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“The grandiosity of tasks and mediocrity of tools”:

Confronting the transnational social question with mobile CEE citizens’ experiences in Sweden

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to the debate surrounding east-west intra-EU mobility, the transnational social question and European citizenship by uncovering often undervalued and stigmatized histories, experiences, and knowledge from the EU's central and eastern member states by highlighting the voices of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden. Taking a problem-driven, adaptive approach, this thesis draws on qualitative interviews—with twelve respondents representing Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Latvia, and Estonia—contextualized by official documents from the EU and Sweden, including a European Commission communication and press release, a report prepared by Sweden's National Board of Trade, and a letter from the EU Affairs ministers of Sweden, Finland, and Norway defending the freedom of movement. This is indicative of the broader purpose of this thesis to problematize 'the west' and focus on how the EU—and Sweden in particular—can follow through on their declared values by learning from the strategies mobile CEE citizens employ. Employing an overarching theoretical lens of coloniality, the thesis compares and contrasts the lived experiences of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden with norms promoted by the EU and Sweden; reveals the transnationality of the social question with the obstacles encountered by mobile CEE citizens; and exposes aspects of coloniality in the eastern enlargement and ongoing governance of the EU. In this way, the findings have implications for the future of European integration or (dis)integration.

Keywords: Transnational Social Question; Intra-EU Mobility; European Citizenship; European (Dis)integration; Coloniality; Decolonial Option

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“Parable”

Some fisherman pulled a bottle from the deep. It held a piece of paper, with these words: “Somebody save me! I’m here. The ocean cast me on this desert island. I am standing on the shore waiting for help. Hurry! I’m here!”

“There’s no date. I bet it’s already too late anyway. It could have been floating for years,” the first fisherman said.

“And he doesn’t say where. It’s not even clear which ocean,” the second fisherman said.

“It’s not too late, or too far. The island Here is everywhere,” the third fisherman said.

They all felt awkward. No one spoke. That’s how it goes with universal truths.

- Wisława Szymborska

I believe that the most awesome obstacle to finding the answers is our dilatoriness in seeking them.

- Zygmunt Bauman

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1. Introduction

But in our (selectively) globalized world, a playground of powers emancipated from political control and powerless politics incapable of controlling them, the gap between the grandiosity of tasks and mediocrity of tools to handle them and perform with them is widening. (Bauman 2016)

Zygmunt Bauman, an influential Polish sociologist and philosopher, said the above in response to an interview question about increasing fear and insecurity regarding migration in Europe, illustrating the complex and seeming hopelessness of the social aspect of European integration, migration, and mobility. Since its inception, Likic-Brboric asserts, the European Union (EU) has experienced tension between economic and social goals, which strengthened with the latest eastern enlargements¹ (2011; 2016). Despite the challenging nature of social inequalities, the EU continues to put social issues at the forefront of the agenda, as illustrated by the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth, hosted by Gothenburg, Sweden in November 2017. With unprecedented integrative efforts between nations pursuing the free movement of goods, capital, services, and persons, the EU has earned its *sui generis* label, with “European movers [...] seen as the champions of an ‘ever closer Union’” according to Recchi (2015, 45).

Dølvik maintains that the eastern enlargement in particular was an extraordinary initiative to allow free movement of goods, capital, services, and especially people, between states with wage gaps varying from 1:5 to 1:13 and corresponding differences in life chances. These disparities influenced a large outflow of people from central and eastern European (CEE)² states (Dølvik 2017, 1-2), leading to debates about *social tourism*. Despite this concern, Sweden was one of only three member states to immediately open their labor market to CEE citizens in 2004, and the only one to have no transitional rules for the inclusion of new EU citizens in the welfare state (Gerdes and Wadensjö 2016, 124). By 2013, Zabransky and Amelina report, 113,080 CEE individuals came to Sweden, and to the UK and Germany—who received the largest percentage—came 1,039,560 and 1,195,107, respectively (2017, 2). CEE migration is only a small portion of total migration to Sweden, with allegedly very small

¹ Following the example set by Böröcz (2001, 47), throughout the thesis lowercase references are used when referring to European regions—such as eastern and western Europe—and the eastern enlargement. Additionally, ‘distancing ellipses’ for terms such as ‘the west’ are utilized when appropriate.

² For the purposes of this thesis, CEE member states and citizens refer to those who joined the EU in 2004 (excluding Malta and Cyprus), 2007, and 2013: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia.

effects on wages and unemployment rates, though, due to economic growth at present, migration to Sweden will likely increase. Gerdes and Wadensjö (2016) maintain that for the time being, it seems there is political and public support for keeping the Swedish labor market open.

A main contribution of this thesis is to expand the consideration of east-west intra-EU mobility beyond *labor* and the traditional push-pull factors and acknowledge the changing nature of mobility to include various other reasons. Therefore, the perspectives of mobile CEE *citizens*, rather than *workers*, are the key focus for this thesis, and make up the interview respondents for this thesis.³ Furthermore, the term *mobile citizen* is used rather than *migrant*, following Bridget Anderson's contention that "there is something about the term migrant that signifies *problematic mobility*" (Sager 2018, 99). In this way, rather than investigate the economic impact of labor migration (a common approach of EU mobility studies), this thesis instead considers how the transnationality of the social question is revealed by the experiences of mobile CEE citizens. Thus, mobile CEE citizens are not the *object* studied; rather, the EU—and Sweden in particular—are problematized as neglecting to recognize the transnational aspect of the social question in Europe and failing to seek solutions on a transnational level.

In placing the critical lens on 'the west' and turning the unidirectional arrow (Gille 2010) away from CEE towards the EU (and Sweden), this thesis contributes to an often-overlooked phenomenon in European Studies—namely, the colonial past and ongoing power matrix of inequalities within the EU. Böröcz, one of the few scholars to make such a connection, focuses on western Europe's colonial past and its impact on CEE, using the concept *coloniality* to go beyond postcolonialism and focus instead on the "fixed system of inferiorized otherness" (2001, 21). Applying Böröcz and Gille's arguments in tandem allows this thesis to place the onus of change on 'the west' by exposing the coloniality that developed from a history of wealth and power, and the ongoing threat it poses to EU integration and the free exercise of European citizenship. Thus, this thesis recognizes that migration and mobility are not the *cause* of economic and social problems, but rather the inequalities mobile CEE citizens encounter are a *symptom* of the coloniality inherent in the EU. Bridget Anderson supports this approach by stating that "a lens of mobility can help us

³ Though eleven out of twelve respondents are employed, only one moved to Sweden out of a *need* for better work.

to approach an analysis” that is less about migrants and more about decreasing the “divide between citizens and migrants” (Sager 2018, 101).

With increasing discord between member states, one withdrawal from the Union, and the growth of populism and far-right politics in both western and CEE member states, it becomes ever more urgent to acknowledge the historical power asymmetries within Europe and their ongoing effects in order to protect the future of European integration. This illuminates not only the relevance of this thesis’ contribution to European Studies, but also the urgency of conducting such a study. To use Szymborska’s adept words from her poem “Parable”, “*It’s not too late, or too far*” to confront the disparities of opportunities and life chances between EU citizens, acknowledge that freedom of movement and European citizenship rights should be truly universal, and strengthen the toolset needed to embrace the grandiosity of the transnational social question.

1.1 Research Question Formulation

The overarching aim of this thesis is *to actualize the transnational social question by exposing aspects of coloniality in the eastern enlargement and ongoing governance of the EU, by highlighting the lived experiences of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden.*

In order to pursue this aim, the following research questions are formulated:

- 1) *How do the experiences of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden compare or contrast with the norms promoted by the EU and Sweden regarding European citizenship, particularly the freedom of movement?*
- 2) *How is the transnational social question revealed by the obstacles and strategies mobile CEE citizens encounter and utilize in Sweden?*
- 3) *How can the lived experiences of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden expose aspects of coloniality within the EU and Sweden?*

1.2 Structure

The introduction establishes the background upon which this thesis is based, elucidating the various spheres of influence on the continuing inequalities within the EU, and formulates the guiding aim and research questions. The following sections begin with a theoretical framework built with previous research and theoretical concepts from a number of research fields. This is followed by a discussion of the research design and methodological considerations, including the focus and scope of the thesis, the approach taken to data

collection, the methods employed, the analytic scheme developed for this thesis, and finally considerations of validity, reliability, and ethics. The results and analysis are then presented concurrently with theoretical reflections, followed by a concluding discussion of the analysis and general concluding remarks.

2. Previous Research and Theoretical Framework

Migration brings that inequality, that global inequality, into our society, forces us to confront it, and that is what is scary about it. And that is why it has become such a tough issue, because it is not really about immigration. It is about global inequality. (Anderson *quoted in* Sager 2018, 105)

Timmermans and Tavory promote the discovery of new theories, including innovatively modifying or extending existing theories when ‘existing theoretical frameworks’ fail to frame the findings (2012, 173). This thesis does not highlight intra-EU mobility as a *problem*, but rather utilizes it as an example that illuminates an underlying mentality of economic prioritization and western ‘universality’. Therefore, this thesis builds a unique theoretical framework by modifying the main approaches of previous research, in order to be used in conjunction and applied to the EU context.

First, previous research on the freedom of movement of persons in the EU is examined, including how this right is promoted by the EU and Sweden, and the changing motivations for mobility. During this discussion, concepts later used for coding and analysis are introduced and explained. Barbulescu (2017) provides a valuable overview of the changing attitudes towards free movement over time, but also illustrates the othering of CEE citizens that can take place. Faist et al. (2016), Samaluk (2016a), and Likic-Brboric (2011) complement Barbulescu’s overview by illustrating further the approaches different member states take to free movement. Faist (2014; 2017) and Carling (2008) together add another dimension by considering obstacles and strategies that transnational migrants experience, and that contribute to the transnational social question. Böröcz’s research supports the decision to limit the consideration to inequalities between western and CEE member states by illuminating the historical power asymmetries between the regions. Kuus (2004) complements this approach by describing the ongoing othering of CEE. Kuus and Böröcz’s contributions, together with Maldonado-Torres (2007), support the strategy of this thesis to consider *coloniality*, a concept that transcends the specific socio-cultural conditions of colonialism from which it emerged and is embedded in all aspects of society. Furthermore, Tlostanova and Mignolo’s (2009) concept *rhetoric of modernity* is directly relevant to the eastern enlargement and also complements Böröcz’s assertion of coloniality in the ongoing governance of the EU. Samaluk (2016a), Kuus (2004), and Gagyí (2016) reinforce this argument by highlighting different aspects of member state complicity in what Quijano (2000) terms ‘coloniality of power’. These arguments lead to the *decolonial option* as a way

forward. Mignolo's (2007) argument of *de-linking* from any 'universal' option and Samaluk's (2016b) assertion that non-western knowledge production is rarely recognized provide a foundation on which to strategize a future response to the ongoing social inequalities in the EU.

2.1 European Citizenship and the Free Movement of Persons

One of the most notorious sore spots of democratic regimes is the contradiction between the formal universality of democratic rights (accorded to all citizens equally) and the less than universal ability of their holders to exercise such rights effectively. (Bauman 2011, 13)

European citizenship involves certain rights and norms, which, according to Faist (2014; 2017), must be identified first to articulate inequalities. Revealing the obstacles mobile CEE citizens encounter in Sweden can bring awareness to norms by juxtaposing contrasting experiences. The idea of European citizenship, as well as the imagination and agency of mobile CEE citizens, is complicated by the changing debates and opinions surrounding the free movement of persons in the EU. Dølvik appeals for "more studies on the distributive effects of labour migration and the conditions under which it can contribute to reduce inequalities across and within countries" (2017, 14). This thesis combines this sentiment with Faist's (2014; 2017) assertion that not only the reduction of inequalities must be considered, but the extent to which labor migration (this thesis extends the consideration to all intra-EU mobility) can contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities.

Addressing this, Barbulescu asserts that "the best-kept secret on freedom of movement [is] its limits" (2017, 23). Barbulescu explains that the original right to free *movement for people* gradually came to be considered free *labor mobility for workers* (ibid., 20), revealing a mindset still in place today. With a growing number of member states seeking more control over who enters and stays, there are mounting challenges to mobility as a *right* for EU citizens. Though free movement is a formal right, the ability of mobile EU citizens to exercise it is progressively more about skills and competencies. While mobile EU citizens can *enter* another member state without the difficulties third-country nationals experience, in order to *stay*, they must be employed or self-sufficient (ibid., 23), revealing a prioritization of economic over social concerns. Faist et al. argue that a "discernible illiberal counter-trend" prioritizes skilled and economically productive migrants and marginalizes those who are not (2016, 91). According to Bridget Anderson, 'worker' status is crucial for not only access to benefits, but also to be considered a 'good citizen' (Sager 2018, 103), a notion which Samaluk maintains imposes the responsibility—or 'moral duty'—of market competition upon

individuals (2016a, 63). This continuing effort to create “the ‘employable’ economically responsible citizen”, according to Likic-Brboric, threatens European social citizenship and the welfare state’s role in upholding it (2011, 288). Though free movement and European citizenship rights have been a great triumph of the EU, Recchi maintains that it is not guaranteed and should not be taken for granted (2015, 153).

