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# Intentions and imaginations of migration among minority group members in the pre-migration phase

## A study of migration imaginations in Estonia and Italy

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# Intentions and imaginations of migration among minority group members in the pre-migration phase A study of migration imaginations in Estonia and Italy

Thesis carried out within the scope of the Doctorate MOVES - Migration and Modernity: Historical and Cultural Challenges, supervised by the Dr. Amanda Klekowski von Koppenfels and by the Dr. Prof. Paula Guerra

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"If you're going to try,
Go all the way. Otherwise,
don't even start."

- Charles Bukowski

*For C.,*
*who sat next to me in the darkest hours*
*and loneliest nights,*
*who helped me up, every time.*

# Contents

## Declaration of honour

I declare that the present dissertation is of my own authorship and has not been previously used in another course or curricular unit of this or any other institution. References to other authors (statements, ideas, thoughts) scrupulously respect the rules of attribution, and are duly indicated in the text and in the bibliographical references, in accordance with the referencing rules. I am aware that the practice of plagiarism and self-plagiarism is an academic offence.

Bolzano, 20th January 2023

Carmen Tasser

# List of Figures

# List of Tables

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## Abstract

This dissertation investigates the intentions and imaginations of migration of minority groups in the pre-migration phase and their identification and self-categorization during this time. The data was collected prior the actual move and the study aims to look beyond the scope of ethnic return migration literature and explore minority migration in its multiple shapes. A multiple case study with a mixed model design and grounded theory was conducted using two cases: Estonia and Italy. Estonia is a country with a significant minority group of Russophones which is the first group of interest in this thesis. Italy on the other hand has a region in the north, namely South Tyrol, with a considerable German speaking population; which will serve as a second case study. The quantitative and qualitative questionnaire was distributed among last year High School students in 2020 in Estonia and 2021 in Italy which led to a total of (N=151) participants in Estonia and (N=90) participants in South Tyrol. The analysis shows a higher probability of minority group members to migrate in both case studies, however not connected to ethnic return migration intentions. The main reasons for migration intentions are the divisions of societies and the lack of feeling of belonging of minority group members, as well as the imagination of a good community in the destination country. Looking at the self-identification of the participants, minority group members prefer a combined identity of their ethnic, national and the European identity, while majority group members favour solely the national identity. However, the European identity can function as an umbrella category and combine both groups. Future studies could explore the relationship between the imagination of migration and actual migration behaviours, as well as the long-term outcomes of migration for minority groups.

**Key words:** Migration intentions, Minorities, Pre-migration phase, Estonia, South Tyrol

## Resumo

Esta dissertação investiga as intenções e as imaginações migratórias de grupos minoritários na fase pré-migratória e a sua identificação e autorrepresentação nessa mesma fase. Os dados foram recolhidos antes da migração propriamente dita e o estudo pretende ir para além da literatura existente sobre a migração de retorno étnico e explorar a migração de minorias nas suas diversas modalidades. Realizamos um estudo de caso múltiplo alicerçado numa abordagem metodológica mista e numa aproximação teórica fundamentada empiricamente, utilizando dois casos: na Estónia e em Itália. A Estónia é um país com uma minoria significativa de russófonos, que constituem o primeiro grupo de interesse desta tese. A Itália, por outro lado, tem uma região no Norte, nomeadamente o Tirol do Sul, com uma considerável população falante de língua alemã; a qual servirá como segundo estudo de caso. O questionário quantitativo e qualitativo foi distribuído entre os estudantes do último ano do ensino secundário em 2020 na Estónia e em 2021 na Itália, o que levou a um total de 151 participantes na Estónia e de 90 participantes no Tirol do Sul. A análise dos dados evidencia uma maior probabilidade de os membros de grupos minoritários migrarem em ambos os estudos de caso, não obstante tal não esteja correlacionado com intenções de migração de retorno étnico. As principais razões para as intenções de migração prendem-se com as divisões nas sociedades e a falta de sentimento de pertença dos membros de grupos minoritários, bem como a imaginação da consecução de uma boa comunidade no país de destino. Olhando para a autoidentificação dos participantes, em ambos os casos, podemos considerar que os membros de grupos minoritários preferem uma matriz identitária que combine a suas identidades étnica, nacional e europeia. No entanto, a identidade europeia pode funcionar como uma categoria guarda-chuva e combinar ambos os grupos. Propomos, inclusivamente, que estudos futuros possam explorar a relação entre a imaginação da migração e os atuais comportamentos migratórios, bem como os resultados a longo prazo da migração para os grupos minoritários.



**Palavras-chave:** Intenções migratórias, Minorias, Fase pré-migratória, Estónia, Tirol do Sul

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the study

> "Sometimes I have difficulties identifying with a country, on the one hand I don't feel Italian because I simply grew up with German as my mother tongue; on the other hand, I don't feel Austrian either because it's a different country. In general, I have the feeling that you are the 'outsider' everywhere, whether you are in Italy or Austria." – Lisa, 19-year-old, member of an ethnic minority group in the north of Italy.

Lisa grew up as a German speaker, in a region where German is the majority language, yet within the territory of the Italian nation state, and thus the inhabitants of the region are Italian citizens. Lisa is at a moment of her life in which she is trying to find her own path, her place to be and her purpose. She is about to finish high school and needs to make decisions about her career, her studies, or any next steps she might wish to take after school, yet she is still not sure who she is and where she belongs. Lisa is one of approximately 360,000 people in South Tyrol[1] who identify German as their mother tongue and live in the transnational reality of being Italian citizens with German as a native language.

Nearly every country is home to at least one minority group, be it a linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minority, or perhaps an old or a new minority, an immigrant minority or any other type of group who does not correspond to the majority of the nation, in one way or another. A significant number of people are known to grow up in a reality consisting of a mixture of cultures, an in-between, and there is considerable literature which takes up this phenomenon in its various forms (see e.g., Ashmore *et al*., 2001; Rothe and Pumariega, 2020; Verkuyten, 1997). Minority groups differ strongly and similarly different is their treatment in societies, thus the literature addressing these topics is manifold and diverse (see e.g., Huot *et al*., 2014; Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2015; Medda-Windischer, 2017; Pan *et al*., 2018; Prina and Berdiqulov, 2018; Varjonen *et al*., 2013). In this study questions on identity and belonging are explored, as well as the migration decisions and dreams of minorities. How can identity be found and developed in a transnational space, in between nationhood, belonging and heritage? How does this membership in a minority group

[1] South Tyrol is the geographic name of the area. Yet, administratively it is called the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano, which together with the Autonomous Province of Trento forms the Autonomous Region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol (Wisthaler *et al*., 2022).

influence the individual's life path and decisions? In line with migration literature, as well as research on minority groups and their identity, this thesis looks at the intersection of these disciplines in order to examine new patterns in the migration of minorities and to explore this topic from an original angle.

