the debate about agency and structure. Indeed, several debates on reflexivity have focused on questions of individual agency. Archer (2009) notes that two theories have persistently dogged most contributions on reflexivity: reflexive modernization and habitus. These theories are antithetical, with one claiming that reflexivity is universal and the other claiming that socialized habitual action is durable (Archer 2009). The first approach tends to assume a perfect fit between habitus and habitat that leaves no room for individual reflexivity, whereas the other argues that the rate of change in modernity is such that it is increasingly difficult to develop dispositions that are attuned to it (Sayer 2009). In this thesis, habitus denotes the non-reflexive
aspect of the self – a system of lasting transposable dispositions that guides the individual’s actions in social space (Bourdieu 1977). On the other hand, in this thesis, reflexivity refers to the capacity to develop critical awareness of the assumptions that underlie practices, and especially meta-cognitive practices (Maclean, Harvey and Chia 2012). In other words, in relation to habitus, reflexivity can be seen as the ability to distance oneself from one’s social surroundings and to become aware of one’s habitual actions. In reality, few authors neatly align with either end of the continuum. Rather, many theorists on reflexivity (at least recently) are trying to synthesize the notions of reflexivity and habitus in some way (e.g. Sayer 2009; Fleetwood 2008; Mouzelis 2007). In the following pages, I will start by discussing Bourdieu and other scholars that show a preference towards the habitus continuum in relation to reflexivity. I will then describe both theories in a more detailed fashion and clarify my choice of theory in this thesis.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) define reflexivity as the systematic exploration of unthought categories of thought that delimit the thinkable and pre-determine the thought. This definition of reflexivity is indicative of Bourdieu’s general approach, which favours the prevalence of social structures. In the broadest terms, habitus refers to our overall orientation to our way of being in the world – that is, to our predisposed ways of thinking, acting and moving in and through our social environment, which encompass posture, demeanour, outlook, expectations and tastes. According to Bourdieu, social structures are reflected in mental structures (Bourdieu 1977). Such mental structures are referred to as habitus, a system of internalized dispositions that can predefine actions, interests and tastes. Central to the concept of habitus is the notion of social class, which forms mental dispositions through family background as well as early schooling. Bourdieu sees class as encoded in people’s sense of self-worth and in their attitudes towards and awareness of others.

Many scholars have accused Bourdieu of leaving little or no room for an individual reflexivity that can mediate the effect of the social field (see Sayer 2009). In terms of migration, such a criticism of Bourdieu may imply that, in his view, the migration motives of individuals would be mostly connected to their class background. However, there are conflicting accounts of how much reflexivity Bourdieu allows for. According to some critics, even though Bourdieu’s habitus is conditioning, it allows a certain amount of re-positioning space for the individual actor (Sweetman 2003). This is how reflexivity enters the process: through reflexive deliberation, individuals can escape their habitus. Bourdieu is not clear about the role of reflexivity in habitual action, but scholars following Bourdieu usually agree that reflexivity emerges only in
conditions where there is a mismatch between habitus and field. McNay (1999), for example, argues that when there is a lack of fit between habitus and field, actors may experience a sense of dissonance, which forces them to become reflexively aware of their social surroundings. Such situations may entail the reconstruction of both one’s situation and one’s self (e.g. Burkitt 2002). How migration may result in a mismatch between habitus and field, along with its result of radical reflexivity, has been described by Janoschka (2011) using the example of political action by British migrants in Spain.

However, Adkins (2003) argues that assuming that such critical moments end with the reconstruction of one’s identity may underestimate the ways in which reflexivity is part of everyday habit, and hence may overestimate the possibilities for identity transformation in late modernity. She suggests that it is necessary to distinguish between the critical reflexivity that leads to identity transformation and the more common form of reflexivity that is a response to relatively trivial conflicts of daily life. Bottero (2010) has a similar reading of Bourdieu, and suggests that Bourdieu does not doubt the existence of reflexivity, but rather the significance of reflexive practices in shaping our practices. According to her, reflexivity can be a reinforcing habit that may contribute to the perpetuation of norms. She agrees with Adkins that reflexivity in research currently covers a range of meanings; these range from the routine monitoring of conduct to the need for agents to provide accounts of their actions to themselves and others, and further to the more self-conscious habitual activity that is generated by particular types of interactional contexts. Article four of this thesis advocates for a sensitivity to various degrees of reflexive deliberation, and argues that reflexivity can serve multiple purposes and that not all moments of reflexivity result in identity reconstruction.

However, an alternative reading of Bourdieu is also available. Several researchers (e.g. Maton 2003; Bassett 1996) claim that Bourdieu allows for reflexivity within certain groups only, such as middle-class intellectuals. Indeed, Bourdieu himself mostly referred to reflexivity in connection with fields such as academia. Similarly, Sweetman (2003) suggests that, for many individuals, reflexivity has become habitual rather than something that is difficult to achieve. He therefore suggests using the term ‘reflexive habitus’ to describe this adoption of the changing nature of social terrain. For certain individuals who experience a great deal of change, it may make sense to avoid trying to construct a viable, coherent and sustained identity at all, since habitus only develops through lasting experience of a social position. Individuals who have adapted reflexive habitus are in a constant search for variety. Sweetman is not totally clear regarding which groups he considers to have
this form of internalized reflexivity, but he relies heavily on Featherstone (1999) in explaining how certain groups can internalize reflexive habitus. Featherstone suggests that one group that struggles in developing sustainable habitus may be the *petit bourgeois*. Sweetman also points to Lash (1994), who proposes that the middle-aged and elderly may be more likely to display the quasi-traditional habitus characteristics of Bourdieu’s understanding of the term, and that it is possible that certain forms of masculinity militate against the acquisition of a habitual reflexivity. As discussed later in this thesis, Sweetman is a reflexivity theorist whose work is used in migration studies to examine why the migration of certain classes can be seen as more reflexive than that of other classes.

Several theorists criticize Bourdieu for his allegedly too-rigid view on the durability of habitus (King 2000; Verter 2003; McLeod 2005). Most critics say that Bourdieu exaggerates the fit between habitus and field, so that his agents lack the capacity to use reflexivity to develop any critical distance from their situation (e.g. Bottero 2010). Although Bourdieu allows for reflexivity in moments of crisis, as noted earlier, in the context of a misfit between habitus and field, he still retains the view that such crisis-driven calculations tend to carry out at a conscious level the operations that are carried out anyways when people follow habitual actions. To be more exact, both practical and reflexive reasoning are embedded in habitual thought. However, such a notion may be problematic, since Bourdieu does not acknowledge the importance of second-order desires (see Frankfurt 1988), that is, of people’s desire to change and think differently from their habitual way of thinking. On the other hand, as Reay points out, encountering a crisis may not only result in change and transformation; it may also cause disquiet, ambivalence, insecurity and uncertainty (Reay 2001). The criticism of Bourdieu’s exaggeration of the fit between habitus and field may be more relevant in certain social contexts, such as in the Eastern European case, where a serious generational shift has taken place since the fall of communism in the 1990s.

The other problem brought out by Bourdieu’s approach to reflexivity is that he underestimates the frequency of crises in our lives. McNay (1999) argues that current society is, in fact, more routinely marked by crises emanating from movement between fields than Bourdieu allows. Furthermore, Elder-Vass (2007) claims that our natal background and socialization practices no longer provide guidelines to action for the young members of any class, let alone assure the reproduction of social position. Both scholars then suggest that habitus does not function in the same way it did a century
ago and that, therefore, individuals must refer to their own resources in planning their lives. In this case, reflexivity is still used to alleviate crises; it is just that crises are more common than Bourdieu allows for. Again, such criticisms may be even more relevant in the case of Eastern Europe, especially in societies that have strong neoliberal attitudes, which encourage individuals to take personal responsibility for social risks. The presence of discontinuous biographies is visible in my interviews, in which very few respondents have followed a straight path from education to work.

The third criticism of Bourdieu’s work is that, by emphasizing the role of early socialization in shaping habitus, Bourdieu ignores the degree of potential heterogeneity within any given milieu, which may shape the lifeworld and the way agents modify and reconstruct their disposition throughout their life. Brooks and Wee (2008) note that individuals are already somewhat ambivalent towards their relationship to the field, for the simple reason that no single field completely exhausts the totality of any individual’s social experiences. Burkitt (2002) furthermore asserts that all selves are constituted by a range of different habits, some of which may clash with or contradict others. Many of these habits may remain latent, only surfacing in the required situation. Mouzelis (2007), in particular, writes about the heterogeneity of the early socialization environment, and suggests various situations in which crises appear. He suggests that it is not only when habitus meets a dissimilar field that a crisis emerges, but that conflicts may also appear between different habitus that have been internalized from childhood. He gives an example of a gay author who was raised in a strict Christian manner and who therefore had internalized Christian values. However, his sexual orientation contradicted these perceived Christian values, leaving him with a rather constant experience of crisis. Mouzelis’s comments led to my suggestion in the third article of this thesis that people may harbour multiple selves and that migration decisions are partially influenced by which self is given preference to.

Contrary to those in favour of Bourdieu, modernization theorists such as Giddens (1991), Beck (2006) and Bauman (2013) can be seen as arguing for widespread reflexivity. These three authors agree that second modernity is characterized by a special type of reflexivity. Giddens (1991) argues that reflexivity has always been central to human experience, but that second modernity has brought about a constant monitoring of social practices. Like Bauman and Beck, he argues that since traditional sources of identity (e.g. family, religion) no longer define our life experiences in the distinct way they once did, people are forced to become active in constructing their lives. The
lack of solid structures in people’s lives leads to ambivalence, which, according to all three theorists, is dealt with by self-monitoring. Giddens (2002) explains that individuals continuously monitor their actions and plan their lives and daily activities. Reflexivity is then used to handle risks, deal with life decisions and create a feeling of control within oneself. Whereas Bauman mainly talks about the negative side effects of this continual monitoring, such as increased risks and insecurities, Giddens is more positive, focusing on the fact that individuals can, perhaps for the first time, have more of a role in determining the nature of their identity. Although Beck and Giddens share many concerns and developed their arguments in collaboration, they disagree about the roots of de-traditionalization. Beck argues that de-traditionalization is caused by a change in material structures, whereas Giddens claims that abstract systems have caused the current state (see Farrugia 2013).

There has been widespread criticism against the theories of second modernity, pointing out its blindness to structures, its lack of concern for emotions and its focus on mainly macro-level changes (e.g. Adams 2003; Fleetwood 2008). Perhaps the most frequently mentioned of these critical points is the lack of structural sensitivity. Skeggs (2004) argues that the second modernity thesis promotes a vision of subjectivities that are produced in a manner that is free of social constraint. She continues by noting that such an understanding of reflexivity – that is, as being uninfluenced by structures – promotes a middle-class world view. Furthermore, Adams (2003) connects the way in which second modernity views reflexivity to the neoliberal illusion of personal agency and individualized subjectivities.

To a certain degree, Archer (2003) agrees with modernization theorists such as Giddens and Beck. She claims that socialization can no longer be treated as constant; this is particularly so regarding the generation that is now reaching adulthood, as this process now bears little resemblance to the practices that continued throughout the twentieth century. Archer departs from Beck and Giddens in that she does not agree that reflexivity can be seen as constant or as practiced uniformly by all people; that is, as Farrugia (2013) has so neatly expressed it, she does not allow for an empty and homogenous view of reflexivity. Archer suggests that reflexivity has a variety of modes. Moreover, unlike modernization theorists, Archer does not see all reflexive modes as being connected to the examination of oneself and one’s social habits. She distinguishes between four different modes of reflexivity: communicative, autonomous, meta and fractured. Of these four categories, meta-reflexivity refers to what modernization theorists usually define as reflexivity.
Meta-reflexivity denotes a way of reflecting that includes moral and ethical questions related to one’s identity. However, even given her use of meta-reflexivity, Archer is not comfortable with being compared with modernization theorists because she does not agree with their description of reflexivity. In her opinion, the book Reflexive Modernization (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994) deals with dangerous and uncontrolled side effects (e.g. modern risks), even though the title implies systemic reflexivity (Archer 2009). Hence, Archer’s view is that Beck and Giddens often refer to reflexivity as the symptom or side effect of second modernity and of unforeseeable changes. In their depiction, reflexivity is devoid of structure and logic (Archer 2009). Archer does have one category of reflexivity that can be described in similar terms, as directionless and confused: that of fractured reflexivity. In Archer’s words, fractured reflexives never achieve the capacity to hold adequate internal conversations and are therefore largely restricted in their reflexive processes. Communicative reflexives depend on others to fulfil their internal conversations. In contrast, autonomous reflexives shut themselves off from others in the completion of their conversations and display much more strategic orientations to the world (Mutch 2003).

One of the most prevalent criticisms against Archer and the critical realist way of approaching reflexivity is that they neglect to consider any interaction between reflexive and pre-reflexive thought (Sayer 2009). Both Fleetwood (2008) and Sayer (2009) maintain that family socialization continues to play an important role, as it has been doing throughout most of the twentieth century. They both settle for an empirical formula that accepts that sufficient change exists to make some reflexive deliberation inescapable, but that sufficient continuity for the formation of routinized responses is still realistic and is still reproduced in large tracts of life.

Several scholars have raised the issue of class and reflexivity (Mrozowicki 2009; Laughland-Booŷ, Mayall, and Skrbiš 2014). These scholars propose finding a way to acknowledge the increased role of reflexivity in decision making, without ignoring the influence that class plays both in reflexive practices and in the possibility of escaping one’s circumstances. To be more exact, two major statements have been made regarding the impact of class on reflexivity. The first statement is that our habitus limits our ability to act freely as a result of our reflection (Nairn et al. 2012). For example, Laughland-Booŷ, Mayall, and Skrbiš (2014) point out that even if working-class students are able to think outside of the scope of their immediate environment, it may prove difficult for them to fulfil these dreams. The second statement is that habitus has a potential influence on one’s reflexive practices (Flam 2009).
Porpora and Shumar (2009) argue that Archer’s reflexive modes may be complementary to Bourdieu’s notion of habitus and may explain why habitus is only a tendency towards certain actions and choices – as Bourdieu himself would admit – and not a determinant of choices. Flam (2009) suggests that fractured reflexivity may be more common among the working class due to the humiliations that are directed towards them. Flam notes that dominant groups can reproduce their positions in society because they possess not only considerable economic power, but social, cultural and symbolic power as well. As the dominated come to see themselves through the eyes of the dominant, they may start to feel that their own ways of thinking, feeling and behaving are degraded and degrading. Issues regarding the connection between reflexivity and class are explored further in article four of this thesis, in which I distinguish between different social groups, their migration motives and their reflexive practices.

Archer herself has rejected any connection to Bourdieu. Even though her work acknowledges the importance of structures in our lives, she stresses this importance mostly in relation to the continuity of one’s childhood environment. As noted above, however, others suggested integrating Bourdieu and Archer in multiple ways. Archer (2009) rejects such integrations on the basis that she does not believe there is enough stability in the Western world for anyone to develop habitus. More specifically, she argues that over the last quarter of a century, socialization is increasingly able to prepare people for occupational and lifestyle opportunities that did not exist for their parents’ generation. Even communicative reflexives, in her opinion, need to work hard to establish a certain degree of stability in their world and to follow in their parent’s footsteps.

The discussion between Archer and her followers who argue for a more accommodating attitude towards Bourdieu is ongoing. Having presented the main arguments from both sides, I will analyse my own perspective on reflexivity in a more detailed manner in the next chapter.

Further contemplations on reflexivity

As noted earlier, I identify with the critical realist school of thought as well as with Archer’s ideas, especially when it comes to the versatility of reflexive practices. Archer’s way of seeing reflexivity as an inner dialogue is reminiscent of Rose’s (1996) argument that reflexivity is connected to the development of modern psychology. Archer talks about reflexivity as our ability to
discuss our thoughts in our head, whereas Rose talks about our ability to discuss ourselves as a subject. However, the distinguishing element is the fact that Archer acknowledges that reflexivity can take on various shapes, whereas Rose connects reflexivity with psychological practice. Rose’s way of looking at reflexivity probably corresponds to Archer’s meta-reflexivity. This connection is important to denote due to the discussion later in this thesis on how LM research views reflexivity. Unlike Rose, Archer does not think that all reflexive activity must be focused on identity matters or must be deeply reformative. Moreover, among her categories of reflexives, Archer includes autonomous reflexives, who focus their reflection on instrumental matters and avoid looking more deeply at their identity. This thesis continues in the same direction by recognizing that reflexive practice can take different shapes and forms.

However, this thesis differs significantly from Archer’s approach in the following manner: Archer distinguishes solely between four reflexive practices that are adopted by individuals based on their childhood. However, this thesis, like the work of Bottero (2010), recognizes the differences between degrees of reflexivity. In their work on how people with different class backgrounds develop elite business careers, Maclean, Harvey, and Chia (2012) noticed two different reflexive practices: accumulative and reconstructive reflection. An accumulative reflexive practice is focused on perfecting one’s skillset in order to perform well in a job, whereas a reconstructive reflexive practice is oriented towards remodelling one’s identity to fit into the environment. Such a distinction suggests that the same people can adapt different reflexive strategies if necessary, depending on the situation.

The article by Maclean, Harvey, and Chia (2012) introduces a concept that is missing in Archer’s studies: the situational aspect. Archer does not distinguish between the different events that individuals encounter in their life and their varying reactions to these events. MacLean’s, Harvey’s and Chia’s approach is more of a Bourdieusian approach in its suggestion that there may be moments of radical reflexivity in which one encounters a mismatch between habitus and field, and there can also be more mundane situations that do not call for identity reconstruction. This perspective aligns with Adkins’ (2003) suggestion that reflexivity can vary – from critical reflexivity, which leads to identity transformation, to reflective responses to relatively trivial conflicts of daily life.

One probable reason why Archer does not distinguish between different events that inspire reflection is her belief that reflexivity is part of the everyday routine. In fact, in Archer’s reasoning, individuals do not need critical
events to start identity reconstruction. This is where my perspective on reflexivity departs from that of Archer. Like Adkins (2003), Bottero (2010) and Maclean, Harvey, and Chia (2012), I find it necessary to distinguish between the events that push us to reflection (i.e. between small frictions in our everyday routine and truly substantial events that push us to question our entire identity). As a result, I also disagree with Archer regarding the unimportance of habitus in a postmodern context. Archer makes a good argument by pointing out that changes in the modern world are happening at a speed that makes it difficult to sustain habitus. Indeed, people in the Western world rarely follow in their parents’ professional footsteps and often relocate. Both these events call for some interruption in habitus. In Eastern Europe in particular, parents and children have a vastly different life experience due to the fall of the Eastern Bloc. Thus, the parents’ experience cannot be used to guide their children in their life decisions. In addition, Mouzelis (2007) makes a compelling case by pointing out that no fit between habitus and field is so perfect that it cannot challenge at least one aspect of habitus. The possibility he presents of inter-habitus conflicts offers an alternative way of approaching habitus: viewing it not as a uniform thing, but rather as something consisting of different parts that may not always align with one another. Indeed, conflicts exist both inside and outside of habitus, and may be more frequent these days in comparison with the age when Bourdieu introduced his theory.

However, regardless of obvious criticism against the concept of habitus, I consider it an important tool for explaining the impact of structures on both our reflexivity and our biography. Reay (2001) demonstrates that working-class students experience greater difficulty in a university environment than middle-class students, because they lack the speech and the necessary social skills that are characteristic of the middle class. Maclean, Harvey, and Chia (2012) discovered that reaching a management level required far more resources and greater self-reflection from working-class people than it did for their middle-class peers. These results do not merely stem from economic and social capital; they are also due to cultural capital and value structures. A middle-class environment puts more stress on self-discipline and cultivates patience. The parenting practices of different classes are vastly dissimilar and therefore result in different thought patterns.

Some reservations should be made, however, because all these studies focused on Western Europe, and especially on the UK, which is known for its classed society. Does habitus play an equally significant role in Eastern Europe, where socialization across classes was in fact encouraged during the Soviet period? Furthermore, is class still important in a context where the
dissolution of the Eastern Bloc and the fall of communism has resulted in a gap between different generations? After the fall, societies such as those in Estonia experienced a significant increase in inequality; could it be that the gap between different classes is widening? These questions are open for discussion and are relevant in discussions of the relationship between habitus and reflexivity.

Different scholars still disagree regarding how class background may influence the development of reflexivity. I tend to agree with Maclean, Harvey, and Chia (2012) and Laughland-Booý, Mayall, and Skrbiš (2014), who suggest that the working class may be more reflexive than the middle class. The reasoning for this view is as follows: through the public media, working-class people are exposed to middle-class values, which are advocated as being desirable; therefore, a clash between habitus and field is more likely to appear. Middle-class values are not challenged in the same way as working-class values; furthermore, following middle-class values is appreciated and acknowledged by society. Therefore, individuals in the middle class find themselves pressed less often to distance themselves from their habitual limits.

In sum, this thesis follows a critical realist approach on reflexivity and sees reflexivity as an inner dialogue that can be operationalized.
Two paradigms in migration studies

As noted earlier, (Archer 2007) broke down reflexivity studies into two opposing paradigms: one arguing for universal reflexivity and the other claiming that reflexive deliberation is rare. The same kind of distinction that Archer makes in reflexivity studies can be applied to migration studies. The mobility paradigm within migration studies, which is inspired at least partially by theories of second modernity, can be described as belonging to the first category. On the other hand, LM research can be at least partially described as gravitating towards the habitus end of the continuum (habitus vs second modernity). (Note that the positionality of LM scholarship will be discussed in greater detail later in this thesis, as it is a field that does not have a clear direction and is still developing.) In the following discussion, I describe both paradigms and their contributions to reflexivity in a more thorough way than before.

The mobility turn

The underlying idea of this paradigm is that mobilities are found everywhere. Urry (2007) brings out themes such as corporeal movement, transportation and communication, migration, immigration, citizenship and transnationalism. Although migration constitutes a vital research area in mobility studies, the mobilities paradigm is used to describe all kinds of mobilities, starting with daily movements and ending with international migration. In this thesis, I focus only on how migration is understood through the prism of mobilities.

One of the central ideas of the mobilities paradigm is that, due to time and space compression, the opportunities for travelling and hence for migration have increased. Urry (2002) even argues that being on the move has become a way of life for many people. He connects these changes to liquid modernity, arguing that liquid modernity is characterized by endless flows of people, money, ideas and requirements for flexibility. Furthermore, as (Hannam 2009) notes, for some people, mobility is part of their everyday life. (Kesselring 2008a) argues that the new mobility regime demands mobility
and flexibility from everyone. He continues by saying that mobility in second modernity is often non-directional and corresponds more with drifting and floating than with a movement that has a clear direction and itinerary. According to Kesselring, our experience of reflexive modernity is full of detours and vague, incomprehensible routes. Cohen, Duncan, and Thulemark (2015) note that patterns of mobilities are becoming more dynamic and complex than before, as individuals use mobility choices to negotiate the growing complexity of modern living. Scheibelhofer (2009) also argues that emigration in Western Europe has become diversified and individualized.

The mobility paradigm discusses not only increased possibilities for travel and migration, but also changing motives for migration. Krings et al. (2013) points out that migration is no longer merely related to work, for the new generation of mobile Europeans in both East and West; it also involves lifestyle choices as part of a broader aspiration towards self-development. Favell (2008) refers to young professional Western Europeans as mobile citizens who enjoy their right to free circulation. These professionals live in Euro Cities that reflect the cosmopolitan face of Europe. On the one hand, these mobile individuals are characterized by a striving towards certain cosmopolitan values, and carefully manage their image as successful young professionals; on the other hand, their lifestyle presupposes flexibility (Favell 2008). Corcoran (2002) notes that modern individuals forge flexible subjectivities in the context of a transnational field of action, thus developing the capacity for rapid and dramatic forms of personhood and for moving fluidly back and forth between markedly different modes of experience and arenas of activity.

Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) note that the mobilities paradigm views all migrants through the same analytical lens (i.e. assuming heightened mobility and reflexivity). Several other scholars criticize the mobility paradigm for understating the influence of class on free mobility (Blossfeld et al. 2006). For example, Gray (2013) points out that the ‘Ryanair generation’, for whom geographical distance is overcome by new communication and transport technologies, is comprised of privileged young people, while the less privileged are more likely to experience time-space expansion. In this context, time-space expansion means that the distances people must commute on a daily basis are growing, and that it takes people much more time to fulfil their daily activities than before. Furthermore, within the mobilities paradigm, movement is generally viewed as liberating and valuable; several critics have questioned this view. Calhoun (2002) is critical of such a positive view, and notes that cosmopolitanism is mainly a capitalist project that connects only elites. Cresswell (2010) additionally notes the risk that the
mobility turn will focus only on twenty-first century high-tech hypermobility. Feminist research indicates that free mobility is accessible only to certain groups and certain societies (i.e. Western societies and groups that are better off) (Hanson 2010). Scholars such as Pratt (1999) point out the difficulties that are encountered by less privileged groups such as refugees, domestic workers and asylum seekers.

All these authors stress the continuing importance of habitus on enabling mobility. Glick Schiller and Salazar’s (2013) criticism of the mobility turn resembles Archer’s criticism of the individualization point of view. All these authors refer to the fact that differences exist in how second modernity – or mobility – are experienced. Archer chooses to direct her criticism towards the usage of reflexivity in the modernization perspective. Although Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) are not criticizing exactly the same thing as Archer in their opposition to the mobility turn, their arguments follow the same logic. Discussions of mobility not being accessible to everyone and the perspective that the mobility turn is normative refer to social differences in migration behaviours. However, the vital difference is that while Glick Schiller and Salazar direct their criticism towards the missing notion of class and habitus in the mobility turn, Archer tends to avoid using Bourdieu’s perspective. Archer’s distinction between different types of reflexivity is based on how different reflexive types develop through different childhood experiences. However, Archer choses to distinguish only between people who have had continuity in their childhood and those who have not. In this thesis, I tend to agree with both the criticism of Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) and with that of Archer (2009) regarding the problem of seeing all groups as highly mobile and as having enough resources to fulfil this promise of mobility. One of the central problems with this paradigm is that the mobility turn focuses on describing changes in migration behaviour on a very abstract level by pointing to general tendencies, mostly in Western societies. It lacks more specific tools for analysing migration behaviour at the individual level or for operationalizing these behaviours. Furthermore, it does not yet have a good analytical focus on social differences, regarding what groups can actually enjoy free movement and how this freedom is reflected in their identity. Even though some research exists within mobility turn on immobility (Cresswell 2010), the problem of social structures has not been fully integrated into the main theoretical approach. Hence, although the mobilities paradigm provides valuable insights in analysing migration, the use of this paradigm in this thesis makes it difficult to analyse individual reflexive practices. The lack of structural rigor and empirical tools can be at least
partially overcome by applying another approach that has recently flourished in migration literature: LM research.

Lifestyle migration research

Within the field of migration research, LM research probably contains the most elaborate discussion on reflexivity and on how reflexivity affects migration decisions. Moreover, this line of research has generated a range of interesting research questions and studies. However, even in LM, reflexivity functions as something of a background concept. In this thesis, I argue that reflexivity is significant both in identifying lifestyle migrants themselves, and in identifying where lifestyle migrants stand compared with other types of migrants. To date, however, the concept of LM has been underdiscussed. As LM is a developing field, multiple theoretical approaches have been applied over the years, leading to some confusion around how reflexivity is perceived in this area of scholarship. Multiple interesting contributions view the applicability of reflexivity on a more empirical level in LM as compared with the mobility turn (Korpela 2014; Osbaldiston 2014). What is missing in LM research on reflexivity, however, is a more general discussion of whether and how these different theoretical approaches fit together. This theoretical discussion has grown in recent years (Benson and O’Reilly 2015a; Benson 2016; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014, 2016b). Most of this discussion does not explicitly focus on reflexivity or on its usage in LM; rather, it focuses on concepts such as individualism and mobility. Benson and Osbaldiston (2016) acknowledge that these two concepts have been used rather uncritically in LM research, and that there is a lack of deeper discussion around how these concepts are to be understood. This thesis argues that the same can be said about reflexivity and the way in which it has been both revised and used within LM. Hence, one of the intended contributions of this thesis is to start a critical discussion on how reflexivity is currently used in the LM paradigm, in the interest of developing such usage further. Such discussions will help LM scholars to better describe the potential variations in LM, and to contextualize it in relation to other types of migration. The following chapter presents a critical overview of the previous research and develops my own argument by underlining the problems in the current approach.
The concept of a lifestyle migrant

LM is a field that grew, at least partially, out of amenity migration studies (see O’Reilly 2001). It was originally defined as a type of migration that is motivated by quality-of-life concerns (O’Reilly and Benson 2009a). As this is a rather vague description, the research falling into the category of LM research varies quite widely. Early authors within the field, such as Benson, O’Reilly and especially Hoey, put strong emphasis on the immaterial benefits of migration (O’Reilly and Benson 2009b; Hoey 2006). For example, Hoey (2006) asserts that lifestyle migrants choose relocation as a way of redefining themselves by reordering their work, family and personal priorities, as they seek a kind of personal moral reorientation. Thus, Hoey sees moral issues as one of the prime motivators for lifestyle migrants. In comparison, the earlier works of Benson and O’Reilly did not speak distinctively regarding moral concerns, although the authors did see LM as an individual and reflexive pursuit of happiness (O’Reilly and Benson 2009a; Benson and O’Reilly 2009). Furthermore, these authors contrasted LM with labour migration; while labour migration was seen as related to economic factors such as job advancement and income, LM was seen as related to aesthetic qualities (Torkington 2010).

