Chapter 1

Introduction

Rita Kaša and Inta Mierīņa

This volume contributes to research on migration from Latvia, a country in Central Eastern Europe (CEE), following the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1991. The experience of independent Latvia with borders opening up to the world and more specifically to the West has turned out to be both a rewarding and wounding experience for communities in the country. On the rewarding side, individuals have gained liberty – an ability to travel the world freely, to see and live in the countries which were beyond the closed doors of the Soviet Union just some decades ago. This freedom, however, has also brought the sense of cost to the society – people are going abroad as if dissolving into other worlds, away from their small homeland. The context of decreasing birth rates and ageing in the country seems to amplify a feeling of loss which is supported by hard evidence. Research shows a worrying 17% decline in Latvia's population between 2000 and 2013. One third of this is due to declining birth rates and two-thirds is caused by emigration (Hazans 2016). This situation has turned out to be hurtful experience for communities in Latvia causing a heightened sense of grief especially during the Great Recession which shook the country at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. By 2013 the feeling of crises even larger than the economic downturn came to a head in Latvian society, pushing the government for the first time in the history of independent Latvia to recognise the migration of the country's nationals and to acknowledge diaspora politics as an important item on the national policy agenda.

R. Kaša (✉)
Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, Riga, Latvia
e-mail: rita.kasa@sseriga.edu

I. Mierīņa
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia
e-mail: inta.mierina@lu.lv

This has raised a number of important questions for research. What has become of the contemporary post-1991 Latvian migrant communities? Who are they? Where are they? How are they? What do they do? How do they live? And how is Latvia's government reaching them through its diaspora policy measures? Will they ever come back? And if they do, will they stay? The current volume presents answers to these questions.

The focus of this volume is driven not only by specific interest in contemporary migrant realities in a very specific historically national context, but also by the potential to address the gap in research on migrants originating from a small European nation. Thus, while the dominant share of migration studies in Europe focus on immigrants from non-European countries (CEED 2014), this volume provides evidence on migrants from a CEE country, particularly their socio-cultural uprooting, processes of integration, and – in the case of return migration – re-integration.

This volume extends the issues covered in research on East to West European migration, especially in the case of the Baltic countries. The literature hitherto has predominantly tackled issues of labour market (Black et al. 2010; Kahanec and Zimmermann 2009). In addition to aspects of employment, this volume addresses social and political trust among emigrants, networks and social inclusion, identity and their sense of belonging, language use and acquisition, participation and distance nationalism, cultural and media consumption, policies aimed at return migration, and employment and education abroad. All these issues in the case of CEE migrant communities have been under-researched although increasingly they are deemed relevant for scholarly investigation (Bijl and Verweij 2012; Bilgili et al. 2015; Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011; Huddleston et al. 2013).

This volume finds its place among studies examining emigration from the perspective of migrant sending countries and contributes to closing the gap in research on migration from Baltics since much of the existing research on migration from CEE focuses on such relatively large communities as Polish and Romanian migrants (e.g., Faist 2003; Galent et al. 2009; Gorny and Rusipi 2004; Kuvik et al. 2013; Simon et al. 2008; Uccellini 2013; Ziemer and Roberts 2012). At the same time, while Latvia is one of the smallest states in Europe it is home to one of the most mobile populations of CEE citizens and according to some estimates, has the highest expected migration potential among European Union (EU) member states (Hazans 2016). A particular feature in the case of Latvian migration is the large share of mostly Russian-speaking ethnic minority people among Latvian migrants, and the increasing share of children and young people leaving the country.

Empirical evidence in the volume broadens and deepens the knowledge about the reasons for and patterns of Latvian migration during the past 25 years. Most importantly, it provides a fascinating insight into the social and psychological aspects linked to migration in a comparative context. The data in the volume is rich in providing perspectives at the individual level of contemporary Latvian migrants globally addressing issues such as emigrants' economic, social and cultural embeddedness in the host country, ties with the home country and culture, interaction with public

authorities both in the host and home country, political views, and perspectives on the permanent settlement in migration or return. This research presents the perspectives of diverse groups of migrants including skilled and unskilled professionals, housewives, students, and entrepreneurs. Although the volume builds on data about Latvian emigrants, many of the issues discussed here are faced by any emigrant community – such as the assimilation of children, relationships between emigrants representing different emigration waves, the complex identities and attachments of minority emigrants, and the role of culture and media in identity formation and presentation.