Dølvik acknowledges that research on intra-EU mobility was meager at the time of the 2004 enlargement, and he displays a much-needed analysis of the “dynamics, pattern and channels of intra-EU/EEA labour migration since 2004” (2017, 2). However, in maintaining that “the basic drivers of cross-border labour mobility are of economic nature” (ibid., 3) Dølvik’s focus is limited to *labor migration*, an all-too-common approach that neglects the increasingly diverse motivations for mobility. Recchi and Samaluk address this gap by bringing attention to the failure of traditional economic theory to value non-economic reasons (Recchi 2015) and acknowledging the “symbolic, cultural, and moral dimensions” of transnational migration (Samaluk 2016a, 62). According to Gerdes and Wadensjö, post-enlargement CEE migration to Sweden was not as large as that to the UK and Ireland, most likely due to knowledge of English and a higher labor demand. However, due to the lack of transitional rules, many mobile CEE citizens did choose Sweden, with the majority coming from Poland, followed by the Baltic states and Hungary (Gerdes and Wadensjö 2016, 125). Many came prior to the eastern enlargement as refugees and may have contributed to post-enlargement migration by networking with friends and family in their countries of origin. Of those arriving from CEE in recent times, most are in their twenties with high education, often higher than their Swedish counterparts (ibid., 125-130).

Another aspect of increasing intra-EU mobility relates to the EU’s pursuit of global competitiveness. According to Likic-Brboric (2016), this involves, among other things, the flexibilization of labor, which results in the increased use of external work providers. This strategy leads to increased precarity, lower working conditions, and “the transfer of business risks onto workers with non-standard employment contracts, such as temporary, part-time and self-employed” (Likic-Brboric 2016, 89). As member states continue to favor “a citizenship model that privileges individuals as bearers of human capital and makes a close connection between work, economic productivity and social justice” (Faist et al. 2016, 106), the disparities of life chances among EU citizens are maintained. Samaluk contends that the focus should transcend matters of equality and justice, questioning the ‘moral-political

norms' that justify such economic activity, and "how they legitimize unequal power relations and affect people's lives and agency" (2016a, 63). The lens of mobility reveals not only inequalities between western and CEE member states, but an underlying mentality of viewing east-west mobility as 'problematic'. This influences the ability of mobile CEE citizens to freely exercise their European citizenship rights. As inequalities are increasingly revealed by transnational interactions, the relevance of transnationality to the social question becomes clear.

2.2 The Transnational Social Question

One might wonder whether we are now on the verge of a new social conflict, this time on a transnational level and along various boundaries – not only in terms of class boundaries, that is, between capital and labour, but also increasingly in terms of difference, or features of heterogeneity such as gender, race, ethnicity, legal status, sexual orientation, religion and, last but not least, transnationality. (Faist 2014, 209)

Faist introduces the transnational social question as being the "perception and politicization of social inequalities between states against the background of demands for more social equality" (2014, 208-209). According to Faist, recognizing the "key social mechanisms"—e.g. hierarchization, exclusion, opportunity hoarding, and exploitation—is vital when ascertaining the underlying processes contributing to persistent social inequalities (ibid., 213). The concept *social mechanism* is not used to claim cause and effect, but rather as "a heuristic tool to better capture the *social processes*" producing and reproducing inequalities (Faist and Bilecen 2015, 287; emphasis added). Following Faist's description, *exclusion* results from the need for "affiliation" in order to access networks or jobs; *hierarchization* entails "job grading as qualified or unqualified"; *opportunity hoarding* involves the use of "support networks"; and *exploitation* involves "power asymmetries" (2014, 214). While mainly attributed by Faist to third-country nationals, this thesis seeks to identify how the social mechanisms are experienced by mobile CEE citizens in Sweden. Bilecen and Barglowski (2015) introduce the idea of *assemblages* of informal and formal social protection, presenting another social mechanism, *reciprocity*, to illustrate mutual help among networks. While mainly applied to family relationships in their research, this thesis applies it in the context of social networks. In addition to reciprocity, Bilecen and Barglowski maintain that some mobile individuals depend on formal social protection, while others rely on help from those 'left behind', and some seek contacts in the new society "with whom they can exchange protective resources (ibid., 208). They conclude that a background of increased mobility and transnational interactions increases social inequalities, which "are concealed if formal protection is understood as being available to all citizens and informal protection as

being equally distributed” (ibid., 211). Thus, the importance of considering informal networks and reciprocity is revealed.

Faist, Bilecen, and Barglowski’s extensive research on how cross-border migration and employment have intensified inequalities in Europe is complemented by Recchi’s (2015) contribution. Acknowledging the positive aspects of transnationality, Recchi introduces the concept *space-sets*. Recchi describes space-sets as “personal maps of the physically experienced world” (2015, 152), which can be a source of capital, but also potentially polarizing (ibid., 153). This complements Faist’s (2014; 2017) contention that transnational mobility and individual strategies can improve inequalities on an individual level but perpetuate greater social inequalities.

This thesis applies Carling’s (2008) concepts of asymmetry in tandem with the social mechanisms identified by Faist, to the perspective of east-west intra-EU mobility.⁴ Asymmetries of moralities, information and imagination, and resource inequalities, according to Carling, result from relationships between migrants and non-migrants. Carling utilizes a framework (Levitt and Nyber Sørensen 2004, *cited in* Carling 2008, 1455) of three experiential categories of transnational migration: 1) those who move, 2) those who stay and receive support, and 3) those who stay with no support. He expands his consideration to include migrants who do not have transnational interactions (Carling 2008, 1455). His framework overlooks another group, which this thesis addresses: native citizens of the host country who interact with the movers.

Asymmetrical moralities, according to Carling, develop from “experiences of leaving, being left, and (thinking about) returning” (2008, 1457). Resulting from these experiences are sometimes feelings of guilt or a sense of obligation to continue participating in the community left behind (ibid.). Asymmetries of imagination can be influenced by opinions in the host countries, which is supported by Samaluk’s assertion that social relations and real or imagined judgments can influence the self-judgements and actions of migrants (2016a, 67). This notion upholds the decision to further consider native citizens in addition to those Carling identifies. Lastly, resource inequalities among transnational movers is especially salient to this thesis, in that movement from poorer to wealthier countries, and resulting transnational interactions, “come to encapsulate the gross inequalities of the global economy”

⁴ Carling conceptualized these asymmetries with material from Cape Verdean migrants in the Netherlands.

(Carling 2008, 1467). A form of resource inequalities that Carling introduces but does not focus on—but is quite relevant for this thesis—is ‘cultural and linguistic competence’, which can affect relationships both with those left behind and in the host country (ibid.). Carling’s argument adds credence to the conceptualization of transnationality as not only a demarcation of difference (Faist 2014; 2017; Recchi 2015), but also as a source of social capital (Recchi 2015).

Asymmetries can maintain the divide between even spatially close individuals or groups (Carling 2008). Böröcz supports this view with the concept of *moral distance*, which is “the inferiorization of peripheral others” (2001, 23). In other words, because CEE is geographically close, “arguments based on irreconcilable cultural or civilizational differences and deep national essences” are relied on to maintain a distance despite spatial closeness (ibid., 24). These tendencies often underlie the ongoing political and public debate surrounding EU mobility. Undoubtedly a valuable contribution to this debate, Barbulescu’s argument nevertheless reveals this trend:

The impact on the ongoing contraction of freedom of movement rights is set to be higher for Southern Europeans. Unlike Central and Eastern Europeans, the young Spaniards, Italians, Portuguese or Greeks moving now to North-Western Europe have have [*sic*] grown up in a Europe in which mobility is free and is a defining feature of being in the EU. (2017, 27)

In rightfully reasoning that southern Europeans fear their mobility rights will be curtailed “when they need them the most” (2017, 28), rather than criticize the austerity measures they are ‘escaping’ (which are largely influenced by the member states they want to move to), Barbulescu instead insinuates the fault lies with *CEE* mobility (ibid., 27-28). Barbulescu maintains that freedom of movement is ‘more important’ for southern Europeans, who were “brought up in the Europe in which freedom of movement was beyond doubt” (ibid., 28). However, free movement, a foundational right of EU citizenship, was nevertheless largely delayed for CEE citizens, with the exception of the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Sweden⁵. The effects of this unequal treatment risk being overshadowed by stratifying the value of free movement among different EU citizens. These underlying tendencies to create moral distance between western and CEE citizens—revealing the underlying and persisting othering attitudes (Kuus 2004)—must be acknowledged if European citizenship is to be equally exercised by all EU citizens. In order to do this, the different historical contexts of western

⁵ The United Kingdom and Ireland imposed minor transitional rules, while Sweden imposed none (Gerdes and Wadensjö 2016, 124).

and CEE member states, and the ongoing power disparities, must be acknowledged. Thus, the relevance of theories on coloniality are illuminated for further discussion.

2.3 Coloniality in the EU

Any analysis of the European Union's behavior *vis-à-vis* the surrounding world should seriously consider two empirical expectations: (1) that the formation of the EU might in fact represent a global imperial strategy of sorts, and (2) that the specific histories of colonialism and empire, with their deeply coded and set patterns of inequality, hierarchy, exclusion and power—and especially their techniques pertaining to the projection of that power to the outside world—are reflected in a deep and systematic form in the socio-cultural patterns of the governmentality of the European Union. (Böröcz 2001, 14)

What sets CEE apart from other less wealthy member states are the historical differences between the western and CEE regions: one with a history of colonialism leading to “wealth, power, centrality and privilege” (Böröcz 2001, 15) and one that is “in some vague sense, recognized as European” (ibid., 16) but is consistently relegated to a negative stereotype (ibid., 18). This is supported by Kuus, who maintains that though the eastern enlargement expanded the actual borders of the EU, the “underlying dichotomy” of ‘western’ and ‘eastern’ Europe remain (2004, 473). Following Böröcz’s argument, the list of the EU’s member states at the time preceding the eastern enlargement “reads as a catalogue of the major colonial powers of the period of world capitalism” (2001, 11). Böröcz asserts that the ‘global social change’ moving outward from Europe instigated the global spread of capitalism. Not only did former colonizers have such great influence on spreading capitalism, but nine former-colonial powers—Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom—constituted *ninety percent* of the EU’s population⁶ (ibid., 11-13). This power disparity, created and increased by colonialism and the spread of global capitalism as a means of controlling and exploiting labor and production, has evolved into a ‘coloniality of power’ (Quijano 2000). This power matrix shapes all aspects of global society, according to Maldonado-Torres, including “culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production” (2007, 243).

Böröcz asserts that the reluctance of ‘the west’ to acknowledge the imperial practices relating to CEE, and the coloniality inherent in those mentalities, will “flourish, paradoxically, not in spite, but because of the absence of a specific colonial history” (2001, 35). Following this argument, moving beyond colonialism allows the consideration of coloniality in the eastern enlargement and ongoing east-west relations within the EU. Quijano asserts that despite the

⁶ Taken from 1998 data.

ending of political colonialism, the relationship between ‘western’ and ‘other’ cultures still involves domination of, among other things, “the imagination of the dominated” (2007, 169), supporting the notion of asymmetrical imaginations put forth by Carling (2008). Furthermore, Kuus explains how the eastern enlargement discourse included the “categorization of Europe into a fully European core and the not-yet-fully European Eastern Europe” who had to ‘learn’ or ‘adopt’ European norms (2004, 473-474). These notions become salient for the free exercise of European citizenship for mobile CEE citizens as they move west and have to negotiate stereotypes imposed by both those they left behind and at their destination.

Another aspect of domination evident in the eastern enlargement process is the persistent pursuit of capital accumulation which, according to Tlostanova and Mignolo, is a strategy of control “disguised by a rhetoric of progress, happiness, development and the end of poverty” (2009, 139). According to Mignolo, this ‘rhetoric of modernity’ is integral to the “practice of oppression, racial discrimination, [and] political concentration of power” (2007, 495), and according to Tlostanova and Mignolo is used to rationalize the “civilizing and developmental mission of modernity” (2009, 132-133). Illustrating this, Likic-Brboric maintains that the neoliberal perspective prevailed in the eastern enlargement due to the message of the “‘incontestable superiority’ of the logic of capital” (2011, 278). This “guise of modernisation”, according to Samaluk, placed the onus of ‘catching up’ on CEE (2016a, 65), and Kuus describes *Europeanization* as “a process in which the accession countries must prove that they are ‘willing and able’ to internalize Western norms” (2004, 477). According to Gagyi, characterizing the post-socialist transitions as ‘catching up’ to Europe “was a full-fledged racist project, part and parcel of the historical constellation of the global economic, political and symbolic hierarchy” (2016, 358).

Using Hungarian politics as an illustrative example, Gagyi demonstrates how both liberal and conservative political camps’ strategies are influenced by coloniality: “It is a case where frustration over global hierarchy, both symbolic and structural, is mobilized to propel systemic integration into the same hierarchy” (2016, 351). In this instance, both sides refer to western reactions—by either aligning or competing—to strengthen their ideological stance within the global hierarchy (*ibid.*, 357). This is supportive of Grosfoguel’s contention that peripheral states, in constructing ideologies of national identity, development, and sovereignty, are nevertheless influenced by their position within the global power matrix (2007, 220). The logic of coloniality is thus concealed by “the mythology about the

‘decolonization of the world’” (ibid.) which allows the perpetuation of the domination and exploitation of non-western cultures under the guise of progress and development by either efforts to ‘catch up’ to or compete with ‘the west’.