As mentioned above, however, the works that fall under the LM paradigm are increasingly variable. Several recent pieces focus on the importance of material benefits for LM (Spalding 2013; Hayes 2014). Spalding and Hayes both stress that by moving to cheaper countries (usually in the southern hemisphere), lifestyle migrants can afford a different kind of lifestyle than in their home country. In addition, Huete, Mantecón, and Estévez (2013) point out how the Spanish economic crisis motivated many British lifestyle migrants to return to Britain hence claiming that material aspects are as important to lifestyle migrants as to labour migrants. Such developments in the field motivated Janoschka and Haas (2013) to suggest that the improved quality of life of lifestyle migrants can be achieved through both material and non-material benefits. Torkington (2010) seconds this suggestion by stating that the improved quality of life that is sought by lifestyle migrants is usually associated with both material advantages (e.g. a lower cost of living and cheaper property prices) and more intangible benefits (e.g. a more amenable climate with plenty of sunshine and year-round warmer temperatures, a slower pace of life, a better and healthier diet, a more sociable culture and more leisure opportunities). Janoschka and Haas suggest three underlying criteria for lifestyle migrants. First, they suggest that LM is a privileged form of mobility because it does not occur primarily for economic reasons. Second,
they suggest that lifestyle migrants predominantly belong to wealthy societies in the Western hemisphere, and that these migrants are choosing to relocate themselves in places with a lower cost of living. Finally, the authors imply that lifestyle migrants possess privileged citizenship status and live far above the medium standards in the country they have relocated to.

However, as I claim in this thesis, the concept of lifestyle migrant is highly connected to the term reflexivity. I review this connection in detail in the next section, where I focus on how reflexivity has been understood by LM and bring out various theoretical influences.

**Reflexivity in lifestyle migration studies**

Early works on LM were heavily influenced by theories on individualization and reflexive modernity. For example, in 2009, Benson and O’Reilly asserted that LM can be seen as a facet of major trends such as individualization and a growing desire for self-authentication (O’Reilly and Benson 2009a). Giddens’ analysis of the importance of lifestyle in second modernity can be clearly seen as having inspired this discourse. Giddens proposes that what he terms ‘second modernity’ forces individuals to reflect and choose the right way to live, in order to create and uphold status (Giddens 1991). According to Giddens, lifestyle practices provide individuals with a way to enact self-identity. Following the discourse of second modernity, LM can be seen as one of the ways in which people communicate their belonging and identity; or, as Benson and O’Reilly say, the quest for the right kind of lifestyle through migration is tightly connected to the late-modern social world (O’Reilly and Benson 2009b). Several other scholars claimed that lifestyle migrants seek some kind of authentic identity, which is not to be found in the postmodern world and which needs to be sought after, usually in less-developed southern states or in rural communities (see Osbaldiston 2012; Hoey 2006; O’Reilly and Benson 2012). In this case, the idea of authentic identity can be connected to the dream of living a different life, or aspiring to the ‘right’ lifestyle. Åkerlund and Sandberg (2015) also describe how LM is often motivated by the wish to change one’s daily life and obtain a different kind of lifestyle. Benson and O’Reilly suggest that the wish to seek a better life is distinct within its time (i.e. second modernity); that is, this migration trend can be considered as a stage within the reflexive project of the self. In their 2014 work, Osbaldiston and Benson write that the early LM paradigm assumed that everyday life shifted somehow in recent times, thereby allowing and producing LM.
The early excitement within the field of LM involving theories of second modernity was later criticized (Korpela 2014; Osbaldiston 2014; Benson and Osbaldiston 2016b). One of the main criticisms comes from Osbaldiston (2014), who claims that it is still questionable whether reflexivity, which is the distinctive characteristic of LM, can be connected to the later phases of modernity. He further asserts that a significant lack of evidence confirming LM as the product of a contemporary sociological epoch calls into question the assumptions that have been made about LM’s uniqueness. He goes on to compare LM with several colonial movements that were also based on the imaginaries of authenticity and an untouched world. Like Osbaldiston (2014), Korpela (2014) criticizes the belief that LM and, furthermore, reflexivity are modern phenomena. Based on Rose (1996), she suggests that the development of psychology encouraged self-reflection. She is also critical of the manner used to describe lifestyle migrants. According to her, this group of migrants is commonly described as comprised of individual agents who are devoid of structures, by this, she means that such descriptions are related to the early fascination with theories of second modernity in the field of LM.

Almost in parallel with the interest in using theories on second modernity to examine LM, several LM scholars used Bourdieu in LM studies. They mainly used the work of Bourdieu to stress the importance of habitus and, in particular, the relevance of class background. For example, Benson describes how lifestyle migrants are keen on re-establishing their class standing after migration. However, class is important in other areas as well as in understanding how lifestyle migrants recreate their life in a new place. For example, in 2009, Benson and O’Reilly describe how all lifestyle decisions are mediated through the embodied class culture, thus indicating that lifestyle migrants’ decision to migrate may be related to their class origin. However, Benson, and Oliver and O’Reilly (2010) do not merely refer to the importance of class borders; they also stress the significance of wider sociocultural imaginaries on LM, thus indicating that lifestyle migrants are socially and culturally embedded in their surroundings and may, therefore, be simply re-enacting their cultural repertoires. Hence, on several occasions, scholars have relied on Bourdieu and his notion of habitus in order to understand LM. However, it is unclear how using Bourdieu fits with the usage of theories on second modernity. As discussed earlier, Bourdieu’s approach is considered to oppose the second modernity thesis. This opposition stems from Bourdieu’s stress on the continuing importance of habitus, while second modernity scholars are in favour of reflexive liberation. The issue of how Bourdieu and Giddens may be used in concurrence has not been commented by Benson and
O’Reilly. This lack of explanation may be filled in by the later work of Benson and Osbaldiston (2016), in which they claim that LM research has used certain ready-made concepts without much forethought. In other words, since LM is a developing field, certain concepts may have been applied that seemed inductively appropriate at the time, although there was never an ontological discussion following the usage of these concepts. Hence, it is clear that while both habitus and reflexive modernity are used to explain certain aspects of LM, these concepts are not synthesized. On the one hand, Benson (2011) talks about cultural imaginaries and how these influence a lifestyle migrant’s decision to migrate. Furthermore, she refers to class structure and to how lifestyle migrants recreate their former class habitus in the new context. On the other hand, she describes lifestyle migrants as reflexive and their migration as an identity project – viewpoints that are common to second modernity. The issue of how habitus and reflexivity are related is thus left somewhat up in the air. Are lifestyle migrants reflexive within their habitus? Or do they overcome their habitual borders? Bourdieu and Giddens and Beck disagree on this issue, so in order to use both approaches simultaneously, further explanation of the nature of reflexivity and of how this concept is to be understood is required.

A potential explanation of how habitus and reflexivity can be used simultaneously in LM research is present in Benson and O’Reilly’s 2009 article, in which they propose using work by Sweetman (2003). Sweetman suggests that in modern times, some groups in the society may find it easy to reflect. He suggests that certain environments encourage regular reflection, such that one can talk about ‘reflexive habitus’. Benson and O’Reilly applied this concept to their study group, suggesting that lifestyle migrants may be subject to reflexive habitus. Some later studies comment on the same phenomenon (see Benson and Osbaldiston 2014) by connecting the habit of reflecting with the Western middle classes. In short, some scholars argue that the Western middle-class culture encourages people to reflect and engage in identity seeking (Osbaldiston 2014). Such a view of reflexivity implies that reflexivity is more accessible to certain privileged groups in society whose environment supports reflexive practices. Osbaldiston (2014) later questions the attribution of higher reflexive capacities to the Western middle classes and suggests that even if this were true, it would require better support with empirical material. Thus, Osbaldiston finds the evidence to support such an argument to be lacking.

Whereas Sweetman (2003) offers a way to integrate habitus and reflexivity, other scholars in LM have made different theoretical suggestions. Hoey
(2006) is never explicit about his particular ontological standing; however, based on his mention of a watershed event that motivates lifestyle migrants to move, one might guess him to be inspired by Bourdieu. Similar to Bourdieu, Hoey argues that the interviewees in his study needed to experience a conflict between their habitus and field (watershed event) in order to distance themselves from the culture that surrounded them. It is interesting to compare Hoey’s approach on reflexivity and LM to that of Benson and O’Reilly. While the latter authors (at least in their 2009 study) argue that reflexivity is habitual for lifestyle migrants, Hoey does not make the same claim. Rather, Hoey assumes that these migrants are embedded in their surrounding culture. In fact, Hoey suggests that people need a shocking event in order to make changes in both their mindset and their life. These two different ontological standings on reflexivity result in different perceptions of who may be categorized as a lifestyle migrant. While Benson and O’Reilly see a lifestyle migrant as someone who is constantly acting in a reflexive way and who questions his or her everyday practices, Hoey sees lifestyle migrants as following societal norms until are challenged by unexpected events. For Benson and O’Reilly, migration is simply part of their interviewee’s normal, habitual behaviour; for Hoey, migration allows people to redefine their whole life. Therefore, I hypothesize that there is considerable variety within LM in terms of who is defined as a lifestyle migrant.

Somewhat similar to Hoey, Janoschka (2011) is also inspired by Bourdieu. In his article on critical reflexivity, Janoschka analyses lifestyle migrants as political actors who have a different perspective because they come from ‘outside’ (i.e. they are introduced to the foreign field and then experience a clash between their habitus and field), thus analysing the consequences of moving and the resulting mismatch between habitus and field. Like Hoey, then, Janoschka assumes that critical reflexivity enters the process when a mismatch occurs between habitus and field, and that reflexivity is not an inherent characteristic of the Western middle classes nor something that is used on a daily basis. However, unlike Hoey, Janoschka spends time studying how conflict situations that cause habitus and field to clash come about, and pays attention to how habitus can be re-formed after such a clash. He suggests that in a conflict situation, habitus can be reflexive and creative because the common conditions of pre-reflexive practice suffer. Hence, the pre-reflexive implicitness of social order becomes discursive and conscious, enabling a readjustment of the discrepancies between habitus and field. Nevertheless, Janoschka and Hoey share a fairly conservative approach to reflexivity, with
both scholars suggesting that reflexivity is primarily relevant in situations in which the existing habitus and thought patterns are challenged.

In the later works of Benson and Osbaldiston, their view on reflexivity becomes more difficult to pin down (Benson and Osbaldiston 2014, 2016). In a chapter from 2014, these authors are critical towards the use of theories on reflexive modernity in LM (partially due to Osbaldiston’s note on the ahistoricity of LM research). In this way, the authors seem to have moved towards a more discursive approach; they now argue that instead of being individually reflexive, lifestyle migrants present a discourse of individualism. However, it is not entirely clear how these authors view the claims of lifestyle migrants’ agency and individual reflexivity; they mention that lifestyle migrants may find themselves in the fortunate position of being free of the constraints of structure and being able to choose where and how they want to live. It is not clear if by ‘freedom from structures’ these authors mean that the migrants have no material constraints, or whether the authors are also referring to a reflexive freedom from surrounding mental structures. All that can be said is that in their joint chapter, these authors take a more critical approach towards the individualization thesis, and now claim that it is necessary to understand whether reflexivity is a self-narrative that is communicated by respondents or whether it goes beyond that. Furthermore, these authors refer to Savage (2010) and Skeggs (2004), two authors who have noted that reflexivity may be a part of the middle-class culture that rejects class as a defining concept. Since Benson and Osbaldiston refer to Skeggs and Savage again in a later piece (Benson and Osbaldiston 2016), it is necessary to comment on the work of these two authors here.

It should be noted that Skeggs’ (2004) main criticism of second modernity is that the view that scholars have taken promotes a middle-class worldview. However, Skeggs does not imply that going beyond one’s class borders is impossible. Rather, Skegg suggests that scholars should be more careful of how they define reflexivity and who they define as reflexive. However, it is not clear how this suggestion translates to LM research.

As I noted earlier, both Osbaldiston (2014) and Korpela (2014) challenge the reliance on theories of second modernity in LM research. Both authors distance themselves to a certain degree from the idea that LM is more reflexive than other types of migration. Rather, they prefer to discuss reflexivity as a discourse that has been adapted by lifestyle migrants. Osbaldiston argues that two approaches can be used to explain the modern-day dilemma of a quest for a better life. On the one hand, the work of Alexander (1996) can be used; in this approach, individuals investigate the self through cultural
norms. On the other hand, the work of Rose (1996) and ultimately Foucault (1982) may be used; this approach perceives the self as a product of ethics and institutional discourse. Osbaldiston comments that both his and Korpela’s approach towards reflexivity is relatively similar; the main difference stems from whether one believes that the self is mainly influenced by institutions or by culture.

Unlike Osbaldiston, I argue that there is a bigger difference between the two aforementioned approaches than the dichotomy of culture versus institutions. Instead, I suggest that the main divergence comes from whether one considers reflexivity to be discursive (inside cultural frames) or not. Osbaldiston refers to Western culture as one of the reasons why lifestyle migrants feel the need to present their migration as reflexive. He stresses that Western (middle-class) culture highlights authenticity and encourages the quest for identity. Reflexivity then becomes a discursive tool – a way to talk about one’s migration. Hence, lifestyle migrants could be reflexive or not – we cannot be completely sure. Osbaldiston’s approach allows us to say that migrants feel the need to present their migration as reflexive. However, this reflexivity is not the same kind of reflexivity as the one that Bourdieu mentions – the reflexivity that distances the individual from his or her surroundings. Rather, this kind of reflexivity is enacted within the bounds of one’s culture; furthermore, the act of reflexivity itself is supported by the culture.

Similar to Osbaldiston, Korpela is critical towards the self-stated reflexivity of lifestyle migrants. She comments, “Even though individual lifestyle migrants regard their migration as escaping the prevalent order, I argue the opposite – that LM means internalizing the current ethos.” Hence, one can conclude that Korpela also questions the ability of lifestyle migrants to distance themselves from their surroundings; rather, she argues that their migration is the result of them being embedded in their local context. However, it is interesting to investigate Korpela’s theoretical basis further, which is done by Rose. Nikolas Rose’s way of seeing reflexivity as self subjectification can be compared to Archer’s internal dialogue. Rose does not appear to totally object to critical realism (Rose 1996); furthermore, he sympathizes with Bourdieu. Based on Rose’s description of his ontological standing, I suggest that Rose does not treat reflexivity as solely discursive, but also sees it as a practice. Hence, this discussion no longer refers only to cultural ways of presenting one’s decisions as reflexive; it also includes reflexive practices. Translated to the LM field, such an approach allows an investigation of the underlying, and perhaps reflexive, practices that push lifestyle migrants to
move. This approach not only discusses how migrants present their migration as reflexive, but also observes the actual reflexive practices behind this presentation. Korpela is critical of the ability of lifestyle migrants to distance themselves from their surroundings, arguing that some migrants follow pre-colonial imaginaries (Korpela 2010). However, with Rose, I argue that such distancing is nevertheless possible. One can become aware of the doings of one’s culture and achieve a certain autonomy from it. However, it is questionable whether lifestyle migrants have done this.

Benson and Osbaldiston (2016) appear to be moving in a similar direction to Korpela in their latest article. The authors problematize the notion of lifestyle migrants as free-floating, idealized and individualized subjects. They also emphasize that several studies in LM research have pointed out the need to pay attention to class. Benson and Osbaldiston add that it is understandable for LM research to use theories that privilege individual choice, because the participants in these studies frequently comment on their new-found freedom; however, this kind of freedom should not be seen as independent of surrounding structural influences.

However, these authors’ perspective on reflexivity is not fully developed. Benson and Osbaldiston mention scholars such as Savage (2010), Skeggs (2004) and Atkinson (2007), but do not fully explain how these scholars have been or may be used in LM scholarship. Benson and Osbaldiston claim that there has been a certain over-romanticization of lifestyle migrants in the past, and that scholars should be careful to avoid this pitfall. This statement could be seen as an indication to be cautious in assessing the relationship between LM and other types of migration (such as labour migration). However, it is not entirely clear if this is what these authors meant. Furthermore, it is not completely clear how Savage, Skeggs and Atkinson colour the way Benson and Osbaldiston understand reflexivity in LM. One potential reading is that Benson and Osbaldiston suggest that reflexivity is discursive – meaning that certain people (usually the middle class) are used to discussing reflexivity and imagining their decisions as reflexive. However, reflexivity does not exist outside of discourse, even though it is used as a concept by certain groups in society to describe their decision making. Furthermore, reflexivity may be used to romanticize and individualize one’s decisions, framing them as independent of societal structures. In regards to lifestyle migrants, this directs us to focus on how they talk about their decisions rather than how they talk about how their decisions were made. The fact that lifestyle migrants frame their decisions as reflexive refers to the discourse they are embedded in.
If reflexivity is treated solely as a discourse that is adapted by certain groups in society, there is little reason to distinguish the decision making of lifestyle migrants from that of other types of migrants. Instead, lifestyle migrants’ way of talking about their migration could be seen as a wish to cast themselves as an agent, and their migration could be seen as a cry for independence from societal structures. However, such independence, as shown by Benson (2012), is never achieved, since lifestyle migrants recreate their old living habits and conditions abroad and work hard at maintaining class borders. This is an interesting way to approach reflexivity, although it has not yet been fully developed; thus, several of my conclusions here are mere hypotheses of how Benson and Osbaldiston might view reflexivity.

Another way to introduce reflexivity into LM research, as mentioned earlier, is to view reflexivity as a practice and lifestyle migrant as an analytical category. Scholars have assessed to what degree lifestyle migrants use reflexivity and have distinguished certain migrant groups as being more reflexive than others. To my understanding, this is how reflexivity was approached in the earlier works of Benson and O’Reilly. As an advocate of critical realism, I argue that although this approach is still quite viable, a potential problem stemmed from the way in which the quality of being reflexive or unreflexive was evaluated in migrants. My reading is that, in their earlier works, Benson and O’Reilly depended too much on how lifestyle migrants presented their migration and concluded that this presentation was representative of the actual reflexive practices behind the interviewees’ migration decisions. This problem can be avoided by distinguishing between the level of practice and that of discourse, and by analysing the empirical material based on this principle. However, this approach would also require a clearer and more operational way of viewing reflexivity. How can we analyse the role reflexivity plays in the migration decisions of lifestyle migrants? This question is addressed by this thesis, which provides an empirical tool for analysing the reflexive practices behind migration decisions.

That being said, LM has provided the migration field with a series of interesting theoretical discussions on concepts that were neglected by previous literature. This thesis builds on these theoretical discussions by asking: how can we bring theory and empirics together, and how can we operationalize reflexivity in migration studies? Furthermore, this thesis examines how applicable these theoretical discussions are on in different context – that of Eastern Europe. Most of LM has focused on the Western middle classes. Some exceptions include working-class British people (O’Reilly 2014), Japanese people (Igarashi 2015) and potentially Chinese people (Salazar and
Zhang 2013). However, LM scholarship is still heavily invested in explaining the migration of Westerners. There is no explicit reason for this bias; however, one potential reading is that Easterners and their migration are not considered to be equally reflexive or impacted by lifestyle concerns as Westerners and their migration. Therefore, it is vital to analyse how reflexivity has been viewed so far in LM literature. It is clear that the earlier articles of Benson and O’Reilly potentially make an argument for a higher Western reflexivity, whereas the later works of Osbaldiston, Korpela and Osbaldiston and Benson seem to suggest that Western culture influences the motivations behind LM, producing a focus on values such as authenticity and individualism. However, it is no longer clear whether the concept of LM should be applied only to Western migrants. If not, how are we to translate it into a different cultural context? This last question was specifically posed by Osbaldiston (2015). Indeed, it is difficult to draw the borders of the LM field, given that the main concept – lifestyle – is so lucid and culturally specific. However, in order to understand the concept of LM better, this thesis suggests that it must be tested in groups other than Western middle-class migrants. Only then will it be possible to assess what role reflexivity plays in this non-Western kind of migration. The thesis continues with a discussion of Eastern Europe and its cultural norms, in order to provide context for such an exploration.
The development of two separate research discourses on European migration studies

Much has been written about the economic nature of East-West migration in Europe (Bartram 2013; McDowell 2009; Galasińska 2009; Fihel, Kaczmarczyk, and Okólski 2006; Rangelova and Vladimirova 2004). As Burrell (2016) has stated, the focus on the economically driven nature of this kind of migration has been strong. This direction was further supported by the argument that most Eastern European workers were employed in low-skill positions in the West. For example, Polish migrants in the UK are said to be primarily employed in the service sector (Drinkwater, Eade, and Garapich 2009), and Lithuanian migrants, despite their relatively high skill levels, were also reported to occupy low-skilled positions (Parutis 2014). Finally, in a more specific analysis of the younger generations, Horváth (2008) pointed out that young people from Eastern Europe tend to move because of their problematic transition to adulthood, which involves unemployment and insecure jobs.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the push-and-pull-factor model was used as one of the main ways to explain East-West migration. In later years, several scholars started to stress the versatile nature of European East-West migration (Napierała and Trevena 2010; Drinkwater, Eade, and Garapich 2009; Burrell 2012). For example, Favell (2008) stated that even though most Eastern European migrants appear to be destined to languish in undervalued roles in temporary and low-paid labour, the East-West story is one of highly skilled migration. Cook, Dwyer, and Waite (2011) criticized the image of a typical Eastern European migrant in the UK as being male, low skilled and saving up money to return. These authors argue that viewing all Eastern European migrants as short-term economic opportunists is too simplistic. All in all, multiple studies aim to illustrate the versatility of East-West movements.

Special attention has been given to the younger generation, due to its over-representation among migrants. Burrell (2010) notes that young people are the most significant demographic component of post-EU migration (Drinkwater, Eade, and Garapich 2009). Hence, the motives of these young people are especially in focus for migration scholars who are researching migration
from Eastern Europe. Burrell (2012) calls these young people ‘developing cosmopolitans’ and argues that, for them, migration should not only be seen as an expression of an economic strategy, but also as a way of building social and cultural capital. Furthermore, Burrell stresses that young Eastern Europeans are increasingly interested in experiencing other cultures, meeting new people and exposing themselves to different kind of lifestyles.

Several studies intended to bring out the versatile nature of Eastern European migration by categorizing migrants based on their motives and the length of their stay (Engbersen et al. 2013; Ciupijus 2011; Engbersen, Snel, and Boom 2010a; Napierała and Trevena 2010). One example is a study by Drinkwater, Eade, and Garapich (2009), in which the authors conceptualize the migration patterns among young people by distinguishing between four groups, metaphorically labelled: ‘storks’, ‘hamsters’, ‘searchers’ and ‘stayers’. Hamsters are said to be saving up money to return home, whereas storks are constantly moving between home and the host country. Stayers are said to orient themselves towards the host country, whereas searchers have yet to make a firm decision about their future and are still assessing their possibilities. According to these authors, many young people can be categorized as searchers, in that they are constantly reassessing their options.

Building on the trends indicated by Drinkwater and colleagues – that is, diversification, fluidity and the mixing of different motives – Engbersen and colleagues introduced a new term to describe Eastern European migration: liquid migration (Engbersen, Snel, and Boom 2010b). The concept of liquid migration is meant to illustrate the complex, transitory and temporary patterns of transnational work and settlement. According to King (2002), liquid migration refers to a continuous, revolving mobility that is carried out by young individuals rather than by families, and that is characterized by a migratory habitus of intentional unpredictability. The concept of liquid migration is inspired by authors such as Okólski (2001) and Wallace and Stola (2001). Referring to circular and temporary free movement, informal labour market incorporation, cultures of migration, transnational networks and other phenomena, Favell (2008) points out that such forms of migration illustrate the emergence of a new migration system in Europe, in which economy and material strategic decisions are but one aspect.

It is arguable that such a migration system has its origins in the introduction of the EU as a common free-movement space. Anghel (2013) points out that the establishment of the EU free-movement space opened up multiple forms of mobility. The post-2004 enlargement of the regulatory environment was initially confined to Ireland, Sweden and the UK as these
countries opened their labour markets to migrants from the new member states. Other member states opted for a transition period. Due to the common labour market, people can choose where to live; this distinguishes current migration from earlier East-West movements in which people had to grasp any opportunity to migrate. (Krings et al. 2013b) state that, in the case of Polish migrants, the EU 2004 enlargement brought new mobility opportunities and lifestyle choices. Thus, Polish migrants increasingly resemble their West European peers in their pursuit of flexible work-life pathways in the new European mobility space.

Even though multiple scholars have pointed out the resemblance between Eastern European migrants and migrants from Western states, research in the field is still marked by something of a stereotype, as mentioned by Waite et al. (2011), about Eastern European migrants. Thus, Eastern European migrants are not usually included in studies of LM research, which mainly focuses on expatriates or globetrotters. Even research regarding the new generation of Eastern European migrants suggests a distinct image of these migrants as being mostly economically oriented (Mueller 2013; Earnings and Migration Strategies of Polish and Other Post-Enlargement Migrants to the UK 2007; Kahanec and Zimmermann 2010; Pollard, Latorre, and Sriskandarajah 2008). As noted by a number of scholars, such an image is not totally unjustified; many Eastern European migrants do see moving as a way to ‘live a normal life’ (Drinkwater and Garapich 2015; Ryan et al. 2009; McGhee, Heath, and Trevena 2012). However, multiple counter-evidence of concerns such as career-building, self-development and even lifestyle have already been brought out (Krings et al. 2013a; Ciupijus 2011; Cook, Dwyer, and Waite 2011). Even scholars who have described Eastern European migrants as working in low-skilled positions stress that these jobs are often perceived as only temporary for these migrants, and as either leading to better jobs or as being part of ‘life schooling’ (Parutis 2014). Thus, using statistical data on the labour market positions of Eastern European migrants in the UK does not give us the full picture of the motivations or the self-identity of these migrants. In fact, many young Eastern European migrants in London can be compared with ‘middling transnationals’, a term used by Conradson and Latham (2005a) to describe New Zealanders in London who were interested in enjoying a European lifestyle before settling down. This comparison is made by Parutis (2014) as well as by King et al. (2017).

The popularization of self-development as an important aspect among Eastern European migrants is making this group comparable with Western
migrants. However, Eastern Europeans are usually not included as an example in studies that aim to describe the EU mobility space (Favell 2011). In fact, (Krings et al. 2013b) criticize the debate on free movers as being mainly focused on mobile Europeans from the old EU-15. Most of the theory building is still based on migration from the ‘old states’ that are assumed to be qualitatively different from the ‘new states’. This bias was brought out by Huete, Mantecón, and Estévez (2013), who claim that there seems to be a certain methodological nationalism behind how LM has been defined so far. According to these authors, researchers commonly assume that Eastern European migrants are economically motivated, whereas economic concerns are of little or no importance to their Western peers. However, based on quantitative material, Huete et al. disagree with this viewpoint. They suggest that the perspective that Western migrants are more oriented towards lifestyle may be related to implicit assumptions that are made about ‘Easterners and Westerners’.

Huete, Mantecón, and Estévez (2013) provide a good critique of the Western-centredness of concepts such as ‘lifestyle migration’ and ‘middling transnationalism’. Indeed, there seems to be an unspoken division in European migration research between West and East Europeans and their migration motives. Furthermore, there is a lack of dialogue between different research paradigms, with theories on middling transnationalism being mostly focused on Western migrants and concepts such liquid migration being applied to Easterners. Increasing attempts have recently been made by younger, mostly Western-based Eastern European scholars to apply the theories that have mostly been used on Western migrants to Eastern European migrants as well (Parutis 2014; Lulle 2009). However, the theories suggested by these Eastern European scholars are still rarely used by Western theorists.

Hence, a situation exists in which the theoretical landscape of migration studies in the EU is still dominated by Western-centred theories. Scholarship in mobility studies and LM is heavily dominated by research conducted on Westerners. One exception is transnationalist studies, which have been applied to Eastern European cases several times (Wallace and Stola 2001). However, a certain distinction is still assumed, with scholars such as Favell (2008) comparing Eastern European migration with Mexican migration to the US. A great deal of emphasis has been on power dynamics (Meinhof 2003). There seems to be a strong assumption that Westerners, as migrants, cannot be compared with Eastern Europeans (Huete, Mantecón, and Estévez 2013; Krings et al. 2013a). An assumption that it is difficult to regard
Westerners and Easterners as similar groups was also visible in several of the reviews I received for this thesis. That is, my reviewers expressed their concern about my use of theories such as LM to describe Estonian migrants, and suggested that I focus on research that is oriented towards Eastern Europeans. At the same time, research on Eastern Europe is developing its own theories, such as the idea of liquid migration (Engbersen, Snel, and Boom 2010b). The problem with developing separate concepts for research on Western and Eastern European migration is the fact that the use of separate concepts only widens the gap between these two different fields. It also supports the idea that the two groups cannot be compared and should be analysed using different theories and concepts. Migration scholars should engage in critical reflection on how they are contributing to maintaining the image of two very different migration systems in Europe.

In order to further develop the scholarly dialogue on mobilities across Europe, this thesis encourages Western scholars to include Eastern Europeans in their samples, and Eastern European researchers to draw more on theoretical discussions that are already well-developed by Western scholars (as mentioned earlier, this is already happening, albeit to a small degree). Not only will the parallel existence of two discourses probably give rise to an empirically incorrect report on European migration, but it may also impede further theoretical analysis of the phenomenon of migration. Therefore, this thesis uses theoretical discussions that were originally based on Westerners to analyse the case of highly educated young Estonians migrants, thereby challenging some of the assumptions that have led this discourse so far, and contributing to the development of these discussions.

The individualization of Eastern European societies

In order to contextualize the migration of Eastern Europeans and assess whether it is useful to use Western theories to understand it, it is vital to take a closer look at societal developments in the East. After all, the whole basis of transition theories is that, due to its particular history, Eastern Europe has developed into a specific space that can be distinguished from Western Europe based on its political and social organization.