Migration is a widely studied topic and a major global trend and through different branches of research explored in its various manifestations. Nevertheless, there do remain gaps in the literature on migration. Discussing migration and minorities, the published literature tends to focus on minority and diasporic groups as a consequence of historical migration. Less research has been done to examine the migration behaviours of minority group members, and when carried out, the main focus has been directed toward co-ethnic return migration (see e.g., Arhin-Sam, 2019; King and Christou, 2011; Kunuroglu *et al*., 2018; Pratsinakis, 2021; Sinatti, 2019; Tezcan, 2018¸Tsuda, 2010; Yilmaz Sener, 2019; Zhen Li, 2021). Thus, research exploring other potential migration aspirations and factors of minority group members not necessarily connected to the 'return' to a homeland is still less common. This is the branch of research to which this research contributes, and, in so doing, it provides a wider view on minority migration in Europe and the factors influencing it as well as seeing new patterns in migration decision. Furthermore, studies into the pre-migration period are more scarce than research on the phases after the move (Amit and Riss, 2013; Raghuram 2013). Studies dealing with this sequence of migration are mostly based on data gathered following the act of migration, and hence the collected data is grounded on the subsequent perception of the specific time (e.g., in Amit and Riss, 2014; Bürgelt *et al*., 2008, Chen *et al.,* 2017; Song *et al.,* 2015). Furthermore, this thesis aims to explore the dreams and imaginations connected to a potential migration project, looking at the expectations of minority group members regarding their future mobility and identity. Quite a bit of literature has touched upon those topics in recent years. For example, Carling and Pettersen (2014; see also Carling and Schewel, 2018) focus on drivers for migration and migration aspirations, touching on the imaginative dimension as well as on the emotional dimension of the phenomena. Aspirations are conceptualised in two ways, on the one hand it is what people expect to achieve in their life; on the other hand, it considers 'hopes and dreams' which do not necessarily need to be based on reality (Leavy and Smith, 2010; Yeboah, 2021). In recent years some migration scholars have started working on those 'imagined futures' in

order to explore and understand migration decisions (see e.g., Koikkalainen *et al*., 2020; Yeboah, 2021). Yet, combining the topics of migration aspirations and minority identities is still less researched. Filling this gap with data of the pre-migration period is rare in the literature and provided through a process of data collection of a particular group – ethnic minority members – and the analysis and conclusions drawn from it. The sample consists of high-school graduates, firstly, as they most likely have not yet experienced migration before, and secondly, as they may be in the pre-migration period should they decide to move abroad for study reasons. The participants are taken from both minority and majority groups and thus the differences and similarities in their migration plans and aspirations can be explored. This contributes to the literature of migration aspirations of minorities and minority identities. Therefore, a multiple case study was made, exploring the pre-migration period of minority group members in two case studies – German speakers in Italy and Russian speakers in Estonia.

## 1.2 The problem statements

The main body of literature concerning migration and its consequences is based on data gathered after the migration. One branch of this literature, focusing on a consequence of migration, is elaborating 'the brain drain', which in South Tyrol is a widely discussed topic amongst the public. Many 'brains', the highly skilled people from the region, leave or move abroad with a lack of skilled workers now seen in South Tyrol (see e.g., Ferrario and Price, 2014; Kofler *et al*., 2020). Yet, the existing research is tackling the problem when it already exists, while in this thesis the focus lies on the time prior to the migration, in order to more fully comprehend the source of the problem rather than simply describing the phenomenon. When data is gathered after the actual move, events and circumstance alter the memories, as they are influenced by an individual's own emotions both in the past and the present, as well as by the surrounding group or society (Janowski, 2012). Therefore, the data gathered in the pre-migration period provides a more unfiltered and straightforward view on the aspirations and reasons in the minds of those individuals about to migrate. The fundamental right of free movement for EU citizens has facilitated the intra-EU mobility, especially among highly skilled workers and students, yet certain 'sending regions' are losing the competition for talent (European Commission. Directorate General for Employment,

Social Affairs and Inclusion., 2021). The brain drain effect is rarely connected to the minority group status, yet some studies indicate that the probability of leaving the country is higher for highly skilled minorities than it is for members of the majority group (concerning Estonia see e.g., Anniste *et al*., 2012). For this reason, the thesis looks at the migration aspiration of high school graduates which are members of minority groups within the EU and explores the factors underlying their migration decision and wishes.

Furthermore, the migration of minority group members is most often interpreted through the lens of co-ethnic return migration (see e.g., Cassarino, 2015; Pratsinakis, 2021; Tsuda, 2010). However, as this thesis shows, the reasons for migration can be many and varied. The label of 'ethnic return migrant' relies strongly on structures and suggests an inevitability, while this thesis argues that the decision to move is highly personal, and one that reflects all the complexities that individuals have. By essentializing members of an ethnic minority to their native language / ethnic minority status, this complexity is lost; thus, it is important to examine ethnic migration from different angles, which is done in this thesis. This is done, in knowing that ethnicity is only one factor and the decision to migrate can not be reduced to only the ethnical belonging or feature of an individual.

This thesis seeks to contribute to research on the migration of ethnic minorities; it explores which components of identity that a minority group member might favour in terms of a migration decision as well as which societal circumstances play a role in this decision. This thesis examines the similarities and differences found in the pre-migration period of members of minorities and majorities, and identifies the main drivers for the migration decisions in both cases. In connection to this, the identification of minority group members is explored, balancing their ethnic and national identity and which role the European identity plays. Furthermore, a connection will be drawn between the influence of the identity of minority group members and the status they have in both society and the political landscape and how this influences migration aspirations.

## 1.3 Background of the case studies

In order to explore the above-mentioned topics, this thesis looks at two case studies within the European Union (EU), Estonia, as one of the youngest member states, and Italy, as one

of its founding members. Both have a minority population of considerable size, yet the treatment of the minority population differs strongly, which will be explained in more detail in the following section. Assessing the two cases of Russophones in Estonia and German speakers in South Tyrol in comparison as a multiple case study is a novum of this research.

A multiple case study allows the researcher to investigate both cases, first framed in their respective setting, and thereafter combining them to ascertain the similarities and differences arising in the cases (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Stake, 2013). Both chosen countries have a sizable minority, namely Russophones in Estonia, and German speakers in northern Italy. In this thesis the terms “Russophones” “Russian natives” and “Russian speakers” will be used interchangeably to refer to the Russian speaking minority in Estonia. This is common usage in the literature when referring to Russian speakers outside of Russia, as language is the main commonality of the group (e.g. Cheskin and Kachuyevski, 2019; Korts, 2009; Poppe and Hagendoorn, 2001; Ryzhova, 2022; Smith, 2003; Vozna, 2022). In the Italian case, the terms “German speakers” and “German minority” will be used to refer to the minority group members, as well as “German speaking minority” which is common in the literature (e.g., Carlá, 2007; Constantin, 2016; Dosch and Lakatos, 2020; Mitterhofer, 2023).