While focused on one sending country, the volume takes on analysis of immigrants' socio-cultural integration at their destinations in a wide comparative perspective. It addresses socio-cultural integration of Latvian migrants in multiple host countries in Europe and elsewhere, diversifying the existing body of literature dominated by case studies of CEE migrant communities in several large receiving countries and especially in Great Britain (e.g., Kuvik et al. 2013; Ziemer and Roberts 2012).

Such contribution of this volume rests on a large dataset generated in the scope of the interdisciplinary research project *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia: National identity, transnational relations and diaspora politics* Nr. 013/0055/IDP/1.1.1.2.0/13/APIA/VIAA/040, financed by the European Social Fund. The project was carried out under the auspices of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Latvia in cooperation with the Faculty of Economics and Management during 2014 and the first half of 2015. This research project brought together a team of 16 researchers representing the disciplines of sociology, economics, media studies, comparative education and political science engaged in a coordinated task to develop a multi-faceted view on contemporary migration from a single sending country – Latvia. In the scope of this work, the research team undertook data collection engaging Latvian emigrant communities in many nations in Europe and elsewhere. Under the umbrella of the overall research focus, each researcher in the project had their own set of research questions, inquiring deeply into specific aspects of contemporary migration realities.

Given the versatility of the researchers' academic backgrounds and research interests, the research process leading to the results presented in this volume involved a significant effort to develop a joint interdisciplinary methodology for the project. Thus, the methodological approach in data collection was jointly designed, while each researcher in the team had a distinct angle when examining contemporary migration from Latvia, described further in this chapter.

An integrated approach to surveying emigrants, which formed the core of the research project, distinguishes this volume from other studies not only on migration from Latvia, but other Eastern European countries as well. Evidence presented in the chapters of this volume comes from a large quantitative and qualitative data set. This quantitative data set, which we refer to as '*The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey,' includes 14,068 respondents who have emigrated from Latvia and represent 118 emigration destination countries. The qualitative data set extends

quantitative research data providing in-depth descriptions of migration realities. The qualitative data consists of almost 200 in-depth interviews with emigrants in Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and other countries, return migrants in Latvia and national migration policy experts. Some authors in this volume used additional qualitative data generation techniques when examining their specific research topic, described in their respective chapters. A detailed discussion of the development and application of the integrated research design for studying contemporary emigrant communities of Latvia is presented in Chap. 2 by Inta Mieriņa in this volume.

One important part of developing a common research methodology for a group of researchers representing different academic disciplines and fields of study was reaching an agreement on the definition of the central terms of the study. The focus of this research on contemporary migrants from Latvia drew on the dichotomous notion of pre-1991 and post-1991 migration from Latvia, characterised by very different historical circumstances. Migration from Latvia in the twentieth century prior to 1991 was predominantly driven by events associated with World Wars I and II, described in Chap. 3 of this volume by Mihails Hazans. Forced emigration from Latvia was a common reason for the forming of the Latvian diaspora prior to 1991. The collapse of the Soviet Union, full restoration of Latvia's independence in 1991, and its subsequent integration with Western countries and the European Union opened new migration opportunities, also discussed by Hazans. Post-1991 emigration was not forced by acts of war and foreign occupation regimes, but influenced by changing economic, social and political conditions instead. The dichotomy of the pre and post-1991 circumstances formed a logical borderline in this research to define contemporary migration as 'cross-border movement after 1991'.