The previous chapter mentioned that the migration motives of young Eastern Europeans are considered by many scholars to be comparable with those of Western Europeans. Several authors have noted that ‘self-development’ has become an increasingly popular reason for moving. Many analytics find an underlying reason for such a development to be the individualization
of Eastern European societies, which is said to be noticeable in family relations, among other spheres. For example, (Krings et al. 2013a) notes that migration patterns have become less network-driven as younger migrants have fewer family responsibilities in their country of origin. New social phenomena such as Euro-orphanhood (children left alone in their parents' homecountry or with partial supervision from their grandparents), fluid populations and an increasing number of mixed marriages are also put forth as indications of the further individualization of these societies (Matyjas 2011; Rogers and Verdery 2013). According to Engbersen, Snel, and Boom (2010), many young Eastern European migrants postpone marriage and having children, and move when they are single and have few family obligations. Others have also noted that most young Eastern Europeans migrants move when they are single and without a family. These statements could be considered as indications of the individualization of Eastern European societies and of the migration waves from this region. Then again, there is also a group of scholars that has criticized research on Eastern European migration as being focused only on young single migrants (Botterill 2014; McGhee, Heath, and Trevena 2012).

The value structure that is present in Eastern European societies is another factor that is commonly mentioned in earlier research on the individualization of Eastern European migration (Kalmus and Vihalemm 2006; Bardi and Schwartz 1996; Schwartz and Bardi 1997). Whereas the 1990s saw the acceptance of materialist values (i.e. material success achievements) in many Eastern European societies, several societies are said to have moved closer to a ‘Western post-materialist (i.e. self-development, life-quality) epoch’ (Kalmus and Vihalemm 2006; Heinla, Tart, and Raudsepp 2013). In addition, parallel to post-materialist values, neoliberalism took hold in several societies. In particular, the Baltic States are known for their strong neoliberalist attitude in public policy making (i.e. free market, low unionization, low social benefits, flexible working contracts), which is said to have influenced migration patterns. According to Sippola (2013), Estonian citizens have internalized the responsibility of taking care of themselves. Furthermore, Vihalemm and Kalmus (2008) describe how neoliberalism as a mindset during the 1990s offered many people a way to handle fluidity and instability, thereby cultivating a strong belief in individual capabilities and responsibility; this belief in their own capacity is viewed as saving these citizens from accepting that they have no control in a chaotic system.

However, neoliberalization has not influenced all Eastern European societies equally. In fact, Estonia is often mentioned as the country that has
cultivated the most neoliberal mindset. Bohle and Greskovits (2007) mention that whereas the Baltic States have accepted a neoliberal capitalist system, the Visegrad states have built an embedded neoliberal model (with slightly more social welfare). These examples contrast with that of Slovenia, which has accepted a neo-corporatist system. Estonia’s neoliberal direction is evident by indications such as low welfare state spending, high income inequality, low minimum wage and a low degree of recommodification (Bohle and Greskovits 2007, Lendvai 2008). Runfors, Fröhlig, and Saar (2017) write about Estonian discourses of self-sufficiency and development. These authors suggest that the Estonian state views citizens as ‘owing’ the state and being responsible for their own welfare. The welfare state is seen in a business-like way, in which the main concern is making it sufficient and technologically advanced, sometimes at the cost of discussing the needs of its citizens. There is a considerable amount of concern over marking the Estonian state as Western and innovative, which has resulted in the neglect of some groups such as single mothers and people living in the countryside.

Strong support for neoliberalism in the Baltic States has had a significant effect on people’s migration behaviour. Woolfson (2009) describes how flexible and unstable labour standards (e.g. very liberal work contracts) may encourage outmigration. He states that there has been a significant outflow of labourers seeking higher wages and better working conditions, which is partially related to how the Baltic States have regulated (or rather, unregulated) their welfare system.

Woolfson (2009) also criticizes the austerity measures that were taken by the Baltic States in response to the financial crisis, and states that these actions may have led to an increased outflow of their workforce. Sippola’s arguments are quite similar to those of Woolfson; among other things, Sippola stresses that public policy in the Baltic States, and more specifically in Estonia, is oriented towards creating loyalty among its citizens by relying on nationalist feelings, but does not offer sufficient welfare standards in return (Sippola 2013). He argues that although the state has downgraded its social responsibility towards the citizens, these citizens are nevertheless expected to be loyal to the state. Furthermore, according to Sippola, although migration is encouraged by the state, it is also assumed that once migrants have been away for some time, they will return because of their (alleged) nationalist feelings. All in all, Sippola illustrates how the Baltic States have created a political climate in which nationalism exists together with what is described as an extreme belief in individual responsibility, and the potential effects of this political climate on migration.
Sippola (2013) also notes that there is a shortage of research on the social and political grounds for the Baltic people’s migration behaviour. Furthermore, only a few studies focus on highly skilled migrants. As noted previously, Parutis (2014) studies highly skilled Lithuanians in London. However, in contrast to the present thesis, most of her interviewees were still working in low-skilled positions. King et al. write about highly skilled Baltic workers in London. They analyse the migration of this group in terms of the concepts of core versus periphery, thus indicating that London is a place of opportunity for these highly skilled migrants (King et al. 2017). Although King et al. focus on Eastern Europeans rather than on Western migrants, their work is largely similar to that of Conradson and Latham (2005a), given the latter authors’ ideas regarding the ‘escalator London’. King et al. (2017) also illustrate how the rhetoric of self-development and wider opportunities plays into the migration of young Baltic migrants. In addition, their analysis points to a slight difference between Estonia and the countries of Latvia and Lithuania: Estonian highly skilled migrants stressed the self-development aspect over those of financial gain or career development. Hence, this chapter asks: how have societal developments in the ‘East’ influenced migration?

East European societies and reflexivity

In earlier research, the concept of reflexivity was hardly mentioned in the context of Eastern Europe. Most studies focusing on reflexivity were based on Western Europe or on the West in a more general sense (Archer 2003; Brooks and Wee 2008; Burkitt 2002; Ho and Bauder 2012; Threadgold and Nilan 2009). One of the few authors who has written on reflexivity in the Eastern Bloc is Mrozowicki (2009). Although Mrozowicki does not particularly focus on arguing that reflexivity is widespread in Eastern Europe as well as in the West, he does implicitly illustrate this point. He focuses on the transition period, and analyses how former socialist workers deal with the changes. Mrozowicki suggests four different strategies – embedding, integrating, constructing and getting by. Each strategy illustrates a different response in terms of agency and reflexivity dialectic. Mrozowicki distinguishes between community-centred and private-centred reflexivity, arguing that the first represents a strong interconnection between an individual’s life story and collective history, whereas the second denotes ways of reflecting that are largely detached from communitarian experiences (Mrozowicki 2009).

The significance of Mrozowicki’s research is that he is studying reflexivity in the context of social changes. This has not been done to the same degree
by other scholars, who rather focus on more mundane daily instances or personal crises. In distinguishing between communal and individual reflexive types, Mrozowicki presents a different characteristic of reflexivity than those seen in standard studies on reflexivity; he indicates that reflexivity does not have to be limited to one person. However, in the context of this thesis, the significance of Mrozowicki’s research is that he successfully shows the importance of the social changes in the early 1990s in relation to reflexivity. He emphasizes that the changes in the Eastern European states required most people to reorient themselves, leading to the application of significant amounts of reflexivity in the process. Therefore, it is surprising that reflexivity has not been present as a more important concept in analyses of these societies.

Some connections can be made between reflexivity research and the life biographies research led by Alheit (1994). Alheit focused on Eastern Germany in his research and also mentioned the life strategies of former socialist workers. Even though he did not actively use the word reflexivity, he and Hoerning (Hoerning and Alheit 1995) spoke of something they called ‘biographical socialization’, which can be compared to habitus. They mentioned that certain experiences need more interpretation, since they do not fit into the profile of biographically accumulated knowledge. Both authors contributed to the discussion on how post-socialist countries dealt with the transition during the 1990s and on how these changes may have necessitated the increased use of reflexivity, even though they never explicitly used the term reflexivity. However both Alheit and Hoerning have illustrated how the social shift during the nineties created the need for many people to reorient themselves, but approach the matter from a different theoretical perspective. Hence, although the work by these authors is very useful for reflexivity studies, they have not actually taken part in the discussion on reflexivity in Eastern Europe.

The question of how reflexivity has developed in Eastern European societies and what kind of impact the huge social changes that occurred there have had on such developments, is indeed an interesting and understudied one. Another important aspect in investigating this question is the role of class in these societies. Traditional understandings of class are based on Western European societies such as France and the UK. However, the meaning of social class may be somewhat different in Eastern Europe, not least because it was relatively common during the socialist period to have friends from all social strata (Ledeneva 1998). Hence, social capital, which was of vital importance for Bourdieu, does not have the same meaning in
Eastern Europe. Furthermore, it was relatively common in Eastern Europe to read and to participate in cultural events such as going to the opera (Berlin 2004), so the applicability of cultural capital is also questionable in this context. However, these societies have developed in many ways since the collapse of the socialist system. Most importantly, many Eastern European countries are now showing similar patterns of social class to those seen in Western Europe. Even though class borders have not yet been sedimented, several authors have focused on analysing new class formations in Eastern Europe (Evans 1997; Ost 2000; Szelenyi 1995; Szelenyi and Szelenyi 1995). Class borders have been noted in connection with migration, for example by King et al. (2014), who mentions the presence of a strong Latvian elite that tends to send its children to Western universities. This example illustrates the importance of relations with the West. The Eastern European elite often gains its cultural capital by having connections with ‘the West’. As the articles in this thesis show, the migrants in the current study show a similar gain of cultural capital in their association with the West: that is, several migrants regard their status of being a migrant as prestigious in itself.

Unfortunately, there are no studies, as far as I know, that focus on the interrelation between class and reflexivity in the Eastern Bloc. Mrozowicki (2009) mentions the working class and the importance of studying the reflexivity of the weak, but does not extend his analysis to the specificities of class dimensions in the ‘East’. Therefore, this thesis can be considered as indirectly contributing to the discussions around class and reflexivity in the Eastern Bloc.

Estonian migration space

Several scholars have noted that the statistical data on migration from Estonia is unreliable and scarce (see Krusell 2009; Veidemann 2010). Problems with the data mostly stem from the estimation of migration being based on changes in the residential registry; however, many people working abroad do not change their place of residence. These problems in data collection are exemplified by the fact that calculations of the number of Estonian migrants range from 10 000 to 200 000. Based on Krusell (2009), a more realistic number is between 15 000 and 20 000. The most popular destination for Estonian migrants is Finland (Randveer and Rõõm 2013; Randveer, Raudvere, and Rõõm 2010). According to Krusell, about 15 000 mobile workers commute between Estonia and Finland, resulting in a migration space with some of the highest migratory traffic inside the EU.
According to Masso, Eamets and Motsmees, in the year 2012, 59% of all Estonian outmigrants lived in Finland, making up 65% of all the foreign workers there. Among other things, these results illustrate the popularity of Finland as a commuting state. According to several studies, Finland attracts mostly workers with secondary education or secondary special education, whereas highly skilled workers are more likely to migrate to other countries such as the UK or Germany. In fact, according to data from the Statistical Office, the UK is the most popular destination among highly skilled Estonians. The UK’s popularity probably has something to do with the high proficiency in English among Estonians as well as to the fact that the UK opened its labour market in 2003 to all the A8 member states. Furthermore, the flourishing financial market of London attracts many Estonian companies that are moving to the UK to be closer to the market. However, one can only speculate which consequences Brexit will have on such an immigration. According to the Estonian media, many Estonian enterprises in the UK are considering moving back to Estonia or moving to Berlin. It is possible that, in future, Germany will be a more prominent destination for highly skilled Estonian migrants.

Regarding the motivations for migration, many migrants have naturally stressed the economic aspect (see Krusell 2009). However, even in Krusell’s study, which focused on all types of migrants, many migrants also stressed self-development as an attractive part of migration. (That is, 90% said that the economical aspect was important, whereas 73% said that self-development opportunities were significant. Note that the respondents could choose both options simultaneously.) However, a study that was carried out among highly skilled migrants showed that, for this group, self-development opportunities were more important than a higher salary (see Kõiva, Käsper, Elme, and Murruste 2010). These migrants named reasons such as better educational opportunities, the opportunity to test oneself and better employment opportunities as their prime motivators for moving. This result also indicates that there are plenty of student migrants who, once they have finished school, may decide to stay in the foreign country.

Saar and Jakobson (2015) describe the varying reasons for migration in the form of a figure (shown in Figure 1).
As shown in Figure 1, Saar and Jakobson distinguish between life-quality and self-development migrants. Furthermore, they distinguish between three types of economic migrants: those with no way of surviving in Estonia, those in need of social services that are not easily accessible in Estonia (e.g. elderly care, support for special-needs children, etc.) and finally those who move in order to gather money for their family (e.g. commuters who are collecting money to buy a house, do renovations, etc.). Thus, even the category of economic migrants contains variation.

Few studies focus on highly educated migrants from Estonia. Anniste et al. (2012) note that the proportion of highly skilled migrants among the larger population of migrants is smaller than in the total population. This means that migration is a strategy that is used more often by low-skilled workers. This particularity may have something to do with the nature of the Estonian labour market.

Maripuu (2012) studies highly educated women who move together with their family. Based on her results, the job salary proved to be an important factor in providing these migrants with the opportunity to practice a certain lifestyle: that of the wealthy middle class. However, Maripuu also claims that many of these highly skilled women were motivated to leave Estonia by boredom with their daily routine and by a need for new challenges. Living standards become an important factor when such migrants consider their return, since becoming used to a different lifestyle makes returning to the old lifestyle more challenging.
Methodology

Critical realism and mixed methods

From an ontologically perspective, this thesis follows the critical realist school of thought. Critical realism offers a counterpoint to the current constructionist trend. The constructionist vogue argues that there is no rational self or ‘objective knowledge’, and that all knowledge is a reflection of the prevailing discourse. In contrast, critical realism claims that the self is an ongoing process, whereby selfhood is socially mediated but not socially determined. It also claims that the self can obtain knowledge of a reality that is separate from our representations (Cruickshank 2003). However, unlike the positivist approach, critical realism does not assume that one has direct access to ‘the truth’; rather, it claims that we can access knowledge through fallible theories. Hence, research continues to provide improving interpretations of reality rather than seeking a definitive finished truth (Cruickshank 2003).

This ontological standpoint relates to my choice of methods. This thesis relies on mixed methods, with the goal of incorporating the strength of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Multiple discussions have taken place in the literature regarding whether these two methods can be combined, as they are often seen as ontologically contradictory (Benz and Newman 2008; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). On the one hand, quantitative research is connected to the positivist school, which argues for the notion of a singular reality that is out there waiting to be found. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is linked to constructivist ideas of there being no such thing as an objective reality. Several articles suggest pragmatism as a way of bringing these two approaches together (Feilzer 2010; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004); however, I suggest that critical realism offers an even better solution for combining the two approaches. If we view knowledge as both constructed and based on the reality of the world we experience and live in, it is only reasonable to examine this reality both qualitatively and quantitatively.
More specifically, the general approach of this thesis is the concurrent nested strategy (Terrell 2012). In the concurrent nested strategy, the collection of quantitative data and the collection of qualitative data occur in parallel to each other. This strategy assumes that one method is dominant; in the current case, the dominant method is qualitative. The embedded method (quantitative in this case) addresses different questions than the dominant one. The qualitative part of this study addresses the following question: how do migrants use reflexivity to make and justify their migration decisions? The quantitative part addresses a different question: can we see any differences in migration decisions in relation to the respondents’ social background?

As mentioned earlier, in this thesis, I view reflexivity as both a form of liberation and as socially binding. Therefore, on the one hand, I concur with the idea that there has been an increase in the use of reflexivity. On the other hand, I also agree with the strand of research introduced above, which claims that social background affects how reflexive practices are carried out and how liberating such practices actually are. Although the impact of social background on migration decision making could potentially be evaluated in a qualitative manner, I find that the quantitative approach holds more generalization power and is therefore more useful to address this particular question. At the same time, it is rather difficult to describe how reflexive practices are carried out and how they influence migration decisions based on a purely quantitative approach; therefore, I include biographical interviews.

Quantitative analysis: logic regression and cluster analysis

The quantitative part of the study is based on data from the 2008 Estonian household module survey. The survey included various questions on subjects ranging from phone usage to trips to foreign countries, and included questions related to people’s migration intentions. Questions addressing such issues included: ‘Have you ever considered migrating?’ ‘What reasons caused you to consider migrating?’ and so forth. This thesis uses only one module of the survey, the one regarding migration motives. The survey had 5596 respondents, of whom 620 said that they were considering migrating. (The exact question was: ‘Do you plan to stay in a foreign country in the next five years?’)

The rest of the respondents were excluded from the analysis.

The data was analysed using the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The first step in the analysis was to use logistic regression on the respondents who intended to migrate in order to cover the variances in sociodemographic characteristics. In general, regression analysis is used to
study the dependence of one variable on one or more other variables (Gorard 2003b). In this case, migration intention was the dependent variable and sociodemographic variables were the independent variables. This analysis demonstrates how the probability of migrating is dependent on sociodemographic variables.

The second step of the quantitative study consisted of a running cluster analysis based on the different migration motivations. Cluster analysis is a technique that is used to identify how various people can be grouped together based on characteristics they have in common (Gorard 2003b). In the current case, since the research question asked if specific groups emerged based on migration motives, migration motives were used as variables for grouping. People considering migration could choose between seven different motivations: better income, the possibility of improving their language skills and experiencing another culture, better working conditions, better living conditions, new experiences and professional development, family reasons, and a lack of jobs in their profession in Estonia. These motivations were coded as binary in the data file. Based on the answers to the question about motivations, three groups were formed using K-means cluster analysis (the description of these groups is in the empirical part of the study). K-means cluster analysis permitted the construction of three clusters, in which each of the 620 respondents were placed according to the nearest mean.

As a third step, a multivariate logistic regression analysis (Gorard 2003a) was performed, which made it possible to analyse how sociodemographic variables influence migration motivations and to see the influences of various variables. Six different variables were included: gender, occupational status, family status, language, education and age. Regression analysis was executed in four stages, resulting in four models. In the first model, I included gender, age and language as demographic variables; in the second, I added education; in the third, I added occupational status, and in the fourth, I added family status.

Based on education, the respondents were divided into five groups: those with elementary and basic education, those with vocational education, those with secondary education, those with secondary specialized education and finally those with higher education. Labour market status was distinguished into the following categories: students or those temporarily at home, managers and professionals, semi-professionals and clerks, service workers, skilled and unskilled workers, and the unemployed. The respondents were then separated into those whose primary language was Estonian, and others. The age groups were as follows: 15–19, 20–29, 30–39, 40–49 and 50–59. (I excluded older people from the analysis, since there were so few of them.)
Finally, family status was included, based on the categories of married, cohabiting, single or divorced.

**Qualitative analysis: biographical analysis**

The qualitative part of the study includes interviews with 37 interviewees which were analysed using the biographical method. The 37 interviewees were located using a variety of strategies, such as snowballing and mailing members of the Estonian Guild (an Estonian community group in London). The research included interviewees that were still living in the UK (22) and return migrants (15). There was an almost equal number of males and females among the interviewees (19 and 18, respectively). As the focus of the study was on highly skilled migrants, all the respondents had white-collar jobs and higher education. (Highly skilled is usually defined either through education or through the job. Since it is relatively common for educated Eastern Europeans to perform blue-collar jobs in the UK, I decided to include both factors as criteria.) All the interviewees were under 40 years old, as it was important that all had experienced an independent Estonia and its neoliberalization during their socialization phase. In other words, all the interviewees were exposed to a capitalist economy and to so-called second modernity, at least to a certain degree. Finally, only Estonian-speaking people were included in the survey. This choice was made for several reasons, starting from the fact that it would be problematic to introduce another category to the study (there was already a division between return migrants and those who were staying in the UK), and ending with the fact that Russian speakers may have had a different experience of Estonia’s neoliberalization. As the values adopted by the interviewees were a central part of the study, such a variation could have introduced an additional complexity.

It is important to note that even though the sample criteria were only related to skills and migration experience, it is likely that the sample was limited in one other aspect. Since the interview was voluntary, it is probable that only those interviewees who felt positive about their life at that point, and perhaps also about their migration experience, participated. The second article gives an overview of the different reflexive modes used by the interviewees. It should be noted that only two interviewees had adopted the fractured reflexive style – the reflexive mode in which an individual’s thought process goes in circles and decisions are not made. Even though several interviewees mentioned serious struggles throughout their migration, many had overcome these struggles at the point of the interview. It should be noted,
however, that few interviewees gave an entirely positive narrative of their life, showing that they did not feel pressure to perform during the interview.

The interviewees were generally approached using either Facebook messages or emails. In the messages, the purpose of the study was described as ‘wanting to know more about their migration experience’. Since, at the point of the interviews, I still had not strictly defined the purpose of my study, the information given about the study was rather general. The interviews were set in different places, ranging from cafes to interviewees’ workplaces. All interviews, aside from one, were conducted in Estonian (one person was more fluent in English). The interviews ranged in duration from one hour to three and a half hours, and the interviewees were interviewed only once. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. They were based on an open-structure method of questioning in which the questions largely depended on the interviewees’ answers. The initial idea was to use a biographical method for interviewing (Rosenthal 1993); however, it was soon clear that this method would not work for the interviewees. The biographical method of interviewing assumes that the interviewees will narrate their biography independently (Bornat 1999). The events they mention and the sequence of this biography then allows the researchers to determine what the interviewees consider to be the central and defining events in their life. However, the main problem encountered in these interviews was that the respondents, and particularly the male respondents, were not comfortable with telling their life story, but rather expected the interviewer to pose questions. Some interviewees even mentioned that part of going to the UK was learning how to make small talk and form answers that were longer than merely a few words. Instead of following the initial plan of doing biographical interviews based on independent narratives, the interviewer asked questions about the interviewees’ life in chronological order, starting from their university experience. Later in the interviews, these questions were followed by a detailed enquiry into the interviewees’ migration experience and into their consideration of potentially returning. This kind of interviewing carries some implications regarding analysis because the interviewer did not collect independently created narratives from the interviewees, but rather helped them with questions. Of course, this process includes the possibility that certain narratives were forced onto the interviewees; for example, the interviewer could have assumed that the migration experience was an important milestone or that the migrants’ educational route played a role in the unfolding of their later life. This kind of chronological interviewing does create certain ontological assumptions regarding people’s life trajectories; therefore, it can be perceived
as imposing for people who have had a non-traditional history. This was not a significant issue in the current study, however, since most of the people who had agreed to participate in the study were able to create a positive narrative of themselves. However, it is likely that if I had interviewed someone with a fractured life story who was undergoing a crisis, using biography as a method may have been more problematic. The specific interview questions are provided in the appendix.

Although some articles have been written on the context of an interview, with a primary focus on how the gender or class of the interviewer can influence the interview (Shapiro, Von Glinow, Mary Ann, and Xiao 2007), little has been written on how certain methods can be context dependent. In my case, I noticed that Estonian men had great difficulty narrating their life story in a biographical manner – they needed helping questions. This finding may relate to the masculine role in Estonian society, which encourages men to be modest with their words and to instead ‘focus on actions’. Several male interviewees stated that they ‘needed to learn how to talk in the UK’ and explained that the way in which men in the UK conduct small talk was extremely uncomfortable for them at first. Due to gender roles such as these, it is possible that biographical interviews may not work in a context where traditional masculine roles are held. This result led to a slight change in the original plans, since the biographical interviewing method was not directly applicable.

The interviews were analysed using the biographical method, even though the interviews were not based on a biographical narrative method. Several researchers have highlighted the importance of biographical analysis in migration studies (Findlay and Li 1997; Ghosh and Wang 2003; Halfacree and Boyle 1993). Halfacree (2004) argues that the biographical approach highlights the complexity of migration decision making and challenges the simplification of the migration process. Wang (2013) argues that migration has a history and a future and is part of an individual’s biography. Ní Laoire (2000) describes another advantage of using biographical analysis in migration studies. She states that the biographical approach sets individual lives within their wider historical and social context, which illuminates individual and group experiences as well as the representations of social processes. Hence, there are multiple benefits to using biographical analysis in migration research.

Merrill and West (2009) note that biographical research is variable; therefore, it should be specified which branch of the biographical method is being applied. The analysis in this thesis was inspired by Merrill and West
(2009), who apply rules that are similar to those in grounded theory for analysing biographical data (see also West et al. 2007). Multiple interpretations of grounded theory exist (Glaser and Strauss 1998), but in this case, the constructivist approach developed by Charmaz (2014) was used. Charmaz’s general idea is that one must interpret data in various stages, starting during the collection of data and field work. The analyser starts by assigning codes to each line. This is done with three to four interviews, using more general categories. These categories are developed as a summary of line-by-line codes. Analysing the first interviews during the data collection allows the researcher to change the design of the research, something that was done in this study to a certain degree. In practice, this meant that I entered the field with a fairly open mindset. For example, at the start of the interviews, I had not yet decided that I would focus on the decision-making process. However, after seeing the differences in people’s biographies and their varying reactions to migration, I decided to enquire more into the interviewees’ specific contemplations about their migration and about how the whole process of moving went for them. In addition, I repeated the general coding separately for each article. The general standpoint of this process is that even with the openness of grounded theory, during the interview analysis, the analyst quickly develops an idea of what she/he is looking for. As a result, other data may be ignored for the purpose of a more general argument. However, since the 37 interviews in this study contained a great deal of detailed data, other general claims could be hidden in those very details. Therefore, the interviews were coded several times over a period of several years, resulting in different articles and empirical findings.

Personal reflections on the research

Merrill and West (2009) note that one cannot write stories about others without reflecting one’s own history in relation to social and cultural locations and to subjectivities and values. In particular, researching reflexivity naturally causes one to wonder about one’s own positionality.

I entered the field of LM as a migrant myself, with previous migration experience. However, it was a conscious choice to research Estonian migrants in the UK instead of those in Sweden, where I reside, since the group in Sweden felt ‘a bit too close to home’. My research interest was sparked by my personal experiences in migrating, and by the kinds of emotions that moving evoked. In the initial stages of research, I fell into the habit of trying to generalize my experience to match those of my interviewees; however, it
quickly became obvious that those experiences would vary substantially. While doing the interviews, I was puzzled by the very different reactions that the interviewees had on migrating. Some of the migrants ended up in deep crisis, whereas others seemed to care little about what country they inhabited. Personally, I would probably belong to the first group. Leaving familiar surroundings and experiencing loneliness was very difficult for me at first. Coming to Sweden began a process of personal transformation for me, so it was incredibly enlightening to obtain information on my interviewees’ experiences.

I did not start out intending to use the concept of reflexivity, so in that sense, this thesis truly was a textbook case of grounded theory. Note that grounded theory stresses the importance of entering the field with an open mind (Glaser and Strauss 1998). The line of research presented in this thesis is therefore inherently inductive. In fact, it took a year and a half of research to stumble upon the concept of reflexivity. I started out with the ‘crisis’ paradigm, assuming that migration could be seen as a mismatch between habitus and field. However, although this approach was helpful, it did not provide the kind of explanatory power that I was looking for. This conclusion was partially reached by participating at conferences and noticing that there is a specific understanding of field as mainly institutional (meaning it can be used for describing entering to the new working place for instance, but is not used for entering to a new country). Finally I came across the work of Archer and became excited about her modes of reflexivity. These seemed to help explain the variation I found in my interviews. From that point on, reflexivity became part of my everyday vocabulary.

As I started analysing my interviewees’ methods of making migration decisions and the connection between these methods and their earlier biography, I took a deep look at my own methods and connections as well. I categorized myself according to Archer’s reflexive modes and noticed that, as part of my migration experience, I did change my reflexive stance. Therefore, I am aware that reflexive modes can and will change over the course of a life. As Frankfurt (1988) has said, people have second-order desires: they are able to want to become different.

**Ethical issues**

Given the size of Estonia and, furthermore, the size of the potential Estonian migrant population in the UK, maintaining the anonymity of the inter-
viewees is a challenging task. I have yet to share any results with my inter-
viewees (by distributing my articles or thesis), partially because the inter-
viewees may be recognizable due to the biographical nature of the study. In
addition, since I form analytical categories based on the interviewee’s experi-
ences, they may not always like how they have been described. In particular,
the category of ‘fractured reflexive’ may challenge peoples’ self-view. I have
yet to determine how to solve these potential complications (both the prob-
lem of recognizability and the problem of the potential reactions of my inter-
viewees regarding their categorization), especially in relation to the second
article, which may not be very rewarding for the interviewees to read.
Although it is theoretical, this article includes a highly personal element,
which may be interesting to the participants. Apart from the second article, I
consider that the interviewees have been sufficiently anonymized and that it
is difficult to connect the quotations to specific people. (In the other papers,
I only use quotations from the interviews and do not use the whole bio-
graphy, unlike in the second article.) One potential solutions could be sharing
the second article only with the people whose biographies are described in
the paper. The other potential solution could be to send the paper first to the
particular interviewees whose biographies have been used, in order to ask for
their consent to distribute the article among the wider circle of interviewees.

Anonymity and the potentially sensitive material are the main problems
that of concern in this thesis. In addition, as mentioned above, there is a
potential problem in the application of analytical categories to describe the
interviewees. Such categorizations could be seen as disturbing by some, since
I, as the researcher, am trying to apply my own worldview onto what the
interviewees said and who they consider themselves to be.
Empirics
First article

The first paper is a continuation of my exploration into the empirical context of Eastern European and Estonian migration patterns. An increasing amount of research on Eastern European migrants argues that people move more and more for reasons of self-development. This research is a reaction to many Western researchers who view Eastern Europeans as solely labour migrants. However, most of the research that argues for a qualitatively different kind of migration from Eastern Europe is based on interviews and therefore does not allow for generalizations. Furthermore, many of these interviews only focus on the young and highly skilled. Therefore, this study aims to determine whether it is possible to talk about the changing nature of Eastern European migration, or whether only certain groups connect their migration to self-exploration.