While these cases are both in the EU, they do reveal substantial differences. Rather than viewing this as problematic, however, and in following theorists of case study selection, we can learn a great deal from such cases. The comparison is based on the same conceptual categories and properties, rather than the evidence (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In the generation of theory “[…] the ‘non-comparability’ of groups is irrelevant” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 51), as long as the data applies to a similar set of categories. It is also vital to think about subgroups within the groups in order to broaden the range of comparisons (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The background of the cases will be presented in the next paragraphs and show what the similarities and differences are; demonstrating that the treatment of minority rights is exceptionally different, while factors like geographical distribution, historical occurrences and minority population size are rather similar. The cases are unique in their features, yet both of them are minorities in the EU with a bordering country representing their language as the state language. Furthermore, in both cases certain areas are inhabited by more minority than majority group members. The data

analysis will show in which way the cases can serve to generalize the results and which results are specific for the respective situation, but which shed light on the two cases. Where cases may have limited generalizability, they are nonetheless valuable, as they contribute to a deeper understanding of phenomena that have not been uncovered in studies before.

The two cases were chosen after thorough consideration, and both are relevant for the field. According to Seawright *et al.* (2014), certain factors must be taken into account when choosing case studies. First, the population of interest should be reasonably large in order to use statistical techniques. Second, relevant data must be available for that sample of the population in terms of the key variables. Both factors appear in both the Estonian and the Italian context. Yet, the main factor for the choice of these two very specific cases relates to the policies concerning minorities, which differ strongly in the two countries. The member states of the EU have a very different interpretation of how a 'national minority' should be defined. Estonia is one of the examples most often used to show how narrow and exclusive this definition can be (see e.g., Cholewinski, 2005). This is partially connected to the law of citizenship, which is the right of blood and not the right of soil; thus, a child of Russian parents will still be Russian (Włodarska-Frykowska, 2016). Since regaining its independence, Estonia has been criticized for its policies excluding ethnic minorities which inspired some adaptations of the laws in 2002 (see e.g., Sjöstedt, 2018). The political dimension will be laid out in more detail in section 1.3. Nevertheless, there is still a gap between minority and often majority rights; minority group members are hardly represented in the political landscape of Estonia (Sjöstedt, 2018), the wage differences between Estonian speakers and Russian speakers are still a proven phenomenon (Toomet *et al*., 2013), and exclusion of the minority group on a formal and informal level is nonetheless in place (Jašina-Schäfer, 2021).

South Tyrol, on the other hand, is seen as a European success story, as a minority conflict was solved peacefully and power-sharing and autonomy turned the region of South Tyrol into a prosperous area (Alber and Pallaver, 2021; Alber and Zwilling, 2022). It is viewed as an illustrative example of minority protection in Europe (Constantin, 2016; Medda-Windischer and Carlà, 2015; Larin and Röggla, 2019). The policies will be elaborated more in detail in section 1.3.

As seen from the literature, Estonia and Italy have very different approaches to minority rights and can be seen as contrasting examples. Whereas the policies and the perception of minority rights are so different in the two cases, the notions of the geographical distribution, the size of the minority population, and historical treatments can nevertheless be compared to a certain extent, and for these reasons, these two cases were chosen.

In the following section the background of the two case studies will be introduced in more depth. First a general introduction into the minority situation in Europe will be given, and thereafter the case studies will be introduced separately according to their historical, social and political background. The minorities in Estonia and in Italy will be presented, in order to give a clear picture of the context and situations before entering into the analysis of the cases.

### 1.3.1 The overall picture

In the contemporary world, most nations do not coincide with nation-states: although there are about 200 independent states and autonomous territorial units on the world map, there are as many as 8,000 nations, that is, if the criterion of language is used as the defining feature (Arts and Halman, 2005). In the last two centuries, the West has changed from a heterogeneous political space consisting of empires, city-states, kingdoms etc. into a system of nation-states aiming for a common national culture, identity, and language (Kymlicka and Straehle, 1999).

In Europe, there are a total of 47 sovereign states, yet more than 90 peoples are counted (Benedikter, 2008). Most European states are dominated by one single, namely, the native language of the majority group, although there may be several official languages. In other states, national and regional languages function on par with the official language in certain territories. This is the case, for example, for German in South Tyrol in Italy, for Catalan, Galician and Basque in Spain, etc. Belgium and Switzerland have two or more official languages used equally, yet those cases are an exception rather than the rule. However, an essential component of a culturally diverse Europe is the protection of national and ethnic minorities (Pan *et al.,* 2003).

For the European Union, the minorities issue is important, as nearly every country hosts at least one minority, and thus there is a potential conflict for all EU member countries in their very own way. No official figures exist to indicate the number of people officially belonging or feeling a sense of belonging to a minority in the EU (see e.g., Council of Europe, 2016; European Commission. Directorate General for Justice and Consumers, 2017), yet some sources can be found that estimate the total number of members of minorities in the EU at around 50 million (see e.g., Makszimov, 2021). The EU has two international instruments for minority protection, namely, the European Language Charter of 1992 and the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities from 1994 (Pan *et al.,* 2003). Thirty-six European states signed the Framework convention, yet as the interpretation and implementation is allocated to the governments of the states, the Framework convention is far from being wholly satisfactory at present (Gal *et al.,* 2001). Furthermore, there is no legal international definition of the term 'minorities', given the wide variation in the way that individual nation-states choose to define the term. Even the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic Religious and Linguistic Minorities, as well as the Council of Europe Framework Convention do not define the term, leaving the definition to other bodies (Medda-Windischer, 2017). Thus, each country determines individually which requirements need to be fulfilled by a group to be classified as a minority and able to receive official protection. Certain countries have a listing of which groups enjoy minority status; others do not name the groups but rather give an outline of who can benefit from minority rights. Estonia defines minorities as follows:

> § 1. For the purposes of this Act, a national minority shall mean Estonian citizens who:
> – reside in the territory of Estonia;
> – have long-term, sound and permanent ties with Estonia;
> – differ from Estonians by their ethnic belonging, cultural characteristics, religion or language;
> – are led by their wish to collectively maintain their cultural customs, religion or language which are the basis for their common identity. (National Minorities Cultural Autonomy Act, 1993)

Italy, on the other hand, is one of the few European countries which explicitly protects linguistic minorities, which is Article 6 of the Constitution (UNESCO, 2016). In law 482-99, Article 2 it is stated that:

> 1. In implementation of Article 6 of the Constitution and in harmony with the general principles established by the European and international bodies, the Republic protects the language and culture of Albanian, Catalan, Germanic, Greek, Slovenian and Croatian populations and those who speak French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitan and Sardinian. (LEGGE 15 dicembre 1999, n. 482, translated by the author)

As seen above, Estonia exclusively grants minority status for people with Estonian citizenship, while Italy lists the most significant minority groups in the country and grants them protection. This is a very different baseline in the two countries, and thus it is not surprising that the treatment of the minority groups differs significantly.