At the same time, drawing strict borders and frames when defining a social phenomenon can be rather arbitrary. Although the approach in this research defines a 'contemporary migrant' as someone who moved out of the country after 1991, there are cases when the logic of applying the year of Latvia's *de jure* independence as the strict and only measure can be challenged. Migration conditions for some years before and after 1991 were in many ways more comparable than those in 1992 and 2000. Therefore, even though guided by the notion of the *old* and *new* diaspora with 1991 as the cut-off line, when collecting data we maintained the possibility for our research participants to self-identify as the members of the *new* diaspora, i.e., a contemporary migrant. Thus, although data in the chapters of this volume primarily speaks about post-1991 migration, there are cases of earlier departures from Latvia as well. In *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, 6.4% of all respondents said they had emigrated prior to 1991. The decisions of authors to include or exclude this group of participants in the analysis was guided by the focus of each chapter.

Specific research questions addressed in separate chapters of the volume set their own requirements for the characteristics of participants such as the year of migration. For example, in Chap. 11 on the communication of the identity of Latvian migrants on social networking sites, Ianis Bucholtz and Laura Sūna present per-

spectives of participants who emigrated after the emergence of the widespread use of contemporary social media platforms, i.e., after 2004. Similarly in Chap. 13 by Rita Kaša on the nexus between student loan forgiveness and return migration, the availability of student loans for studies abroad from 2001 set the focus on participants who left to study abroad after this year.

Another term as equally important as ‘contemporary’ in this research was the concept of diaspora. In order to capture the diversity of contemporary Latvian emigrant communities, this study applied an open definition of the term ‘Latvian diaspora’, welcoming any participant who self-identified with Latvia as a geographical place, nation or citizen. Fieldwork was organized in three languages – Latvian, Russian and English – so research collecting quantitative and qualitative data could be tailored depending on the participant’s preference. To enable a diversity of migrant associations with Latvia and yet have one common reference point, the common baseline characteristic for research participants was their or their family’s emigration from Latvia.

One of the aims of this research was to capture the perspectives of the ethnic minority representatives of the contemporary Latvian diaspora. To achieve it, this research sought to recruit Russian-speaking members of Latvian emigrant communities. In determining the belonging of research participants to an ethnic minority or a Russian-speaking group from Latvia during data collection, we relied on the self-identification of participants. We do not apply terms such as ‘ethnic Russian’ in this research unless the participants themselves identify like this. We took a similar approach to the majority group in this research; that is, ethnic Latvians. Participant self-identification with this ethnicity determined their belonging to this group. In order to succeed in recruiting ethnically diverse participants, we had to approach participant recruitment based on some assumptions about their ethnic belonging. However, when collecting data, we asked the participants about their ethnic self-identification and built our further engagement with participants on the basis of this perspective.

Ethnicity as a factor in defining the identity and belonging of migrants emerges as a theme in several chapters of this volume. A systematic focus on identity and belonging as it relates to ethnicity, however, is present in two chapters. In Chap. 6, Mārtiņš Kaprāns discusses the ethno-cultural, political and social contexts for long distance belonging, comparing perspectives of Latvian and Russian-speaking migrants in Great Britain. In Chap. 8, Iveta Jurkane-Hobein and Evija Kļave present a more nuanced view of identity formation among Russian-speaking Latvian migrants in Great Britain and Sweden.

Thus, in this research and the chapters of this volume, there is a common approach concerning a shared, if broad, definition of the terms ‘contemporary migration’, ‘Latvian diaspora’ and ‘ethnic self-identification’ of Latvian migrants. Another common feature is our jointly developed *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey and approach to qualitative interview data collection.

In other respects the chapters in this volume represent diverse contributions. The authors of the chapters in this volume draw on different sources of literature characteristic to their research focus and the field of studies they represent. We view this approach as a positive as it extends the links between the fields of migration studies and knowledge generated in other fields of social sciences. Thus, each chapter in this volume grounds its research focus in the literature suited to that particular research focus. Although this approach does not enable a joint theoretical framework for tackling various angles of contemporary migration, it does offer a multifaceted empirical contribution for understanding the emigrant communities of one sending country in Europe in terms of contemporary migrant identity, belonging and perspectives on return migration.