The paper is based on the Estonian Household Module Survey, which reported 560 people who intended to migrate in the near future. Based on a cluster analysis, three different migrant groups were discovered: self-development, life-quality and economic migrants. Self-development migrants align with recent trends that have been observed lately among Eastern Europeans. Life-quality migrants focus their motives on many different aspects such as work environment, better living conditions, and so forth. Finally, economic migrants mainly focus on improving their material wellbeing.

The study showed that migrants moving for economic reasons were more likely to be older, blue-collar workers and males. Life-quality migrants were more likely to be cohabiting. Finally, self-development migrants had a higher probability of being female, younger or divorced. The main conclusion of this article is therefore that migration from Eastern Europe is becoming increasingly varied, both in terms of motivation and in terms of whether the migration is perceived as voluntary or involuntary. Older and low-skilled migrants are more likely to see migration as a forced decision that is made due to economic difficulties, whereas younger and highly skilled migrants may find migration to be a route towards self-fulfilment.
Second article

The second paper aims to question the aforementioned divide in migration studies, which is based on the two opposing views of reflexivity. As mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, migration literature can be roughly divided into two extremes: the approach that sees reflexivity as universal for all migrants, and the approach that argues that reflexivity is limited to certain groups. This article uses Archer’s analytical toolset and the different modes of reflexivity to suggest a third way: reflexivity can be acknowledged as being common for all kinds of migrants, but there are a variety of ways of reflecting. On the one hand, this new way solves the common problems that are connected to the mobility discourse and to the work of Beck and Giddens, with their insensitivity to social background and their inability to provide analytical tools for empirics. On the other hand, the new way offers a solution to the potentially elitist viewpoint that considers certain migrants (usually middle-class migrants) to be more reflexive.

In this article, the reflexive modes proposed by Archer (2003) – communicative, autonomous, meta- and fractured reflexivities – are connected to different migration motivations. Communicative reflexivity is connected to migrants who are mainly moving for family reasons. Here, it is important to note that people whose motivations are strongly related to family expectations are counted as family migrants. Autonomous reflexives are connected to career-related motives. Their way of reflecting can be seen as instrumental, unlike that of the meta-reflexives. Meta-reflexives usually see migration as an opportunity for self-exploration. As meta-reflexives are engaged in a constant search for the perfect environment, they often end up moving several times. Finally, fractured reflexives are connected to the use of migration as an escape route.

Using four modes of reflexivity to analyse migration decisions provides a way to analyse reflexivity in migration behaviour, taking potential variances between migrants into consideration, without assuming that certain groups are more reflexive than others. Keeping in mind that reflexivity may appear in different ways provides a tool for understanding the variance in migration.
The third paper in this thesis focuses on the issues of return migration and on the ways in which the decision to return is contemplated and made. Like the second paper, the third article uses reflexivity as a potential way to explain the decision-making process for return migrants. The primary motivation of this paper is that even though outmigration is increasingly considered to be individualized, complex and oriented towards self-development, return migration is still considered to be primarily connected to social networks, for some reason. Many researchers have investigated the nexus of individuality versus sociality, and have found that migration allows for independent self-expression, whereas returning provides the comfort of social support (Corcoran 2002; Conradson and Latham 2005b, 2007; Lawson 2000). This paper suggests that such a dualistic view may be misleading because connecting return migration primarily with social contacts may ignore the complexity of such a decision. Just as we ask who is migrating, we should also ask who is returning and why.

This paper suggests viewing return decisions as being reliant on three types of comparisons that people make. As already noted above, social or horizontal comparisons have been well-researched and commented upon, especially in transnationalist research. People use comparisons with other people as part of their decision making. The second way of comparing is to engage in temporal or vertical comparisons. McGhee, Heath and Trevena (2012) discuss temporal comparisons and suggest that these have become more important than social comparisons. The idea behind temporal comparisons is that people compare the ‘present-day me’ with the ‘previous me’ in order to judge their success. If the work of Rose (1996) were applied to this situation, he might suggest that this kind of development is natural, given the increased importance of psychology today and the idea of the self as something that can be changed. Wiley (2009) makes a similar assertion, noting that people can be seen as having intermittent conversation between the ‘past me’, ‘present me’ and ‘future me’. Although the first two nodes of comparison have been put into practice by migration researchers, at least to some degree, the last way of comparing – sectional or identitarian comparison – has been
overlooked. This article suggests that identitarian comparison may be almost as important as the other two ways of comparing. Identitarian comparison is a comparative process whereby people compare different parts of their identity with each other. In other words, people play different roles in their lives, and these different roles align with different parts of an individual's identity. Mouzelis (2007) suggests that not all the conflicts that result in reflexive liberation must include the clash of habitus and field; some may be the result of an internal clash, such as a clash between different parts of one's identity. Although Mouzelis focuses mostly on moments of conflict, this article suggests that when major life decisions are made, different parts of the self are in dialogue. Similarly, when contemplating return migration, people make decisions about which parts of their identity are most important. For example, if an individual regards his or her identity as being mainly connected to his or her career, having social contacts back at home may be of little importance in making the decision to return or stay. Hence, including the third kind of comparison for individuals who are contemplating a migratory return allows a partial answer to the question of why some people return while others do not. Furthermore, including this comparison takes into account the changing nature of relationships and the individualization of society, suggesting that a migratory return cannot be any more explained as merely homing desire and a wish to return to former social surroundings.
Fourth article

This article is inspired by certain theoretical incoherencies in LM studies. In this article, these incoherencies are analysed through the perspective of reflexivity. I argue that, depending on the theoretical approach to reflexivity, different LM scholars reach dissimilar conclusions regarding who is a lifestyle migrant and how LM and reflexivity are related to class and Western culture. When researchers use different approaches, the lifestyle migrants being studied may appear more reflexive than other migrants; or, they may be seen as having the linguistic tools to present their migration as reflexive or to practice reflexivity, but doing this within the limits of their own culture. Even though it is noteworthy that LM scholarship encourages theoretical multiplicity, the approaches used are not always compatible. This leads to confusion around the term ‘lifestyle migration’ in general, as exemplified by the numerous studies aiming to define the concept (Torkington 2010; Benson and O’Reilly 2015b; Benson and Osbaldiston 2016a; Benson and O’Reilly 2015b)

One of the central goals for the fourth article is therefore to explore how this theoretical confusion can be addressed and potentially solved. Some of the theoretical incongruities around the concept of a lifestyle migrant come from different scholars either using reflexivity as a self-reported category (which the migrants themselves apply to their migration) or as an analytical tool (which is applied by scholars in order to position lifestyle migrants in relation to other types of migrants). The fourth article suggests viewing reflexivity as an analytical category, and claims that taking such a position is potentially useful for LM scholarship. One potential benefit is being able to analyse the relationship between the Western middle class and LM at a deeper level than interviewees’ own choice of wording when describing their migration. The connection between class background and LM is currently unclear, and I argue that this connection can be examined by analysing the reflexive practices of lifestyle migrants. Similarly, using reflexivity as an analytical tool allows us to highlight potential variations among migrants.

Such potential variations in reflexivity practices are highlighted in this article by drawing on interviews with highly skilled Estonians. The article
suggests distinguishing between three different reflexive practices: identitarian, structural and teleological reflexivity. Identitarian reflexivity refers to self-questioning and refashioning practices, teleological reflexivity is goal-oriented, and structural reflexivity includes an awareness of both the underlying structures of one’s thinking and the currently surrounding structures. The empirical analysis in the article also distinguishes between five different types of migrants that have dissimilar migration motives and that come from different social classes. Each type takes advantage of the three reflexive practices to a different extent. Interestingly, the results demonstrate that migrants with a lower-middle-class or working-class background who have had little guidance in their early life inhabit all three strategies. Those belonging to the higher class took advantage of only structural and teleological reflexivity, finding it unnecessary to refashion their habitual behaviour. (It could be hypothesized that this result has something to do with these migrants’ habitus being seen as positive in the eyes of society.) By drawing on my suggested conceptualization of reflexive practices, other LM researchers can further analyse potential variations in how and in what way lifestyle migrants practice reflexivity.
Conclusions

The main aim of this thesis is to unpack the relationship between migration, reflexivity and class, by using highly skilled Estonian migrants as an example. In doing so, the thesis primarily engages with LM research due to its heightened interest in migration decisions and reflexivity. The mobility turn also takes an interest in reflexivity, but uses the concept more as an umbrella to justify why mobilities are an important concept to study at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century. The other important field of research supporting this thesis is the field of Eastern European migration, which offers empirical material for positioning highly skilled Estonians on the ‘migration map of Europe’.

The thesis consists of four different articles, which take slightly different directions. The first article examines the empirical case and the different types of migrants in Estonia; the second applies Archer’s modes of reflexivity to migration studies and connects the modes of reflexivity to different migration motivations; the third challenges the idea of return migration as something that is mainly connected to social connections and homing desire; and the fourth suggests a way for LM to operationalize reflexivity in order to position lifestyle migrants in relation to other types of migrants and to understand potential variations in LM. Nevertheless, all articles share the basic purposes of analysing the role of reflexivity in migration and examining the attempt to operationalize reflexivity in order to describe this role.

The idea behind operationalizing reflexivity is that reflexivity can be seen as an analytical category, rather than only talking about discourses of reflexivity. The difference between these perspectives is that focusing on discourses of reflexivity causes us to focus on the interviewees’ reports about their migration decisions; although this allows us to describe their experience and perhaps also examine why the interviewees perceive their migration as reflexive, it leaves us unable to determine whether their decisions are actually reflective. This thesis takes a critical realist approach and supports the idea that it is possible to determine reflexive practices in migration decisions that go further than the self-reports of migrants. Of course, this approach requires a careful definition of reflexivity and a close analysis of the interviews.
This thesis offers various ways of operationalizing reflexivity. On the one hand, it uses Archer’s reflexive modes to describe how different biographical backgrounds can lead to dissimilar ways of reflecting and narrating one’s identity. Such variations in identity imply that people migrate for different reasons, and that migration plays different roles in their identity building. Archer suggests distinguishing between four different modes of reflexivity – autonomous, communicative, meta- and fractured reflexivity. This thesis found that autonomous reflexives (who mainly reflect on instrumental and practical matters) were largely unburdened by their migration and moved mainly for work purposes. On the other hand, communicative reflexives (who were highly community-oriented and who needed other people to finish their reflections) were extremely disturbed by their migration, and mostly migrated for relationship purposes. These two examples show how the use of different reflexive types can help to explain varying migration motives as well as the varying degrees of stress people experience after migration. Furthermore, this approach challenges the idea of only one type of reflexive migrant existing under second modernity – a migrant who is highly individualized and free-moving. Research on free mobility in the EU seems to support the idea of an unproblematic migration, especially for those who are highly skilled. In fact, this type of unproblematic migration probably describes only one kind of migrant (autonomous), who is highly work-oriented and independent.

The other way of operationalizing reflexivity is by analysing the comparisons people engage in when they make migration decisions. Current research on return migration mostly focuses on social comparisons, and emphasizes that people regularly move back to their home country because they strongly identify with their friends and relatives there. This thesis suggests that, due to current changes in societies (i.e. dissolution of old social structures, individualizing family relations, etc.) migrants’ return should be increasingly seen as an identity-related project. On the one hand, people engage in comparisons with their former and current selves (temporal comparisons) to decide where they are better off. On the other hand, people compare different parts of their identity (identitarian comparisons) to decide what is most important to them (e.g. a bigger income versus being near family). This emphasis on the different types of comparisons people engage in before deciding to return aligns with recent research in migration studies, which suggests that migration is increasingly connected to self-development and is seen as an identity-related project.
Finally, reflexivity can be operationalized by the purpose it serves — whether teleological, structural or identitarian. Teleological reflexivity is goal-oriented, structural reflexivity provides insight into the influence and role of structures in one’s life and identitarian reflexivity is oriented towards reconstructing one’s identity. In relation to migration studies, such a distinction provides researchers with analytical tools for determining the extent to which each migration is reflexive. LM literature sometimes refers to lifestyle migrants as being more reflexive due to their Western middle-class background; however, having an operationalization of reflexivity provides tools to determine whether such migrants are in fact more reflexive than labour migrants. Identifying these three reflexive practices also helps to disengage LM from potential cultural bias (see Huete, Mantecón, and Estévez 2013), whereby reflexivity is connected to certain habits that are characteristic of the Western middle class.

The use of such operationalization is twofold. On the one hand, there has been some discussion on whether reflexivity can be connected to certain societies and social groups. Since most of the research on reflexivity, and especially on the use of reflexivity in migration, has been done using Westerners as an example, there is a danger that the definition of reflexivity may be influenced by such choices. Therefore, by clarifying their evaluation of reflexive practices among their study groups, researchers can avoid potential bias. This approach also allows authors who are analysing reflexive practices in other parts of the world to add to and challenge the current use of reflexivity. In general, this approach demystifies the concept of reflexivity.

The other benefit of operationalizing reflexivity or, more precisely, of offering different ways of operationalization, is that it allows us to acknowledge different factors that influence reflexive practices. On the one hand, Archer (2009) takes a socio-psychological approach by stressing the importance of continuity and discontinuity in one’s childhood environment. She argues that one internalizes one’s mode of internal dialogue, which is tightly connected to an individual’s identity. On the other hand, the threefold approach to reflexive practices (as I advocate in the fourth article) suggests that everyone can potentially use different reflexive practices. However, the use of these practices is at least partially connected to class background. Although Archer challenges the significance of social class in reflexivity, I argue that there is a connection, albeit not necessarily a direct one. The connection between reflexive practices and social class stems less from belonging to a particular class and more from being able to internalize and perform societal values. Hence, achievers in my study were able to follow Estonian
social norms that supported material success and accomplishments. As a result, this group had little reason to engage in self-reflection. The fact that they were able to perform these values was linked with the fact that they had parents who encouraged and supported their achievements and shared these values (i.e. implying that they usually came from a middle-class background).

This thesis therefore aims to inspire further discussion on how social class, reflexivity and migration are related. As these connections are rarely straightforward, they make an interesting subject.

Finally, one of the central concerns of this thesis was to theorize reflexivity in migration decisions. Multiple ways exist of operationalizing and describing reflexivity in migration decisions. Generally speaking, however, individual reflexive practices have received surprisingly little attention in migration studies so far. This thesis aims to further the discussions in one particular field – LM studies – by suggesting that reflexivity can be seen as an analytical tool. LM shows more interest in reflexivity than any other kind of migration research; I argue that this field struggles with the concept of reflexivity because it has not yet been used to describe other types of migration. The discipline as a whole would benefit greatly from an increase in articles on the use of reflexivity among labour migrants, refugees and other migrants. One of the claims made in this thesis is that all migrants use reflexivity; the question is not whether they use it, but rather to what extent and for what purposes they do so. It is possible that lifestyle migrants are more reflexive than other migrant groups; unfortunately, however, we know little about reflexivity in these or in other groups. Therefore, one of the main gaps in current migration literature is the analysis of reflexivity among groups other than Westerners, groups other than the middle class, and groups other than lifestyle migrants.
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Individualisation of Migration from the East? Comparison of Different Socio-Demographic Groups and their Migration Intentions

Maarja Saar

Abstract

Recent studies on Eastern European migration argue that moving for self-development reasons is becoming increasingly common among this group. Furthermore, it is suggested that migration from the East is becoming individualised and less dependent on social surroundings. Nevertheless, most such results rely on interviews conducted among certain social groups, such as the young and highly skilled. Hence, the comparison between different social groups and their motivations is rarely provided and, therefore, the claims about increased individualisation might be premature. This article uses the Estonian Household Module Survey, including responses from 620 Estonians intending to migrate, to evaluate if migration flows are indeed becoming more individualised and less dependent on social surroundings. Using cluster analysis, three different groups — self-development, economic and life quality migrants — are formed, which are then tested using regression analysis to check for the influence of socio-demographic variables. The article concludes that socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, family status and socio-economic status are still relevant for migration intentions. Indeed, a new group of Eastern European migrants, mainly oriented towards self-development, is emerging; however, it is small and consists mostly of young, Estonian-speaking females. The results complicate the notions of free mobility and liquid migration from Eastern Europe and illustrate that there is a need to pay attention to the increasing group differences in these societies.

Keywords: migration motives, individualization, Eastern Europe.

Introduction

Recent research on Eastern European migration has suggested that new mobility patterns are emerging. Instead of the stereotypical migrant, male and low skilled, looking for ways to accumulate money before returning to the home country (Drinkwater, Eade, & Garapich, 2009; Engbersen, Leerkes, Grabowska-Lusinska, Snel, & Burgers, 2013; Parutis, 2014), we see more and more highly skilled migrants that are interested in self-development, new cultural experiences, etc. Such mobility patterns have been related to the individualisation of these societies as well as to the prevalence of post-materialist values. Sommers and Woolfson (2014), on the contrary, claim that instead of the prevalence of post-materialist values, many people from the Baltics are motivated by economic troubles. The results from different studies on Eastern European migration are indeed contradictory on the main motivation of migrants. This might be because the migration currents from Eastern Europe are becoming diversified and more complex (Burrell, 2012; Engbersen et al., 2013; Morokvasic, 2004). However, apart from acknowledging the versatility, there has been very little effort to describe and explain such diversified migration flows.

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This article departs from the question of whether the versatility of migration motives of Eastern Europeans can be explained by their varying social background. Due to the qualitative nature of current research focusing on Eastern European migration and motivations, we lack sufficient comparative data on the differences between social groups (Engbersen et al., 2013). Such discrepancies make it very difficult to understand the motivations of migrants in a more generalised manner, instead of focusing on individual stories. Hence, it is also very difficult to control for the individualisation of migration flows, since different social groups and their migration motives are rarely compared. However, the claims on the individualisation of migration from Eastern Europe cannot be made solely based on the young and highly skilled.

This article analyses the connection between different migration motives (intended) and socio-demographic variables. It uses quantitative data from the Estonian Household Module survey from 2008, which asked people if they intended to migrate and if so, for what reasons. Among 5500 respondents, 620 intended to move. The results will be analysed, first to determine the influence of socio-demographic characteristics on migration motives, then using cluster analysis to identify different groups based on migration motives, and finally employing regression analysis to determine if socio-demographic characteristics have any influence on determining to which group an individual belongs.

Estonia provides a good case for the study for numerous reasons: the extent of migration from the country, the rapidly increasing inequalities in the society, the prevalence of neoliberal discourse, and proximity to the Western (Northern) societies. The aforementioned factors bring together the high emphasis on individualist and materialist values, increasing economic disparities, the strong stress put on individual responsibility for one’s economic wellbeing, and the proximity of potential places of exit. In a way, the country illustrates the cleavage present in most Eastern European societies, which so far has been mainly overlooked by migration studies.

The changing nature of Eastern European migration

Migration from Eastern Europe has traditionally been related to economic motives. However, several scholars have recently criticised such stereotypical representation of Eastern European migration (Black, Engbersen, & Okólski, 2010; Ciupiulė, 2011; Burrell, 2010). Especially young and highly skilled Eastern Europeans are suggested to be part of a new generation of mobile Europeans for whom moving abroad is not only work-related but also involves lifestyle choices as part of a broader aspiration for self-development (Black, Engbersen, & Okólski, 2010; Kring, Bobek, Moriarty, Salamańsk, & Wickham, 2013). Such changes have been connected with the transformations in these societies, such as individualisation, the introduction of the free EU mobility space, the increase in post-materialist values, and the importance of the project of the reflexive self. Overall, it is suggested that individuals no longer fit into traditional categories such as family or class, but are forced to engage in reflexive decision-making about their lives. Mobility is part of such reflexive decision-making, as flexibility becomes a requirement for the individuals in the second modernity. According to Engbersen, Snel, & Boom (2010), many migrants postpone marriage and having children, moving when they are single and have few family obligations.

Still, some argue that in addition to self-development related motives, Eastern Europeans do migrate with their families for the purpose of improving their family’s livelihood. In fact, Botterill (2014) criticised research on Eastern European migration for focusing only on the experiences of young, single people, often with an emphasis on patterns of individualised mobility as characteristic of post-accession migration. Both Botterill (2014) and McGhee, Heath, & Trevena (2012) argued that securing a livelihood for one’s family and living an economically more secure and sustainable life has been a concern for many Polish migrants. Drinkwater et al. (2009) have suggested that the category of
A8 (new accession countries) migrant worker needs to be questioned. According to them, A8 migrants engage in diverse migration strategies that encompass a range of movements from short-term movements linked to specific working contracts through to permanent settlement. Furthermore, Trevena, Glorious, Grabowska-Lusinska, and Kuvik (2011) have developed three different categories of Eastern European migrants: target earners, whose main objective is to accumulate enough money for the purpose of investing in their home country; career-seekers, who wish to develop their career abroad; and finally drifters, who pursue goals other than professional advancement or saving for investment.

Nevertheless, most studies that aim to describe differing migration motives among Eastern European migrants are qualitative. Even though these studies provide a valuable contribution to understanding the versatility of different migrants groups, what is currently lacking is a comprehensive overview of the social background of these dissimilar migrant groups (see also Engbersen et al., 2013). Although there is evidence that motives of Eastern European migrants differ, we are left in the dark as to why such differences have emerged. Furthermore, if Eastern European migration has in fact individualised, such differences might not be explainable by the different social background of these people. However, in order to check whether that is really the case, we would need to test the connection between migration motives and social characteristics.

As most of the research has favoured the theory on free mobility, there is little data on how socio-demographic variables influence current migration motives. Cook, Dwyer, & Waite (2011) suggested that the experiences of Eastern European migrants are more complicated than currently stated and depend on factors such as gender, ethnicity, qualifications, language, skills, etc. In migration research, the former biography has been mainly stressed by contextualist research on the 90s and currently by lifestyle migration research, which argues that the middle class is becoming increasingly characterised by new mobility patterns. In addition, there has been an assumption that the highly skilled tend to move for career advancement and cultural enrichment, whereas the low skilled generally consider economic factors more important (Conradson & Latham, 2005; Kennedy, 2010). When it comes to gender differences in migration patterns, several researchers have criticised the underlying assumption that women would mostly move for family reasons (Bilsborrow & Schoorl, 2008; Kofman, 2000). Furthermore, there is a lack of studies on how ethnicity influences migration motives. Only Aptekar (2009) and Cook et al. (2011) have noted that in addition to economic reasons, minorities (Russian speakers in Estonia and Roma) tend to move because of discrimination in the sending countries. Finally, there are no studies on how family status influences migration motives.

Most of the aforementioned studies focus on Western European migrants; however, due to the rapid changes following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the impact of socio-demographic variables on migration motives might differ significantly in these societies. In addition, Horváth (2008) has stressed that it is important to consider values as potential drivers of migration, and several studies have illustrated that in Eastern European countries only the younger generation is influenced by post-materialist values that are so common in the West (Drinkwater et al., 2009). However, the research focusing on Eastern Europeans and the influence of socio-demographic variables on their motives is qualitative (Engbersen et al., 2013). Hence, there is very little comparative material on how variables such as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, family status and age influence migration patterns from Eastern Europe.

However, studying migration patterns, specifically migration motivations, is a daunting task not the least due to the fact that we can either study those who intend to migrate or the actual migrants. In both cases, the motives that are stated might depart from the motives at the moment of migrating. If we are to study those who have migrated, the motives stated at the moment of survey might vary from the motives at the time of migration. On the other hand, if we study those who intend to migrate, our study might include migrants who never carried out their plans. In this article, I have chosen to study migration intentions and, hence, will add some comments on the relationship between
migration intentions and the actual migration. A growing number of academics have started to use migration intentions as approximations of actual migration; however, more research is needed on the match between the two (see van Dalen & Henkens, 2008). According to Castaldo, Litchfield, & Reilly (2005), migration intentions provide information on whether the individual has considered migrating, therefore, these individuals could be considered as predisposed towards migrating. However, scholars have also found that there are gaps between intended and actual migration (see Krusell, 2009); not everyone who intends to migrate actually does so. Gordon & Molho (1995) have found that among internal migrants who had intentions of moving, 90% did so within five years. Böheim & Taylor (2002) showed that those respondents who express an intention to move are three times more likely to move than those not expressing any intention. Finally, van Dalen & Henkens (2008) found that 24% of those intending to move had done so within two years of the interview; however, they suggest that more respondents probably did subsequently migrate. Such varying results might, of course, lead to potential problems in using motives of intentions as proxies for understanding migration behaviour. However, one can hypothesise that migration intentions and retrospective migration motivations might refer to different things. While migration intentions might be more closely connected to the societal discourses, retrospective motivations might be related to migrants’ experience in the host country. Hence, I would say that using intentions is not a problem, if they are analysed as an indication of the host society and its mentalities.

Estonian society, migration, inequalities and value structure

According to data from Statistics Estonia, about 18,000 people have left Estonia during the last three years. If we include the incoming migrants (many are return migrants), net migration is approximately 9,000. The high number of return migrants suggests that Estonia is experiencing much circular migration. According to the most conservative estimations, 1.5% of the total population has migrated during the last ten years (see Krusell, 2009). However, Hazans and Phillips (2010) have noted that if commuters are taken into account, the number of potential migrants can go up to 4.5% of the total population. When it comes to the portrait of an average Estonian migrant, Hazans and Phillips (2010) have suggested that most migrants are young and with secondary education. Randveer & Rõõm (2013) add that males and blue-collar workers are most likely to move. This is supported by the findings of Anniste, Tammaru, Pungas, and Paas (2012), which demonstrate that highly educated people are less likely to leave Estonia. For many people, the underlying objectives for migration are economic (see Krusell, 2009). Nevertheless, other causes, such as improving language skills and gaining new cultural experiences, are also becoming important. As Kõiva, Kärner, Elme and Murruste (2010) have indicated, cultural experiences and self-development purposes dominate, especially among the highly educated group. This is supported by research on other Eastern European countries, where an increase in self-development related motives has been noticed. Jakobson, Kalve and Ruutsoo (2012) have identified two main groups of Estonian migrants moving to Finland. The first group consists of those with economic problems seeking better wages, and the second group comprises strategically recruited and highly skilled people, for whom that might have not been the first migration experience. Still, most of the aforementioned studies are qualitative and a comprehensive study comparing different socio-economic groups in the society is yet to be carried out.

In order to formulate hypotheses about different social groups and their migration motives, I will analyse both inequalities as well as value structure in Estonian society. In Estonia, the structural and economic reforms have been the most radical ones amongst the post-socialist CEE countries (Böhle & Greskovits, 2007). One result of privatisation and rapid market liberalisation was a sharp rise in social inequalities. The main losers in this process were those in lower occupational positions, especially those in the agrarian and manufacturing sectors. Due to the strong influence of neoliberal
ideology, the consequences of structural unemployment were often felt mainly by individuals, leading to a situation where many people internalised the message of being agents separated from social influences (Heinla, Tart, & Raudsepp, 2013; Vihelemm & Kalmus, 2008). Woolfson (2009), Sippola (2013) and Lulle (2009) have argued that many individuals responded to neoliberal policies by ‘voting with their feet’ – migrating. Sommers and Woolfson (2014) have argued that especially after the economic crisis, Baltic States have experienced a new outflow of individuals, to whom they refer as the austeriat. The austeriat, mainly the young and unemployed, uses free mobility as a survival strategy. However, Sommers and Woolfson (2014) as well as Saar and Jakobson (2015) argue that more and more families are found among migrants. Still, it is somewhat unclear who exactly belongs to the austeriat group.

Vihelemm and Kalmus (2008) have argued that the Estonian value space has experienced considerable changes since the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to them, societal structures have been undermined and individual success is considered more important than the common good. According to Slater, consumer culture and its values are gaining ground in the country, and many people, especially among the younger generation, put great emphasis on material and social success. Saarniit (1998) has called this the process of individualistic pragmatism of the Estonian value space. Nevertheless, such a process is most noticeable among those born in the 70s and the beginning of the 80s. For those born in the 90s, social and altruistic values are more important (see Rämmér, 2009). Women as well as Estonian speakers tend to also have a more post-materialist orientation. Furthermore, women and men also occupy different economic sectors, women being overrepresented in education, health and social care, whereas men dominate in business and industry (Masso, 2010), which to some degree leads to different values. In terms of migration, such value differences in the society might indicate varying motives. For instance, it is likely that men and Russian speakers would migrate more for economic reasons. Hence, it is important to consider not only the material conditions of different socio-demographic groups, but also their value orientations.

As briefly mentioned above, there are significant differences between the values held by Russian (30% of the population) and Estonian speakers. The background for different values, as well as the potentially differing migration motives, is the materially and politically deprived situation of many Russian speakers (see Saar, Lindemann, & Helemäe, 2009). Because of such deprivation they are more likely to value material success more, especially the members of the older generation (Vihelemm & Kalmus, 2008). According to Rämmér (2009), value differences in Estonian society do not follow ethnic lines, but rather generational ones. Furthermore, Aptekar (2010) has claimed that among Russian speakers moving from Latvia and Lithuania, material reasons dominate, but many Estonian Russians flee due to political discrimination.

Overall, it is important to note that both material conditions as well as particular values held by certain social groups can have an impact on their migration behaviour. On the one hand, Estonia provides a case that inspires some migrants to flee from its neoliberal conditions and policies. On the other hand, many people have internalised both neoliberal values as well as individual responsibility for their lives (see Kalmus & Vihelemm, 2006). In terms of migration, that means that there can be significant differences in potential motives and attitudes.

Based on the previous, I formed the following hypotheses:

First, as noted, Russian speakers tend to be in deprived situations in Estonian society and value material wellbeing more than Estonian speakers do. Estonian speakers, on the other hand, tend to aspire to high social positions and success. Therefore, I suggest:

1. Russian speakers intend to migrate more for financial reasons, whereas Estonians tend to go because of the career potential.

Second, as several scholars have suggested, women are more socially oriented when it comes to migration, whereas men are more materialistic and focus on success. Therefore, I suggest:
2. Women intend to migrate more for social reasons, whereas men have financial motives.