The references above illustrate the insidious and permeating nature of the ‘logic of coloniality’ (Mignolo 2007) in all aspects of society, and the urgent need to acknowledge this power matrix in order to value the voices and experiences that have heretofore been repressed. The eastern enlargement unambiguously pursued competition, unfettered movement of capital, deregulation of labor markets, and flexibilization of the labor force (Likic-Brboric 2016, 81). This affected the lives and agencies of mobile CEE citizens, according to Samaluk, by “extend[ing] market rules to other spheres of life” (2016a, 64). In order to address the prejudices towards CEE citizens, and asymmetries of life chances they experience, ‘the west’ must be problematized by acknowledging this rhetoric of modernity and logic of coloniality at work in the EU. Supporting this notion, Gille maintains that largely, “the arrow between *the global* and Eastern Europe remained unidirectional” (2010, 15; emphasis original). Exposing the connections and interdependencies between west and east (or in this case western and CEE member states) will, according to Gille, assist in *de-centering* and *particularizing* ‘the west’. Samaluk argues that applying this strategy to the “emerging struggles within the European periphery against the neoliberal-induced austerity” will help build solidarity (2016b, 113). Furthermore, a postcolonial critique (or in the case of this thesis, the lens of coloniality) exposes the binary thinking and coloniality in east-west relations and “makes us think about epistemology that keeps it alive” (ibid., 97). Samaluk seeks to overcome this (western) epistemology in her work, which “aims to provide a deeper understanding of the agency of moving post-socialist subjects” (ibid., 98). This thesis takes a similar approach in considering the agency of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden.

Emphasizing the need to break down binary thinking, Tlostanova and Mignolo propose a way forward:

And the decolonial option is an option among many already existing ones, struggling against the oppressions and abuses, against the ignorance of the rulers of the states and corporation managers and for the knowledge and wisdom of all those human beings, around the planet, that do not, cannot play the game, historically established by the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality. The de-colonial option starts by de-linking from that dream, or rather, a nightmare, and from the sanctified belief that there is only one game in town. (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009, 144)

Quijano asserts that ‘epistemological decolonization’ will allow for new methods of communication and exchange of cultures, experiences, and meanings, providing validation

for other rationalities (2007, 177-178). This addresses what Samaluk refers to as “the soft power of western academic ideologies and paradigms that rarely recognize knowledge production coming from post-socialist CEE” (2016b, 97). In the EU context, this is significant for CEE citizens who, with their different histories and experiences, can challenge the “‘naturalised’ and ‘ahistorical’ neoliberal morality” (Samaluk 2016a, 75). In this way, Mignolo explains, the concepts of *primitive* and *tradition* can be acknowledged not as “outside Europe and outside modernity”, or as something that came *before* modernity, but rather as a *construction* of the *rhetoric* of modernity (2007, 472). Following Grosfoguel’s argument, “this is not an essentialist, fundamentalist, anti-European critique” but rather a denouncement of *any* “sole epistemic tradition from which to achieve Truth and Universality” (2007, 212). Mignolo argues that the decolonial option differs from postcolonial theory in that it *de-links* rather than transforming “within the academy” (2007, 452). Thus, the decolonial option transcends disciplines, going beyond even *inter*-disciplinary thinking with the goal of “un-disciplining knowledge” (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009, 144).

3. Research Design and Methodology

The following sections begin by detailing the boundaries of the empirical inquiry. The approach of the thesis and the role of the researcher are then outlined, followed by a discussion of the choice of methods, including sampling strategies. Lastly, the validity, reliability, and ethical considerations are discussed.

3.1 Focus and Scope

Rather than narrowing to a specific group of CEE *workers*, the focus is instead on CEE mobile *citizens*. In this way, several motivations for mobility other than work can be entertained—such as education, family reasons, love, or just adventure—along with all types of employment and skill levels. Rather than focusing on specific discriminations, the social mechanisms of exclusion, hierarchization, opportunity hoarding, and exploitation outlined by Faist (2014; 2017) and Faist and Bilecen (2015) are utilized as guiding themes to explore larger, societal inequalities. Carling’s (2008) framework of asymmetries regarding moralities, imaginations, resource inequalities, and cultural and linguistic competences are also considered. These social mechanisms and asymmetries can be encountered in discriminatory ways or utilized as strategies; both types of experience—though the latter may reduce inequalities on an individual level—work to perpetuate greater inequalities (Faist 2014; 2017) between western and CEE member states. This thesis limits its consideration of the larger transnational social question—proposed by Faist (2014)—to an EU perspective. Faist and Bilecen acknowledge the value of this angle by concluding that future research limited to the EU could be “particularly interesting [...] because it is not only the poorer nation-states that serve as a point of reference for the subjective assessment of inequalities by migrants and non-migrants alike, but also the richer welfare states” (2015, 291). Thus, elements that Böröcz claims are imbedded in the EU’s governance—inequality, hierarchy, exclusion, and power (2001, 14)—are also utilized as guiding concepts.

3.2 Adaptive Methodological Approach

The pursuit of this thesis is not ‘emancipatory’—which, according to Layder, can make objectivity quite difficult to achieve (2013, 3)—but rather has the goal of problematizing ‘the west’ (Gille 2010). In other words, this thesis seeks not to ‘empower’ (Layder 2013, 3) CEE citizens or determine how they can further ‘integrate’ into Swedish society, but how Swedish society—and the EU—can follow through on their declared values, by learning from the

strategies mobile CEE citizens employ. Following Layder, an adaptive approach, which is “problem-driven rather than methods-driven” (2013, 70) will be utilized. This approach allows personal biases to be minimized, and knowledge production to be directed as much as possible by the interview respondents and relevant secondary material. Taking a flexible approach facilitates the discovery of successful strategies in addition to obstacles that mobile CEE citizens experience in Sweden, which can be highlighted and contribute to the debate surrounding the transnational social question. The adaptive approach incorporates both “explanatory” and “exploratory” objectives in a flexible strategy that adjusts to evolving ideas, concepts, and analysis (Layder 2013, 104). These characteristics, along with considering “social reality as interlinked social domains” (ibid.) make the adaptive approach particularly appropriate for the investigation of mobile CEE citizens’ experiences and negotiations of Swedish society. This approach is compatible with Wiesner et al.’s attitude towards the overarching research question, which they maintain is a cyclical process of revision, analysis, development, and confirmation (2017, 85).

3.2.1 Role of the Researcher

A main premise of my argument is that the ‘universality of the west’ and the binary logic of east/west must be eschewed. My status as a privileged Anglo-Saxon is therefore something to be considered. Quijano asserts that many disciplines demonstrate a ‘subject-object’ relationship between ‘the west’ and the ‘other’, and that studies that ‘objectify’ western societies are essentially non-existent (2007, 174). Therefore, my goal is to let CEE histories, experiences, and interpretations dictate the conclusions which I can draw. In juxtaposing the experiences of mobile CEE citizens with promoted norms and values, I as a researcher gain *some* objectivity, and thus distance myself from personal value claims and judgements. However, *total* objectivity is neither possible, nor desired, as one motivation for this thesis is to address social inequalities in the EU context—an inherently *moral* issue. As Wiesner et al. contend, “research is always a contribution to debate and, therefore, contains a political aspect” (2017, 60). They go further in asserting the only chance of contributing “something new and original” is by “constructing a highly one-sided profile of interpretation” (ibid., 64). Thus, these attempts at objectivity and distance are valuable not because they are achieved, but because they act as an instrument for *accountability*.

With the above in mind, the empirical and theoretical foundations are, as much as possible, developed with research from CEE perspectives, with support from other non-western

scholars as well. József Böröcz, who provides the theoretical foundation that motivates this thesis in connecting *coloniality* to the eastern enlargement and Zsuzsa Gille, largely influential in the pursuit of this thesis to problematize ‘the west’, are both from Hungary. Barbara Samaluk, originally from Slovenia, has exemplified the methodological strategy this thesis pursues in highlighting the voices of CEE citizens to illustrate greater social inequalities. Merje Kuus, contributing to understanding the persistent othering of CEE, is Estonian. Madina Tlostanova and Walter Mignolo, influencing the pursuit of the *decolonial option*, while not from CEE, are Russian and Argentinian, respectively. Anibal Quijano, who coined the term *coloniality of power*, is from Peru.

3.3 Methods, Sampling, and Implementation

The perspectives of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden are explored through interviews, seeking out how they perceive European citizenship rights, particularly free movement, and how these experiences bring awareness to norms promoted by the EU and Sweden. Official documents such as communications from the EU and Sweden provide contextual support to the interview findings.

3.3.1 Interviews

The main source of empirical material are qualitative interviews, upholding a main premise of this thesis to rely on CEE voices. The interviews are directed and problem-centered with an exploratory nature, open to new possibilities introduced by the respondents, who are mobile CEE citizens. According to Layder, what differentiates *directed* interviews from *semi-structured* interviews is “the problem-focused nature” of the questions (2013, 83). Pilot interviews utilized a thematic interview guide and suggested questions under each theme. During these interviews, it became apparent that pre-formulated questions did not allow the most spontaneous answers, and when the respondents were allowed to speak at length, with follow-up questions based on the topics they initiated, they shared the experiences that were important to them. This process resulted in a more open interview guide (Appendix 2). Kvale contends that “a good interview question” should address both thematic knowledge and foster a good atmosphere for communication (2007, 57). Therefore, while exploring the guiding themes of this thesis, the dynamics of the interview interactions were assessed, and efforts made to communicate with the respondent in a way that prioritized them feeling comfortable and valued. This “interpreting ‘as you go’” approach provides the opportunity to begin

analysis already in the interview situation (ibid., 102) and is compatible with the adaptive approach.

The sampling process included personal connections and online forums. Email templates (Appendix 1) were utilized online. Following the adaptive approach, problem sampling, as outlined by Layder, was pursued, emphasizing the “*relevance* to key problem-questions” (2013, 114; emphasis original). As the larger problem area is inequalities between western and CEE member states, rather than specific discriminations of individuals, the interview respondents were not limited or stratified by citizenship, profession, sector, skill level, or gender.⁷ This follows a main premise of problem sampling: selecting respondents based on their potential to contribute pertinent information to the research aim (Layder 2013, 119). The following criteria were used to limit respondents:

- Forty-years-old or younger.
- Arrived in Sweden after their country of origin joined the EU.⁸

Rather than limiting the consideration to one nationality, the focus is on common obstacles mobile CEE citizens in all types of employment and with various skill levels face in Sweden. Prioritizing and valuing CEE voices complements the “theoretically informed” nature of problem sampling and its goal of discovering “new perspectives” (Layder 2013, 121). Despite the flexible nature of problem sampling, Layder stipulates it needs a concrete starting point of using known concepts to instigate data collection. Thus, the initial “exploratory premise” (ibid., 127) of the interviews consisted of Faist’s four social mechanisms explored against the backdrop of the coloniality in east-west relations in the EU but was still flexible to developing ideas and unforeseen data collection.

Ten initial respondents (Appendix 3) were interviewed, at locations of their request. A room at the University of Gothenburg was offered, which some accepted; others chose to meet near their home or conduct the interview via video chat. As the goal was to allow the direction of the interviews to be largely determined by the respondents, with a minimum amount of guidance to remain within the themes, these location requests were accommodated. These initial ten interviews were conducted between 24 January 2018 and 27 March 2018 and

⁷ By happenstance, all interview respondents had at least some higher education, with the majority holding at least one higher university degree. Purposefully limiting respondents to those with higher education could serve to increase attention to experienced disparities.

⁸ Thus, respondents needed to arrive in Sweden after 2004 for citizens of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia; after 2007 for citizens of Bulgaria and Romania; and after 2013 for citizens of Croatia.

ranged between 21–52 minutes, resulting in 5.96 total hours of interview time and 39,029 words of transcription. Two follow-up interviews were conducted on 10 and 11 April 2018 and together were 97 minutes long; due to time constraints, only relevant portions were transcribed. The follow-up respondents (Appendix 3) were sought from the academic community in order to provide a perspective on theoretical developments (following Timmermans and Tavory’s (2012) recommendations) from the point of view of mobile CEE citizens who are established in Sweden.⁹ Manually transcribing the interviews allowed the social and emotional nuances of the situations to be maintained (Kvale 2007, 95), which aided in the subsequent analysis. Since the focus of the interviews was to gain knowledge about life experiences, strict adherence to relaying every overlap, silence, or intonation was not deemed necessary; however, to the extent that I interpreted these things as meaningful or purposed, they were included. Otherwise, transcriptions were kept as precise as possible.