This volume consists of three parts. The first part of the volume includes chapters which consider the question of contemporary migration, its characteristics and approaches to measuring this phenomenon. Chapter 2 by Mieriņa, as mentioned earlier, describes the research design forming the overarching rules for generating the body of evidence presented in the chapters of this volume. This chapter discusses this methodology in the context of other migration studies and major surveys on migration. Mieriņa argues that innovative elements of the research approach in *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia: National identity, transnational relations and diaspora politics* research project, which is the framework for contributions in this volume, qualify this methodology for application in other contexts and studies of various migrant groups in Europe and beyond.

To set the context for the evidence presented in this volume, the chapter on an integrated approach to survey emigrants worldwide is followed by a description of a brief history of emigration from Latvia in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, together with analysis of its driving forces. In this chapter Hazans provides detailed statistics on the main population flows – migration, refugees and deportation – to and from Latvia in the twentieth century. This review is followed by a more detailed analysis of emigration during the first 15 years of the twenty-first century, describing the four waves of emigration between 2000 and 2016. This analysis draws on the discipline of economics and engages insights from the human capital theory, the new economic theory of migration, the network theory and migration systems theory, as well as emphasising the institutional factors framing migration. The chapter concludes that while economic reasons for emigration remain widespread, non-economic ones are becoming increasingly important. It also concludes that the potential for emigration is higher than the potential for return.

The chapter following that, by Ilze Koroļeva, draws on the dataset of 14,051 respondents in *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey and develops profiles of Latvian emigrants based on their attitudes and self-identification, both with Latvia and their host country. Among Koroļeva's findings is that most respondents feel closer to Latvia than to their host country. However, the people who left Latvia during the Great Recession and its aftermath, as well as those who left for economic reasons, are the most alienated from their home country. These migrants formed the third wave of twenty-first century emigration from Latvia. Koroļeva concludes that

the level of subjective life satisfaction and having a family back at home are important for strengthening the sense of belonging to Latvia and can be a crucial factor in return migration.

Taking into account that most late twentieth and early twenty-first century migration from Latvia has been driven by economic factors, in Chap. 5, Aivars Tabuns looks at the role of formal and informal intermediaries in providing job placement abroad. This chapter addresses such issues as fraud, the mistreatment of jobseekers and discrimination from employers. Using the *Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey data, this chapter describes the vulnerabilities of migrant workers and the unfair treatment and discrimination they face. It also includes recommendations for further studies and policy development.

The second part of the volume *Case Studies on Transnational and National Belonging of Migrants* consists of six chapters, which are in-depth case studies looking at the socio-cultural integration of Latvian migrants in various host countries. This section opens at Chap. 6 with Mārtiņš Kaprāns considering the transnational aspects of identity and the long distance belonging of Latvian migrants in Great Britain. This chapter uses *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey data and semi-structured interviews with Latvian migrants in Great Britain. This chapter discusses the ethno-cultural, political and social contexts of long distance belonging for self-identified Latvian and Russian-speaking emigrants. This research finds differences in ethno-cultural and political contexts of long distance belonging among the ethnic majority and minority emigrants from Latvia. However, there are also points of convergence between the two groups of migrants. This chapter concludes that the social context of long distance belonging enables new forms of allegiance towards Latvia, which are manifested in philanthropic initiatives, participation in various interest groups and a regular interest in what is happening in Latvia.

Chapter 7 by Daiga Kamerāde and Ieva Skubiņa continues the exploration of the Latvian emigrant community in Great Britain. Their research angle, however, is a focus on the future of the Latvian emigrant community in this country. The chapter explores the formation of national and transnational identity among the 1.5 generation migrant children – the children born in Latvia but growing up in Great Britain – from the perspective of their parents. Based on evidence from semi-structured interviews, this chapter shows that the 1.5 generation Latvian migrants are on a path to become English-dominant bilinguals. There is a tendency towards an active integration and assimilation into the new host country either facilitated by their parents or occurring despite their parents' efforts to maintain ties with Latvia.