Third, based on theory, the highly skilled are seen more as being interested in career development, whereas the low skilled are motivated to migrate due to economic constraints. Also, as Kalmus and Vihelemm (2006) suggested, personal harmony seems to be more relevant to more highly educated people. Therefore, I propose:

3. People with lower education and occupational status intend to move more for financial reasons than is the case for highly skilled people.

Fourth, I assume that since those who are married are less likely to migrate, they do so because of structural constraints such as unemployment or poverty.

4. Married people intend to move because of structural constraints such as an inability to find a job or financial difficulties.

Finally, as mentioned above, several scholars have suggested that younger people migrate for self-development reasons and for career success, whereas older migrants move for economic reasons. However, Olofsson and Westin (2011) suggested that older people are more socially oriented, while Kalmus and Vihelemm (2006) claimed that younger people in Estonia are more materialistically oriented. Therefore, I would suggest:

5. Older people intend to move more for social and life quality reasons, whereas younger people are motivated by career success and material benefits.

Methodology

The data analysed in this study is based on an Estonian household module survey carried out in 2008 and 2009. The survey included various questions on subjects ranging from one’s phone usage to trips to foreign countries. In this article, only one module of the survey, the one regarding migration motives, is used. The survey had 5596 respondents, of whom 620 said that they were considering migrating. (The exact question was: Do you plan to work in a foreign country in the next five years?) First, logistic regression analysis was carried out based on migration intentions to get a better overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of those who were planning to migrate. Those considering migration could choose between seven different motivations: first, better income; second, the possibility of improving language skills and experiencing another culture; third, better working conditions; fourth, better living conditions; fifth, new experiences and professional development; sixth, family reasons; and seventh, lack of jobs in their profession in Estonia. These motivations were coded as binary in the data file. Based on the answers to the question about motivations, I formed three groups using K-means cluster analysis (the description of the groups is in the empirical part of the study). Second, I performed multivariate logistic regression analysis, which allowed me to analyse how socio-demographic variables influence migration motivations and also to see the influences of the variables. I included six different variables: gender, occupational status, family status, language, education and age. Regression analysis was executed in four stages, resulting in four models. In the first model, I included gender, age and language as demographic variables; in the second stage education was added; in the third, occupational status; and, finally, family status. I will now describe some of the variables in more detail.

Based on education, people were divided into five groups: those with elementary and basic education, those with vocational education, those with secondary education, those with secondary specialised education and, finally, those with higher education. Labour market status was distinguished as follows: students or those temporarily at home (both have the intention to return to the labour
market and, therefore, differ from the unemployed); managers and professionals; semi-professionals and clerks; service workers; skilled and unskilled workers (a lot of cases will be in de-skilled positions in the foreign country because there are problems with recognising qualifications inside EU); and the unemployed. Based on language, people were separated into those whose primary language was Estonian and others (primarily Russian speakers). Age groups were: 15-19; 20-29; 30-39; 40-49 and 50-59 (I excluded older people from the analysis, since there were so few). Finally, in family status, married, cohabiting, single and divorced were included.

Results

First, I will describe the group that intended to migrate based on the abovementioned six variables. As we can see from Table 1, males are more likely to want to move than females. Based on the age group, younger people are more prone to migrate than the oldest age group. People whose mother tongue is different from Estonian are also more likely to become potential migrants. Surprisingly, education does not have a strong influence on people's migration intentions; only people with basic education are less likely to have an intention of moving compared to those with higher education. Compared to unemployed people, almost all other groups are less likely to consider moving. Only those in blue-collar jobs are as likely to become potential migrants. Finally, single people are more likely to consider moving than all other family status groups.

Table 1: Regression analysis — migration intentions based on socio-demographic variables (8 regression coefficients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migration intentions (reference group does not want to migrate)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (reference group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>males</td>
<td>0.41***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59 (reference group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>2.31***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>1.68***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>1.25***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>0.91***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (reference group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>-0.45***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher (reference group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>-0.425*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary specialised</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labour market status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed (reference group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students/house</td>
<td>-0.58**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers/professionals</td>
<td>-0.51**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-professionals/clerks</td>
<td>-0.74**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service workers</td>
<td>-0.45*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled and unskilled workers</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single (reference group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-1.15***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabit</td>
<td>-0.83***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>-0.55**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nagelkerke's R Square 0.21

Source: author's calculations based on Household Module Survey 2008
Second, I will analyse the motivations for migration and their popularity. However, before going to my analysis I would like to make a short comment on the differences between the motives of those who intend to migrate and those who have migrated. As my data also included people who have carried out their migration plan, a separate group not included in this analysis, I can say that the difference between the reasons for migrating and intending to migrate were not great. The most significant difference was that those who had migrated regarded the improvement of living and working conditions as more important factors for moving than was the case with those intending to move. The explanation for this may be that these factors might have become important only afterwards, but might also be related to the specifics of the group that returned after migration. Although there is a gap between those who carry out migration and those who solely intend to migrate, at least according to my data the differences in motivations for migration between these groups are not big. Table 2 illustrates all the reasons that were considered important for migration by respondents – this means that one person could choose more than one reason for migrating. As can be seen from the Table 2, better income was the most important reason for those people who were planning to migrate, 92% considered it significant. Also, professional development and the benefits of being exposed to other cultural and linguistic environments were vital as migration motives. Family reasons proved to be the least significant for people intending to migrate (10%), followed by the lack of professional opportunities.

Based on the migration incentives, I distinguished three different clusters (see Table 2). I chose to use three cluster versions because in this case the differences between the groups were notable and also each group was big enough to be representable. Respondents could choose whether the reason was important for migrating or not. The first cluster can be characterized as consisting of people whose main incentives for migrating are economic. Other reasons are less significant, although maybe it is worth noting that given the small number of people for whom a lack of professional opportunities

Table 2: The popularity of migration motives, %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations for migration</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better income</td>
<td>91.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New experiences/professional development</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of language skills/cultural experience</td>
<td>79.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better living conditions</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better working conditions</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of professional opportunities</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family reasons</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author’s calculations based on Household Module Survey 2008

Table 3: Three clusters based on migration motives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations for migration</th>
<th>Economic migrants</th>
<th>Life quality migrants</th>
<th>Self-development migrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better income</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of language skills/cultural experience</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better living conditions</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better working conditions</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New experiences/professional development</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family reasons</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of professional opportunities</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: scale: 1—not important; 2—important
Source: author’s calculations based on Household Module Survey 2008
was a push factor it proved to be more important for the first cluster. The first cluster then can be called ‘potential economic migrants’. In the second cluster, people regard several benefits, such as better income and living conditions, professional development and language skill improvement as relevant. They can, therefore, be termed ‘potential life quality migrants’, taking into consideration multiple aspects of the environment, not only economic gains. Criticism of local politics could also be behind this group’s motivations, as they ‘vote with their feet’ (see Lulle, 2010). In the third group, improved language skills and professional development are seen as most significant. Unlike for the two other groups, income is less relevant as a reason for migrating. Also, better living conditions appear totally irrelevant in making a decision. Hence, I have decided to call this group the ‘potential self-development migrants’ (for ease of reading I will subsequently leave ‘potential’ out of the names of the clusters). In the following, I will briefly describe the average person belonging to each cluster.

Among economic migrants there were more people from Eastern Estonia, speaking mainly a language other than Estonian (primarily Russian). Those people were older than the average respondent and were likely to have a family. There were more men than women and more blue-collar workers than members of any other occupational group among potential economic migrants. The unemployed were overrepresented as well. A big share of life quality migrants were working in service. In terms of the location, Central and Western Estonia were dominant (rural areas with sometimes higher unemployment). The average respondent belonging to this group was rather young (20-29) and single. Finally, self-development migrants had higher professional status (managers, professionals). Women and Estonians were overrepresented. Also, members of the youngest age group (15-19) were more likely to belong to this cluster.

Next, I will discuss the results of the regression analysis. As a reference group, I chose self-development migrants since this group differed more from the two others. Between the two other groups, the differences in terms of socio-economic variables were not as big and statistically significant.

The impact of gender proved to be significant in all four models. Males were more likely to become economic migrants than self-development migrants compared to females, whereas there were no gender differences in the odds of becoming a life quality migrant. This means that material motives were more important for men, whereas for women, self-improvement was seen as a significant reason for migrating. To a certain degree, this follows my earlier hypothesis where I claimed that men are more likely to be motivated by the material gains of migration. Still, it is also important to note that there were no differences in belonging to the second cluster in comparison with the third, meaning that women were less likely to be migrating for social reasons than for self-development purposes, which somewhat challenges my hypothesis. There are many explanations for such differentiation based on gender. First, men and women have distinct occupations in Estonian society. Since my statistical data also included information on the economic sector of work, I also checked for the influence of gender when adding this variable to the model. It appeared that the influence of gender decreased significantly when adding in the economic sector. Indeed in certain fields, migrating for self-development reasons was more likely than in others. A second possible explanation for the differences between the motives is the dominance of gender roles in Estonian society, where men are expected to be the income earners, whereas women, especially younger women, seem to favour the idea of lifelong learning. Also, some women might feel that due to the dominant gender roles in Estonian society, their professional growth is limited and they might consider moving for career advancement reasons. One should also differentiate between what is considered as a valid explanation for migrating and what is behind the actual motives. In that case, my results do not state that men are less interested in self-development, but they might just show that it is less socially acceptable for them to declare their interest in this area, compared to being economically successful.

When it comes to age, younger people were less likely to become economic migrants than self-development migrants compared to the oldest age group. However, there were no significant differences in the odds of becoming a life quality migrant. Still, when adding family status to the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic migrants (self-development migrants base outcome)</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender Females (reference group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>1.032***</td>
<td>0.985***</td>
<td>0.934***</td>
<td>0.960***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group 50-59 (reference group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>-1.249**</td>
<td>-1.329**</td>
<td>-1.313**</td>
<td>-1.734**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>-0.412</td>
<td>-0.520</td>
<td>-0.486</td>
<td>-0.848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>-0.349</td>
<td>-0.248</td>
<td>-0.397</td>
<td>-0.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Other (reference group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>-1.614***</td>
<td>-1.704***</td>
<td>-1.550***</td>
<td>-2.572***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Higher (reference group)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>1.546***</td>
<td>1.044*</td>
<td>0.937</td>
<td>0.520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>0.955*</td>
<td>0.453</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td>0.431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>0.824*</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td>0.849</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary specialised</td>
<td>0.941*</td>
<td>0.540</td>
<td>0.512</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour market status</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed (reference group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students/house</td>
<td>-0.939*</td>
<td>-1.023*</td>
<td>0.515</td>
<td>0.530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers/professionals</td>
<td>-1.453**</td>
<td>-1.621**</td>
<td>-1.481*</td>
<td>-1.915**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-professionals/clerks</td>
<td>-1.446*</td>
<td>-1.626**</td>
<td>-1.815*</td>
<td>-2.053**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service workers</td>
<td>-0.944*</td>
<td>-1.065**</td>
<td>-0.919</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled and unskilled workers</td>
<td>-0.847</td>
<td>-0.919</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family status Single (reference group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-0.270</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.679**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Life quality migrants (self-development migrants base outcome)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Females (reference group)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>-0.081</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>-0.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group 50-59 (reference group)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>-0.403</td>
<td>-0.742</td>
<td>-0.539</td>
<td>-3.395**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.477</td>
<td>-0.552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>-0.130</td>
<td>-0.175</td>
<td>-0.202</td>
<td>-0.573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>-0.270</td>
<td>-0.362</td>
<td>-0.461</td>
<td>-0.749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Other (reference group)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>-0.635***</td>
<td>-0.662***</td>
<td>-0.594**</td>
<td>-0.662***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education Higher (reference group)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>0.957***</td>
<td>0.607</td>
<td>0.515</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>0.984**</td>
<td>0.454*</td>
<td>0.390</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>0.837***</td>
<td>0.701</td>
<td>0.598</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary specialised</td>
<td>0.855**</td>
<td>0.582</td>
<td>0.423</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour market status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed (reference group)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students/house</td>
<td>-0.678</td>
<td>-0.657</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managers/professionals</td>
<td>-1.481**</td>
<td>-1.186**</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Semi-professionals/clerks</td>
<td>-0.806</td>
<td>-0.116</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service workers</td>
<td>-0.315</td>
<td>-0.191</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skilled and unskilled workers</td>
<td>-0.209</td>
<td>-0.094</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family status Single (reference group)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-0.758*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td>-0.615*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>-0.863*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nagelkerke's R-Square

|          | 0.17 | 0.20 | 0.22 | 0.24 |

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Source: Own calculations based on Household Module Survey 2008
model, the youngest group was less likely than the age group 50-59 to become life quality migrants, compared to becoming self-development migrants. The latter group fits my hypothesis, where I stress that older people should be more interested in improving their life quality. However, contrary to this hypothesis, economic motives proved to be less important to the youngest compared to the eldest. A possible explanation may be the strong prevalence of the neoliberal discourse that stresses individual development and career success, which makes the younger people put a high value on these factors. In addition to this, many younger people might be interested in migrating for study purposes and then later decide to stay for work. This, therefore, makes financial reasons irrelevant and puts stress on new experiences and self-exploration. However, this does not mean that financial motives are irrelevant in the long run since good educational credentials or excellent language knowledge can increase the chances of success in the labour market, both in the homeland as well as in the host country.

Estonian speakers are less likely to become economic and life quality migrants than self-development migrants, compared to the Russian speakers. This also fits my hypothesis, in which I stressed that Russian speakers are probably more motivated by economic gains due to their deprived situation in Estonian society. However, it was somewhat surprising that migrating for self-development is also a more important motive for Estonian speakers than life quality reasons, compared to Russian speakers. One could assume that being economically deprived and working in low status jobs, Russian speakers would also feel that their life quality was suffering and that it could be enhanced by moving away. Seeing migration as a means to improve life quality could indicate discrimination in Estonian society. Also, coming from the lower social positions, Russian speakers might see their migration more as a response to structural constraints, rather than a free choice shaping their own individual life path. Finally, when it comes to the value structure of Estonian speakers, they put great stress on achieving success and a high position in society. Migration for self-development purposes might, therefore, be seen as a means of obtaining a higher position.

According to model 2, all educational groups except the more highly educated are more likely to become economic migrants than self-development migrants. However, when we add the labour market situation to the model, the effect of education diminishes. This means that education mainly has an influence through the labour market situation. Therefore, we can say that when it comes to migration intentions, the labour market position plays a key role. The reason why migration intentions are connected to occupational status might be merely due to practical considerations, meaning for instance those working in blue-collar jobs might intend to move for economic reasons more than others because they would experience the greatest increase in salary. Still, those with basic education are more likely to become economic migrants than self-development migrants compared to those with higher education, whereas those with vocational education have higher odds of becoming life quality migrants than self-development migrants compared to the higher educated. The second phenomenon might be explained by people with vocational education perceiving their working environment as bad in Estonia and seeing more advancement in this respect when moving abroad, than those with higher education.

All other groups apart from blue-collar workers are less likely to migrate due to economic motives than for self-development reasons, compared to the unemployed. This is quite logical taking into consideration that economic troubles can be relevant for the unemployed, especially considering very low unemployment benefits in Estonia (approximately 100 euros a month). Similarly, blue-collars might imagine their life in terms of lacking material necessities rather than as a project of self-development. Moreover, for them the financial gains might be the highest. Professionals and managers also have lower odds of becoming life quality migrants than self-development migrants, when compared to the unemployed. This might stem from the fact that their living and working conditions as well as life quality are already comparatively good in Estonia. Therefore, they perceive professional development as a valid reason for migrating. In addition, lower educated people might expect to advance less professionally by moving than those with high skills. Therefore, their experiences in foreign countries
might not be that relevant for their CV. When adding the impact of the family status to the model, managers, professionals and service workers are even less likely to become economic migrants than self-development migrants in comparison to the unemployed.

Finally, cohabiting or married persons are less likely to belong to the life quality migrants group than self-development migrants compared to those living alone. This is a somewhat interesting result and a potential explanation could be that the perception of life quality might be influenced by both the double income as well as having a partner. If people with a partner evaluate their life quality as higher than those who are single, it is only natural that this is not important as a reason for migrating. Second, those who are divorced are less likely to become economic migrants than self-development migrants compared to those who are single. This is also a somewhat unexpected and interesting result. One possible explanation could be that those having overcome divorce become more conscious about shaping their lives and developing themselves, and they want to take a more proactive role in this through migration. In addition, recreating one's identity and establishing a new system of values is easier abroad, so migration and the recovery process from an important life event might go hand in hand in this case.

Conclusion

The main objective of this article was to test the alleged individualisation of Eastern European migration. Several studies have noted that Eastern European migrants are more oriented towards self-development and their migration motives have become individualised. This article, however, has demonstrated the opposite. By checking for the impact of socio-demographic variables on migration motives, the article found that there were significant differences between various social groups. The article has distinguished between three kinds of migrants: self-development migrants, economic migrants and life quality migrants. The results show that self-development migrants are likely to be young, highly educated, female, Estonian speakers and divorced. This is concurrent with the qualitative studies on Eastern European migration, which claim the new mobility patterns to be characteristic of the young and highly educated. However, these results also bring out the impact of gender roles as well as ethnicity and marital status, which have so far received very limited attention. The second group, economic migrants, are more likely to be older, blue-collar, Russian speakers and male. This confirms the assumptions that younger people in Eastern Europe are increasingly inspired by post-materialist values, whereas the older generation still holds on to materialist values. However, the differences can also be explained by the increasing responsibilities related to aging, such as taking care of the family and relatives. Finally, life quality migrants are more likely to be either cohabiting or married, and in terms of most other variables stand between economic and self-development migrants. These results indicate that life quality migrants might move with their family for the purpose of improving the family livelihood.

Even though one can see some signs of new mobility patterns in the studied population, these relate to a very specific population. The group of self-development migrants is smaller than the two other groups and includes mainly young, highly skilled females. Many qualitative studies have indeed argued that it is the young and highly skilled who are more likely to have other motivations than economic concerns. However, this has not yet been checked quantitatively. Furthermore, rather little attention is given to the fact that there is a contradiction in claiming that migration from Eastern European countries has become individualised, while also suggesting that these individualised patterns characterise mainly the young and highly skilled. Whereas it might be true that the young and highly skilled see their life plans as a result of individualised reflection, they are by no means acting independently of their social surroundings. Hence, it would be useful to distinguish between individualisation on a discursive level and individualisation in an individual's behaviour.
To continue, few migration studies have paid attention to the increasing inequalities in Eastern European societies. On one hand, there is a group consisting of young, highly skilled people that have many opportunities, and for whom migration is mainly an act of liberation. On the other hand, there is an aging, socio-economically challenged group that migrates mostly for economic reasons and for whom moving is not desirable. Such results point out the societal inequalities where the young and highly educated can afford to view migration as a self-development strategy, whereas for the elderly it is a survival mechanism (see also Saar & Jakobson, 2015). There is also a third group, which is family-centred and values social security and is, therefore, attentive to a wide range of conditions influencing life quality. This group is most likely more versatile, which is also reflected in the results, as it had very few strong correlations with socio-demographic variables. According to Saar and Jakobson (2015), this group probably includes people ranging from struggling single parents to wealthy couples.

The influence of socio-demographic variables can be partly explained by the emergence of class society in many Eastern European countries and the increase of material inequalities, but also by the value changes in these societies. Several Eastern European countries have seen a rapid increase in social disparities. However, such inequalities often run along socio-demographic lines, due to the advantages that were present for the younger, Estonian-speaking male population in the nineties. It is also important to note, according to Sippola (2013), that as a result of neoliberal policies, managing was put on the shoulders of individuals for whom migration becomes one potential solution. Hence, although mostly overlooked, neoliberalist policies in Eastern European societies have had a great effect on migration flows. However, this is not the complete picture as the value structure in these societies is also a potential explanation for the difference between migration intentions. Whereas the older generation, males and Russian speakers are more materialistically oriented, younger, highly skilled people have adopted post-materialist values. Hence, there is a strong connection between values and socio-economic wellbeing, which is reflected in migration patterns. Currently there are many contradictory claims about Eastern European migration, starting from Woolfson’s rather dark vision of Baltic migrants belonging to the austeriat, and ending with Kring et al.’s (2013) much more positive tone about the empowerment and experimentation of Polish migrants in the UK. If we were to analyse the background of the studied migrants more carefully, we could produce a more detailed picture of Eastern European migration flows.

References


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Paper II
Using reflexivity to explain variations in migration among highly-skilled

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Abstract

Migration literature has traditionally distinguished between different motivations of migration, such as labour, family and newly also lifestyle migration. However, the background of these motivations is less explored. This article suggests that these different motivations may be explained by different modes of reflexivity as distinguished by Margaret Archer. Linking modes of reflexivity with migration motivations addresses two problems in current migration literature. First, it provides for practical application of reflexivity in explaining migration motivations. So far, reflexivity has mainly been used as a background concept and more for theoretical purposes. Second, the article advocates using psycho-social approach as opposed to more commonly adapted ethnical or class based explanations in understanding migration behaviour. This has its advantages as it allows avoiding falling into the trap of methodological nationalism or classism. Even though the article includes only interviews with highly-skilled Estonian migrants, it illustrates that the reasons of migration among highly skilled are versatile and cannot be explained solely by their class background.

Introduction

Up to the present time, migration studies have mainly categorized migrants based on either their skill level or their migration motivations. Groups such as labour migrants, lifestyle migrants and family migrants have been characterized. However, we know little about the causes of these different motivations or whether they are related to migrants’ identities. This article suggests using the concepts in Margaret Archer’s understanding of reflexivity as a
potential tool to explain variations in how migrants develop different purposes for their mobility.

Reflexivity is an underused concept in migration studies. Nevertheless, two schools of thought regarding reflexivity in migration are to be found: the first, which stems from the mobility turn, claims that reflexivity is universal; the second, known as lifestyle migration research, views reflexivity as being more characteristic of certain kinds of migration, such as lifestyle migration. Unfortunately, neither approach presents a way to analyse the varying roles and meanings of reflexivity in different types of migration. Following the universalistic paradigm leads to an acknowledgment that reflexivity is part of every mobility-related decision; however, this perspective does not explain why people migrate for such different reasons, nor why they experience the move itself so very differently (Ghosh and Wang 2003). On the other hand, connecting reflexivity only to certain types of migrations may lead to the assumption that certain classes and ethnicities are more reflexive than others ((Huete, Mantecón, and Estévez 2013; see also Osbaldiston 2014). For example, early works in lifestyle migration research assume greater reflexivity among lifestyle migrants than among labour migrants; such research also implies that the cause of this heightened reflexivity may be the migrants’ Western middle-class origin.

This article suggests a third way, and draws on the work of Margaret Archer (2009), who acknowledges that reflexivity is universal, but views it as taking on different forms for different persons (see also Archer 2012). For migration studies, Archer’s perspective means that both labour migrants and lifestyle migrants are reflexive, but that they have adopted different reflexive styles. Archer has defined reflexivity as the regular exercise of the mental ability – which is shared by all normal people – to consider oneself in relation to one’s social context, and vice versa. This paper departs from Archer’s understanding of reflexivity in that I understand reflexivity to be a way for migrants to conduct their internal dialogue. Hence, reflexivity is universal – that is, characteristic of all people – while simultaneously taking on different forms. This perspective on reflexivity permits the exploration of the different roles reflexivity can take in migration decisions.

This article aims to illustrate the role that reflexivity plays in different kinds of migrations, including family, labour and self-development migration. Using Archer’s theory on reflexive modes, this article matches different ways
of conducting an internal dialogue with different types of migration. It relies on 37 biographical interviews that were conducted with highly skilled Estonian migrants in the UK and with return migrants. It reviews how different reflexive practices lead to different life priorities, and hence to dissimilar migration motives.

The heterogeneity of reflexivity and migration

The dialogue on structure versus agency has been central to migration studies for decades (Castles 2010). In particular, recent research has brought new insights to the structure-agency discussion, suggesting a central role for reflexivity. For example, lifestyle migration scholars have viewed migration as being connected to the reflexive self, thus fulfilling people’s need for self-authentication (e.g. Osbaldiston 2012; Hoey 2014; O’Reilly and Benson 2009). The focus of the discussion has therefore shifted somewhat in recent years, and is now related to how much the motive to migrate is influenced by the mental structures of our society and culture, and how much this motive is the result of “free will”. However, this kind of research is as yet only initiated. As a result, contributions that relate to reflexivity and migration are currently dispersed throughout migration literature, and few attempts have been made to structure them. This section, which deals with theory, functions in part as a way to understand the logic behind different approaches within migration research, and suggests one way of structuring these approaches.

For such structuring, this paper uses Archer’s (2009) theory on reflexivity. Archer’s perspective on earlier understandings of reflexivity within the social sciences stresses the dual and antithetical character of reflexivity, with one standpoint claiming that reflexivity is universal, while the other claims that socialized habitual action is durable. In the context of migration studies, Archer’s analysis could be translated as follows: some theorists consider reflexivity to be universal and hence view all migrants experiencing second modernity (that is, those who live in the period from the last two decades of the previous century up to the present day) as reflexive; whereas others insist that only certain types of migrants are capable of being reflexive, and that reflexivity is an ability that is related to particular societal groups (mostly the Western middle class). The first perspective can be connected to the mobility turn and to scholars such as Papastergiadis (2013), (Kesselring 2008b) and Urry (2007). These scholars primarily rely on Beck and Lau (2005) and Bauman (2013) in their approach, and research reflexivity on a somewhat
large scale, focusing on recent societal changes and on the impact these have had on mobility. The central idea is that migration has become more frequent, less predictable, more individualistic and more reflexive during recent decades (Sheller and Urry 2003; Elliott and Urry 2010; Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006; Kesselring 2008a). These scholars’ ideas are somewhat concurrent with those of Beck and Bauman, and suggest that since earlier societal structures have been undermined in second modernity, people must rely more on their own resources in order to make decisions, including decisions related to migration. On the one hand, these scholars assert that the conditions of second modernity have made migration more frequent and accepted; on the other hand, they also suggest that these moves are strongly related to personal pursuits, rather than to societal norms. Several scholars have stressed the importance of self-development (seeing the self as a reflexive project) for migration under second modernity (Kato 2013; Conradson and Latham 2007; Botterill 2014; Scheibelhofer 2009; Corcoran 2003).

In opposition to the claims of, for example, Papastergiadis (2013) and (Kesselring 2008b) regarding universal reflexivity in migration, lifestyle migration scholars have stressed the continued importance of habitus in reflexive decision making. Lifestyle migration research initially relied heavily on the work of Beck (2006), Bauman (2013) and Giddens (1991), and viewed this type of migration as an example of the pursuit of happiness and ontological security (Korpela 2014). However, various lifestyle migration scholars later turned towards more structural approaches (O’Reilly and Benson 2009; Benson 2011). The work of Benson and O’Reilly (2009) is an instructive example, which draws on Sweetman (2003) and his theory on reflexive habitus in order to make a claim for the distinctive nature of lifestyle migration. Sweetman has claimed that under second modernity, many individuals have internalized reflexivity; that is, for certain individuals, it makes sense to avoid trying to construct a viable, coherent and sustained identity at all because their environment is under constant change. Based on Sweetman’s work, Benson and O’Reilly argue that certain migrants, such as lifestyle migrants, who usually come from the Western middle class, have internalized reflexivity. Thus, reflecting has become second nature to these migrants, rather than a difficult achievement. Acknowledging that some migrants are able to reflect freely implicitly assumes the existence of those for whom reflexivity is “more difficult to achieve, if at all” (Sweetman 2003). This means that Benson and O’Reilly (2009) position themselves towards the habitus end of the continuum in the dialogues on reflexivity. Like Benson and O’Reilly,
Hoey (2006) can be classified as preferring a more habitus-based view of reflexivity. His assertion that lifestyle migration can result in some watershed event (an opinion that is shared by Benson and O’Reilly, at least in their earlier works), resembles Bourdieu’s (1977) argument regarding reflexivity becoming actualized in situations in which there is a mismatch between habitus and field. In other words, if lifestyle migration and the reflexivity of lifestyle migrants are seen by researchers as a reaction to adverse conditions in the migrants’ lives, then those researchers are making a claim about the conditions that bring about reflexivity. Bourdieu’s view on reflexivity differs from this perspective, because he allows for the presence of reflexivity only in moments of crisis.

Meanwhile, discussions on reflexivity continue among lifestyle migration scholars. Although reflexivity cannot be considered a central topic of discussion in lifestyle migration studies, there has been some renewed interest in this topic. In the interests of finding a middle ground between these opposing views, two scholars, Korpela (2010) and Osbaldiston (2014), both suggest combining habitus with reflexivity. In his writing, Osbaldiston (2014) draws on the work of Alexander (1996), and on the assertion that reflexivity should be seen as working within the bounds of culture. This perspective suggests that reflexivity never challenges one’s cultural basis; rather, it functions within the frames of that very culture. In a way, Osbaldiston’s (2014) suggestion is a variation on the idea of a reflexive habitus. Both Sweetman (2003) and Alexander (1996) find reflexivity to be constrained by habitus; therefore, both authors can be seen as inclining towards the habitus end of the continuum. On the other hand, Korpela (2014) suggests using Rose (1996) as a primary author for understanding reflexivity. Rose’s approach may be closer to those of Bauman (2013) and Beck (2006) in the way it approaches reflexivity because it suggests that reflexivity is indeed widespread. However, Rose disagrees with the views of Bauman and Beck regarding their view that such increased reflexivity is a modern phenomenon. Rather, Rose argues that people became reflexive with the birth of modern psychology, when they became aware of the “separate self” and the possibility of changing and developing this self.