Europe has a great number of 'indigenous' minorities, as well as immigrant minorities, yet these arose by different mechanisms and are treated by the relevant states in different ways. Anderson (2017) defines several variations of indigenous minorities, like 'ethno-linguistic', 'regional', 'traditional' or 'national', depending on the specific circumstances. These vary from one country to another, as do protection policies. Local factors play a role, as history, political aspects and territorial changes are taken into account (Shoraka, 2010). Depending on whether a minority has a kin-state[2], or whether it is a smaller language group without particular 'patronage' or it has been artificially created by new states, the situations of conflicts, needs and context scenarios are manifold (Benedikter, 2008). What is common to all minority groups is the desire to maintain a collective identity, one which differs from the majority group (Medda-Windischer, 2017), thus Europe needs to deal with the national and 'quasi-national' identities of the individuals (Arts and Halman, 2006).

As this paper examines two European cases – the Russian speaking minority in Estonia and the German speaking minority in Italy, both very different in how they came into existence and in their diverse policies on minority rights, yet similar in how the local people perceive their societal situation – the following allows for a more detailed comparison of the two.

Estonia has a total of 25% percent Russophone inhabitants (Willis, 2019). The Russian-speaking community is mainly concentrated in the capital, Tallinn, and in the north-eastern parts of the country, especially in the region of Ida-Virumaa, close to the Russian border.

[2] Ethnic kin states are typically those states which border or are close to the region in which the diasporic group lives and with whom the minority group shares and maintains strong ethnocultural and ethnoreligious bonds. (Ganguly, 1998)

Notably in this north-eastern area, ethnic Estonians are often the minority group whereas Russophones comprise the majority group (Aasland and Fløtten, 2001). Estonia is located in north-eastern Europe and, with a population of 1.3 million inhabitants (Statistiks Estonia, 2022), is a relatively small European country and one of the youngest members of the EU.

Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol in Italy is inhabited by three different language groups. According to the 2011 census, the population of the province of Bolzano (this paper will also use the synonym South Tyrol) is 26% Italian-speaking, 69% German-speaking and 5% Ladin-speaking (ASTAT, 2020). The region is the northernmost region of Italy and shares a border with Austria. Italy is a European country and one the founding states of the European Union.

The two case studies are different political entities, as in the Estonian case it concerns a whole country, while in the Italian case the focus lies on one single province within a state. This needs to be acknowledged and is surely a great difference, however the next section will show, that the autonomous province of South Tyrol has many freedoms in their legislation and thus is not so strictly bound to the Italian state laws.

### 1.3.2 The Estonian and the Italian case in detail

History is a central part of ethnicity and is particularly relevant for the understanding of issues associated with ethnic minority identities and inter-ethnic relations (Liebkind, 2006); for this reason, the following introduction into the historical context of both case studies will be presented. Estonia regained its independence in 1991, while in the Italian case the country's current borders have been in place since 1919. Nevertheless, both countries experienced a 20$^{th}$-century regime oppressing the language and culture of an ethnic group. Estonia experienced a time of 'Russification' starting in 1944, and South Tyrol underwent 'Italianization' from 1925 onwards, with both sharing a similar strategy to homogenise the nation. Nowadays, in modern Italy and Estonia, minority groups receive different treatment. While South Tyrol enjoys a lot of freedom to decide certain aspects of their own governance, the minority groups in Estonia are still struggling, education in their native language being an example. The commonality of both cases returns in the extreme division of the society: even though in theory people should be bilingual and an exchange between

the ethnic groups is seen as something positive, the groups, in fact, are divided. The following paragraphs will give a more in-depth overview.

**Estonia**

Since the 12th century, various powers have occupied the territory of the Baltic States, inter alia the Swedes, the Danes, the Germans, and in the 18th century the Russian empire for the first time possessed the territory of Livonia and Northern Estonia. The time after 1906 led to a steadily intensifying wave of national consciousness within the three Baltic States, which resulted in each one declaring independence in 1918 following World War I (Misiunas *et al.,* 1993). Estonia became a sovereign state for the first time, and a shared Estonian identity could start to be built among the inhabitants of the territory (Tamm, 2008). However, in 1940 the Baltic States were forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union in the wake of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed one year earlier (Elsuwege, 2004). From 1944 on, a period of Russification started which came with a variety of policies to incorporate the territory and extinguish the Baltic nations. Soviet settlement policies resulted in Estonia receiving around 180 000 immigrants from 1945-47 and another 30 000 arriving in 1950-53 (O'Connor, 2015), which led to a dramatic drop in the native share of Estonian population. In Estonia, the 'non-titular' nationalists grew from 12% in the pre-war period to 39% by 1989 (Smith, 2002). This numbers can be traced not only to the internal migration of Russian speakers from other parts of the USSR, but also to the fact that many titular nationals were deported, murdered, and exiled (Skerrett, 2014). At least a quarter million Estonian natives fled westwards in 1944-45 to evade the Russification policies. Furthermore, in 1949, around 100 000 rural Baltics, mostly women and children, were deported and dispersed throughout the USSR (O'Connor, 2015). Another measurement of Russification was the implementation of the Russian language in schools and universities. This resulted in many Estonians becoming functionally bilingual, which then turned Estonian from a majority language to a minority language, with the number of people speaking Russian becoming ever greater in the territory (Skerrett, 2014). Estonia started to rebuild its independence gradually from 1988 onwards, all three Baltic States went into the direction of a restoration of national sovereignty and linguistic and cultural human rights. In 1991 Estonia declared independence and its sovereignty was re-established and a new constitution came into force in 1992

(Rannut, 2008). In 2004 Estonia joined the European Union, the Schengen area in 2007 and in 2011 the Eurozone.