Chapter 8 by Jurkane-Hobein and Evija Kļave extends the focus on identity formation among migrants from ethnic minorities, an angle often overlooked in research. By analysing 30 life histories of self-identified Russian-speaking migrants from Latvia in Sweden and Great Britain, this chapter shows that in addition to the migration history of their families, the migrants' own migration patterns create interlinked and sometimes conflicting layers of transnational identity. The analysis in this chapter distinguishes three main processes in the formation of identity: aspiring to a Latvian identity, claiming an unrecognised Russian-speaking Latvian iden-

tity, and developing transnational ‘non-belonging’. Thus, this chapter provides useful insights into how social integration patterns between majority and minority at home are repeated in the emigrant community in the new host country.

A different perspective on migrant identity formation through the lens of the impact of transnational media and culture is presented in Chap. 9 by Laura Sūna, examining how Latvian migrants in Germany feel and experience their belonging to Latvia and its culture. Using evidence generated via in-depth interviews, open media diaries and network maps of Latvian emigrants in Germany, Sūna argues that culture is shaping the transnational self-perception of Latvian migrants in Germany as it provides collective narratives of imagined common frames of references and confirms processes of ‘belonging’ and ‘distinction’.

The question of the welcome the integrated emigrant community affords newcomers from the same country of origin is addressed by Andris Saulitis and Inta Mieriņa in Chap. 10. This studies the relationships and interaction among Latvian emigrants from different migration waves in the United States. It specifically examines reasons for the inability of the existing ‘old’ Latvian diaspora community, formed as a result of the events of World War II, to integrate late twentieth and early twenty-first century newcomers from Latvia into it. This chapter presents *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey and semi-structured interview data analysis. The chapter concludes that newcomers distance themselves from the already-formed emigrant community. They do not have an active engagement with Latvians back home. Instead, these migrants base their belonging on the notion of having roots in Europe in terms of cultural heritage and identity. For them, there is no return home, as they only look forward.

Bucholtz and Sūna conclude this section of the book with a focus on the role of social technologies in the life of contemporary migrants. This chapter analyses how ethnic transnational identities are manifested and negotiated on the social networking sites used by Latvian migrants. The empirical data in the chapter comes from 20 semi-structured interviews with Latvian migrants in different countries and *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey. The results presented in this chapter demonstrate that migrant interactions on social networking sites do not necessarily lead to the homogenisation of concepts of what ‘being a Latvian’ means to migrants. Results show that a migrant can identify with the host society yet still reject some of its characteristics – and choose Latvian alternatives instead.

The third and final part of the volume contains two chapters focused on return migration and related national policies from the perspective of contemporary migrants.

In Chap. 12 Evija Kļave and Inese Šūpule juxtapose normative return migration policy in Latvia and the experiences of return migrants. This chapter considers the extent to which return policy activities correspond to the needs and expectations of return migrants, and addresses the role of this policy in the process of making the decision to return. Evidence in this chapter consists of policy documents, *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey and in-depth interviews. This chapter finds that the national return migration policy has no impact on individual return decisions among Latvian migrants, as the main reasons for return are non-economic.

Coming back is connected to homesickness and also eliminating the risk of assimilation for their children in the host country society.

The final chapter in the volume concludes with Rita Kaša exploring the effectiveness of government policy in prompting return migration. The focus of this chapter is on a specific policy measure – that of student debt forgiveness for international graduates who return and work in positions of social value. Based on qualitative semi-structured interviews, this chapter shows that offering debt forgiveness for former students abroad who return to take jobs at home in specific public sector roles does not prompt return migration among graduates at universities abroad. Evidence from *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey in this chapter suggests that regardless of the source of their higher education funding, the intention to stay abroad dominates among Latvian international students. Yet, curiously enough, the intentions to return are more common among international students who have paid for their studies either with money from their family or with a student loan from the Latvian government.

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