Archer’s (2009) approach to reflexivity could be said to fall between the two aforementioned extremes. She agrees with the theorists on second modernity that reflexivity is widespread due to the fact that socialization can no longer be treated as constant. However, she also finds that the way Beck (2006) and
Beck, Giddens, and Lash (1994) have described reflexivity – that is, as uncontrollable and devoid of structure or logic – conflicts with the central idea of reflexivity as a conscious process that allows for increased agency. In fact, Archer views reflexivity as essential to the ability to plan one’s life in accordance with one’s main priorities. Therefore, in Archer’s opinion, agents use reflexivity in a purposeful manner to fulfil their goals. However, these goals differ depending on the reflexive mode. Archer distinguishes four different modes of reflexivity: communicative, autonomous, meta-, and fractured reflexivity. Practitioners of each of these four modes adopt generically different stances towards society and its constraints: the evasive, the strategic, the subversive and the passive (Archer 2003).

For migration studies, Archer’s approach indicates that through reflexive deliberations, subjects formulate different goals; as a result, their mobility has a different intended outcome. Subjects’ migration motives can be connected to their modes of reflexivity; in addition, the way in which subjects react to replacement, and the degree to which migration affects their identity, may also be related to reflexive modes, as suggested in this article. Archer stresses the manner in which subjects dovetail their main concerns; that is, which aspect of their life they prioritize in terms of time. Using Archer’s take on reflexivity in migration permits the work of different scholars in the field of migration studies to be brought together under the perspective that all migrants are reflexive, but that migrants do not all reflect in the same manner. Archer’s approach also highlights the importance of major priorities that lead to migration.

Estonia, societal changes and value structure

Many scholars have suggested that Eastern European migrants are becoming increasingly reflexive. Within migration studies, Krings et al. (2013) have stressed that Eastern Europeans should not be seen as making their decision to move in an unreflexive manner that is oriented only towards material gain. The development of reflexivity in Eastern European societies was heavily influenced by the changes that occurred during the 1990s, when the economic and political systems shifted, as did the earlier principles of success and wellbeing (Kupferberg 2012). During the communist phase in Estonia, the lives of people were heavily regulated in terms of leisure time, housing and consumer choices, and employment tracks. Under capitalism, people had to face new kinds of decisions and take an active role in their life planning.
Roberts 2008). Archer connects reflexivity with the speed of the changes that occur in our societies, which make following in our parents’ footsteps increasingly difficult (Archer 2010). She asserts that people now constantly need to plan their lives and question their choices. The same process took place in Eastern Europe during the 1990s, when people had to face a neoliberal market economy that forced them to take individual responsibility for their lives (Kalmus and Vihalemm 2006). Furthermore, in Estonia in particular, personal responsibility and the ability to take risks were stressed over other, more social qualities. This is not to say that people were completely devoid of reflexivity before the 1990s; rather, during that earlier time, people were not forced to reflexively plan their lives.

Reflexivity as a phenomenon has only been explored in studies of Eastern European societies to a limited extent. One of the few contributions to this field comes from Mrzowicki, who mentions that Eastern European workers chose different strategies to deal with the shift to capitalism (2009). He also makes a statement that is somewhat similar to Archer’s perspective, saying that reflexivity is not related to class background. This view is in contrast with some pieces in migration literature (Benson and O’Reilly 2009; Osbaldiston 2012) that claim that the middle-class culture encourages self-reflection and the questioning of one’s life. Although there may be a connection between different types of reflexivity and class, this is a concept that requires further exploration. The connection between migration, reflexivity and class would be especially interesting to discuss in the Eastern European case, since class borders have not yet been clearly developed in this society.

In the migration flows from Estonia, material and self-development reasons both seem to be relevant (see Krusell, 2009; Saar & Jakobson, 2015), although each group of migrants prefers different countries and is described by different likely sociodemographic variables. Highly skilled and self-development-oriented migrants are more likely to move to English-speaking countries such as the UK or the US, whereas low-skilled and more economically oriented Estonians seem to prefer Nordic countries, especially Finland (Statistical Office, 2016). Statistical analysis also shows correlations between migration motivations and socioeconomic characteristics: highly skilled migrants are more likely to move for self-development reasons, whereas low-skilled migrants are more likely to move for economic reasons. However, it is important to note that such motivations are not directly translatable into Archer’s reflexive modes or into the migrant types described
in this article. For example, it is possible for someone to migrate mainly for economic reasons, but still be categorized as a family migrant because her main motivation is to help her family to acquire a better standard of living. Hence, thus far, migration studies have identified little connection between a migrant’s identity and his migration motivations, based on socioeconomic characteristics such as class, gender, and so forth.

Methodology

The analysis in this article is based on 37 in-depth interviews that were conducted with highly skilled Estonian migrants. Two groups are included: people currently living in the UK, and people who had lived in the UK but who decided to move back to Estonia. Of these interviews, 15 were conducted in Estonia and 22 were conducted in the UK. The interviews showed that migration is not necessarily a one-time event, since several of the interviewees in Estonia were thinking of returning to the UK, and vice versa. Many of the interviewees reported a constant dialogue regarding their future plans and possible re-migration. This perception of migration as a process was a main factor in the choice to analyse migration through an identity lens, focusing on how migration fits into each individual’s wider biography.

Since one of the core interests of the initial research was to understand how the ongoing societal changes over two last decades have altered the migration behaviour of Estonians, I decided to focus on the younger generation (aged 20–40). These are the Estonians whose maturation period at least partly coincided with Estonian re-independence. I assume that the transformation of value structures that was caused by the ending of the Soviet Union’s regime has had an impact on peoples’ motivations for migration, as well as a potential impact on people who migrate. Regarding the other selection criteria, I chose interviewees with university experience who held a white-collar job. These are typical criteria for defining a migrant as highly skilled (Koser and Salt 1997). I was particularly interested in highly skilled migrants because of hints in previous literature implying that the alteration of modern society into what Beck and Giddens, for example, have termed “second modernity” has had greater impact on the highly skilled (Beck and Lau 2005; Giddens 2002).

I found my interviewees primarily through snowball sampling (Creswell 2013), although I also searched for respondents through the Estonian Guild
website. The Estonian Guild is a group that formed in order to connect
Estonians in London with each other. The study group included 21 females
and 16 males, with ages varying between 24 to 38 years of age. The group
displayed a wide variety of professions, from freelance artist to business con-
sultant. The interviews varied in length (ranging from 1–4 h) and form. One
interesting finding was that a biographical form of interview does not work
for all national and gender groups, and is particularly problematic for
Estonian males due to the dominant gender roles in Estonian society. Hence,
in some of the interviews, the interviewer (this author) ended up asking many
questions, while in other interviews, the interviewees were able to tell their
story with little or no intervention from the interviewer. In general, inter-
viewees bonded with me through our common migration experience, even
though I have never lived in the UK. Several interviewees were interested in
my story and asked questions about my experiences, so in some instances, we
continued talking even after the interview was complete.

This particular article was inspired by the very different experiences the inter-
viewees presented of migration to the UK. For some, migration played only
a small role in their identity, while for others, the experience was highly
transformative. Because migration had a transformative role in my own life,
I was initially surprised by the very instrumental role that some migrants gave
to space. Such differences came out strongly in the initial analyses of the
interviews, which started with line-by-line coding and then shifted to more
general categorization. Puzzled by this discovery, I started rereading theories
to help me explain such different reactions to migration. Most studies that
discuss migrants’ identities focus strongly on national identities (see trans-
national studies). However, the interviewees in this study did not speak as
much about their national background as they did about their personal
struggles. Hence, it was necessary to look for a theory that would go beyond
national identity. I found such a theory in Bourdieu and Archer. Although
Bourdieu’s notion of conflict between habitus and field explained some of the
background of migration experience, I was nevertheless puzzled about why
some migrants did not experience migration as a conflict between habitus
and field. The connection that Archer makes between personal aspirations
and reflexive practices helps to explain this variation. In the next step of the
analysis, I categorized all the interview narratives using Archer’s reflexive
modes. This categorization was easy for most of the interviewees; however,
as mentioned later, there were some odd cases that did not quite fit.
Therefore, I tentatively drew the conclusion that migration itself can undo
one’s reflexive mode and inspire one to transform into using another form of reflexivity. However, this transformation can be a relatively lengthy process during which interviewees can show signs of alternate reflexive types. Reflexive modes can change over the course of a person’s life, especially when people are faced with circumstances in which their previous reflexive mode no longer functions.

This article draws upon four of the 37 interviews in order to illustrate the four reflexive modes in Archer’s typology. This approach is fairly common in biographical research (Merrill and West 2009), and permits an in-depth use of the rich life stories that were gathered, while simultaneously exemplifying how modes of reflexivity have distinct impacts on people’s migration behaviour. These four interviews were chosen because they clearly illustrate how each of the four reflexive types Archer describes behave in their role as migrants. Although these four cases are ideal types, it would be interesting in future to examine non-ideal cases as well. Unfortunately, doing so is not possible in this article due to space limitations.

Types of migration and modes of reflection

Archer’s point of departure is that people are active agents in their choice of how to relate to their childhood environment. Archer’s reflexive types differ from each other in their primary life priorities as well as in their relation to their surroundings. Each reflexive type relates to its family and environment in a different way: autonomous reflexives choose certain projects to engage in, and therefore connect their identity to performance; communicative reflexives identify strongly with their families, and therefore go to great lengths to sustain their birth environment; meta-reflexives are critical of their parents’ values, and therefore seek an identity that is better adjusted to their priorities; and fractured reflexives renounce their social origins because they understand these origins as the source of the problems in their life. Such reflexive modes can be successfully used to analyse people’s migration behaviour and to contextualize different kinds of migrants by understanding their main concerns. The remainder of this article describes four different migration motivations and connects them to four different reflexive modes.
Communicative reflexive: Tiina

As the name indicates, communicative reflexives put a high value on social relationships. In fact, they are said to need other people to finish their internal dialogues. Regarding the migration of these reflexives, I propose that it is often influenced by other people. These migrants are either pushed by their families of origin to go and explore the world outside of Estonia, or intend to reunite with their spouses abroad. Tiina describes her migration as follows:

I had met a guy while I [was] working in a bar in Greece and I had visited him in [the] UK. It seemed that we worked well together then I decided that I will move to [the] UK.

Tiina’s migration was motivated by her wish to live with her boyfriend. In fact, she had planned very little else, and had no concrete plans for how to find a job or how to organize other practical matters. Most of these things were organized in cooperation with her boyfriend. Tiina felt quite lost, on many levels, when she landed in the UK. As she herself expressed, she did not expect so many things to be different.

Coming to [the] UK was not particularly easy. I think… I was a totally different person than in Estonia. Self-confidence disappears really easily. You have nothing to rely on. It did not affect my relationship in a good manner. You become clingy, you only have this one person, then he has such a big responsibility. He has to babysit you. I visited home as often as possible. Skype helped me a lot. One can communicate there. I was trying to find other Estonians in [the] UK, but it was not easy at all. Estonians seem to want to be on their own, they do not want to communicate [with] other Estonians when they are abroad.

Out of all the interviewees, Tiina experienced the biggest shock upon moving to the UK. When describing her migration, she focused on feelings of loneliness and on the lack of a social network. She described her desire to engage with her ethnic community, unlike other Estonians in the UK. As is characteristic of a communicative reflexive, most of Tiina’s description of her move focused on her personal relations with other people, rather than on her new context as such. Thus, places can be said to have meaning for communicative reflexives through social relations. Places in themselves do not have value for communicative reflexives; their value comes from the people inhabiting them. Furthermore, places have value when they offer familiarity and safety, mostly through social networks.
Tiina’s strong reaction to migration is understandable, given how much of her identity was dependent on the people who surrounded her. In the previous quotation, she described the collapse of her identity and self-esteem. Communicative reflexives are highly challenged by moves and migration, which is why they usually try to sustain their original context. In Archer’s sample, most communicative reflexives tried to establish a life that was similar to that of their parents (Archer, 2003). The practices of communicative reflexives may differ, however, depending on societal context. The original sample of 37 interviewees for this article only included highly skilled migrants who moved voluntarily, not families that were forced to migrate because of their economic situation. This omission biases the sample to a certain extent. However, I suggest that the same process of initial crisis and alienation is experienced by communicative reflexives who move because of economic reasons. Archer’s sample focuses on examples in which following in one’s parents’ footsteps was possible; however, in some cases, migration may actually be a way for communicative reflexives to hold their immediate family together. Therefore, the practices of communicative reflexives may differ depending on their social situation.

Autonomous reflexive: Kalle

Archer has described autonomous reflexives as being somewhat instrumentally oriented, and as weighing obstacles and enablement to achieve their goals. Their main orientation tends to be towards their work. Kalle is no exception to this rule. His migration to the UK was clearly connected to his desire to pursue a new career in acting. He took several years to plan this move:

In 2004, I decided that I have to change my life and then I decided to slowly start to investigate. I joined [a] hobby theatre, then I started writing acts and decided that this is the field I would like to work [in]. Then I participated in an international project and we presented [at a] theatre school in Maastricht, and then I decided that I could also study acting. The Netherlands was, however, not really [a] viable choice because of the local language and, as I already knew English, I decided that [the] UK could be better. During the first round, I did not get in, and then next year, I decided to have such schools in the list which would definitely take me, those that were lower ranked.

The above quotation gives an idea of how autonomous reflexives plan their future. Kalle’s way of describing his migration process was strategic, and
relied substantially on what were intended to be rational choices. He first described how he did not change his field abruptly; rather, he slowly started investigating a new field using a hobby theatre, to see if he could imagine himself working there. Then, after having made a decision, Kalle took concrete steps to get closer to his dream. Note that at no point does Kalle refer to any people around him; he clearly describes himself as being in total command of his life. His decision to migrate is thus clearly connected to his work, which, as mentioned earlier, tends to be of primary concern for autonomous reflexives. It may be interesting to view more specifically the relation that autonomous reflexives have with space:

I feel as if I am working in the world. I am where I need to be. The fact that I am currently here does not mean that I am anchored here. Of course, sometimes it gets stressful, never even fully unpacking my bags; but at the same time, I have decided that I am going to carry on [for] five more years, and then I will re-evaluate.

Rather than having a sentimental relationship with a particular place, Kalle presents himself as being practical-minded regarding where he lives. As he expresses it, his work takes precedence over any particular place – and over people, for that matter. In Kalle’s frame of reference, people were often considered to fulfil practical roles, such as colleagues who offered potentially useful connections. In general, Kalle’s interview contained few examples of sentimentality about specific places or people.

Kalle’s relationship with people and places partly explains his way of experiencing migration. Unlike communicative reflexives, Kalle was not greatly concerned by moving away from his familiar environment and social networks. His mind was primarily focused on managing his university studies and organizing practical matters in the UK. Hence, Kalle did not experience a strong uprooting and, as a result, his migration experience played a rather marginal role in his overall identity. Archer has noted that autonomous reflexives show a readiness to move away from their initial environment; furthermore, they even choose projects that will separate them from their background (Archer, 2003). Like other autonomous reflexives, Kalle did not perceive migration as anything surprising. Rather, he talked about it as if it were a natural by-product of developing his career.
Meta-reflexive: Jaan

Archer characterizes meta-reflexives as endless searchers who are unable to balance their priorities, and who are continually looking for an ideal context (Archer, 2003). Jaan describes his move to the UK as follows:

> Leaving Estonia was part of discovering the world. In Estonia, I already knew everybody and I was offered several jobs and possibilities in science and I felt myself [to be] a bit too convenient – I wanted a challenge. I had everything already planned and….it did not fit me. I had been several times in London and I had liked it, so therefore I decided for London.

Note that Jaan’s description of his migration differs from a typical autonomous reflexive’s or communicative reflexive’s motives. Jaan first notes that Estonia and his life in Estonia felt a bit too planned, and that he wanted to leave his comfort zone – a desire that is the opposite to a communicative reflexive’s priorities. On the other hand, he rarely mentions his career or career-related ambitions; rather, he makes it clear that he had good opportunities in Estonia, but chose not to pursue them. Instead, Jaan talks about challenging himself and discovering something new. These are characteristic migration motives for meta-reflexives.

On several occasions, Jaan reflects on what he has experienced in the UK, referring to multiculturalism and to London’s particular vibe. His descriptions of places primarily relate to how they have shaped him as a person.

> What I like about London is the fact that it is much easier to live healthy over here. London has everything and, especially in terms of food, the choice is really good. I like the fact that if you have some principles that guide your life, then it is much easier to fulfil those in London. You can always find what you need.

Here, Jaan connects to the places around him in an internally oriented fashion. For him, place is not particularly related to his job, his friends or his community; it is related to the question of identity and to who he wants to be. Healthier eating was only one example of how Jaan was able to connect his actions and choices to a larger principle in his life. For example, Jaan also confessed that he has doubts about his career choice – working in the corporate world – at times. His feelings of guilt are related to societal inequalities; he feels that, somehow, he should not enjoy his wealth, because so many
people have hardly anything. Like Jaan, meta-reflexives see places as either enabling or constraining the expression of their identity.

Coming to London was not a particular shock to Jaan, as it was the beginning of a new episode in his life. Throughout his interview, Jaan referred to the many ways in which life in London has widened his perspective and made him realize new things about himself and the world. These comments also underline Jaan’s general perspective on migration: he sees it as a form of self-expression. Jaan noted that, although he currently has no concrete plan for the future, he would like to experience some other countries as well. He also mentioned that he is still struggling to find a balance between development and stability. Jaan’s struggle aligns with Archer’s suggestion that meta-reflexives struggle to smoothly dovetail their priorities (Archer, 2003).

Fractured reflexive: Taavi

Fractured reflexives, according to Archer, struggle to complete their internal dialogue (Archer, 2003). Their inner dialogue does not work as a guide to action; rather, it leads the subject to feel additional emotional distress about his or her condition. Such an inability to carry out an internal dialogue or to take appropriate action produces a completely different motivation for migration.

I had a motivation crisis in Estonia, my personal problems and depression…. I decided to go away on a spree. I went first to Belgium, I had one acquaintance there and, well, I did not know the language and then my acquaintance suggested that I could go to London instead. It was before [the] EU, so I lied [at] the border [and said] that I am just [briefly] visiting. And then it was like you are thrown [into] the water and you have to swim. I did all kinds of odd jobs and I almost forgot about my depression – it was [a] struggle for life.

Unlike the other interviewees, Taavi had not planned on coming to the UK; in fact, it was rather a desperate move. He had no clear plans as to what he was going to do in the UK, nor did he have a clear idea of why he was going there. As he himself described, “throwing himself into the water” helped to redirect his attention away from his internal problems. Fractured reflexives use external stimuli to redirect their attention away from their destructive internal dialogue. Migration is one such external stimuli, which offers some hope for a better tomorrow.
Taavi cultivated an intimate relationship with London and probably gained a great deal of insight into the city, having seen many different sides of it.

In the beginning, to get [a] feel for the city, I walk, I walked a lot. When you do not take transport but walk, you get to know the city. It was of course frightening in the beginning, to be all alone, but then you meet people and then you scrape by.

Interestingly, Taavi’s relationship with place was mainly related to safety – that is, “getting a feel for the city” in order to feel safe. In general, fractured reflexives seem to seek safety, but have difficulty finding it. A new place offers hope for a safer and better context, but these hopes are not often fulfilled. Taavi’s first experiences in the UK were mostly about surviving and finding a place to stay. Unlike the other interviewees, whose migrations were doubtless more privileged than Taavi’s, his story is perhaps the most emotionally engaging. He described his fear and his struggles in an engrossing manner, focusing on how certain experiences made him feel. Compared with the other reflexive types, meta-reflexives are oriented towards judging their external environment by their internal state. However, meta-reflexives’ judgements are often quite analytical, whereas Taavi’s reflections were somewhat raw.

It is difficult to describe the importance of migration for fractured reflexives. In this case, for example, Taavi changed his fractured reflexivity into meta-reflexivity after 15 years in the UK. Archer has noted that fractured reflexivity is not a “sentence for life”; rather, it describes a person at a particular moment in time (Archer, 2009), or perhaps in space.

On the other hand, in Tiina’s move to the UK, she can be seen as acting like a fractured reflexive, since she “robbed” herself of her supportive social environment. It is likely that, if faced with the loss of the key determinants of our identity, many of us could act as fractured reflexives. Autonomous reflexives might associate retiring with losing their significance in the world, or meta-reflexives could get stuck in menial jobs. Hence, being able to fulfil one’s major priorities may be a crucial determinant for being able to be content with one’s life.

Conclusions
This article suggested using Archer’s theory on modes of reflexivity in order to analyse different types of migration and understand how these motivations
came into being. In this way, it develops migration theory by suggesting that reflexivity plays an instrumental role in migration decisions and can be used to understand why motivations for migration differ. This article connects different reflexive modes to different types of migration: autonomous reflexivity to career mobility; communicative reflexivity to family migration; meta-reflexivity to lifestyle migration; and fractured reflexivity to safety-related migration. Distinguishing between different kinds of reflexivity permits an understanding of migration motivations from a psycho-social perspective.

There are certain advantages to choosing a psycho-social approach. Thus far, migration literature distinguishes between different types of migrants, but does not offer much explanation of how these motivations came into being. The identity concerns of migrants have been largely removed from explanations, and the literature often takes an instrumental approach, such as by using economic concerns as a potential explanation. This article takes a different perspective by suggesting that the seeds of potential migration motivations may have been planted much earlier, and can be traced back to early biography.

Migration literature has had a somewhat problematic relationship with both class and ethnicity. For example, some authors have suggested that some works in lifestyle migration are guilty of methodological nationalism (and classism). By assuming that certain motivations, such as lifestyle, are connected to certain nationalities and classes, individual differences may be neglected. Even though this article only studied highly skilled Estonians, it identified varied migration motivations within the group. This finding suggests that the explanation behind these individuals’ migration cannot be related only to class and nationality. I do not mean to say that there is no connection between their migration and their class and nationality; rather, I suggest that complicated individual differences exist, which can be better explained by a psycho-social approach.

References


To return or not to return? The importance of identity negotiations for return migration
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ABSTRACT
Whereas migration research has been heavily influenced by the individualization paradigm, studies on return migration have been more inspired by theories on attachment and belonging. It is common for this kind of research to assert that the main motivations for returning are social contacts and a homing desire. Although this article does not question the importance of such motivations for some, it does argue that return migration needs to be more problematized, not least by studying people who have decided not to return. Based on interviews with highly skilled Estonians, this article suggests that return decisions are influenced by three types of comparisons: social, temporal, and intra-subjective. The first two comparisons have been discussed to some degree in migration literature; however, a focus on intra-subjective comparisons – in which people compare different parts of their identity in order to decide on a potential return – has been scarce. This article suggests that, in line with the individualization of social relationships, but also with the introduction of a new EU mobility space, it is the latter type of comparison that is becoming increasingly widespread.

Introduction
Thus far, return migration has been mainly analyzed in terms of the importance of social contacts for returnees. Numerous scholars, both in transnational studies and in return migration research, have stressed the importance of social networks, especially family ties, for return migration (Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 2005; Condon, 2005; Ni Laoire, 2008; Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999). Furthermore, Mevs and King (2012), Corcoran (2002), Ralph (2014), and others have viewed family or love as a prime motivator for return migrants. They also connect returning with life stage, stressing that people especially tend to return at the family-making age. Even though a somewhat paradigmatic change has occurred in migration studies, with the individualization thesis now having a strong influence on how people’s migration motivations are analyzed, this change has not influenced research on return migration to the same degree. Even though the new generation of EU migrants in particular are viewed as increasingly interested in self-development and exploring their options (Favell, 2011; Gray, 2013; Kennedy, 2010), their motivations for return are still seen as related to the need for comfort, attachment, and social
belonging. Furthermore, the literature on return migration has paid very little attention on the high levels of mobility and the potential re-migration of returnees.

This article takes this discrepancy as a starting point, and questions the strong connection between return migration and social contacts. On the one hand, potential criticism can be found in the notion that return migration studies usually focus only on individuals who have decided to go back, leaving those who decide to stay out of the picture. This choice of focus can lead to potentially problematic conclusions that exaggerate the meaning of social contacts in the decision-making process. Furthermore, McGhee, Heath, and Trevena (2012) have pointed out that Polish migrants in the UK were not so much focused on evaluating their social belonging as they were engaged in comparing their current situation with their former situation in Poland. As their self-image had changed considerably while working in the UK, this comparison made their return increasingly difficult. McGhee et al. (2012) then draw attention to the importance of the self-development discourse, claiming that the studied migrants were not actively comparing themselves with those around them, but were rather monitoring their personal development.

Having two distinct positions on how migrants make decisions to stay or leave presents a question: What kind of comparisons do migrants use when deciding on their return? This question is the departure point for this article. The research is based on 37 interviews with highly skilled Estonians who have either lived or are currently living in the UK, mainly in London. I have specifically chosen to study the younger generation of migrants (up to age 40) in order to better understand how the recent individualization process has impacted their migration. The interviewees in this study all had some childhood socialization during the Estonian re-independence. In this article, I focus on the ways in which these migrants discuss the different localities they have inhabited and the relation of these locations to their identity. The data were analyzed using grounded theory method in the beginning, in order to discover the main topic and do an initial categorization of the interviews. Later, ideas from biographical analysis were mainly used – comparing the experiences and life courses of different interviewees, and so forth.

**Different types of comparisons in decision-making**

The majority of research on return migration can be located inside the transnational paradigm. As mentioned earlier, the transnational paradigm has heavily stressed the importance of migrants’ continuing links with their home country (Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 1994; Condon, 2005; Wimmer & Schiller, 2003). According to Schiller, Basch, and Blanc (1995), transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities that are embedded in networks of relationships that connect the migrants simultaneously to two or more nation states. In other words, regardless of geographical distance, migrants often invest considerable time and effort on remaining in contact with those in their homeland. These social networks are seen as impacting migrants’ religious and ethnic identities, as well as their social belonging (Basch et al., 1994). Originally, the transnational paradigm was provided as a criticism against the assumption that migrants, upon their arrival, give up their former identities. However, this paradigm has also functioned as a tool to understand return migration. Several scholars have explained return migration using the familial ties that are kept alive by migrants (Burrell, 2010; Corcoran, 2002;
Martin & Radu, 2012; Ni Laoire, 2008). For example, Brah (1996) discusses homing desire, which is connected to a former homeland, whereas several other diaspora scholars notice a remaining ideal – the myth of return (Cohen, 1997).

Even though transnationalism has paid growing attention to individualization (see Delhey, Deutschmann, & Grlanaru, 2015; Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013; Mau, 2010), other fields such as lifestyle migration research and mobility turn have included individualization theories to a greater extent (Benson, 2014; Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013; Janoschka, 2010; Kesselring, 2008; Korpela, 2014). The main thesis is that, due to ever-changing society as well as to the dissolution of old social structures, migrants are increasingly pushed to make decisions on their own. Moreover, in addition to migration being seen as more fluid and unpredictable, the motives of migrants are thought to have changed (Papastergiadis, 2013). Migrants, especially those who are highly skilled, are nowadays seen as acting on a need for personal development and authentic identity (Scheibelhofer, 2009). Such causes are considered especially relevant in the light of the introduction of a new EU mobility space. Kennedy (2010) claims that macro changes have created a world which, despite its intense competitive pressures and insecurities, also operates as an arena where skilled migrants can pursue personal projects. Favell (2011), Conradson & Latham (2005b), and Recchi (2008) all describe new kinds of migrants – young, middle class, in search for new experiences, rather than interested in economic benefits. Such migrants are then described as highly mobile, using their free movement rights in pursuit of flexible work-life pathways (see Gray, 2013).

Aligned with the focus on such free moving individuals, runs criticism against the importance of family. Engbersen, Leerkes, Grabowska-Lusinska, Snel, and Burgers (2013) claim, for example, that Eastern Europe has experienced an individualization of family relations; rather than considering their identity in relation to their family, younger generations now prefer to see themselves as individuals, forming their own identity. Furthermore, several scholars have noted that friendships, since they are of one’s own choosing, have now become the defining elements of social belonging (Kennedy, 2010). However, such friendships can be global; in particular, younger highly skilled migrants are seen to develop multiple social networks all over the world. This furthermore challenges the traditional idea of return migration as connected to tight family ties.

As the importance of localized social networks decreases, other identities, such as professional identity, become more important for migrants (Colic-Peisker, 2010; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007). However, scholarly ideas on self-made identities also challenge the concept that return decisions are highly dependent on social identities. As mentioned earlier, several scholars have questioned the importance of group belonging in the twenty-first century (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994; Beck & Lau, 2005). Inspired by this perspective, McGhee et al. (2012) have suggested that migrants are increasingly basing their decisions on temporal comparisons. According to McGhee et al. (2012), temporal comparisons are a process that takes place when one compares one’s former self with one’s current self. In their theoretical underpinnings, McGhee et al. (2012) rely on Rose (1996), who has suggested that people may be more likely to compare themselves with their own situation at an earlier time than with the situation of someone else at the same time. Based on Rose, McGhee et al. assert that the same pattern was visible among
Polish migrants in the UK, who preferred to compare their lives in the UK with their former lives in Poland, as well as with the lives of the people around them. The assertion made by McGhee et al. could be compared to literature on highly mobile EU citizens and their interest in self-development. Similar to those highly mobile citizens, the primary interest of Polish migrants was in how much their life had improved compared to their earlier life in Poland. McGhee et al. hence stress the importance of the notion of self-development for return decisions, claiming also that often the transformations in the self make returning very difficult. Several others have noted how moving challenges migrants’ former identities and disturbs their former social relations, thereby creating space for new subjectivities (Butcher, 2009; Conradson & Latham, 2005b; Conradson & Latham, 2007; Rojek & Urry, 1997). The same phenomenon is noted in diaspora studies, although it occurs more with those who have actually returned, as they describe their difficulties in adapting to what, in their imaginations, they had envisioned as home. However, McGhee et al. (2012) suggest that, due to the studied migrants’ closeness and connections with Poland, such a return is not necessary; to reveal the comparison, the change in self can be acknowledged without an actual return.