The ideological cornerstone for the re-establishment of Estonia's independence was the recognition of the Soviet Union's annexation as illegal, thus allowing for the principle of state continuity to be applied. Basically, this means that the present-day Republic of Estonia as proclaimed in 1918 (Poleshchuk, 2016) has never ceased to exist. Everyone who was a citizen of Estonia before 1940 was automatically given Estonian citizenship; all others needed to gain it through naturalisation, which primarily affected the nation's Russian inhabitants (Shoraka, 2010). According to Statistics Estonia, on the 1st of January 2020, 1 128 559 inhabitants of Estonia held Estonian citizenship, 83 989 held Russian citizenship, and 71 361 were stateless, so called Aliens (Statistics Estonia, 2021). According to the National Minorities Cultural Autonomy Act from 1993, minority members holding the Alien status are excluded from minority rights and political participation, along with minority group members with foreign citizenship (Zabielska in Benedikter, 2008). They are not allowed to vote in national elections, whereas in municipal election they may do so (Oskolkov, 2020). Generally, the Russophones in Estonia are not granted many distinguished courtesies. In territories where the minority group exceeds 50% of the population, everyone shall be able to address the state authorities in their native language and receive answer in the respective language. Since 2007 messages on signs in a 'regional version' or 'foreign language' can be added, providing that the Estonian sign occupy the prominent place (Poleshchuk, 2016). As for the media, live foreign language programmes without translation shall not exceed 10% of the weekly volume of original programming production. Local newspapers and radio stations for the Russian population are nevertheless available, as well as media from the Russian Federation (Poleshchuk, 2016).

According to the Estonian constitution, all citizens have the right to receive education in Estonian and it allows minorities instruction in their native language, but it does not grant it as was the case with the Constitution of 1920 (Poleshchuk, 2009). It is permitted to organize 40% of education in another language (de facto Russian), or to have Russian private schools, yet all municipal upper secondary schools (thus the final three years) are in Estonian. The Estonian school system is linguistically separated and does not create contact across ethnic

groups but rather works in reverse and divides the ethnic groups from an early age (Korts, 2009).

In the 2011 census, a total of 51 383 students enrolled in Higher Education were identified as Estonian native speakers, while only 12 545 Russian native speakers were students in Estonian HEIs at that time (Statistics Estonia, 2021). The Estonian Higher Education system is only available in Estonian (and partially in English), in accordance with the aim to protect and maintain the Estonian language (Skerrett, 2014). However, there are more societal differences between the two groups. Many more Russian speakers are unemployed than titular Estonians (Aasland and Fløtten, 2001; Lindemann, 2009), and face a higher risk of poverty and social marginalisation, given that their average annual income is around 20% lower. Also, minority group members are overrepresented in the population of the homeless and in the prison population (Poleshchuk, 2016).

Estonian is the main and only official language, which is a cornerstone for conflicts and discrimination. Especially in the medical sector, where no bilingualism is required, the encounter of Russian-speaking patients with Estonian speaking doctors were reported as problematic. The social networks of the two ethnic groups are segregated, as well as the labour market and the educational system. Even the nightclub scene in Tallinn is divided, there are 'Estonian' nightclubs, 'Russian' nightclubs, and some few bilingual ones (Poleshchuk, 2016).Thus, these few examples show how strong the division of the society is even nowadays and in how many areas it exists.

**South Tyrol/Italy**

In 1363 Tyrol (today's territory of North Tyrol, South Tyrol, East Tyrol, and Trentino) was incorporated into the Habsburg Empire. Then as today, the majority of inhabitants of Trentino were Italian speakers, while Tyrol was inhabited nearly exclusively by German speakers. With the Versailles Peace Treaty in 1919, the Italian border was moved to the alpine crest at Brenner/Brennero. Trentino and today's South Tyrol became part of the Kingdom of Italy (Peterlini, 1997).

In 1922 the Fascist leaders took over the Italian government with a radical policy towards South Tyrol's German speakers: assimilation and Italianization of the minority group was the main aim (Alcock, 2001; Peterlini, 1997). The measures introduced were initially a ban on

the German language in all public domains (Eichinger, 2002), meaning that all German names and signs were Italianised, newspapers publishing in German were closed down, and German or Austrian Radio was forbidden. German was instructed solely in so-called 'catacomb schools', that is, underground illegal schools (Alcock, 2001). A large number of Italian-speaking internal migrants (were) moved to South Tyrol to speed up the pace of assimilation (Alcock, 2001), which strengthened the position of the Italian language (Eichinger, 2002). Thus, the assimilation policies led to a growth of the Italian-speaking population in South Tyrol from 1000 people in 1910 to 100 000 in 1943 (Carlà, 2013). The peak of the repression of German speakers was reached in 1939, when the population was forced to choose either to migrate to present-day Germany or Austria, or to stay in South Tyrol and abandon German language and culture. This policy was known as the 'Option' and it induced 80% of the South Tyrolians to opt for migration. About 75 000 had already left the territory before the end of World War II (Eichinger, 2002) and the fall of the fascist regime.

In 1946-47 an agreement was made between Italy and Austria to guarantee certain autonomy for South Tyrol (Alcock, 2001). Given this precedent, in 1948 when the first Autonomy Statute was issued by the post-war Italian government, it was interpreted as insufficient by the South Tyrolians (Peterlini, 1997). In 1952 they claimed that German should be the official language in South Tyrol; however, this claim was rejected, and German schools were still obligated to teach Italian whereas the Italian schools had no obligation to teach German (Alcock, 2001). This tension, combined with the accumulation of oppression over the decades, came to a head in 1956 when the first bombings occurred. The terrorists mainly targeted infrastructures and symbolic objects, as their aim was to fight for the self-government of South Tyrol. The violence went on until 1961 (Peterlini, 1997). This is why the South Tyrol question was brought to the United Nations, resulting in a so-called 'package', which revised the Autonomy status of the Paris Agreement (Alcock, 2001) and was the starting point of the current strong Autonomy of the region.

The German-speaking population In South Tyrol enjoys one of the most advanced systems of minority protection in the world (Carlà, 2013). It holds primary legislative power for most factors of economic and social policies, namely culture, tourism, industry, housing, and trade (Südtiroler Landesregierung, 2019) as well as public health, public works, vocational training etc. (Alcock, 2001). Furthermore, a regulation was introduced, stating that the jobs

in the public sector need to be distributed in accordance with the relative size of the language groups; the same applies to the South Tyrolian government. Furthermore, all public jobs require the so called “Zweisprachigkeitsprüfung”, an examination of bilingualism (Eichinger, 2002). All public documents are required to be bilingual (trilingual in Ladin areas), as well as all public signs (every town name, street name etc.) and toponyms (Carlà and Medda-Windischer, 2018). Both languages, German and Italian, are treated equally in the territory and both are official languages in South Tyrol[3] (Abel, 2018). The language groups have the right to use their native language when communicating with public offices. Furthermore, access to electronic media products is guaranteed in both languages and for the German-speaking group the government must install a network to guarantee the reception of foreign radio-television programs from German-speaking countries (Carlà 2007).