3.3.2 Documents

The analysis of documents has largely the same problem-centered motivation as the interviews. In order to emphasize the interviews—and thus CEE perspectives and voices—documents are utilized as secondary sources for contextual support of the interview findings. Following Wiesner et al.’s contention, the documents analyzed for this thesis are seen “as parts, and as arenas and reflections, of political activity and political processes, strategies and actions” (2017, 59). Therefore, the documents themselves are public communications, press releases, or representations of how the EU and Sweden promote their norms and values to mobile EU citizens. In this way, the lived experiences of interview respondents are explored together with what they could reasonably expect to encounter in Sweden based on these public communications. As such, “theoretical relevance” played a more important role than potential “representativeness” (ibid., 88) in selection of the following documents:

- Communication: “Free movement of EU citizens and their families: Five actions to make a difference.” (European Commission 2013)
- Press Release: “Fairness at the heart of Commission's proposal to update EU rules on social security coordination.” (European Commission 2016)
- Letter from the EU Affairs Ministers of Sweden, Finland and Norway: “In times of crisis, we must safeguard free movement.” (Financial Times 2014)
- Report: “Moving to Sweden – Obstacles to the Free Movement of EU Citizens.” (Kommerskollegium 2014)

⁹ These respondents, both Polish, moved to Sweden before Poland joined the EU.

As part of the consideration is how Sweden promotes these norms for individuals with non-Swedish origin—and the access these same individuals have to information about Sweden—the search was limited to documents available in English. Interestingly, it was difficult to find recent documents in English addressing social rights for non-Swedish individuals in Sweden. The letter was addressed to the EU institutions, and was thus in English, while the Kommerskollegium report is an edited version of a report in Swedish completed the previous year.

3.4 Abductive Analytic Scheme

The analytic scheme developed for this thesis draws from several researchers (Layder 2013; Kvale 2007; Tracy 2012; Wiesner et al. 2017; Timmermans and Tavory 2012). First and foremost, an abductive approach is taken in the analysis. According to Timmermans and Tavory, the goal of abductive analysis is *theory construction*, founded on cultivating surprising findings “against a background of multiple existing sociological theories and through systematic methodological analysis” (2012, 169). Thus, the theoretical framework of this thesis was consistently revisited and adjusted. Bricolage and *theoretical reading* allow the flexibility to freely and unsystematically utilize various techniques and incorporate discoveries together with reflections on theory into a continuous text, according to Kvale (2007, 115-118). This approach—much like that employed by Samaluk (2016a; b)—is pursued here as well. Furthermore, the process of discovery, interpretation, and double-checking with more data (Timmermans and Tavory 2012, 168) is conducive to this approach.

Kvale acknowledges that considerable knowledge and interpretive experience are needed for a completely unsystematic approach (2007, 117). Accordingly, Layder’s adaptive approach—flexible but with a structured beginning point—is utilized. Rather than pursuing an open strategy of reading through and identifying code labels along the way, Layder suggests an initial approach of applying pre-defined, theory-based labels, rather than developing codes from the data. This strategy does not exclude the possibility of *emergent codes* arising after the initial stages of analysis (Layder 2013, 131). The analysis thus incorporates *orienting concepts* as coding labels. According to Layder, orienting concepts are well connected to previous studies and should be analytic guides through social processes and behavior (ibid., 134). The interviews are analyzed utilizing *orienting concepts* based on four social mechanisms relating to cross-border inequalities—exclusion, hierarchization, opportunity hoarding, and exploitation—identified by Faist (2014; 2017); three types of asymmetries—

morality, information and imagination, and resource inequalities—identified by Carling (2008); elements of coloniality in EU governance—inequality, hierarchy, exclusion, and power—identified by Böröcz (2001); and other theoretically derived concepts. Table 1 presents the guiding themes for organizing the analysis with the theoretical basis—including orienting concepts—drawn from the preceding framework.

Table 1: Themes with Theoretical Basis

Norms	This theme encompasses the increasingly varied non-economic reasons for mobility (Recchi 2015) and the transnational aspects of <i>citizenship</i> (Faist et al. 2016). Concepts of <i>moral distance</i> (Böröcz 2001) and asymmetric <i>morality</i> and <i>imaginings</i> (Carling 2008) shed light on how the experiences of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden compare and contrast with promoted norms.
Obstacles and Strategies	Depending on whether they are imposed on them or utilized by them, several concepts can manifest as either obstacles or strategies, such as <i>opportunity hoarding</i> (Faist 2014; 2017), <i>cultural and linguistic competence asymmetries</i> , and <i>resource inequalities</i> (Carling 2008). When experienced as obstacles, these can contribute to <i>exclusion</i> (Faist 2017). <i>Space-sets</i> can also be a source of strategic social capital but are also potentially polarizing (Recchi 2015).
Coloniality	A persisting <i>market bias</i> (Likic-Brboric 2011; 2016) contributes to limiting free movement (Barbulescu 2017). A <i>rhetoric of modernity</i> (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009) is used to justify the <i>hierarchization</i> and <i>exploitation</i> (Faist 2017) of mobile CEE citizens and also perpetuates the <i>inequality, hierarchy, exclusion, and power</i> inherent in the EU’s governmentality pattern (Böröcz 2001).

Orienting concepts in italics.

Coding of the transcriptions involved manually writing the orienting or emergent concept next to the relevant excerpt. This was done several times, with a revisiting of theory after each iteration, following Timmermans and Tavory’s (2012) approach to theory construction through abductive analysis. Supporting this, Tracy maintains that consistently reconsidering the codes and their descriptions helps to prevent ‘definitional drift’ (2012, 190). Additionally, she maintains that the “best direction of the analysis” should be reassessed along with the research questions after preliminary coding, incorporating literature that creates new perspectives (ibid., 191-193). Tables 1 and 2, as well as the theoretical framework, represent the final results of this iterative approach of this thesis.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

According to Layder (2013), mixing methods increases validity and reliability; thus, the interviews, though emphasized, are supplemented by documentary analysis in a contextually supportive role. Tracy explains that “reliable studies are those that can be replicated in exactly the same way, no matter who is conducting the study” (2012, 228). This thesis, as a

qualitative—and largely interpretive—study, cannot be ‘exactly’ replicated. Thus, the reliability of this thesis is contributed to with precise transcriptions (Timmermans and Tavory 2012) and transparent reporting for both theoretical and methodological development. The generalizability of this study was considered, in that *common* experiences among the respondents were relied on. Though the respondent base was small, repeated obstacles and strategies lend credence to the conclusion that it would be a common experience among similar individuals. Furthermore, the documentary analysis provides corroborating evidence for several of the findings.

It should be acknowledged that all respondents are from Gothenburg, though several have experiences not only in other Swedish cities, but also other western member states. Layder asserts that extending a sample beyond one sub-site is not always essential, but researchers “should be aware of the relevance of possible sub-sites to an overall grasp of your problem or topic” (2013, 118). Considering Gothenburg is a large city with a strong industrial and manufacturing presence, the findings could differ from other large cities and would most probably differ from rural areas as well. However, since the design of this study is to develop strategies to address inequalities based on the experiences of mobile CEE citizens, the only danger seems to be that certain types of experiences are missed. A larger, more extensive study could remedy this.

Due to the cross-cultural nature of the interviews, considerations were made concerning varying levels of English and the use of a translator, following Kvale’s (2007) recommendations. However, since the analysis is not focused on linguistics or language usage—and instead considers stories—language disparities are not necessarily a problem to be overcome. Ideally, a personal translator would not be used, but in one case where the respondent felt more comfortable with his spouse translating, it was deemed that access was more important than the possible bias, especially considering it was in many ways a shared story.

3.5.1 Ethical Considerations

According to Tracy, *procedural ethics* entails doing no harm, refraining from deception, obtaining informed consent, and safeguarding confidentiality (2012, 243). Thus, all respondents for this thesis were assured that their names and any employers names would be kept confidential. A verbal agreement included the option to change their mind or ‘take back’ anything they felt uncomfortable with. Several respondents asked to receive the final thesis,

and I agreed. Thus, an additional level of accountability was obtained. As the goal of this thesis is not to disparage either mobile CEE citizens or the EU and Sweden, but to develop positive strategies for the future, *relational ethics* was particularly important. In this way, respecting and valuing the respondents “as whole people rather than as just subjects from which to wrench a good story” (ibid., 245) was prioritized, as well as acknowledging that my status as an American could have some emotional influence.

4. Results and Analysis

The following sections present the results of this thesis interwoven with theoretical considerations and analysis, and a discussion of how the findings answer the research questions. Several orienting concepts used for the analysis can have negative or positive manifestations, or both at the same time; thus, the danger of preconceived conclusions is minimized. However, many of the concepts are adapted from their original applications—notably by applying them only to mobile CEE citizens within the EU—and manifest differently from the original conceptualizations. In order for clarity and transparency regarding this different usage, Table 2 presents the overarching themes and clarifies which concepts are associated with each by providing examples from the interviews of how they manifest in the experiences of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden. Using the themes identified in Tables 1 and 2, the following three sections address the norms regarding mobility and European citizenship; the obstacles mobile CEE citizens encounter in Sweden and the strategies they utilize to overcome them; and the aspects of coloniality that are exposed by these experiences.

Table 2: Orienting Concepts with Examples from Interview Analysis

Theme	Concept	Examples
Norms	Mobility	Non-economic reasons for moving were the majority among respondents.
	Citizenship	To many, European citizenship was mostly about easy travel.
	Asymmetric Moralities	The desire to return to country of origin to “change things.”
	Asymmetric Imaginations	Feeling unaccepted when returning to country of origin.
	Moral Distance	Shunning conservative or traditional views; Enduring CEE stereotypes.
	[Self-Distancing]	Actively distinguishing oneself from stereotypes or differences between Sweden and countries of origin.
Obstacles and Strategies	[Front-Desk Officials]	Those in a position to help often either do not know how to help, or do not express care.
	Cultural and Linguistic Competence	These competencies have led some to jobs or proven helpful in navigating social interactions.
	Resource Inequalities	Access to information, networks, or assistance varies among individuals.
	Exclusion	Lack of connections needed to secure jobs and other opportunities.
	Opportunity Hoarding	Prioritized inclusion of members of one’s own social group.
	Space-sets	Using knowledge or connections built outside of Sweden to gain advantage.
Coloniality	Market Bias	Emphasis on self-sufficiency; Employment contract required for personal number.
	Hierarchization (of individuals)	Provision of cultural and linguistic training to higher skilled or recruited workers.
	Exploitation	The misuse of traineeships and temporary contracts.
	Rhetoric of Modernity	Feeling that freedom of speech is limited to liberal views and that conservative opinions are ‘wrong’.
	[Precarity]	Individuals ‘stuck’ in temporary and fill-in jobs.
	Inequality (between member states)	Poor labor markets and/or corruption in countries of origin.
	Hierarchy (of member states)	Upheld by CEE countries wanting to compete with ‘leading countries’, thus acknowledging the hierarchy.
	Unequal Power	CEE countries accepting unwanted outcomes for the greater benefits (e.g. financial help).
Exclusion (of member states)	Evidence of this was not found. Likely, this applies more to candidate countries.	

Emergent concepts in brackets.

4.1 Norms

Sweden, despite their reputation for social equality and generous social benefits, also displays an attitude towards free movement that favors labor and market competition. The ministers for EU affairs of Sweden, Finland, and Norway wrote a letter to the EU institutions defending freedom of movement. It states the following:

We need to make sure that we use the full potential of a continent of half a billion people. [...] In times of increased global competition, access to the entire EU and EEA population is an asset for European companies. [...] Furthermore, mobile EU citizens help the host country's economy to function better by alleviating skills shortages and labour market bottlenecks. (Financial Times 2014)

Upon reading this, the focus seems not on the rights, freedoms, and opportunities of individual citizens, but rather on the benefit to companies and national economies. A communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions entitled, *Free movement of EU citizens and their families: Five actions to make a difference* (hereafter referred to as the *five actions communication*), states that “the main motivation for EU citizens to make use of free movement is work-related, followed by family reasons” (European Commission 2013, 3). This statement obfuscates that while mobility may be ‘work-related’, it is often not the primary reason. Traditional economic reasons are increasingly less motivating for migration (Recchi 2015), even in east-west intra-EU mobility. When work *is* a motivating factor, it is often intertwined with “symbolic, cultural, and moral dimensions” (Samaluk 2016a, 62). Recchi and Samaluk’s arguments are bolstered by the findings: three respondents left well-paid, stable jobs and lowered their immediate opportunities in order to prioritize their personal relationships; other respondents used continuing education as a staying strategy. Claiming that ‘work-related’ reasons are the ‘main motivation’ ignores the situation that, since employment is required in order to *stay* in another member state, ‘work-related’ activities are not necessarily a *choice*. One respondent who moved to Sweden to join her boyfriend, who himself had moved to Sweden earlier, described her situation:

I had a good job in Romania, I was just climbing on the hierarchical companies, and had a good position. [...] The professional part, it was so very difficult to get a job at the same level I left in Romania. (Romanian, financial analyst, female, 37)

Among the interview respondents, only one moved to improve his employment situation, and there were emotional aspects tied in with that as well: “*He longed for it. He was keen to come to Scandinavia. And then he was lucky, that he got the chance to come here*” (Hungarian, construction worker, male, 38; translated by spouse). This respondent’s wife, who moved to Sweden two years afterwards to join him, also left a good career:

I worked for a multinational company [...] and well, I really liked it. But working for a multinational company, it's also [a] stressful life. So, [on] one side I really regret it, but on the other side, absolutely not. And now, this is leisure time for us, because I quit my job. (Hungarian, mother/unemployed, female, 37)

The only other male among the initial respondents moved to Denmark immediately after high school to study abroad, and received a job offer from a Swedish company with whom he had collaborated for his master's thesis. Among the eight women in the initial respondents, six moved to be with boyfriends or *sambos*¹⁰ (three were Swedish, two shared the nationality of the women, and one was Spanish). Of the two remaining, one completed her PhD in Denmark and secured a job in Sweden before moving, and the last had a master's degree from Poland in Scandinavian Studies and came alone to learn the Swedish language and culture more. This respondent, though moving to find a job, did not *need* better work, and in fact had a comfortable, enjoyable job that she felt confident she could return to. She simply moved to Sweden because she *wanted* to. The two follow-up respondents, both Polish, completed exchange studies and moved to Sweden for paid PhD opportunities *before* Poland joined the EU. Even though economic reasons factored in—Sweden provides paid PhD positions; Poland does not—other factors such as family connections played a role in the choice. One of these respondents said, “*We chose to move here—nobody forced us—there was not, in any sense, a forced migration. [...] We could have lived wherever*” (Polish, lecturer, female, 39).