McGhee et al. (2012) turn our attention to the importance of reflexivity in return decisions. They suggest that, instead of merely basing decisions on their attachment to their home, potential return migrants exercise social comparisons (i.e. comparing their situation with others around them) – and, to an even greater extent, temporal comparisons (i.e. comparing their former situation with their current situation). Whereas McGhee et al. (2012) focus mostly on temporal comparisons, Mouzelis (2007), a reflexivity scholar, brings out another important form of comparison. Mouzelis takes Bourdieu (1977) as his starting point, and particularly Bourdieu’s idea that reflexivity enters the situation when there is a conflict between habitus and field. In a migration context, this means that reflexivity is often introduced when migrants discover that their former identification strategies do not fit with their new context anymore; they are therefore forced to reinvent themselves, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. Mouzelis pushes Bourdieu’s theory further by suggesting that the conflict does not necessarily have to be between one’s self and the outside world; one can inhabit two conflicting subjectivities. As an example, he describes a gay Christian author who found him to be increasingly conflicted, because the ‘Christian part’ of him was in conflict with the ‘gay part’. Thus, Mouzelis’s argument highlights the idea that identity is hardly unidimensional; rather, it consists of several potentially conflicting parts.

In terms of migration studies, Mouzelis’s argument allows a claim to be made, one that has already been made by several other researchers: that migrants may possess multiple subjectivities. In particular, scholars such as Conradson and Latham (2007) and Conradson and McKay (2007) have spoken about translocal identities, stressing the crisscrossing of localized subjectivities. Interestingly, transnationalist research also stresses the possibility of having more than one ethnic identity. However, a study of how these inter-subjectivities become detrimental in potential return decisions has not yet been done. Return migration, while problematized to some degree, has mainly been connected to ethnicity in past studies. This article suggests that social and temporal comparisons should not be the only comparisons focused on in understanding how return decisions are made; intra-subjective comparisons (i.e. the process of comparing different parts of one’s identity) should also be considered.
Estonia: outmigration and return migration

Estonia was one of the eight countries that joined the EU in 2004. Polish migrants have found much scholarly interest, other, smaller accession countries less so (Black, Engbersen, Okólski, & Pantiru, 2010; Burrell, 2012; Engbersen, Snel, & de Boom, 2010; Fihel & Grabowska-Lusinska, 2014). Research on Polish migrants suggests that especially the younger and more educated of those can be described as a new generation of mobile Europeans, for whom the move abroad is not only work-related but also involves lifestyle choices as part of a broader aspiration for self-development. Polish migrants have also been compared to middling transnationals, a concept suggested by Conradson and Latham (2005a), in order to describe the spreading of migration amongst the middle class. Saar (2016) has identified a similar group of self development orientated, highly educated and rather young migrants among Estonians. Other studies have also brought such a group to our attention – According to Krusell (2009), self-development is almost as important a reason for migrating as is a better salary abroad. Furthermore, Köiva, Käasper, Elmo, and Murruste (2010) mention that for highly skilled Estonians, obtaining education abroad, testing oneself, and obtaining better employment opportunities scored as the most important motivators for migrating. Additionally Maripuu (2012) found that for highly skilled women, boredom with the daily routine and a need for new challenges were more important for migrating than economic reasons. Furthermore, although a higher salary abroad proved to be important when considering returning, its relevance was related to obtaining a certain lifestyle that people had gotten used to.

All aforementioned results suggest that similar tendencies – the development of a highly mobile generation that sees migration as a way to pursue personal projects, could be observed in the Estonian case as well. This generation has had nearly 15 years to enjoy free mobility inside the EU (apart from the working restrictions instituted by some states in the early years). According to Favell and Becchi (2009), intra-EU movers are also redefining their position in the workforce. In terms of sectors of employment, EU citizens living abroad are less likely than nationals and third-country nationals to have a job in agriculture. More significantly, their involvement in the industrial sector is declining at a faster pace than that of nationals. This suggests that we must turn more attention to not only low-skilled Eastern Europeans abroad, but also those in high-skilled positions.

When it comes to the potential return of these migrants, researchers have found some contradictory results. The initial assumption was that the migration of these Eastern Europeans was only temporary (Burrell, 2010) however, as witnessed during the later years, this generation of free movers is not returning in the volumes which were predicted. The study done by McGhee et al. (2012) is only one among many studies which suggests that great share of Eastern European migrants abroad are seriously contemplating staying. Similar results have been found out by Black, Engbersen, and Okólski (2010), Ciupiūs (2011) and others. When it comes to the Estonian case, there is contradictory evidence about return ideas. Both Hazans and Philips (2009) and Anniste, Tammaru, Pungas, and Paas (2012) claim that highly skilled workers are more likely to return to Estonia. However, according to the Estonian Statistical Office, the net migration has been negative for most of the years following accession. Hence the questions around the potential return of Estonian, and in a wider sense Eastern European, migrants are current and relevant. This
article will continue by first presenting the data and analyzing how these return decisions are contemplated, and which comparisons the migrants use during these contemplations.

Methodology

My field research is based on 37 interviews conducted with Estonian speakers who were either currently living or had lived in the UK. All my interviewees were highly skilled, meaning that they held a white collar job and had a university degree; however, their degree might have been from a different field. (In Estonia, it is fairly common for people to work in a field other than the one they were educated in.) The interviewees were found either by snowballing or through the Estonian Guild, an organization in London through which Estonians connect with each other. There were 21 females and 16 males in the study group, and their ages varied from 24 to 38. I decided to focus on the younger generation, since I was interested in how Estonian post-independence policies might have influenced people’s attitudes toward migration. Therefore, all the interviewees had had some of their early socialization occur after Estonia regained its independence.

The interviews were conducted using a biographical method, meaning that respondents were asked to tell their life story (West, Alheit, Anderson, & Merrill, 2007). Usually, however, some helping questions were required, as the interviewees were quite confused and were not used to talking about themselves to such a degree. At first, I began analyzing the interviews using line by line coding. After the first few interviews, however, more general categories emerged, so I used these for my analysis for the rest of the interviews. This article focuses on how the interviewees spoke about both Estonia and the UK, and the ways in which they connected their identities to these places. Throughout my interviews, I found many signs of how important places – and the social worlds emerging in these places – were for my interviewees. Even without being asked about London or Estonia in particular, several interviewees spoke of their connections to these places. Mentioning Estonia at this point might have been connected to the fact that I, the interviewer, was Estonian. During my analysis for this article, I then collected all the quotes from the interviews in which participants discussed their relation to these two places, as well as those in which they mentioned their identity. Next, after reading these quotes several times, I created subcategories, distinguishing between the following factors: the environmental, cultural, political, and social aspects of both places. I found it interesting how the interviewees related their connection to a location with their sense of self.

Three types of comparisons

This section illustrates three different kinds of comparisons that were found to be important when migrants considered their return. Figure 1 visualizes the three kinds of comparisons, and shows how they are first categorized as either interactive or intransitive, denoting the fact that social comparisons focus on one’s relation with the outside world, whereas both temporal and intra-subjective comparisons are internally oriented. In social comparisons, people compare themselves with those around them when deciding whether they are successful enough and whether they feel an attachment to their
surroundings. In temporal comparisons, people monitor their own success, distancing themselves in these evaluations from other people. In intra-subjective comparisons, people compare different parts of their own identities in order to decide which is the most important in their self-determination. Even though both temporal and intra-subjective comparisons are internally oriented, they do not necessarily exist independently of society. That is, the different subjectivities that people possess are often related to their social belonging and to the environment in which they grew up. I call these comparisons intransitive, not because they are divorced from society, but in order to direct attention to the kind of reflexive work that is taking place – one that demands that people use themselves as a point of reference. Each of these comparisons will be described in more detail in the following discussion, using highly skilled Estonian migrants in the UK as examples.

**Social comparisons**

Social comparisons did play a role in shaping highly skilled Estonian migrants’ decision-making processes. On the one hand, the interviewees tried to compare themselves with those around them in order to assess where they could meet ‘their kind of people’. On the other hand, for several interviewees, comparing their status and position with those of the people around them was a key factor in assessing their well-being. For example, one interviewee states:

> I have not adjusted here. For me, Estonia fits. I do not feel part of society here. I am Estonian. I am different, like many Estonians are. Very few can accommodate and feel oneself at home here. But I do not want to feel. I have a homeland and I do not want to make any unnecessary efforts. (Aadu, 36)

Aadu compares himself with both Estonians and the British, and discovers that he belongs with the Estonians. He gives a rather essentialist value to his nationality, arguing that ‘there is something that unites all the Estonians’. He actively ‘others’ himself from the British, and finds returning to Estonia to be the only way to fit in. Furthermore, he clearly states that he does not want to fit into British society, since he does not want to become estranged from Estonia. Whereas Aadu identified strongly with his nationality, some interviewees connected their identity to smaller groups, such as other Estonians in the UK, or Estonians that had been abroad. These interviewees found a kind of understanding within these groups that was not achieved with Brits or Estonians. It is likely that a similar kind of ‘inbetweeness’ may have been a common link.
In total, five different groups were distinguished as essential for social comparisons: the international community, other Estonians in the UK, Estonians in Estonia, Brits who had been abroad, and Estonians who had been abroad. Unlike Aadu, many interviewees connected their identity strongly to the international community, and stated that they would miss the ‘cosmopolitan vibe’ when forced to move back. Some also mentioned that they did not want to deal with the social pressures in Estonian society (e.g. to have children, be nationalist, etc.), and that moving back was therefore less likely for them. Thus, social comparisons do not only play a role as a positive denominator; they can also be demotivating, if people they feel that they themselves are subject to the same kind of comparison from other people.

Position was another important aspect that inspired social comparisons. However, although many interviewees talked about social belonging, social position was mostly mentioned by career migrants, and especially by those who had connected their identity very strongly to their achievements. Here is one example of how position was used in social comparisons:

I feel that I am somebody here. In Estonia I also felt that I was somebody, but less so. I have not accepted a low-paying job here, unlike many other Estonians I know. I feel that I have a good position among Estonians here in London. I did not come here for digging the gold and accepted working in Starbucks. In Estonia I was a mediocre employee. There, I was a lower middle class, but here I feel that I am a upper middle class. I have done quite well for myself compared to the people I communicate here – I have position. (Rein, 36)

Rein feels that moving to the UK has advanced his position, both in his eyes and in the eyes of Estonian society. However, even though Rein has lived in the UK for several years, his reference point is still Estonia. He wants to look good in the eyes of his fellow Estonians back home; therefore, he does not consider return as an option. Although Rein has the same position in the UK as he had in Estonia, working in his field in the UK makes him feel more successful. This perspective might be connected to the societal values of a post-communist society, in which going abroad is still a sign of success.

Here, two examples of social comparisons were briefly reviewed: identifying one’s social belonging and juxtaposing one’s social position against that of others. In the following section, I focus on temporal comparisons among the interviewees.

**Temporal comparisons**

McGhee et al. (2012) note that, for Polish migrants, comparing one’s life before and after moving was detrimental when considering a return. Compared with Polish migrants, who experienced a stark change in identity when moving, highly skilled Estonian migrants had less extreme experiences. Nevertheless, many migrants mentioned that the UK offered them a different kind of lifestyle – the kind of lifestyle they could not experience back home. A change in lifestyle sometimes also contributed to a transformation in value systems:

There is an individualist attitude in Estonia and I also shared in it once. The thought behind it is that competition will help the society, because everyone wants to improve. In reality, this is not the case. Here I have picked up the idea that people are better when they cooperate and are open, but this idea has gone missing in right-wing/liberal system. Estonia is so right-wing and very individualist when it comes to people’s attitudes. In my opinion, this is unreasonable at times. (Kalle, 27)
Kalle has experienced an identity shift during his stay in the UK. This shift is mostly related to his political views, but it also affects his values. He describes himself as a former neoliberalist who has now turned into a social democrat. The UK has shown him other modes of societal functioning, which he finds to be more efficient and humane. Although Kalle found his values changing once he was already in the UK, some interviewees noted that they left Estonia because they wanted to experience something new. Exposing oneself to challenges has been noted as a vital motivator for Estonian migrants (Köiva et al., 2010).

Alienation and challenges may not only be connected to Estonian society, but also relate to a more specific environment the migrant is coming from.

I have changed so much over here. I come from a family with great prospects and I was very spoiled before I came here. Now I am not so dependent on others’ approval and do not have so many prejudices anymore. When I now see my old friends, who have stayed at home, having the same life, same friends – they have remained the same. I have very little to talk to them about now. Not everything centers around small things, such as who wears what and who is dating whom – all the small town gossip, especially when you are spoiled; these things are very relevant to you. (Maria, 24)

Maria notes that she used to have a different set of values, one that was partially defined by her social surroundings. Hence, her comparison can be seen as involving both temporal and social aspects. From a temporal side, she stresses the changes in her behavior, depicting them as positive, and calling her previous behavior spoiled and childish. She sees her former self as somewhat corrupted and as having ‘wrong values’, whereas she describes her current self in a positive manner, by comparing herself with her former friends.

**Intra-subjective comparisons**

Intra-subjective comparisons refer to situations in which individuals compare different parts of their identity in the present time. Such comparisons are especially evident when different parts of the identity are in conflict. However, even if there is no conflict, different parts of the identity often come up when one is making a decision. Particularly important, life-changing decisions, such as migration, can bring up parts of our personality that we may be completely unaware of. For example, Karoli expressed conflicting sensations about Estonia:

I came back here because of my boyfriend and, well, also because my family was here. I missed seeing my sisters’ children; I did not want to miss seeing them growing up. (33)

Then again, Karoli is also certain that she will not stay in Estonia:

Now that I am back here, I notice how monocultural Estonia is. There is no international cuisine, no interesting theater plays – nothing in the city. My boyfriend is not Estonian and, especially for him, Estonia seems very boring.

For Karoli, different parts of her identity direct her toward different paths. On the one hand, she missed her family while in the UK, and she considers herself to be close to her family. On the other hand, once back in Estonia, she notices that she has become cosmopolitan, and does not easily fit into the country anymore. She also notes that having an international family in Estonia is very challenging, as there is very little entertainment that her boyfriend, who is non-Estonian, can take part in.
Some interviewees had almost automatically adjusted to parallel subjectivities, each of which had its own place and time. For example, Indrek says:

When I come to London, I do not think of enjoying the theater or going to a jazz concert. London, when it comes to social side of life, is very weak for me. When I come here, my mind automatically focuses on business. In different environments, I am the person I need to be to fit. In Estonia, I enjoy social life, visit events, and go to concerts. (35)

Indrek connected the UK to his work and successful career, and Estonia to pleasure and free time. Such compartmentalization was also present among some of the other migrants. Indrek and others also noted that they consciously alter their ways of behaving depending on the environment. Indrek was relatively vague regarding his future plans, stressing the importance of his career. However, he did not really exclude the possibility of returning to Estonia one day. Indrek also made it relatively clear that his career was currently more important than the social life he had in Estonia. His career had even determined where he lived in the UK – near the airport, as he was a frequent traveler.

One can live for a considerable period of time with conflicting subjectivities. Such conflicts usually make for a confused individual who is constantly reconsidering and weighing his/her migration decisions. For example, Aivar says:

Just recently I thought that I have not been grateful enough and given enough back to Estonian society. However, then I was watching the graduation ceremony from my old university, and even in the speeches they mentioned how everyone is going away. Then I also thought about people that have worked for 30 years and only receive 400 euros of pension, and realized that I cannot go and save this system, it is so irreparably broken that I would have to dedicate my life to it. (27)

Aivar is clearly fighting with conflicting subjectivities. One of his subjectivities tells him to return to Estonia and contribute to society – to try to improve the system. His other subjectivity cautions him not to invest his whole life on something that would yield very little reward. Right now, Aivar seems to be determined to stay in the UK, because he has realized that he does not want to dedicate his life to improving the Estonian system. However, Aivar may reconsider later in his life, as his wish to contribute may not disappear.

Clashes of parallel subjectivities can occur on different levels. Although some other interviewees also experienced conflict between their subjectivities, their conflict did not extend as deeply as it did for Aivar.

People in the big stations are always stressed out. When you are riding home in the evening you are basically running to the train because you do not want to wait 20 minutes for the next one. Then people get angry. I admit that I honestly once hit a tourist in Victoria station and got angry because he was standing in my way and I was running for the train. Then, when you think back afterwards, it is like, wait, this is not me, why? (Trin, 31)

Triin noticed that she had adapted to the lifestyle that is so common in London, and had become stressed and very driven. She realized that this was not the kind of person she wanted to be, and hence decided that she must change her environment in order to be who she wanted to be. However, Triin did not think that changing back into a person who is family oriented and calm would be particularly difficult because, in her mind, the changes did not say anything about her; rather, she considered them to stem
from her environment. Thus, Trín had not internalized the changes that had happened to her in London.

Although it was rather uncommon for an interviewee to be experiencing a crisis caused by conflict between multiple subjectivities, several interviewees had been through such an experience in the past. For some, such a deep crisis was also the result of encountering a new situation, which had unsettled the main parts of their identity and led them to question whether they had built their identity on the wrong grounds. For example, after being unemployed in the UK, one interviewee noticed how dependent she was on her achievements. As a result, she went through a deep self-searching process, and was able to redefine her identity to some extent. Matí was one of the interviewees who ended up in a deep crisis and who engaged in soul searching during his time in London:

I was working in banking and all this system is so much based on greed. I would say that about 90% of my coworkers were ready to work all the time without any compromises to get to the next level. For what? To get paid more. I had a colleague there who said that he has a dream to buy a certain amount of apartments, rent them out and then he will live as a rentier. For that he has to work 10 more years, he has calculated it all. I thought poor person, in his way of thinking. He was a couple of years older than me, his hair was grey and it was visible that it was the result of this work. I was all the time looking at these people and then I also started looking at myself. I was thinking, I do not want to become like this. I want to travel, read, communicate with friends, learn new languages. I was just thinking of the things I want. I felt that this work was hindering my development. (Matí, 35)

Matí’s experience shows a certain degree of social alienation from his surroundings. However, it also shows that he has internalized the behavior that is so typical to his environment. Although it is possible that he had always been focused on his achievements, being in his current context made him aware of the negative side of an achievement-related lifestyle. His fast-paced life made Matí realize that he is not willing to engage in a lifestyle that is primarily focused on earning more. As a result, Matí decided to quit his job in the finance industry and go travel the world. He expressed a need to re-establish close contacts with his international friends, and felt great relief over his decision.

**Conclusion**

Despite the fact that numerous studies are referring to EU migrants as highly mobile, self-development oriented and flexible, their return migration has so far been analyzed through the lens of a homing desire. This article suggests seeing return decision as an ongoing process, whereby many highly mobile migrants continuously engage in future planning and debating over a potential return. It is suggested that three comparisons are used for this kind of deliberation: social, temporal, and intra-subjective. Social comparisons are related to migrants comparing their position to those around them; temporal comparisons are focused on comparing one’s situation in the past (usually in the home country) with the present and finally through intra-subjective comparisons migrants compare different parts of their identity, to decide what is the most important pillar of their identity. Whereas both social and temporal comparisons have been mentioned earlier by migration research, intra-subjective comparisons have not appeared in migration studies so far. Therefore, this article particularly focused on explaining intra-subjective comparisons. Intra-subjective comparisons are a further development from
Mouzelis’s concept of internal conflict, which was introduced in relation to Bourdieu’s argument that reflexivity generally enters a situation when field and habitus clash. Mouzelis’s idea is that intra-subjective conflict occurs when different parts of the identity conflict with one another. However, I suggest that these subjectivities do not necessarily have to conflict; they can exist quietly in parallel, while still being relied upon when individuals consider returning to their country of origin.

Viewing return migration as a consequence of a series of deliberations which are aligned to three different kinds of comparisons, allows us to move away from the paradigm where return is seen as somewhat natural consequence of national and social belonging. Rather, it offers a more complex picture of how return decisions are made and contemplated over throughout the years. Instead of focusing only on migrants that do return, this article also analyzed the one’s that did not, finding that often times both migrants and returnees viewed their situation as temporary. The fact that these decisions are in fact becoming less permanent, especially after the introduction of free movement inside EU, should encourage us to focus on the decision-making process. Thus far, very few scholars have seen these decisions in the light of individualization and, therefore, as being dependent on a self-constructed identity. However, for those who treat their identity as a process that is to some degree of their own making, return decisions become part of the identity-making process. For free movers especially, a return might relate more to the question of ‘who do I want to be’ rather than to that of ‘what social contacts do I have’. As social contacts are seen as increasingly mobile, and as the importance of immediate family is decreasing, there may be a need for identity focused return migration research.

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References


Paper IV
Reflexivity beyond lifestyle migration: highly skilled Estonian migrants

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Sent to Migration Studies

Abstract

This article aims to address a certain lack of clarity within lifestyle migration research (LM), which this author claims stems from different ontological understandings of reflexivity. It argues that scholars in LM research either see reflexivity as a discourse, which leads them to suggest that lifestyle migrants have internalized a certain way of talking about their migration, or as an actual practice, which results in claims that lifestyle migrants in particular show heightened reflexivity. These two ontologically different positions lead to a dissimilar understanding of who is a lifestyle migrant and how LM compares with other migration currents. As a potential solution, this article suggests an analytical route that views reflexivity as a real-life practice that can be divided into three types: teleological, structural and identitarian reflexivity. This route, the author argues, would allow certain current criticisms of LM scholarship to be addressed, including: the unclear relationship between Western middle-class culture and LM; the potential methodological nationalism behind LM studies; and, finally, the question of how LM relates to other types of migrations.

Introduction

Lifestyle migration (LM) scholarship is a young research field that was, at least initially, mostly empirically oriented (Benson & Osbaldiston 2016). This article is inspired by a certain lack of theoretical clarity in LM research, and focuses on the concept of reflexivity. Depending on the theoretical approach on reflexivity, different LM scholars reach dissimilar conclusions on both who is a lifestyle migrant and how LM and reflexivity are related to class and Western culture. Furthermore, even though it is highly commendable that
LM scholarship encourages theoretical versatility, the different theoretical approaches that have been chosen by various authors over the years are not always compatible. This incompatibility can result in discussions that cannot reach a conclusion because scholars enter the discussions with dissimilar ideas of what LM is. However, these ground-level differences are never dealt with because they are more implicit than explicit.

Moreover, most of the LM literature contains a certain ambivalence regarding whether reflexivity is seen as a discourse or as a practice. For example, some authors have claimed that lifestyle migrants show heightened reflexivity in comparison with labour migrants or refugees. Such claims rest on the idea that LM should be seen as an identity-related project, as is common in second modernity (Benson & O’Reilly 2009; Benson & Osbaldiston 2014). However, these claims indicate that reflexivity is seen as a practice in which lifestyle migrants engage more than other migrants. On the other hand, other scholarly LM work suggests viewing the reflexivity of lifestyle migrants as a discourse in which they engage (Benson & Osbaldiston 2016; Benson & O’Reilly 2015). This contrasting perspective means that interviewees are seen as using reflexivity as a way of talking about their migration. Hence, from this perspective, the reflexivity of lifestyle migrants is self-reported, and is simply a discourse that they use to describe their movement.

To date, LM research has mostly examined groups that come from what is termed the “Western middle classes” (Huete et al. 2013) (Salazar & Zhang 2013; Oliver & O’Reilly 2010a). Osbaldiston (2014) suggests that Western middle-class culture may encourage reflexivity along with identity-related projects such as LM. However, this issue has received little attention so far, even though other authors have also mentioned it (Huete et al. 2013; Korpela 2014). In order to examine the LM focus on Western middle classes and its employment of the concept of reflexivity, this article uses interviews with highly skilled Estonians coming from different class backgrounds. The aim of this paper is to discuss how the relations between reflexivity, class background and migration can be understood. Drawing on a group that is characterized by its variation in migration motivations and class backgrounds permits a discussion of whether and how these factors may impact the use of reflexivity in migration. In order to reach this aim, this paper first discusses how reflexivity has been used in LM so far, and points out potential problems or incongruences in the current discussion. Second, this paper
suggests a typology of three types of reflexive practices – identitarian, teleological and structural – that may be applicable in future LM research.

This paper starts with a chronological overview of different theoretical approaches that are used by LM scholars. Next, it explores the relationship between the Western middle class and LM, as described by LM thus far, and analyses the position of highly skilled Estonian migrants. The article ends with a discussion on how distinguishing between different reflexive practices can provide a way to analyse the relationship between social origin and reflexivity in migration decisions.

The uses of reflexivity in LM research

Over the years, different attempts have been made to theorize LM. Authors such as Bourdieu (1977), Sweetman (2003), Skeggs (2004) and Alexander (1996) have been used to develop central concepts. However, the usage of each of these authors has different consequences for defining LM – consequences that have not yet been analysed in detail. Furthermore, there is a tendency for scholars to concurrently draw upon these very different theorists without discussion; this occurs both in regards to general concepts and to reflexivity in particular. In terms of reflexivity studies, however, scholars following Bourdieu versus Beck and Giddens, for example, are considered to be in opposition. Using both bodies of work at the same time would require at least some explanation and further theoretical discussion. Some of the later articles within the field, such as those by Benson & Osbaldiston (2016) and Benson & O’Reilly (2015), adapt a more theoretical approach and review earlier LM research in a critical fashion. However, a comprehensive view on how these approaches fit together is still lacking. Such a comprehensive view would help to clarify how LM scholarship intends the concept of reflexivity to be used.

Several early pieces written on LM used Beck and especially Giddens for inspiration (O’Reilly & Benson 2009; Benson & O’Reilly 2009). These theorists of second modernity claim that people in general have become more reflexive due to increased structural pressures to make personal decisions. This central concept and its usage are inspired by Giddens, who asserted that lifestyle is of vital importance during late modernity and is drawn upon by many people to create some structure in their lives. Using theories of second modernity to define lifestyle migrants would indicate that all migrants are
becoming more reflexive and that their migration is becoming more identity related. However, this viewpoint leads to a new question: if all types of migration are identity related, and if we assume the existence of a certain reflexive self, is this perspective of reflexivity useful for distinguishing LM from other types of migration under second modernity? In fact, it may be more useful to do what Benson & O’Reilly (2015) suggest in their article, and talk about lifestyle within migration instead of LM.

Using reflexive modernity as a basis for understanding LM has been criticized within the field by authors such as Korpela (2014) and Osbaldiston (2014). The main criticisms are related to presentism and the overemphasis on the agency of lifestyle migrants. That is, Osbaldiston claims that LM may have grown out of colonial history (and hence should not be seen as a result of second modernity), whereas Korpela suggests that lifestyle migrants enact neoliberal ideology with their movements (and hence are following societal discourses). Therefore, it is suggested that scholars need to focus more on structural influences and the potential historicity of LM in order to understand this particular type of migration.

In 2009, Benson & O’Reilly suggested using Sweetman (2003) as a theoretical basis for understanding LM. Sweetman argues that reflexivity has become internalized for certain groups, and has thus become common rather than difficult to achieve; that is, in certain circles, reflexivity has become part of habitus and one’s birth environment. Based on Sweetman, Benson and O’Reilly conclude that self-reflection and self-questioning are easy for people from the Western middle classes, and that Western middle-class culture may actually create this exact kind of reflexive habitus. The implicit conclusion of this statement is that lifestyle migrants have internalized reflexivity, so their migration can be seen as the result of such internalization. Labour migrants are negatively compared with lifestyle migrants in that the former’s reasons for migration are viewed as stemming from a primarily economic nature and as being less identity driven; thus, the migration of labour migrants is viewed as being less reflexive. Furthermore, the reflexivity of lifestyle migrants is connected to the Western middle classes, who are seen being ‘schooled’ to question their life and seek alternatives (Osbaldiston 2014). Again, according to this logic, the negative case of the lifestyle migrant should be non-Western and non-middle class.
On later, separate occasions, both Benson and O’Reilly use Bourdieu (Benson 2011; Oliver & O’Reilly 2010b) without explaining how Bourdieu’s theories on class fit with the earlier presentation of lifestyle migrants as individualistic agents that was based on theories of reflexive modernity. These scholars mainly draw on Bourdieu to explain why class structures are relevant as lifestyle migrants settle into new contexts. They also mention that cultural imaginings impact how lifestyle migrants choose their destinations and may also affect how migrants form an image of a ‘good life’ (Benson 2011). When using Bourdieu, these scholars do not clarify the impact of class on the decision making of lifestyle migrants; rather, they stress that even though lifestyle migrants imagine themselves to be liberated, they are in fact bounded by class in both their decision making and how they rebuild their life after migration. A stricter understanding of Bourdieu (there are multiple readings of Bourdieu in reflexivity studies) indicates that, like other migrants, lifestyle migrants carry out their cultural and class-bound habitual practices. Janoschka (2011) offers a more elaborate usage of Bourdieu in his analysis of radical reflexivity in relation to migration. He proposes that by moving, lifestyle migrants create a conflict between their habitus and field, and therefore become open to criticizing their former habitus. Unfortunately for the focus of this paper, however, Janoschka does not analyse how reflexivity or radical reflexivity enters the migration decision-making process.