All subjects in schools are thought in the respective mother tongue, the second language is implemented from the second year or primary school on (Eichinger, 2002). Furthermore, each linguistic group has created its own social world, consisting of sports clubs, libraries, mass media and churches; thus contact across languages is rare. Moreover, although official bilingualism has not yet reached society in the broadest terms, it has improved in recent years even though implicit bilingual exchange is still lacking (Carlà, 2013). The linguistic identities are still mutually exclusive; belonging to one linguistic group means not belonging to the other, with very few exceptions. This is already prescribed by the formulation of the census questions (and the ones from the ‘Sprachgruppenzugehörigkeitserklärung’[4]), as the options are Italian, German, Ladin or Other. A child with parents from both linguistic groups still needs to decide on one group and cannot choose to be both (Carlà, 2013). Furthermore, people ticking the option ‘Other’ still need to choose one language group they are affiliated to, in order to take part in public job recruitment.

These issues notwithstanding, the practice of using the other language is still problematic only to the extent that in one’s private life, the other language is indeed rarely spoken

[3] 2.2% of the inhabitants of South Tyrol are native Ladin speakers, a neo-Latin or Romance language. Ladin speakers have the same rights as German and Italian speakers.

[4] The ‘Sprachgruppenzugehörigkeitserklärung’ is a declaration to which language group every citizen of South Tyrol feels affiliation. The options are German, Italian or Ladin and it is needed for several public services and usually filled in when turning 18 (Südtiroler Landesverwaltung, 2018).

(Carlà, 2007). Furthermore, in the last 30 years the perception of cohabitation in the territory has steadily improved across all language groups and nowadays it is mostly not seen as a problem (Larin and Röggla, 2019).

However, when looking at the history of both cases, the Russification of Estonia and the Italianization of South Tyrol used similar methods and happened in a similar time period. While in Estonia the Russification policies started in 1944, the "Option" in South Tyrol took place in 1939, thus, in both countries people still remember the times they were forced to give up their language and culture.

As mentioned before, the comparison of a country and a region cannot be seen as a comparison between two countries, but between two territories which are different legal entities. This is influencing the outcome of the study, as later chapters show, in the Italian case the national identity is very foreign for the minority group members. However, both territories have a similar size of population and face, on a more sociological level, similar challenges.

## 1.4Research aims, objective and questions

This thesis argues that minority group members have different migration aspirations and thus their migration behaviour is more distinct than the behaviour of majority group members. Minority group members in this study have a higher tendency to migrate internationally, as they feel a lack of belonging in their current state of residency, while majority group members opt for internal migration more frequently. This is connected to a separation from society and a feeling of exclusion experienced by minority group members. This thesis explores the pre-migration period of minority group members, with a particular focus on the comparison between minority and majority group members. Furthermore, it focuses on minorities as migrants, independent from those reflecting an ethnic-return migration point of view, but rather focusing on other 'soft' factors for minorities to migrate, such as emotional factors, the feeling of belonging and attachment, and questions of self-identification and categorization. The context of the research is Europe and through two case studies a more generalizable result is sought. The migration aspirations and plans connected to ethnic minorities aside, this thesis also asks about identity, and how the

identity of an individual is influenced by their status as a minority group member, and connected to that, what effect it has on migration aspirations. One of the extraordinary points in this research is the data gathered during the pre-migration period, that is, in the time frame between the decision to migrate and the start of the preparations and the actual move. This research draws on theories on migration imaginations (see e.g., Koikkalainen and Kyle, 2016; Salazar, 2011) and the identity of minorities (see e.g., Veres, 2015; Verkuyten, 1997). A central element, combining theories on migration and minorities is Anderson's concept of 'Imagined Communities' (1983). In his original meaning, Anderson coined it to refer to nations and how they are Imagined Communities; every community larger than face-to-face contact is, according to Anderson, an Imagined Community. The original concept focuses on media, and how it creates a sense of community, as well as the feeling of belonging that people have to this community. Other scholars applied the concept to different types of communities (see e.g., Calvet, 2016; Gruzd *et al.*, 2011; Kanno and Norton, 2003; Kavoura, 2014; Madenoglu, 2020; Norton and Pavlenko, 2019). Yet, putting it into the context of this research, Imagined Communities can serve as driver for migration, as part of the identity of minority group members, as part of the identity for future migrants, and even as European identity combining ethnic and national identity. The idea of belonging is central for minority group members, as they grow up in a transnational space, in a space in-between. Therefore, the imagination to fit into a community – be it the European, or that of the destination society or anything else, serving the purpose to feel belonging – is a crucial part of the identity of minorities. In connection to this, the social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) also serves a crucial theory, especially when looking at the components of the identity of minorities in the pre-migration period. Furthermore, as the study is focusing on the time prior to the migration, how migration is imagined is crucial. And here again, the Imagined Communities are relevant, as they might also be connected to an imagination of the future.

The central arguments of this thesis is that minority group members have a higher tendency to migrate under certain conditions when compared with majority group members. When minority group members feel excluded from society and they perceive their chances for a better community are located elsewhere, the tendency for migration is higher. Therefore, this research tries to understand why minorities choose to migrate and how this decision is

influenced by the factors in their daily life as well as the emotional and social aspects concerning their status as minorities. The focus lies on the mutual influence of the surroundings and identity underlying the decision, as well as on the influence of the migration decision on their own identity and society. The literature suggests that migration has a strong influence on the individual's identity (see e.g. Lados and Hegedűs, 2019; Linhard and Parsons, 2019; Pecníková, 2021). Furthermore, the influence of society, culture, surroundings and feeling of belonging on migration aspirations and decisions is widely discussed in the literature (see e.g., Boccagni, 2017; Carling and Collins, 2018; Carling and Schewel, 2018; Dantzer, 2017; Krivonos and Näre, 2019). Therefore, this thesis looks at migration aspirations of minority group members and investigates if and how the migration plans differ between majority and minority group members. Furthermore, the migration imaginations will be investigated, that is, the expectations and imaginations the participants hold with respect to their life after the migration and the outcome(s) of the move. Imagination as part of migration aspiration has enjoyed more attention in recent years, as the field has opened up to see the migrating individual not only as *homo economicus,* but also to acknowledge that dreams, imaginations and emotions play an equally crucial role in many migration decisions (see e.g., Chambers, 2018; Glaveanu and Womersley, 2021; Koikkalainen *et al.*, 2020). Another factor influencing the migration imaginations of minority group members is the imagination of a community (Anderson, 1973) in which they fit better.

This imagined future community is connected to the identity of the participants, which is explored as well in this thesis. Minority identities are highly complex constructs, trying to balance between ethnic and national identities (see e.g., Fleischmann and Phalet, 2018; Fleischmann *et al.,* 2019; Verkuyten, 2016). Identity is strongly connected to the discrepancy of ethnic and national identity as well as to the possible combining category of the European identity, which potentially serves as common ground to combine the other identities (see e.g., Agirdag *et al.,* 2016; Clycq *et al.,* 2021). This thesis suggests an association of the complexity of minority identities, the perception of it in society and the migration aspiration of minority group members, connected to a perceived exclusion of the broader society. Those factors for a migration decision of ethnic minorities will be expanded in detail in the empirical chapters of this research.