These findings are incongruent with the bias towards *labor mobility* that both the EU and Sweden demonstrate. A European Commission press release (2016), “Fairness at the heart of Commission's proposal to update EU rules on social security coordination” states that it “reflects the *political* commitment of the Commission to fair *labour mobility*” (emphasis added). Additionally, it includes a statement from the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen:

Free movement is a fundamental right of our Union cherished by its citizens. It brings benefits to *workers, employers* and the *economy* at large, helping tackling *labour shortages* and *skills gaps*. We need *labour mobility* to help restore *economic growth* and *competitiveness*. But mobility needs to be based on clear, fair and enforceable *rules*. (European Commission 2016)

Thyssen claims that this update “safeguards free movement and protects citizens' rights” (ibid.); however, the italicized words in the above quote indicate a strong bias towards

¹⁰ The Swedish word *sambo* is used here because there is no appropriate English translation. In English, domestic partner status requires legal registration, and cohabitant status is not official and has no rights attached to it. In Sweden, cohabitants with *sambo* status are legally recognized and entitled to most of the rights of married couples.

member state rights and market competitiveness, rather than *citizens'* rights and social safety, despite the fact that 'social affairs' are in her area of responsibility. This upholds Likic-Brboric's (2016) contention that the flexibilization of labor is prioritized over individuals' security, Faist et al.'s (2016, 106) assertion that member states conflate "work, economic productivity and social justice", and Samaluk's (2016a) argument that a responsibility for market competition is imposed on individual citizens.

The *five actions communication* states that "free movement is the EU Treaty right which citizens value the most and see as the most important achievement of EU integration. It goes to the heart of Union citizenship" (European Commission 2013, 13). This attitude towards European citizenship was mirrored in several of the respondents who praised the lack of passport controls and trips to embassies. For example, one exclaimed, "*I remember how I was treated crossing boundaries before that, you really show them your passport, being questioned. And then the opening was an amazing thing. [...] This was an immense shock. What?! No borders? No guards? Amazing!*" (Polish, researcher, male 39). One respondent reported travel as the only influence on her European identity, while another acknowledged the greater sense of freedom and opportunity beyond just being able to travel:

I got [Swedish citizenship] as soon as I could, yes. My thinking behind was that I wanted to have freedom to choose, and I was afraid that maybe European Union would collapse. [...] I don't have to say no to my Polish origin—and still have the choice of freedom in the future. [...] I'm a new generation of Polish people that have been brought up with a different view. Our parents, they have always dreamt about traveling to the west. They didn't have those possibilities, so I see my generation as people who fulfill their dreams. And, getting access to things that they've never had access to. (Polish, customer service provider, female, 38)

This excerpt illustrates the danger of assumptions like Barbulescu's (2017) that free movement is less important for CEE citizens; indeed, this perspective might indicate that it is even more life-changing for the new generation of CEE citizens. The embrace of free movement is intertwined with what Samaluk terms "discourses about the West" influencing the strategies mobile citizens employ (2016a, 62). These discourses can also change the imaginations of those 'left behind', especially about family or friends who left. One respondent reported such an experience, and said, "*even when I come back to Bulgaria, people don't accept me as Bulgarian anymore, to be honest*" (Bulgarian, freelance video editor, female, 33). One respondent illustrates the complexity of European citizenship beyond free movement:

I'm about to apply for Danish citizenship, because I can have it now. And sometimes I'm just thinking to get rid of the Romanian one, to some, like—but there are days when I want to move back and change things, like, with the new mindset that I have. “*Okay, things are different there, and you don't have to be like this, and we can make things easier.*” But, then it's like fighting with windmills. I see there that if it's not a collective thinking, then it's hard to change things. (Romanian, programmer, male, 27)

His experience in other countries has revealed to him the greater societal inequalities between his CEE home country and his western host countries, supporting Carling's (2008) argument that transnational mobility can contribute to asymmetric moralities. Another respondent expressed a similar sense of obligation to return to ‘change things’, one aspect Carling contributes to asymmetric moralities:

People look at you a bit like—I don't know, maybe it's because they're jealous or because you don't live there anymore, they don't accept you—because you don't face the same problems, maybe, that they face every day. But I think, in the recent years, I've been more involved into Bulgaria's problems and politics and stuff like that, so I know a lot about—much more than before—about what's going on in Bulgaria, and I try to be quite active. [...] The more I go, the more I'm like, ah, maybe I should go back to Bulgaria. Because, yeah, I think the older I become, the more I'm thinking I need to go back home. (Bulgarian, freelance video editor, female, 33)

This respondent also acknowledged how her mobility influenced the imaginations of those she ‘left behind’ and how the attitudes she experienced in her home country influenced her feelings of obligation, upholding Carling's argument, and also providing evidence for Samaluk's claim that “actual or imagined judgements by others” influences self-judgements and actions (2016a, 67). Yet another respondent said, “*I feel a little bit like I should do something about it, try, but it's easier to avoid it. You know? If I have to be honest*” (Polish, sound interaction designer, female, 31), expressing feelings of obligation, but also a sense of futility. These manifestations of asymmetric moralities (Carling 2008) reveal that benefits to individuals from transnational mobility can also lead to negative outcomes, e.g. feelings of guilt or sadness. In a way, these experiences can be seen to increase these respondents' space-sets—discussed more in the next section—and additionally supports Recchi's (2015) assertion that these space-sets can be polarizing.

The juxtaposition of positive and negative aspects of transnational mobility, as maintained by Faist (2014; 2017) and Recchi (2015), are highlighted in a different way by another respondent, who expressed gratitude for the positive aspects of joining the EU. She was exposed as a student to an EU-funded program that brought students from different countries together in Brussels. Despite this positive, life-changing experience, she nevertheless acknowledged the less positive aspects for her home society, reinforcing Faist's (2014; 2017)

position that while individual inequalities may be lessened, societal inequalities tend to persist:

What the European Union did at that time really brought a certain result in my life as an individual. Although I do not see it only in a positive manner—also negative. For example, that I left the country, I left my parents, I live far away from my family. So, all those very precious bonds have been—I don't want to say destroyed—but have been weaker because of that. (Polish, customer service provider, female, 38)

A further experience that can shape mobile CEE citizen's strategies is when moral distance (Böröcz 2001) is imposed by the host society or native individuals. The excerpt below reveals an experience of this moral distance being encountered, and the efforts the respondent had to take to combat it:

Some other guy at university [...] he has a particular name that was a foreign—of course [they say] “*no, it's a strange name.*” So, he changed the name to usually Jonsson, Svensson, you know, and then he got three interviews. And when I heard that, I was, “*Oh my god, can it be this?!*” Ok. So, I changed a lot on my CV. I took away countries. I took away cities [...] and applied. So, I think, after I made these differences, I was called to interview much more often, and even get—even though during the interviews you get, “*Where is this background from?*” and so on. “*This company, I don't recognize, what's the name of it? I don't remember having it in Sweden.*” So, you can't lie, you don't even *want* to lie, but of course it was a tipping point for me. I took away and tested and tried. So, for me, with my country, region, the name of the city, people were a little bit skeptical, I suppose, and they didn't talk to me. [...] And, it tested for me, to be invited to an interview where I could present myself, my skills. You see? I'm not so strange as my CV can look. So, don't be afraid. Just give me the job, give me the opportunity to prove that I am as good as everyone. So, this is what I ask for. But, yeah, going there was difficult. You almost get depressed. You almost get depressed. (Romanian, financial analyst, female, 37)

Her experience provides evidence for Kuus's (2004) argument that othering practices towards CEE citizens is ongoing. The respondent above took active measures to hide her 'otherness' just to get the chance to be *considered*.

Often a moral distance (Böröcz 2001) is perceived without concrete discriminations, which can influence the self-identification of individuals. One respondent expressed the influence that enduring stereotypes, like those Kuus (2004) describes, can have:

It's a kind of burden, I would say so, to live as an immigrant. In a situation when you are from a group that is not so privileged. [...] It's a different thing when you come to Sweden and you're a Pole—a Polish person—and I think it's a different thing when you come to Sweden and you are American. I think so. [...] There is a certain stereotype in Sweden about people from East Europe. It's related to the time when we had Iron Curtain, when Sweden was extremely thriving and was a rich country—one of the richest countries in the world—and on the other side of the Baltic Sea, you had Poland. Communistic Poland, poor, very much destroyed. (Polish, customer service provider, female, 38)

Her use of the word *immigrant* to self-describe, even though EU policy does not categorize her as such, indicates the pervasiveness and persistence of the moral distance imposed between CEE and western member states and upholds Kuus's assertion that "the underlying dichotomy" between east and west remained despite EU enlargement (2004, 473). It also demonstrates an awareness of a different conceptualization of those coming from wealthier countries, such as the United States in her example.

In addition to imposed moral distance, such as that described by Böröcz (2001), several respondents (including the previous respondent who edited her CV) exhibited strategies to cope with enduring CEE stereotypes, which led to the emergent concept, *self-distancing*. For example, the excerpts below illustrate active efforts to self-distance from the common perception of CEE citizens as low-skilled workers or burdens on the system:

Some Polish people came to Sweden, to the south, you know, and they stole bicycles. Some Polish people worked in north also, picking up berries, at that time. And all those pictures, I mean, of course, for the time being, maybe they fade, but I remember that when I came to Sweden I had—I mean in some way, to deal with them. I got to know a little bit here and there about them, and of course I felt ashamed because of that. Somehow, I always try to, for the time being, show that I'm not one of these people that were *forced* to leave Poland, but that I have a choice, and education, and can always come back. I also make sure that I, somehow, kind of give the message that I had a good job before I left Poland. So, they don't think I'm here to steal a job from anyone else. Those things make that I feel better. I feel then more in place, I would say so, more self-confident. (Polish, customer service provider, female, 38)

I remember I had the need of distinguishing myself in this sense. And I remember my story when I talked to people and everybody just assumed that we came as the first wave of immigrants. And I was like, "No, we didn't. We came one year before, and that's a huge difference. Because the others were basically from the working class, and we were not. (Polish, lecturer, female, 39)

The only thing I remember is that *many* people went to UK to work. It was this boom. That's what I remember the most. We had this—in the back of your mind—"you should go, you should go, earn some more money." I was like, no, I will not go just to earn more money. [...] For me, it was a weird idea to go and clean someone's toilet during summer, I don't know. I know that someone needs to do it, but when you think of minorities in countries, I didn't want to be—I didn't want to be part of it, no, no. (Polish, sound interaction designer, female, 31)

The second excerpt (follow-up respondent) lends support to the self-distancing strategies, but also points to the possible distinction between the younger and older generations. Many respondents were in their twenties when they moved to Sweden and expressed the same feelings. These self-distancing attitudes sometimes entail an active stance of not being perceived as the 'other', supporting Quijano's (2007, 169) claim that "the imagination of the dominated" is influenced by the ongoing relationship between 'the west' and 'the other'. For

some (e.g. the last excerpt above) the self-distancing actions began even before moving, showing an awareness of not only the dichotomy between east and west that Kuus (2004) describes, but also—and perhaps more significantly—between poor/unskilled and privileged/skilled. This provides evidence for Likic-Brboric’s (2011, 288) argument that the EU’s prioritization of “the ‘employable’ economically responsible citizen” is highly influential in individual lives.