In their 2014 introduction and 2016 article, Benson & Osbaldiston (2014, 2016) favour the work of Skeggs (2004) and Savage (2010) as a means of understanding the role of reflexivity in LM. Skeggs and Savage have claimed that the ability to choose is a fundamental characteristic of the Western middle classes and that reflexivity may be deeply class-bound. According to this perspective, reflexivity may not be relevant for the working classes, but may be a concept that is built upon and un-reflexively entailing middle-class views. Thus, using the work of Skeggs results in a completely different reading of reflexivity, one that views reflexivity as just a figure of speech that middle-class people like to use to describe their decisions. From this perspective, reflexivity is available for those who are relatively privileged but is not relevant in other contexts. However, following this line of thought departs from the ‘real reflexivity’ of lifestyle migrants, and leads instead to a discourse of reflexivity. Hence when following Skeggs, instead of focusing on how decisions are made and how lifestyle migrants may liberate themselves from their surrounding contexts, it is more important to focus on how migrants talk about their migration.
Osbaldiston (2014) has also suggested using the work of Alexander (1996) to shift attention from the presentism and class focus of LM. Alexander maintains that reflexivity is culture-bound, meaning that people can only reflect on things within their cultural framework. Hence, for Alexander and Osbaldiston, reflexivity does not involve stepping outside of one’s cultural framework or habitus; rather, it involves more conscious deliberations within these limitations. One might even say that, through reflexivity, people consciously do what they would otherwise habitually do. However, this viewpoint suggests a different reading of LM – as a practice that is embedded in a particular group (the Western middle class). It is possible that through reflexivity, lifestyle migrants are able to verbalize concerns that might otherwise be merely habitual. However, this perspective on reflexivity does not necessarily see lifestyle migrants as being more reflexive than labour migrants (who may come from different cultures and may act within their cultural framework).

Finally, Korpela (2014) has proposed Rose (1996) as a potential theorist for analysing LM. Rose suggests that modern psychology has created a concept of self that permits reflexivity. In essence, following the work of Rose leads to the view that lifestyle migrants are reflexive just as other migrants are, and that seeking authenticity is only one potential way to be reflexive. Rose has been described as a critical realist by some, and Rose’s perspective aligns best with the perspective that is suggested by this article. Bottero (2010) has suggested that reflexivity can cover a range of meanings: from everyday routine monitoring to more radical reflexivity that addresses one’s underlying habitual actions.

As the description above shows, LM research has been based on the work of many different theorists over the years. The field of LM, as Benson & O’Reilly (2015) suggest, is open for debate and is not a closed system, which has no doubt enabled such a great variety of research. Thanks to this open approach, an interesting discussion around reflexivity is emerging. However, by relying on different theories, scholars are clearly understanding the concept of LM differently. The abovementioned examples show how, depending on the approach, lifestyle migrants may be seen as more reflexive than other types of migrants, may be argued as only possessing increased reflexivity due to their Western middle-class culture, or may be viewed as reflecting only within the bounds of their culture. The way in which scholars approach reflexivity not only influences how lifestyle migrants are defined, but also
affects how other types of migration are positioned in relation to LM. These approaches are not always compatible. This article follows Bottero’s (2010) suggestion and employs the definition of reflexivity that is provided by Maclean et al. (2012, p. 5): reflexivity is the capacity of an actor to construct practical understandings of the location of self within a social system, to act accordingly, and to reflect further and refine understandings in response to events and the consequence of actions taken. This definition will be operationalized later in this paper using data from the study on highly skilled Estonian migrants. Ontologically speaking, this understanding of reflexivity is close to the critical realist school of thought; hence, this article considers reflexivity to be a real phenomenon, rather than viewing it as only a figure of speech or a discourse that is used by interviewees. The definition above also indicates that people can go beyond their own habitual or cultural lens and achieve a critical distance from it. Particular reflexive practices are discussed in more detail in the empirical part of this paper.

Positioning the study group

As mentioned above, it is essential to distinguish between reflexivity as an analytical concept and reflexivity as a societal discourse in order to understand the use of reflexivity in LM research. This differentiation is highly relevant for the analysis of the case in this study: are Estonian migrants to be conceptualized in terms of LM because they relate to the discourse of heightened reflexivity, or is LM an analytical category that may be applicable to this group? In their 2015 article, Benson and O’Reilly suggest that LM is an analytical concept. Later in the same article, however, they assert that the concept was inductively developed based on the reporting of the migrants (British migrants in France and Spain) that they interviewed. The alternation between these two perspectives on the role of reflexivity is recognizable within LM research as a whole. Whereas some pieces in LM research describe reflexivity as a discourse that lifestyle migrants use to set their migration apart (Benson & Osbaldiston 2016a; Osbaldiston 2014; Benson & O’Reilly 2015), others claim that lifestyle migrants have an elevated ability to reflect (Hoey 2006; Osbaldiston 2010; O’Reilly and Benson 2009; Benson and O’Reilly 2009, 2009) indicating that the category as well as the concept of reflexivity becomes an analytical tool.

The empirical data drawn upon in this paper is based on 37 interviews that were conducted with highly skilled Estonian migrants in the UK. Studies
focusing on Eastern European migration are commonly separated from those focusing on Western Europeans or on Westerners in general, which this author finds problematic due to the lack of discussion on whether such a separation is justified. Some contributions to LM research have examined groups other than wealthy Westerners (Salazar & Zhang 2013; Oliver & O’Reilly 2010a); however, there is little meaningful discussion on whether the concept of LM is related to Western culture or not. Research into concepts such as mobility and middling transnationalism has mostly focused on Western migrants as well (Conradson & Latham 2005; Conradson & Mckay 2007; Hannam 2009; Kennedy 2010). Although some scholars who focus on Eastern Europe have made attempts to apply the aforementioned theories and concepts to Eastern European migrants (King et al. 2014; Krings et al. 2013; Parutis 2014), the two research fields (Eastern and Western migrants) are more or less separated. Theories that draw on Western migrants tend to be focused solely on that group, and are rarely applied to other groups (Conradson & Mckay 2007; Benson 2011), whereas scholars who study Eastern Europe rely on their own theoretical approaches (Engbersen et al. 2013; Trevena et al. 2011). One of the main tools for analysing high mobility among Eastern Europeans is the term 'liquid migration’, which was suggested by Engbersen et al. (2013). However, this term essentially refers to tendencies among Eastern European migrants that are quite similar to tendencies that are present among Western migrants as well. Hence, these two groups – Eastern and Western European migrants – may be more similar in their migration patterns than the literature implies. More discussion is required in LM scholarship and in migration literature in general regarding the potential pitfalls of such a distinction.

In part, this paper uses LM as its analytical tool in order to bring Western-centred concepts and theories into an analysis of a group that is generally spoken of as coming from outside of Western Europe and North America. In addition, since the topic of reflexivity has not been overly explored among migration scholars, this study relates to LM research as one of the only paradigms that draws connections between migration and reflexivity. It is necessary to explore the role of reflexivity in all kinds of migration, not only LM. Thus, this article intentionally attempts to contextualize LM in comparison with other types of migration in addition to critically exploring how lifestyle migrants and their reflexivity are positioned in terms of other migration currents.
The interviews in this study were biographical (i.e. the interviewees were asked to tell a story of their life) and were analysed using grounded theory. The interviewees themselves rarely mentioned class background, an occurrence that is in line with the neoliberalist discourse in Estonia (Kallaste & Woolfson 2013). Hence, this article uses class as an analytical tool (where class is defined as a group with common political economic and cultural status), and further defines class in terms of the economic and cultural capital of the parents. An interest in social background and class emerged when the interviews were analysed using line-by-line coding from grounded theory (Charmaz & Smith 2003). The initial analysis produced five different narratives that the interviewees drew upon when describing their lives and migration processes. In order to uncover how and why these narratives differed, a secondary analysis was carried out, whereby three different categories of reflection were constructed. These three categories are analysed in this article as reflexive practices, thereby highlighting the versatility of the concept of reflexivity.

Self-narratives of migrants from different social backgrounds

In order to explore the role that reflexivity plays in the migration decisions of highly skilled Estonian migrants, this part of the article illustrates the five different self-narratives that the interviewees drew upon. These self-narratives are analytically connected to the participants’ social origins, and illustrate how their social background has influenced their ways of representing themselves. The narratives are presented through a description of the reflexive practices that are characteristic of each specific narrative and of each interviewee’s belief in his or her own agency. O’Connor (2012) has described subjective agency as an individual’s subjective belief about his or her personal capacity to exert influence. This analysis includes subjective agency as an analytical tool mainly because of the motivations that were outlined earlier in the theoretical section; that is, it is possible that migrants consider their migration to be their individual choice and to be independent of societal norms. Therefore, it is important to see how subjective agency and reflexivity interlink in the migrants’ stories.

Based on five different self-narratives and variations in how these groups used reflexivity, three reflexive practices are identified: structural, teleological and identitarian. These reflexive practices are a further development of the work of Maclean et al. (2012), who distinguish between accumulative and
reconstructive reflexivity. According to Maclean et al. (2012), accumulative reflexivity is a process whereby an individual consciously builds capital and positions and embraces opportunities, whereas reconstructive reflexivity refers to an individual reflexively reconstituting himself or herself in response to contingencies. This article suggests that, at least for the purpose of analysing migration decisions, it is better to distinguish between three practices (note that the division by Maclean et al. was developed for analysing class mobility). What appears as structural reflexivity in this article is integrated by Maclean et al. into reconstructive reflexivity; however, because some migrants practice one type of reflexivity but not the other, it makes sense to distinguish between identitarian and structural reflexivity. The following discussion presents the five self-narratives of the migrants in this study, and then summarizes how these five types of migrants use reflexivity.

Childhood cosmopolites

As implied by their name, childhood cosmopolites experienced an early contact with cultural versatility and were exposed to other countries at a young age. This exposure happened either through travelling or through their parents’ multicultural friends. This group had a rather privileged background – not always financially, but certainly in terms of their cultural background. Several of the group members’ parents were employed in occupations that required an extensive knowledge of other cultures, such as working in academia, foreign relations, and so forth. However, the parents of these children were generally unable to satisfy their travel needs due to the restrictions of the Soviet Union. Still, mobility and the exploration of different cultures were considered to be valuable in these families, and this perception was passed on to the children. Not surprisingly, many of these children, now adults, described their wish to explore the world as their main motive for migrating:

Leaving Estonia was related to my wish to see the world. I already knew everything in Estonia, and everyone, and I felt myself very comfortable. I wanted to go and discover something new. (Rein, 24)

Sometimes, their move was also inspired by interest in a specific place. In general, however, cultural images of other cultures and countries had a major role in motivating these people to move. Moreover, most childhood cosmopolites were quite young when they decided to move. Even though these children relied on their parents’ support and capital, they took an active role in their migrating process:
I started applying for foreign schools one year before my graduation. I went to Finland and Sweden to take different tests, wrote hundreds of essays, and collected recommendations. At the time I was taking my national exams, I already knew that I had been accepted. (Maria, 27)

Given that Maria was only 17 when she started the application procedure, such dedication and purposefulness communicates a high degree of subjective agency. Not only was she aware of the necessary steps in her application procedure, but she also showed a high degree of self-belief. Such a belief in her own capabilities, along with trust that she would be able to manage in a foreign country at a young age, is strongly related to the kind of parental support and values that the interviewees in this group enjoyed. This finding corresponds with many other findings that indicate that children with higher class backgrounds describe their future in terms of what they want to do rather than in terms of what they can do (Laughland-Booû et al. 2014).

Although the dreams of these interviewees were strongly connected to their parents’ values and aspirations, the interviewees showed a significant degree of reflexivity when it came to analysing their choices:

> I wanted to go away because I think I have always been a cosmopolitan at heart. When I was small, we visited my brother in Florida and I did not speak a word of English, but I decided I wanted to learn. From that moment, I got the experience that the world is so big. My parents always also tried to take me with them on their trips. (Maria, 27)

Maria’s quotation illustrates her awareness of the structures that enabled her early migration to the US. Reflecting on their childhood environment and acknowledging their parents’ influence on their decisions was usually not a problem for childhood cosmopolites, although they also insisted on the great agency that they themselves had provided.

**Small-towners**

Small-towners originally came from a context that was quite different from their current situation. Their families were usually of working-class origin, and it was not unusual for them to be the first of their family to enter higher education. However, as class differences were not very distinct after the Soviet period in Estonia, the struggles of these interviewees cannot be compared with those of working-class students entering university in the UK.
Still, it was common for small-towners to later revise their original choice of occupation, and many commented that they had few resources to rely on in making their choices. For these interviewees, migration was either part of this revision, allowing them to start with a totally clean slate, or was meant to advance their current career. The status of living in London and the feeling of climbing upward and getting out of Estonia were also significant.

I am a cosmopolitan. I grew up in a smaller town and then already when I went to Tallinn, I thought, thank God. Now even Tallinn seems very small. It is a matter of self-esteem – to say that I am in London. (Raul, 36)

Even if the interviewees initially migrated to London with the idea of returning, adding London to their CV was thought to add status and recognition. Small-towners internalized the achievement-related mentality in Estonia, and came to perceive that making a career in a foreign country was something that would give them more credit and value, probably not only among their friends and relatives, but also in Estonian society. Flam (2009) described how the working class is shamed and humiliated in the public discourse; hence, by migrating and being successful in a foreign country, small-towners can prove their capability to mainstream society.

Most small-towners showed both an awareness of structural constraints and agency in their future planning. On the one hand, having come from surroundings that did not support their current careers, these interviewees were aware that there were limitations to their goals and achievements. On the other hand, they also tended to use rather creative approaches to circumvent these constraints.

After my appointment at the foreign ministry ended, I told them that I wanted to go abroad. I actually wanted to go abroad already after finishing school, but decided that I could not, that it was too risky. So now I took the recommendations from very prominent figures and I got into the school I wanted to. (Tiit, 35)

Although Tiit was aware of his potential limitations, he found a way to achieve his goals regardless. He had to wait to realize his dreams after calculating the possible risks, but he was able to fulfil his dreams later in his life, after gaining resources to buffer the risks. The agency of small-towners is hence different from the absolute belief in their options that is shown by childhood cosmopolites. Having encountered more difficulties in their lives,
Small-towners are somewhat more sceptical about life. Their reflexive practices have a different purpose than those of migrants from privileged backgrounds. Due to the discrepancy between their background and their current status, small-towners must reconstruct their identities and abandon their parents’ guidelines when it comes to envisioning their future.

I have participated in self-development courses here a lot, to discover my inner fears, who one is because of his/her past, how you believe in yourself. These have given me more self-esteem and I have come to understand that maybe I am capable of something more. Until now, I have been a lost soul – I had no idea about what to do with my life. I was satisfied with my work, but it was not quite it. One has to feel that there is this something that you want to do. (Kaur, 36)

Kaur was one of the few members of the study group who had consciously engaged in self-reflection, using the help of self-development courses. Not all small-towners showed such extensive reflexivity; however, most had reflected carefully on what they wanted to become, and had revised their earlier decisions. Although few had changed their lives entirely, all had made some revisions. Still, considering their need for introspection, many members of this group had internalized an achievement-related discourse and relied somewhat on society’s approval and recognition in their decision making. Hence, their reflexive practices were often oriented towards gaining something that their parents did not have: societal admiration and respect.

Achievers

Achievers can be viewed as part of the typical younger middle class in Estonia. Highly oriented towards success and accomplishments, these interviewees have internalized the neoliberal ideas that are prevalent in the country (c.f. Sippola 2013). They were willing to work long hours to get ahead in their work. Their efforts were not prompted as much by a desire for material success (although there was an unspoken expectation that they would be adequately paid) as by the wish to have a challenging job and to do the best they could.

I felt that studying in my specialty in Estonia was pointless. There were older people that were very much against the changes. I wanted to do everything better, so that I could learn more. So I participated in international networks and communicated with others in my specialty abroad. After finishing, I did not see that working in Estonia would develop me in the way I wanted, so I decided to go abroad. (Liisi, 27)
The typical story of an achiever was, ‘I thought there would be bigger career opportunities for me abroad’. These interviewees often migrated with the idea of staying for a couple of years; however, they discovered that it was very difficult to find a job that would challenge them at the same level in Estonia.

Achievers rarely mentioned their families or anyone else as having influenced them. They attributed their success to their own persistence and strong will, which they seemed to view as being unrelated to their support network. Thus, they had great belief in their individual agency. Moreover, they hardly ever doubted whether their dreams would be fulfilled, or reflected on any potential constraints that might hinder their success.

I think I could manage in several specialties if I wanted to. Also, in high school, I was quite good in most subjects. I think if I had not studied my subject, I could have been a very good programmer or gene technologist. But I am glad that I did not choose these subjects, because I think they would have become a little boring in the longer run. (Riina, 32)

Riina showed a high degree of agency, and mentioned an abundance of options from which she had chosen her current career. She obviously believed in her capacity to manage in many different situations and saw few constraints in her way. However, when asked why she had chosen her current specialty and why she had migrated to the UK, she could not really explain, but said that these occurrences had more to do with happenstance. In general, achievers showed a high degree of instrumental reflexivity – that is, in figuring out the steps that were needed to achieve their next goal. However, some had a low degree of reconstructive reflexivity. It was uncommon for achievers to question their choices; the feeling of ‘doing and achieving’ was more important to these migrants than their particular direction.

I went to London because my degree was in a specific field and the job in the UK was very much connected to my degree. I knew the organization and I skimmed through their webpage and found that they were looking for someone with my degree, so I sent my documents and they invited me for an interview. (Reet, 35)

This quotation illustrates the instrumental quality of the reflexive practices of the achievers. They were good at accumulating resources to achieve their next goal, and at figuring out the steps they needed to take. However, they had difficulty explaining why, exactly, they had such a goal in the first place. Since an achievement-related mentality had always worked for them, they
had never had to wonder about their identity. Problems with identity could start when achievers had to deal with debilitating illnesses that stopped their achievement cycle. Otherwise, they followed societal and parental discourses, while simultaneously being convinced of their individuality and agency.

**Lonely riders**

In terms of their motives for migrating, lonely riders showed a considerable resemblance to achievers. For them, too, migration was a challenge – a quest taken to develop oneself, usually in terms of one’s career. However, lonely riders showed a slight difference in motive in that they often described being in Estonia as a hindrance – almost as if they wanted to break free from constraints:

> After a few years of working, I started to feel that Estonia was too small for me to develop in my specialty. The more I learned about my subject, the more I grasped this. So I started to feel that I had to move on, I had to get out. However, I also realized that in order to work somewhere else in the world, I needed a master’s degree. (Jaana, 29)

Unlike achievers, lonely riders migrated fairly consciously, since they lacked the support that the achievers had. Lonely riders as a group were named based on their relation to family and society: they felt quite alone in their life and relied only on themselves when planning it out. Their background was usually either working or lower middle class; more importantly, they had had to take care of themselves from an early age. They were often children of single parents, or had lacked the necessary support at home, which led to a certain alienation. Hence, they relied on parental guidance only to a limited extent in their decisions – if at all – although their friends were a source of advice.

Lonely riders showed a significant degree of agency in their actions. Their migration was usually well planned out and thought through. Their future planning did not have the optimistic and sometimes naïve element of that of childhood cosmopolites. Lonely riders were much more aware of the potential constraints they might meet; therefore, right from the start, they had conducted their plans in ways that would allow them to deal with potential bad luck. However, their experiences had also left them with a much stronger self-belief, as exemplified in the next quotation:

> I did not really feel very insecure when I was unemployed. I think our generation in Estonia is used to getting by. As I have discussed with my friend,
we know that whatever happens, we can find some kind of a job. As long as you have your brain and you are fit, there is no reason why one should not find a job. This is a generation that is now in their thirties with technical education. They have never had to try too hard to find something in Estonia. There are young people now in Estonia that have had to try really hard to find a job, but we have never had to do this. We have never had to think: Oh my God, now I have been unemployed for a year, I have no idea about what to do. We are not this generation. (Martin, 35)

Although this interviewee was very optimistic about his chances of finding a job, he was also quite reflexive about those around him, and acknowledged that others might have different life experiences. Thus, he did not attribute his success to his individual abilities alone, but acknowledged the part that luck had played in his accomplishments. Other interviewees that were categorized into this group also pointed to examples of happenstance and lucky coincidences, and did not believe that their life up to this point was only a result of their careful planning.

Several lonely riders showed a similar kind of societal reflexivity to that of childhood cosmopolites; that is, their reflexivity was a mixture of societal critique and self-reflection. In other words, with society as a background, lonely riders tried to imagine what might be possible for them within their particular setting.

One cannot rely on working in something that is one’s absolute passion. Every person has to find a balance between having the taxes paid (earning sufficient money) and still being satisfied. If I did not have to think about salary, I would do something entirely different, like charity work. (Jaana, 29)

Jaana acknowledged that she was not doing a job that fully satisfied her. However, she had learned early on that life is tough and that one must work in order to survive, so she considered reflecting on ‘what one would really like to do’ to be too idealistic. In this way, the reflexivity of lonely riders appeared to rely more on their inner sense of practicality and responsibility than on anything else.

Drifters/snap-deciders

Drifters were easily the boldest among the whole group of migrants. Their moves were often spontaneous and they rarely had a specific idea about what they would do once they arrived.
I went to the UK totally randomly. After graduation, I felt that I did not yet want to go to work and I did not really want to work in the specialty I had graduated from. So I decided to see the world and prolong my childhood. It was then that I saw an advertisement in the library for work in London. So we, me and my boyfriend, both decided to go there. (Katre, 32)

For many drifters, migrating was a way to escape the societal expectations of settling down and starting a family. As this interviewee pointed out, she was interested in prolonging her childhood for a while longer.

Drifters did not usually have strong contact with their parents and felt slightly alienated from them. Their parents were usually working in totally different areas; therefore, the interviewees felt that their parents would not understand them properly or be able to give meaningful advice. However, the interviewees did not stress the alienation factor or their independence in their stories, but rather focused on their adventurous nature and how they were unable to stay in one location for too long. Drifters came from different backgrounds, ranging from working class to middle class. However, many of them had either had a life-changing experience early in their life, or were generally confused about their position in the world.

There was usually little planning predating their moves, and a great deal of their life was described as ranging from spontaneous to random. Compared with the other groups, the drifters appeared to be guided by chance and opportunity rather than engaging in conscious future planning. However, this was a very varied group in terms of belief in their own agency. Some interviewees in this group showed a high degree of agency and were convinced that they could manage in all kinds of situations.

I went to the interview and I managed to sell myself very well, and I left the place saying, ‘Well, I also have other offers, so whoever calls me first, there I am going to go.’ (Terje, 35)

Other interviewees were much more careful about declaring themselves to be capable:

I got a job quite quickly, but I was very lucky. I was not very selective, I wanted to just get a job and just get a thick CV. (Anne, 31)

Although that category of drifters and snap-deciders made up quite a diverse group, these interviewees were linked by a lack of clear life direction. These
were people who were testing out their possibilities, people who were tired of the old and who wanted to continually conquer new horizons. In a way, this group could be divided further into those who were aimlessly drifting and others who were enthusiastically accumulating all kinds of experiences. However, neither of those two sub-groups had a clear picture about who they were and what they wanted to do. Hence, their birth environment had not really prepared them for their life and had, to a certain extent, left them floating.

Drifters generally did not show a high degree of reflexivity. When compared with the migrants depicted in the work of Engbersen et al. (2013), drifters correspond to the footloose migrants who were young, who came from the working class, and who were leaving their future open. To a certain degree, drifters were afraid of making a final choice, so they kept multiple options in mind. When asked why they made the choice to come to the UK, most could not give a clear answer:

I did not like the kind of changes that the new management was making in our company. So at first I applied for some other jobs in Estonia, but I did not get anything. At some point, I just thought that I wanted to go somewhere. I had had this idea in my mind already for a few years. So I thought, why not go to the UK? (Laura, 35)

Their choices seemed to have very little to do with a specific goal they wanted to achieve in life or with the kind of person they wanted to be. They appeared to be somewhat confused about what they actually wanted, so any chance or opening was welcomed and followed up on.

Three types of reflexivity

This article suggests that reflexivity be viewed as an analytical category, and distinguishes between three different reflexive practices: identitarian, teleological and structural reflexivity. Identitarian reflexivity refers to self-questioning and refashioning practices that are similar to those covered in earlier research. Teleological reflexivity refers to goal-oriented reflexivity, while structural reflexivity includes an awareness of both the underlying structures of one’s thinking and the currently surrounding structures. Table 1 presents these five self-narratives in relation to social class, a belief in one’s own agency and reflexive practice. All three aspects are inter-related.
The general conclusion that may be derived from Table 1 is that in the case of highly skilled Estonian migrants, reflexivity does not relate directly to class background. In fact, lonely riders were the most reflexive and showed signs of all three reflexive practices. Lonely riders felt a lack of support and guidance from their early surroundings, which put more pressure for them to ‘figure out things on their own’. Typical higher class migrants, the childhood cosmopolitans, also showed signs of critical thinking, but had generally not distanced themselves from their early surroundings. In fact, their migration was supported by the ideas that they had internalized from their childhood surroundings. The lack of identitarian reflexivity among childhood cosmopolitans can be explained by the fact that society supports most of their habitual practices and their worldview. Hence, in order to succeed, they did not
need to change their way of thinking very much. The same explanation applies to achievers, who represent the ‘stereotypical middle-class’ migrant. Table 1 shows that achievers demonstrated the least reflexivity of all the types. The achievers had internalized societal ideas of a good life, and followed the neoliberal striving for material and personal success. Their lack of structural awareness made it easier for them to succeed, because they had little doubt of which direction to go in.

It is interesting to note how reflexive practices and subjective agency relate to one another. Table 1 shows that achievers have a strong belief in their personal capabilities and individuality. Achievers recurrently described themselves as following their individual dreams and being unaffected by society. The achievers thus contrasted with the drifters, who had little belief in their personal agency, but who were reflexive about themselves and the structures around them. It is possible that being at odds with existing structures (i.e. feeling a lack of belonging) or having had a former traumatic experience supplied drifters with reflexivity, while decreasing their belief in their own abilities. The relation to subjective agency is that although individuals may present themselves and their migration as highly individualist and unaffected by surrounding structures, doing so does not necessarily say anything about the extent of their reflexivity; rather, it describes their belief in their agency.

To sum up, Table 1 demonstrates that in the interviews drawn upon here, subjective agency and reflexivity are somewhat at odds with each other. Furthermore, the table illustrates that identitarian reflexivity was more common among those from a lower class background, perhaps because the interviewees from these groups had to work harder to fit themselves to societal ideals. In these interviews, identitarian reflexivity was also less present than structural and teleological reflexive practices. These results indicate that when discussing migration as a self-fashioning practice and an identity-related project, it is possible that we should be looking for identitarian reflexivity.

Discussion and conclusion

This article is motivated by a certain lack of theoretical clarity in LM scholarship regarding reflexivity. It claims that reflexivity is essential for defining and positioning LM in relation to other types of migrations. This article suggests that reflexivity should be viewed as an analytical concept rather than
used as a discoursive tool. Using reflexivity as a discoursive tool has led to miscommunication regarding what constitutes reflexivity (i.e. the potential Western-centredness of the concept) as well as to confusion regarding whether reflexivity is only discoursive or whether it is a practice (i.e. some researchers are ambivalent on where the discourse of reflexivity ends and practice begins). Using reflexivity as an analytical concept allows us to position what our interviewees tell us in relation to their social background. In other words, it permits us to analyse how characteristic a particular migration motivation is within that migrant’s socio-cultural surroundings. Only then can we analyse whether people are following their habitual norms or whether they are establishing a critical distance from them.

This article suggests a typology that distinguishes between three types of reflexive practices: identitarian, structural and teleological reflexivity. It argues that this typology permits an inter-cultural analysis of reflexive practices as well as an acknowledgment of the wide variety of ways of ‘doing’ reflexivity. In the case of LM, the identitarian type of reflexive practice is primarily drawn upon. As shown in the interviews that are quoted in this article, this type of practice is used when individuals consciously question their goals and engage in reshaping their identity. In this way, their migration becomes a self-fashioning activity that is often at odds with their socio-cultural surroundings.

For LM research, using reflexivity as an analytical tool means analysing the reflexive practices of lifestyle migrants. Lifestyle migrants may vary in terms of how and in which ways they are reflexive. Distinguishing between three modes of reflexivity provides researchers with a potential tool to describe this variation. Furthermore, in order to understand the specificities of LM, this paper suggests distinguishing between subjective agency and reflexivity as two distinct phenomena. By stressing the uniqueness of their migration, some lifestyle migrants may show a strong belief in their agency; however, this belief does not equate with the possession of reflexive capabilities. Therefore, additional research is suggested in future in order to engage in a dialogue regarding how subjective agency affects lifestyle migrants.

Finally, analysing the reflexivity of migrants using these three reflexive practices provides a cross-cultural way to analyse reflexivity that removes the necessity of cultural boundary-making. Migrants from almost any context, whether Western or not, may engage in some of these types of reflexive
practices. This typology does not connect reflexivity to the presence of a certain type of self; rather, it recognizes that reflexivity can be practiced in diverse ways. This typology may also be used as a tool to compare the reflexive practices of lifestyle migrants with those of other types of migrants, and to thereby help to contextualize LM.

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140. Maarja Saar, *The Answers You Seek Will Never Be Found At Home: Reflexivity, biographical narratives and lifestyle migration among highly-skilled Estonians*, 2017
Reflexivity has received little attention, but it, along with other changes in contemporary societies, plays an increasingly important role in the decision to migrate. This thesis identifies various ways of operationalizing reflexivity that can be of use not only for lifestyle migration studies but for migration research in general.

Using highly-skilled Estonian migrants as an example, the relationship between migration, reflexivity and class is laid out. As a theoretical lens, this work relies heavily on reflexivity studies and, from migration studies, engages primarily with lifestyle migration research and studies on Eastern European migration.

Relying on the Estonian Household Module Survey and interviews, four arguments are made: 1. that there are increasing group differences within Estonian society that influence motivation for migration; 2. that the motivation for migration should be analyzed, in addition to class or ethnicity, from a socio-psychological perspective to challenge the very categories formed along the aforementioned lines; 3. that return migration research should focus more on identity-related factors as additional motivators rather than relying on the desire to return home as the predominant explanation; and 4. that reflexivity can be used as an analytical tool in lifestyle migration studies, dividing reflexivity into three practices: teleological, structural and identitarian reflexivity.

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