In the following, a brief overview of the chapters will be given, in order to make the structure of the thesis and analysis clearer for the reader.

## 1.5 Overview of the thesis chapters

This thesis is structured in seven chapters. This first chapter introduces the topic to the reader, as well as the questions and the background of the cases. Chapter One gives an idea, why the two case studies of the Russian speakers in Estonia and the German speakers in Italy were chosen and introduce their background. Different aspects of the two case studies are presented, starting with a general overview on the situation in both countries. Thereafter, a short overview of the history and the development of the minority groups in both countries is given, as well as the legal and finally the social aspects. This part shows the differences and similarities of the cases and enable the reader to get to know the cases before the actual study will be presented.

The second chapter will introduce the methodology of the study. It is a mixed model design with a multiple case study, using grounded theory. The mixed model design investigates the macro level of the topic while adding the view of the individual. With this strategy, the weaknesses of both designs can be overcome (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The multiple case study serves the purpose of providing an in-depth view on the case itself, while framing it in a real-world context (Yin, 2013), and to then combine the findings of both case studies. Grounded theory is the concept of building theory out of the data collected; it is a strong interaction between collecting data and interacting with the theory throughout the process. Thus, quantitative and qualitative data can be used in this spiral process to develop a theory, free from preconceptions. Furthermore, the validity and reliability of the study is investigated, revealing the strategies used to improve it and to minimise the bias. Thereafter, a short paragraph will introduce the positionality of the researcher and shortly explain the role of being an insider or an outsider in research. The main part of the second chapter concerns data collection. The data collection strategy is explained as well as the choice of the sample. An online questionnaire was used, distributed in both Estonia and Italy, with open- and closed-ended questions, in order to gather quantitative and qualitative data from majority and minority group members. In the Italian case, additional secondary data was used as well.

The Third Chapter presents the initial analysis. For the Estonian case, the participants were grouped into Russian speakers and Estonian speakers, according to their preferred language. Thus, a cluster analysis was performed to distinguish the two groups, and an initial description of the features of both groups could be made. For the Italian case, documents were analysed and grouped to reduce the amount of data and facilitate an easier analysis for the later chapters. This chapter shows the step-by-step process, how the data was treated and prepared for the analysis occurring in Chapter Five and Seven.

The Fourth Chapter is the first chapter to introduce a part of the theoretical framework (Chapter Six will be the second theoretical chapter). It starts with introducing the most common migration theories and with giving an overview of the different approaches to it in the disciplines, introducing network theory and migration system theory. Hence, of more interest for this study, the theory about ethnic return migration is elaborated, as it concerns the migration of ethnic minorities. Thereafter, Andersons' (1983) theory of Imagined Communities is introduced, as it is strongly connected to the topics of nation, ethnicity and language. Furthermore, imaginaries and imagination are introduced and the role they play in mobility decisions. The next chapter is the empirical chapter presenting the data connected to this branch of the literature.

Following this chapter, the Fifth Chapter, as the first empirical chapter, is presented. The two empirical chapters (Five and Seven) are both structured along similar lines. The results of the data sets are structured according to topics, which are alike in the Estonian and the Italian case. After analysing both cases according to the same categories, a comparative discussion is performed to show in which aspects the cases overlap and where the differences are to be found. The Fifth Chapter first presents the results of the Estonian case study, grouped into the topics of migration plans, migration aspirations and migration imaginations. In this part (and later), a line is drawn to Chapter Three, as the respective theory is presented there. After concluding the results of the Estonian data, the Italian data is presented, structured according to the same topics. Thereafter, a conjoint analysis of the two case studies is made, revealing the differences and similarities of the data and interpreting the results according to existing theory. The aim of the Fifth Chapter is to illustrate trends in migration decisions of minorities and majorities and to show that minority group members are more likely to migrate internationally. This is connected to an

Imagined Community in the destination location and a lack of a feeling of belonging in the country of origin. This is strongly connected with the status of being a minority, which is why the next chapter looks at literature concerning minority identities.

Chapter Six is the second theoretical chapter whose focus is mainly on identity and minorities. As Chapter Five showed a higher tendency of minority group members to migrate along with their aspirations for migration, the characteristics of minority identities are elaborated here and how they influence migration decisions. This chapter is theoretical, preparing the way for Chapter Seven. Theories about minority identities are introduced, as well as any differences in ethnic and national identity. The chapter investigates self-categorization and how minority group members can identify with certain categories. Furthermore, the literature on European identity as an umbrella identity will be presented, followed by existing research on the change of identity through migration. Migration as a coping strategy for minority group members is shortly introduced before it bridges to the next chapter. This theoretical chapter is connected to the following, empirical chapter as it introduces the theories crucial for the data analysis thereafter.

Chapter Seven presents the second part of the data analysis and is well-structured in the two case studies, being followed by a conjoint discussion. The Estonian case study is presented first, the Italian case study second. The initial topic for both cases is the identification of the participants and which categories they favoured among ethnic, national and European identities. Furthermore, the feeling of being a minority is explored in both cases, as well as the perceived sameness of participants to other communities. The data shows that minority group members prefer their ethnic identity in combination with the European identity, while majority group members prefer their national identity, which is alike in both cases. Furthermore, the feeling of being a minority is not really strong among minority group members and most participants expect not to change their identity after migration. This chapter links the data back to Chapter Six, showing that for the identification of minority group members the results are in line with previous research; however, the imagination of participants of not changing their identity through migration is not. After concluding this chapter, the transition to the final discussion is made.

Chapter Eight is the discussion of all analysed data in both case studies and the conclusion. Besides a general roundup of the topic as well as an explanation of the results, Chapter Eight

presents two models, developed through the analysis. The first model concerns the migration circle, especially of minority group members, and includes the fact that migration is viewed as something very positive before the move. However, the migration cycle model includes literature about other phases of migration but mainly connects the expectations and imaginations of migration with the emotional development during the process. The second model presented deals with the identity components of minority group members, especially in the time period of pre-migration. The data, along with previous literature, indicate the most important characteristics of minority identities. This model provides an understanding of the factors influencing the wellbeing of minority group members, and how this influences migration decisions. This Chapter shows the conceptual results of the thesis and how they can be interpreted and discussed. Furthermore, it sums up the topics covered in the previous chapters and highlights the main takeaways from this thesis. This chapter also presents an idea for future research. Furthermore, it connects the results of this research with implementations and a more general picture of the European minority landscape.