4.2 Obstacles and Strategies

Sweden’s National Board of Trade, Kommerskollegium, prepared a report, “Moving to Sweden – Obstacles to the Free Movement of EU Citizens,” (Hereafter referred to as *Kommerskollegium report*) based on complaints submitted between 2010–2012 from mobile EU citizens in Sweden. In the forward written by the Director General Anna Stellingner, she states, “While in many ways, it is easy to live in Sweden as an EU citizen, obstacles still remain that need to be overcome” (Kommerskollegium 2014, 1). One such obstacle to the free exercise of European citizenship rights is when front-desk officials demonstrate a lack of willingness to help or a general deficiency of knowledge. *Front-desk officials* is an emergent concept influenced by several respondents’ experiences and is supported with the *five actions communication*, which states, “Complaints to the Commission show that in certain cases front-desk officials are not sufficiently familiar with free movement rights” (European Commission 2013, 12). One respondent describes a difficult time when she couldn’t find a job, in addition to acknowledging the impact the self-sufficiency stipulation to free movement that Barbulescu (2017) highlights can have on individual’s sense of security:

A European—from another European Union country—can stay for three months. And, then you have to study, work, or you just have to show that you have money to live. And at that time, I didn’t study, I didn’t have work. So, when I went to *Arbetsförmedlingen*, they asked me about permission—work permit—I said that I don’t have [it]. And then, “*Oh, you have to move back.*” And I was upset. I wanted to get a job. Not like, oh if you don’t have it, you have to go back. So, I called my husband and said, “*They are going to throw me out of the country!*” And he said, “*No. I will then go back, and bring you back.*” But, he really helped me, so I don’t know how I would have survived, or got all the things in place, if I hadn’t my Swedish husband. Because I remember, nine months it took for work permit. And, every time it was the wrong documents. It was so frustrating. And sometimes it was written only in Swedish, and even my [Swedish] husband couldn’t understand the explanation or reason. (Latvian, executive HR administrator, female, 32)

This respondent moved to Sweden primarily to be with her Swedish *sambo*; however, she still wanted to work. Despite *wanting* to work, and making effort to find something, she encountered not only bureaucratic obstacles in the form of unhelpful front-desk officials, but also linguistic obstacles, due to her lack of Swedish and accessible information, a form of

resource inequalities (Carling 2008). This is added to the fact that, as an EU citizen, she has the right to register as a job-seeker and receive unemployment benefits from her own state. This example illustrates a juxtaposition of the “formal universality” of European citizenship rights with “the less than universal ability of their holders to exercise such rights effectively” as argued by Bauman (2011, 13) and also strengthens Bilecen and Barglowski’s (2015) contention that informal networks are beneficial. This finding was additionally corroborated by the *Kommerskollegium report*:

EU citizens moving to Sweden must pass through several administrative procedures involving several Swedish authorities. Our findings within the framework of this report show that EU citizens find it difficult to learn where to go, what the rules are, and whom to call; further, they encounter problems understanding information and decisions communicated only in Swedish. (2014, 13)

Another respondent described a similar story where her European citizenship credentials were not enough to gain useful help from front-desk officials:

So, first I went to *Migrationsverket*, and [...] in essence, I said I’m from the European Union and they said, “*Oh! But then it’s not to us, go to Skatteverket.*” Ok, I walked from there to *Skatteverket*, went in line, and I said well I need—I’m from the European Union, I have a sambo here and blah, blah. And they said, “*Oh! You’re from the European Union, well then you don’t need to come here, you need to go to Migration service.*” “*Well, I just came from there. Like not even half an hour ago I was there.*” “*Oh, aha! Hmmm. Well, I don’t know that. We can’t help you.*” I was like, “*Okay...*” “*But you have the right to be here, from European Union.*” Very good, I have the right, but I can’t do anything! (Croatian, student/part-time shop employee, female, 25)

She went on to describe how she consulted online forums and got advice to apply as a *sambo*. This application needs proof of health insurance (an S1 form), and she discovered that this form is illegal in Croatia except for posted workers (after getting help from her parents to consult Croatian officials). When she explained the situation at *Skatteverket*, they replied “*Well, if it’s illegal then it’s not our problem. You should solve it with Croatia*” (ibid.). This indicates a systemic problem, which highlights the importance of the decision for this thesis to include native citizens of the host country who interact with the movers as an addition to Carling’s (2008) framework. One of the follow-up respondents offered a contrasting experience: “*I really see the officers of the Swedish IRS as friendly and helpful. They really solved my problems, but because they don’t see myself as a potential abuser of the system*” (Polish, researcher, male, 39). He acknowledged that his PhD and language skills were likely beneficial in this exchange, which highlights the potential hierarchization that Faist (2014) claims results from ‘job grading’.

In addition to unknowledgeable officials, the complexity of the Swedish system led to several respondents experiencing exclusion, supporting Faist's (2014, 214) notion that 'affiliation' is needed to access to jobs:

I was without a personal number for one year, so I couldn't work, basically. Although they offered me some job, but they said, "Ok, but we need a personal number." And I was like, "Yeah, but I don't have a personal number." So, I go to *Skatteverket*, and I say, "Here is a letter offering me a job, but I don't have a personal number." And then, they said, "No, but we need a contract." But then I can't get a contract because I don't have the personal number. [...] And it's crazy. (Bulgarian, freelance video editor, female, 33)

The *Kommerskollegium report* revealed "an alternative to the personal identity number — namely, the co-ordination number" (2014, 9). However, it "must be ordered by a public authority" and can be rejected by public and private services (*ibid.*). The *Kommerskollegium report* concludes, "If not having a personal identity number hinders EU citizens from living and working in Sweden, this could amount to an impermissible obstacle to the free movement of persons" (*ibid.*, 10). Since this coordination number is only for individuals without an employment contract, it sustains Anderson's contention that 'worker status' is necessary for access to benefits (Sager 2018, 103), and lends support to Samaluk's argument that 'moral-political norms' are used to "legitimize unequal power relations and affect people's lives and agency" (2016a, 63). Additionally, it provides evidence in Sweden for the market bias that Faist et al. (2016), Samaluk (2016a), and Likic-Brboric (2011) all describe. Only one respondent indicated knowledge of the coordination number, and she experienced exclusion as described by Faist (2014), and a frustrating back-and-forth experience with unhelpful and unknowledgeable officials at *Skatteverket* and *Migrationsverket* before discovering it on her own:

In *Migrationsverket* they said: "Oh, we can't, you're from European Union. We're not from European Union here. Go to *Skatteverket*." Ok. We went again to *Skatteverket*. We came to a person and explained, now we want to make a *sambo* [application]. "That doesn't exist." [We were] like: "Yes, it does, we have friends who have papers who said to us to collect this, this, and this." "Aahhh, no, no, no, you can't do that." "Are you sure? Because our friends did that." "Wait, I will ask somebody." So, she went, she brings a person. That person says: "Oh, mmm, I don't know." And then she went to get another person, and the third person came, and she's like: "No, it's impossible to make that. We can't help you." [...] And the thing is, we asked them, what can one do? And one can't do *anything* according to them. And then we read on some forums and stuff, and people said if you go to *Arbetsförmedlingen*, then you can get that *samordningsnummer*. And then, with that, you can find a job. Because we talked with [an] administrator at [my] *sambo*'s job, and she said that without any number it's so much paperwork, like, nobody will do that. It's just too complicated. You really need to be well qualified in order to get something. So, then we got that number—that *samordningsnummer*—and with that I started SFI and, but like, nobody—no authorities told us—that there was a possibility to go to *Arbetsförmedlingen*. (Croatian, student/part-time shop employee, female, 25)

In addition to struggles with front-line officials regarding information and personal number attainment, lack of network participation and informal group membership are additional obstacles mobile CEE citizens face in Sweden. Faist and Bilecen (2015) state that uneven access to networks and memberships contributes to exclusion. The excerpt below indicates how one respondent had initial help from her husband, who moved to Sweden almost two years before her, but afterwards the lack of network and resource inequalities (Carling 2008) became frustrating. This bolsters Bilecen and Barglowski's assertion that 'assemblages' of formal *and* informal social protection strategies are needed:

Yes, to find your way, you have to go—well, I would say this was not easy here, because I came here, what to do? My husband helped what to do for the first steps, but if you want to go deeper, ok, what are the next steps? You don't know. I mean I didn't find any site or any information: what are the obligatory steps you have to do, you have to handle your papers—what are those papers? [...] It would be great to have a good site where you can find all the information. I found the goteborgstad.se—it was cool, but all the information are in Swedish. So, I used Google Translate, and... [laughs]. (Hungarian, mother/unemployed/, female, 37)

For those respondents who had personal connections and networks, utilizing them to overcome exclusion, which according to Faist (2017) emerges from 'network closure', was a common strategy, supporting Bilecen and Barglowski's assertion of the importance of informal networks. One respondent's *sambo* helped her get a part-time contract to the supplier he worked for so she could get a personal number. Another got her first job through the help of a fellow member of a student organization. Yet a third experienced a quicker and easier process with help from her husband, who had previously received Swedish citizenship. One respondent, accepting that she did not have any personal connections who could help her find employment, and recognizing her inequality of resources (Carling 2008) decided to seek out new connections on social media, providing evidence for one of the strategies that Bilecen and Barglowski (2015) describe:

I got some freelance work finally [...]. And that was through [...] one women who does coaching for people who want to get into the film industry. And she gave me some contacts, and that was the only way. Because I sent my CV to from different companies, but I never got much reply, and I heard from other people that the best way to get into the film industry, or media, is through contacts. But, I didn't have any. (Bulgarian, freelance video editor, female, 33)

Most of the personal connections and networks described above involved help from Swedish partners or family members of partners. Opportunity hoarding, or the "preferential inclusion of a certain group" (Faist and Bilecen 2015, 288) did not arise as a common obstacle among respondents, though a Hungarian couple indicated the difficulty of finding a way into the

Swedish housing system; they finally got help from a Serbian friend, indicating the use of opportunity hoarding as a strategy:

Yeah. The Swedish are keeping their distance in this way—for this topic. It's not easy to find. We searched—we tried many ways, many websites, many options, and didn't find—you know *Blocket*? We found many good ones, and I sent an email. Out of the twenty, only two answered. (Hungarian, construction worker, male, 38; translated by spouse)

The same Serbian friend also recommended him for a job, and he later returned the favor, stating that they helped each other through “*a hard path*” (Hungarian, construction worker, male, 38; translated by spouse). This illustrates the importance of reciprocity and informal networks for many mobile citizens that Bilecen and Barglowski (2015) argue for. While these respondents experienced little help from Swedes, another respondent showed a different perception of attitudes towards ‘foreigners’ in Sweden, stating that “*They love foreigners, and they want to employ foreigners, I would say. Especially women, I would say that they're really positive towards women and foreigners*” (Bulgarian, freelance video editor, female, 33). This is supported by the positive actions Sweden has taken to address resource inequalities that Carling (2008) asserts are prevalent among transnational migrants. For example, two respondents reported taking advantage of specialized programs the employment office offers for specific careers—in these cases, media/culture and economics.

In addition to beneficial programs in Sweden, several respondents indicated their international experiences, or what Recchi (2015) refers to as space-sets, were beneficial to them in finding employment. Mostly, they referenced their cultural and linguistic competence, which Carling (2008) maintains contributes to resource inequalities. The respondents who utilized their space-sets as strategies in the labor market mainly took advantage of their linguistic competencies to work in either hourly or full-time employment at call centers, customer service centers, or external service providers. Two respondents utilized their native languages—Bulgarian and Polish—and one, though she was Latvian, was hired in Sweden for her knowledge of Norwegian. The prevalence of mobile CEE citizens being utilized for their language skills is indicative of the polarizing effect that Recchi (2015) argues can be a result of space-sets. For these individuals, it resulted in employment, but it also reveals the potential for individuals like this to get ‘stuck’ in this type of employment, supporting Likic-Brboric’s (2016) contention that the EU’s support for competitiveness leads to an increased use of external work providers, which several respondents with experience of this type of work were. This notion is further discussed in the next section.

4.3 Coloniality

A market bias has been revealed in both previous sections, reflected in the norms of European citizenship and free movement, and influencing the obstacles mobile CEE citizens encounter in Sweden. This market bias is an underlying characteristic of what Mignolo (2007) refers to as the logic of coloniality. Examples of this in Sweden are revealed below by exposing the hierarchization of individuals, including the privileging of some and the exploitation of others. The following respondents reveal the preferential treatment of recruited employees, including help with housing, legal aid, language and cultural training:

I got help, but because it was like a package from [my employer] so I didn't even have to ask for it. They just helped with that. At the beginning, so like, they helped with finding an apartment, the [personal number], which were necessary at the beginning, I would say. So, I didn't have to *ask* for it, so it was like that. (Polish, sound interaction designer, female, 31)

I was fortunate to have the intercultural training when I moved here, where we touched all the subjects [...] I had a relocation company, but I had this special deal from [my employer]. They paid for my—I lived in a hotel here for a year and a half. Because I told them I was homeless when I started in Denmark and I know it's hard in Sweden to find rent as well, so if you want me to move here you need to find me some solutions. (Romanian, programmer, male, 27)

Juxtaposed with the preferential treatment of recruited and (perceived to be more) skilled workers, are efforts to exploit temporary workers to keep them temporary, illustrating on an individual level an aspect of domination “disguised by a rhetoric of progress, happiness, development and the end of poverty” (2009, 139) referred by Tlostanova and Mignolo as the *rhetoric of modernity*. The same company¹¹ described above, rather than using temporary contracts to assist workers in building skills and networks, they are continually renewed to keep the workers ‘temporary’. This reinforces Likic-Brboric’s (2016) argument that the transfer of business risks onto workers with non-standard employment contracts is a strategy of competitiveness—in this case, embraced by Sweden. One respondent was hired as an unpaid trainee for three months, then received a six-month paid extension of her contract. Her temporary contract continued to be renewed every six months for four years before she resigned due to lack of opportunities:

¹¹ While interview evidence is only from one company, anecdotal evidence indicates it is a common occurrence among companies in Sweden.

[The consultant status] motivated me to leave, because I knew that I wanted to be—to have a regular employment. It was my dream, and I spent four years there. You know, it's a long time. Normally, they accept consultants and after one year, you know, if they see the consultants are very good, and do all the tasks, they are employed. I didn't have this opportunity, and I felt that I had to leave. [...] Because if you work as a consultant, you're always like 'B team', not 'A team'. For me, it was important to have possibilities to cooperate with Poland, because they have huge cooperation, like thirty percent of their IT was located in Poland. And, as a consultant, you know, I couldn't have those opportunities, unfortunately. I couldn't go for business trips, I couldn't get any project, and so on. So, I thought I need to search for new opportunities. (Polish, customer service provider, female, 38)

This hierarchization of individuals bolsters Faist et al.'s argument that member states favor a conceptualization of citizenship that “privileges individuals as bearers of human capital and makes a close connection between work, economic productivity, and social justice” (2016, 106). The changing nature of intra-EU mobility to include a variety of reasons for moving other than a *need* for work—as outlined by Recchi (2015) and Samaluk (2016a)—combined with the flexibilization Likic-Brboric (2016) describes, results at times in even skilled workers finding themselves in this type of precarious situation. This surprisingly common experience among respondents led to a third emergent concept, *precarity*. The excerpt below illustrates a similar situation to the one above, beginning with an unpaid traineeship:

It was planned to be for only three/four months, but after I guess all three months, four months, I got temporary job, to say so, paid. Because the trainee wasn't paid. So, I got that job even prolonged over the summer time, so until September. So, for me, it was for nine months really actively working for them. So, this was my start. [...] It wasn't so easy. You know? Yeah, well, shortly, actually—during the summertime, I tried to ask my manager if there would be a need for—which I could see they needed my job, because I was really working full time. [...] and they told me, “*No, we don't need the—unfortunately.*” But, they didn't really tell me from the very beginning. So, I ask, I ask, I ask. [...] During that time, I was like ok, if I don't get the job, I also start looking for other companies. But it was very difficult. (Romanian, financial analyst, female, 37)

In addition to traineeships being exploited, Sweden's generous parental leave provides another example where non-standard contracts are used resulting in increased precarity, providing more evidence for Likic-Brboric's (2016) argument. One respondent reports moving in and out of first hourly work, then a prolonged traineeship, like above, followed by short-term replacement jobs (filling in for those on parental leave). She has yet to secure full-time employment:

So, it was like, periods when you had need of lot of employees [...] and, then it was a quiet period. [...] I worked in [...] hour work. And, also in school, and then another customer [service job] in Swedish. [...] And then, just when I was finished with master—I send copy of master to all the people I interviewed there, and said, “*Oh, if you need, I’m here.*” And one needed. And, then it was starting as a summer worker for two-three weeks, and then it was prolonged six months, six months, six months. And then they did a reorganization, so I had to quit. [...] And, I *really* liked the company and so, but yeah, you have to move on. So, another possibility to come back to [that employer] was through recruiting companies like Adecco. So, that was my next step. And again, it’s so typical of [them]: half-year contracts, half-year, half-year, half-year, and for almost three years—but I looked through. It was a HR coordinator, the role, but bigger than [the other job] when I did the first. But, yeah, I tried to be employed, and I applied internally, and always get, or mostly, that’s it’s a headcount question. We have to take care of internal resources, and not apply externally. And, then, yeah, I got tired of this. (Latvian, executive HR administrator, female, 32).

After this she got a job on a short replacement assignment and is currently in another replacement assignment (both for parental leave). These precarious situations—both being ‘strung along’ in consistently renewed temporary contracts or bouncing from job to job—are juxtaposed against the preferential treatment of individuals according to perceived skill level or recruitment status as described above.

In addition to individual experiences in Sweden, several respondents indicated that inequalities between member states persist despite EU membership and aid, supporting Faist’s (2014) notion that social inequalities can persist even if individual circumstances improve:

I was tired of corrupt people—I thought that getting with the EU would solve problems. But, it’s like getting to marriage with problems. The marriage won’t solve the problems. I’m the first generation after the fall of the communism. But, it was strange that people that were communist, and in the Communist Party, the next day they were democrats. I mean, teachers were allowed to [...] teach children with [a] communist mindset, kind of. [...] ‘Cause that formed their mindset, and there were a lot of things in the education system and healthcare—I mean, doctors wouldn’t look at you if you don’t give them money and bribe them. And, here the health system is free, and education is free and of good quality. You get the sense of equality. (Romanian, programmer, male, 27)

It’s much better, the salary, all the social benefits, yeah, here in Sweden. So, and when I go to Latvia, it’s more—I feel depressed, and the people, especially the older ones, look very sad and depressed. So, yeah, I feel it’s a bad atmosphere. (Latvian, executive HR administrator, female, 32)

The smoothness of the social system over here, [...] I cherish it more [after experiences in Poland]. (Polish, researcher, male, 39)

When asked about the differences between Bulgaria and Sweden, one respondent said, “*They’re massive, really*” and continued:

People don't have to really struggle here, in life. [...] In Bulgaria, many people have to think about the next day, like, am I gonna have money to pay the rent or the electricity or the water bills, or food, even. It's really bad. [...] I just love that in Sweden everything works. Things work like they should. In Bulgaria, nothing works. It's true. There's also corruption, everywhere. The whole system is corrupted. When you start from the top, the government, and down to the smallest institutions. [The EU does] all these projects for different things where they invest money. I think it's a great thing, it's just—the problem is that sometimes those money that's been invested by the EU gets—you know, someone who's in charge of that money just steals them. So, the actual project might not happen. (Bulgarian, freelance video editor, female, 33)

While not discounting the leading efforts of Sweden regarding equality, one purpose of this thesis is to reveal weaknesses often disregarded or overlooked because of this exemplary status. In this light, one respondent shared her comparative experiences:

If there was something that really surprised me—I think I didn't expect that Swedish society would be so individualized. [...] I see Swedish people as extremely kind and let's say caring, but I am very much aware that it's only very superficial. It's the way they are educated. Deep inside I think that they do not have this collective thinking. They are very much focused on themselves as individuals, on what they want, on their independence. [...] And many [young people] had issues with their families: divorced parents, parents that didn't take responsibility for them. [...] So, of course that was shocking, and this is also something that I have always with me, that I know that this society is not as perfect as it seems to be. (Polish, customer service provider, female, 38)

She spoke of a different perception of 'traditional' family values and was surprised that Sweden seemed to lack them. Experiences like this underscore the importance of Mignolo's (2007) argument that concepts like *primitive* or *tradition* are a construction of the *rhetoric* of modernity, not as something *outside* modernity. A follow-up respondent offered a further perspective on these 'culture clashes':

Those diverging values are there in the west as well [...] But maybe the case is the with the eastern enlargement that they became in bigger numbers part of the EU. [...] The naïve belief was that they would just adopt—realize how great the liberal community is, and they will just change. (Polish, lecturer, female, 39)

This upholds Anderson's (Sager 2018) notion that it is not about immigration, but rather inequality, and supports the decision for this thesis to use the lens of mobility to bring these inequalities into the western sphere of attention.

Additional respondents felt like their conservative opinions were taboo and that their freedom of speech was limited to 'liberal' views, reinforcing Tlostanova and Mignolo's (2009) assertion that a rhetoric of modernity is being used as a 'civilizing' mission:

In Sweden, you have to be so equal, and everyone has to be together. Like, when I talked about my school experience [...] my husband sometimes says, “You don’t have to say this! It’s better if you don’t.” Like, in Latvia, we had this competition. It was normal in secondary school that you had class ‘A’ and ‘B’. And, it’s not because it’s a big school, or big class. It’s because ‘A’ is the smartest ones, and ‘B’ not smart. [...] And my husband’s like, “You don’t have to tell this, no, no, no... ‘A’ class: it’s discriminating!” (Latvian, executive HR administrator, female, 32)

Yeah, quite a lot of times [I was made to feel uncomfortable]. And it’s, again, about this political correctness. [...] I have a kind of conservative view to some things, but I’m still a liberal. But, I’m not a ‘leftist’ for instance. I agree with a lot of things, but I don’t support them, or I don’t *stand* for them in that sense. ‘Cause it kind of, like, conflicts with my views. So, sometimes I don’t like that I have to feel that I’m white, straight, Christian, Jewish person. Yeah, ‘cause that’s the worst you could be now. (Romanian, programmer, male, 27)

There is one thing, I’m not quite sure that one is supposed to say it: But, before I moved to Sweden, I was thinking: “*Oh, this society is so open to everybody.*” Like, they don’t judge, they have more or less freedom of speech, and stuff like that. But, then you come here and notice that, sure they accept everybody as long as those everybody are not so much different from them. And, the freedom of speech, you can say everything, but if you have a different opinion, you better keep it for yourself. [...] I mean, some groups of people cannot accept anything you say [...] not even as a joke, and if it’s like a bit politically incorrect or it’s on any level implies some sort of sexism, they like stop talking to you. It’s really difficult to talk with those people, you don’t know, can you talk at all? That’s something in Sweden that I think is bad and I think that news and all the media is kind of protecting that kind of cannon. And then people get a bit too sensitive and then that’s how things [are] for now, I really hope for change. (Croatian, student/part-time shop employee, female, 25)

This rhetoric of modernity goes together with a logic of coloniality (Mignolo 2007), illustrating how a larger coloniality of power (Quijano 2000) influences member states to overlook some negative aspects in order to compete within the same power matrix, upholding the global hierarchy as described by Gagyi (2016) and Grosfoguel (2007):

They want to integrate as much as possible and be on the top with the leading countries. Because there’s a lot of potential. But, when you ask simple people, like some of them are pissed that they can’t—I don’t know—be free on how to treat their cattle, and big farm, like—we have traditions for Christmas where you kill the pig in a certain way, and with the EU regulations you have to use electricity, and so some of the people are pissed, but a lot of them are really, they have a positive opinion about it. (Romanian, programmer, male, 27)

That was a very intensive period after Poland joined the European Union. And now, with the time being of course Poland has had some issues with the European Union, when it comes to receiving migrants, refugees, and even how Poland should be governed. So, of course these are, let’s say, negative aspects of being in such an organization that sometimes you just need to maybe do something that is against your will. But, I remember that the first years after Poland joined were extremely thriving for the country. (Polish, customer service provider, female, 38)

Support for the EU was always very high before Poland entered. There was some attempt at polarizing society, and some fears, like, what will happen? And they will just take our identity away. But, that disappeared quickly, because the money came. (Polish, lecturer, female, 39)

The above excerpts indicate both the hierarchy and unequal power aspects that Böröcz maintains “are reflected in a deep and systematic form in the socio-cultural patterns of the governmentality of the European Union” (2001, 14). At times, the desires and aspirations of governments differ from those of individuals, but both levels express a willingness to accept some undesirable outcomes if they are outweighed by positive ones. This supports Gagyi’s (2016) argument that even ‘nation-first’ efforts acknowledge the power matrix of coloniality by working to ‘catch up’ or compete in it. Furthermore, it upholds Grosfoguel’s (2007) assertion that the ‘decolonization of the world’ is a myth to allow the exploitation of non-western cultures to persist.

4.4 Discussion

Grounding the theoretical framework of this thesis in *coloniality* addresses the concern put forth by Layder (2013) to go beyond mere description and explain the social influences behind a given phenomenon. One such social influence that upholds the unequal east-west power relations, according to Samluk, is the ‘binary logic’ (2016b) of most academic thinking. This thesis seeks to undermine this epistemological control by utilizing CEE voices to problematize ‘the west’. In this way, this thesis seeks to break down binary thinking and the ‘universality’ of ‘the west’ by placing the *problem* in the forefront, rather than the *object* studied. Thus, the lived experiences of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden are not analyzed for their failure or success to *integrate*, but rather for how they expose the rhetoric of modernity and logic of coloniality at work in the EU and Sweden. Much in the same way that individual strategies and social mechanisms contribute towards perpetuating greater social inequalities (Faist 2014; 2017), CEE member state strategies perpetuate the asymmetric power hierarchy between east and west, by either embracing it with the goal of ‘catching up’ or by pursuing ‘nation first’ in order to compete in the same order (Gagyi 2016; Grosfoguel 2007). Mignolo proclaims that *delinking* from the rhetoric of modernity and logic of coloniality “brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, other economy, other politics, other ethics” (2007, 453). Below, the guiding research questions are restated, with some discussion about each, followed by some reflections on the potential implications these findings have for the debate surrounding the freedom of movement, European citizenship, and the future of European (dis)integration.

1) How do the experiences of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden compare or contrast with the norms promoted by the EU and Sweden regarding European citizenship, particularly the freedom of movement?

The findings above indicate the freedom of movement is promoted as free *labor mobility* by both the EU and Sweden, revealing a market bias. This is contrasted with the respondents: of the initial ten, only one moved for better work opportunities, and he had very strong emotional and cultural reasons as well. Interestingly, the two who moved *before* their country joined the EU moved for better employment opportunities. And even then, it was not *needed*, as they had the resources to either stay in Poland or move to another country of their choice. This embrace of control over mobility—by those who *choose* it without *needing* it—and the throwing off of traditional restraints—such as societal pressure for economic success and self-sufficiency—could be considered a decolonial action in itself, acknowledging that financial achievement is not necessarily a measure of a successful life.

Most respondents primarily valued the free movement that the European Commission (2013) claims is the most valued European citizenship right among EU citizens. Respondents reported enjoying easy travel first and foremost, in addition to international relationships, educational opportunities, increased work opportunities, and for a few, chances to address inequalities in CEE. The findings showed, however, free movement at times bears a cost. For example, respondents reported feeling alienated by those ‘back home’ and contending with enduring stereotypes in Sweden by self-distancing. Thus, while respondents’ experiences clearly compare well with the EU’s promotion of the positive benefits of free movement, the majority of them were aware of—and at times saddened by—the negative effects.

2) How is the transnational social question revealed by the obstacles and strategies mobile CEE citizens encounter and utilize in Sweden?

Faist (2014) argues that the transnational social question is the perception of inequalities against a background of equality norms. Given the discussion of the first research question, the transnational social question becomes clear in the EU context. Furthermore, specific obstacles that mobile CEE citizens face in Sweden, as well as the strategies they utilize, reveal not only the impact this question has on individual lives and agency, but also has implications for the future of European integration efforts. Comparatively, many respondents reported the Swedish system as working smoothly and providing security; however, juxtaposed with the norms of European citizenship, free movement, and equality that the EU and Sweden promote, the inequalities and obstacles come to light.

The uncommon occurrence of opportunity hoarding as an obstacle in Sweden, together with the prevalence of exclusion due to resource inequalities, unknowledgeable front-desk officials, and lack of networks or connections, indicates that it is more likely a bureaucratic problem than one with the ‘hearts and minds’ of the Swedish people, which implies a solution is possible. Though some reported feeling the burden of enduring stereotypes and othering, the findings indicate that (the perception of) skill or self-sufficiency had greater impact than nationality. For example, the self-distancing strategies included ensuring that employers or peers knew about the *choice* to come to Sweden, the ability to easily return, or the level of education. This is also illustrated in the disparate experiences with officials by those who were perceived as unlikely to be burdens on the system (i.e. privileged, Swedish speaking, academics).

While space-sets were clearly an advantage for several mobile CEE citizens, the cultural and linguistic skills gained from these space sets led to permanent employment for only one respondent, indicating again a systemic problem of misuse and exploitation, which is discussed below.

3) How can the lived experiences of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden expose aspects of coloniality within the EU and Sweden?

The market bias revealed in the norms of free movement and European citizenship expose the logic of coloniality present in the EU. Furthermore, several obstacles encountered by the respondents were largely influenced by a market bias as well, such as unequal treatment from officials. This market bias was inherent in the eastern enlargement, exacerbating inequalities for not only member states, but also individual citizens. While much evidence exists that many mobile CEE citizens do not experience many obstacles and indeed praise Swedish society, the logic of coloniality is still relevant and can be illuminated by the hierarchization and exploitation of individuals in the Swedish labor market, as well as the rhetoric of modernity that promotes liberal values and suppresses alternate ways of thinking. This indicates that the bureaucratic problem mentioned above can be considered a symptom of the logic of coloniality and rhetoric of modernity at work in the Swedish labor market, and is not limited to CEE citizens, though their experiences serve to highlight this issue.

Hierarchization is revealed in the preferential treatment of recruited employees. Others who moved to Sweden with similar education and skills, but without a job offer, often became ‘stuck’ in temporary or part-time employment, leading to precarious situations. This

juxtaposition again points to the prioritization of the market over individual security and also reveals the impact of enduring stereotypes, since many respondents had similar education, skills, and backgrounds, and only differed by not having a job offer before moving to Sweden, reinforcing the notion of a bureaucratic problem.

Though there was ample support for Sweden's status as an equal society, there were also some expressions of regret that there is not more openness to other opinions and histories. The feeling of 'forced equality'—e.g. in education settings or political discussions—reveals a rhetoric of modernity that works to suppress the *traditions* of some of the respondents. On a member state level, the rhetoric of modernity was found again, in reports of CEE states wanting to compete with 'leading countries' and accepting negative aspects 'against their will'.

Mignolo concludes that to progress forward, we must "link analysis from the perspective of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality (its ethical, political and theoretical consequences), with strategies, strategic plans toward the future" (2007, 500). According to the decolonial option, this future should be "a vision of human life that is not dependent upon or structured by the forced imposition of one ideal of society over those that differ" (ibid., 459). In order to do that, we must transform the discussion, accepting the experiences, histories, and knowledge that have been repressed under the pretense of modernity.

5. Concluding Remarks

There are things that changed a lot, but things are changing as we speak. I mean, yesterday there were like, three hundred thousand people in the streets protesting ‘cause the government wants to give some laws that kind of makes, sort of, a level of corruption legal. And we are not ok with it. [...] So, things are changing and now with social media and people are more informed and people started to think for themselves and look for information before doing stuff or voting. But, we are still a bit far from being okay. (Romanian, programmer, male, 27)

Bauman stated in a recent interview, “I believe that the most awesome obstacle to finding the answers is our dilatoriness in seeking them” (2016). Considering the above excerpt in this light, the presence of such gross inequalities in the EU should not be disregarded because of the progress that has been made. It underscores the urgency for the EU to find a new way forward to achieve social equality throughout the Union. The goal of this thesis is to contribute to the debate surrounding the transnational social question, European citizenship, and the future of European (dis)integration.

Taking an adaptive and problem-centered approach, this thesis utilized qualitative interviews *to actualize the transnational social question by exposing aspects of coloniality in the eastern enlargement and ongoing governance of the EU, by highlighting the lived experiences of mobile CEE citizens in Sweden*. In this way, it problematized ‘the west’ by revealing the transnational nature of the social question in Europe. The juxtaposition of mobile CEE experiences with promoted norms and values in the EU and Sweden—and the discovery of obstacles encountered, and strategies utilized by mobile CEE citizens—revealed experiences, histories, and knowledge that can contribute to the decolonial option. Pursuing the decolonial option, according to Tlostanova and Mignolo (2009), allows the investigation to transcend the boundaries of discipline and address problems resulting from the colonial matrix of power. This has clear relevance for future research and efforts to address European (dis)integration and ongoing debates about free movement and European citizenship.

Faist proposes that a promising area of research “concerns whether and in what way the transnational social question plays a role in public forums, debates and political conflicts in Europe” (2014, 220). Expanding the investigation of this thesis and gathering comparative perspectives of CEE citizens EU-wide could provide valuable insight into ways of resisting the rhetoric of modernity and logic of coloniality and utilize previously repressed histories, experiences, and knowledge to change the way European integration is talked about and considered. A more inclusive respondent base—including different age groups and those

coming specifically to seek employment—could allow further comparisons of different employment, education, language skills, or motivations for mobility regarding feelings of othering or the experiences of the social mechanisms, asymmetries, and patterns of EU governance. Additionally, examining the influence of space-sets (Recchi 2015) on the exercise of free movement and negotiation of the social question within Europe could provide further valuable information about the future of European integration. Likic-Brboric maintains that increasing efforts to control migration and reinforced market bias in policy “discredits social dialogue and generates a decay of democratic politics and European social citizenship” (2016, 82). She argues that an alternative that “promotes European solidarities, social protection, ‘decent work’ and a rights-based mobility/migration regime” (ibid.) is needed. In order for future European integration to succeed, the decolonial option must be embraced and the possibilities opened to other alternatives, acknowledging the transnational nature of the social question and recognizing that voices from ‘the periphery’ of the EU are not mediocre tools.

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Appendix 1: Interview Request Email Templates

In addition to writing customized emails to individuals connected to my personal network, I also utilized templates for a more general search for respondents. The following was used to contact gatekeepers, such as human resource managers or customer service representatives:

Dear [Name],

I'm a master's student at the University of Gothenburg, and I'm currently seeking interview respondents for my master's thesis. I will be studying the experiences of mobile EU citizens from Central and Eastern EU member states living and/or working in Sweden, and will hopefully be able to talk to individuals from several different countries. I am seeking to interview people from the following member states who are currently living in Sweden: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia.

I am seeking to talk to people in all kinds of employment and with different skill levels. What is of interest to me is their experiences moving to Sweden and living and working in Swedish society. Specific employers are not relevant to the study, and thus [employer] would not be specifically mentioned. Only general descriptions would be used, such as care worker, doctor, janitor, waitress, etc. Additionally, anyone I interview will be anonymous in the thesis.

There are not many criteria, as I want many diverse stories; however, below are the few limitations:

- Currently younger than 40-years-old.
- Arrived in Sweden after their country of origin became an EU member.

I am wondering if you're in a position to possibly connect me with individuals who might be interested in participating in an interview. It is perfectly fine to provide my email address and have them contact me directly; I don't wish to invade anyone's privacy.

Best Regards,

Kristin Clay

Master's Student in European Studies
Political Science Department, University of Gothenburg
claykj@gmail.com

The following was used to contact respondents directly through group forums:

Hello fellow expats!

I am an American/Canadian living here in Gothenburg for the last 8 years. Currently I'm a master's student at the University of Gothenburg and I am starting my master's thesis. I will be studying the experiences of mobile EU citizens from Central and Eastern EU member states living in Sweden, and will hopefully be able to talk to individuals from several different countries. I am seeking to interview people from the following member states who are currently living in Sweden: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia.

I am seeking to talk to people in all kinds of employment and with different skill levels. What is of interest to me is their experiences moving to Sweden and living in Swedish society. Specific employers are not relevant to the study, and would not be specifically mentioned. Only general descriptions would be used, such as care worker, doctor, waitress, etc. Those unemployed but looking for work are welcome too. Anyone I interview will be anonymous in the thesis.

Please get in touch if you are interested in participating in an interview!

Best Regards,

Kristin Clay

Master's Student in European Studies
Political Science Department, University of Gothenburg
claykj@gmail.com

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Inform respondent of anonymity for both themselves and their employer.

Request audio recording.

Reassure respondent that they don't have to answer a question if they feel uncomfortable.

Encourage them to voice any thoughts they might have, even if I don't ask a specific question.

Date of Interview:

Nationality:

Gender:

Age:

Education:

Interview Location:

Current Job:

Time in Sweden:

Interview Length:

Transcription Word Count:

Describe your background a bit and some of your motivations for coming to Sweden.

Exclusion

- Experiences when first arriving
- Social life
- Do they feel free to be themselves and have their own opinions?

Opportunity Hoarding

- How were jobs found and obtained?
- What kind of connections are utilized? (both ways)

Hierarchization

- Work atmosphere
- Public services (healthcare, housing, education, childcare, etc.)

Exploitation

- Labor market situation in home country
- Differences between countries
- Work situation in Sweden

Transnationality

- Ties with home country (friends/family, financial, political participation, etc.)
- Reasons for moving

Citizenship

- Changes since moving to Sweden (attitude, identity, mentality, knowledge, etc.)
- Feelings about EU membership (what benefits do they acknowledge?)
- Political participation
- Membership in groups or organizations? (local, national, or EU)

Inequality Between Member States

- Changes in home country since EU membership
- Things valued or missed in home country
- Reasons for moving
- Remittances, etc.

Appendix 3: Interview Respondents

Nationality	Gender	Job	Age	Education	Time in Sweden	Reason for moving to Sweden
Croatia	Female	Student/Part-time shop employee	25	Completing Master's (started in Slovenia)	1 year, 9 months	Joining Swedish <i>sambo</i> .
Romania	Male	Programmer	27	Master's (Denmark)	2 years	Received a job offer in Gothenburg while finishing Master's in Denmark (Moved to Denmark in 2007).
Bulgaria	Female	Freelance video editor	33	Unknown	2 years, 8 months	Joining Swedish <i>sambo</i> (Moved to the UK in 2006).
Hungary	Female	Mother/Unemployed	37	Master's (Hungary)	3 months	Reunite with Hungarian husband (moved before).
Hungary	Male	Construction worker	38	Unfinished Master's (Hungary)	3 years, 2 months	Better employment opportunities, but also dreamed of coming to Scandinavia.
Romania	Female	Financial Analyst	37	Bachelor's (Romania) Master's (Sweden)	9 years	Reunite with her Romanian boyfriend (now husband) who had moved previously.
Poland	Female	Customer Service Provider	38	Master's (Poland). Completing another Bachelor's (Sweden)	10 years	To learn the Swedish language and culture better, (Master's degree is in Scandinavian Studies).
Poland	Female	Sound Interaction Designer	31	Master's (Poland) PhD (Denmark)	1 year	Received a job offer while finishing PhD in Denmark.
Latvia	Female	Executive HR administrator	32	Bachelor's (Latvia) Master's (Sweden)	9 years	Moved to be with a Swedish <i>sambo</i> (now husband).
Estonia	Female	Parental leave from sales position	30	Bachelor's (Estonia) Master's (Sweden)	8 years	Moved to be with a Swedish <i>sambo</i> (now husband).
Poland	Male	Researcher	39	PhD (Sweden)	15 years (pre-2004)	Family connections influenced the choice of Sweden, in addition to better paid PhD studies than in Poland.
Poland	Female	Lecturer	39	PhD (Sweden)	15 years (pre-2004)	Moved with wife, and also to complete PhD studies.