## 1.6 Conclusion

It is necessary for any researcher to be aware of their own biases and to have a strategy to address them. Indeed, not only does the researcher's identity come into play but the participants' identity can also influence the process, as one's own positionality in the society can bias any individual (Bourke, 2014). Social factors such as gender and class can influence the research process (Ganga and Scott, 2006); therefore, a keen awareness of their nature and scope is crucial. The next chapter will introduce the strategies used in this research to tackle any potential bias on the part of the researcher.

This chapter offers the reader an introduction into the purpose of the study, that is, the research of migration aspirations and dreams of minority groups in Europe. Belonging to a minority shapes the identity and influences the life path and decision-making process significantly. Therefore, this thesis argues that minority group members have a higher tendency to migrate than majority group members, given that they feel a lack of belonging in their home society and have established an imagined future community in their chosen destination. This phenomenon will be explored through two case studies: the Russian-

speaking Estonians and the German-speaking Italians. Both groups are a linguistic and ethnic minority in their respective countries and so they struggle with issues of belonging and identity. The data presented in the following was collected during the pre-migration period or the decision-making period of the participants. In the following chapters, an overview of the existing literature on migration of minorities, along with that on identity and belonging, will be presented and combined with the outcome of the data collection of the two case studies. Quantitative and qualitative data of both cases will be presented and will elaborate on the factors underlying the participants' decisions. The cases will be confronted to obtain a more general picture of the phenomenon. Parts of the secondary data, stemming from the period following the migration decision, will be incorporated in the chapter concerning the reality of migration, opposing the expectations and dreams elaborated before.

# Chapter 2: Methodology

## 2.1 Methodological overview

This study set out to examine migration aspirations of students in their final year of high school in Estonia and Italy and to detect similarities and differences in the migration aspirations between members of the ethnic majority and of the minority group. In doing so, some broad comparisons can be made between the two cases, bearing in mind the difference in their minority policy and their similarities in geographical distribution, historical aspects and social cohabitation. The two groups were foremost chosen because they stand before a decision about whether to move or not after their graduation, which offers the chance to investigate the pre-migration period. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many will study abroad, which is why the interest was raised to determine more precisely what differences these would be. Furthermore, the identification with one or multiple cultures was explored and a possible correlation with the migration decision investigated. Therefore, this study employs a mixed research strategy, precisely a within-stage mixed-model design in a concurrent time order which combines quantitative and qualitative methods in one paper (Creswell, 2012) and a multiple case study approach using grounded theory. The Estonian case study was conducted in 2020, while the case study in Italy took place in 2021. They differ in data sources and strategies of analysis, yet the results are appropriate for comparison; they are presented in parallel, in Chapters Five and Seven.

In the following chapter the research strategy is presented as well as a detailed protocol of the data collection in both case studies, including sources, demographics etc. The validity and reliability tests applied in this thesis are explained and the position of the researcher and her role in the study is introduced.

## 2.2 Mixed-model design

In the social sciences, there is a general distinction between two research strategies, quantitative and qualitative research. In recent years, a third type has emerged, the mixed methods, which does not aim to replace either strategy, seeking, rather, to add an alternative (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). This research design fits the present study

for many reasons; mixed methods research design is appropriate in this case as the study is "focusing on research questions that call for real-life contextual understandings, multi-level perspectives, and cultural influences" (Creswell *et al.,* 2011, p. 4). Furthermore, the study aims to investigate the macro level of the topic and to add the perspective of the individual (Creswell *et al.,* 2011), in order to provide more complete knowledge and stronger evidence for an analysis of the findings (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The mixed-model design was used to overcome the weaknesses of one method by using the other method in a complementary way, thus "seeking elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with results from the other method" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 22). Mixed methods "help researchers reduce threats to validity and reliability while mixed method studies simultaneously increase the likelihood that the research will make a meaningful contribution to the literature" (Abowitz and Toole, 2010, p. 115). The study is conducted with an unequal priority which "occurs when the investigator embeds a secondary dataset within a larger, primary design or reports unequal quantitative or qualitative components in the study" (Creswell *et al.,* 2011, p. 7). This derives from the fact that the amount of quantitative data is greater in the Estonian case, while the qualitative data is the main data source for the Italian case. However, the mixed method strategy compensates for this imbalance of available primary data, which will be further elaborated upon in the following.

## 2.3 Multiple case study approach

To a certain extent all studies investigate a specific unit or number of units. Yet, the main differentiation of the case study method is how it contrasts with other forms of social research: the experiment and the social survey (Gromm *et al.,* 2000). Defining the scope of the case study, Yin (2009) argues that it is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

Case studies use various sources of data to elaborate a case from the viewpoint of the participants. This allows the exploration of the issue through multiple lenses and an understanding of several facets of the phenomenon (Baxter and Jack, 2008). A case is a specific entity, even when occurring in a multiple case study, with the first step examined on

its own, with the ultimate aim of understanding the case (Stake, 2013). One issue about case studies that is widely discussed in the literature is the deficiency of generalisation and thus the desire to apply the case to real life (Stoecker, 1991). Furthermore, as a research methodology, case studies have been criticized for not being scientific as no replication is possible given how the case study is strongly connected to the temporal moment of data collection as well as to the specific settings in this situation. Nevertheless, a case study gives an in-depth view on a single case or multiple cases through the analysis of the data (Tellis, 1997) and represents a contribution to the field in terms of contributing data, analysis and insights into a case. The case should be seen in its real-world context and not investigated in isolation (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2013), which implies a profound exploration of the historical, political, and social circumstances of each case in order to provide a holistic understanding of the situation. For the present study, this was partially done in Chapter One, in which a short overview of the circumstances in both countries was given, with a deeper contextualization presented in the theoretical Chapters Four and Six.

This is a multiple case study, which as a design, has attained greater popularity in recent years (Rashid *et al*., 2019; Yin, 2009; see e.g., Ghazi-Saidi *et al*., 2020). The multiple case study allows the researcher to analyse every case in the respective setting (Baxter and Jack, 2008) and confront the findings thereafter in order to discover a wider theoretical evolution (Gustafsson, 2017). When choosing multiple case studies, the cases need to be similar in some ways, and thus examples of the same phenomenon. One feature of a multicase study is to understand the differences and the similarities of the cases; after having analysed them separately (Stake, 2013), similarities can indicate a more general pattern, while differences can illustrate case specific features. However, it is not a comparative study as it is usually fixes its attention on one or a few variables in a more simplistic way, while a multiple case study aims to conceptualise the cases more holistically, and to describe and interpret the phenomena within its setting (Stake, 2013). In this study the two case studies are ethnic minorities in two countries, Estonia and Italy, while each case study consists of numerous cases, thus participants.

The strategy of having a multi-site study was already developed in the 1970s in order to increase the generalizability of case studies. Such studies were exploring the same issue in a number of different settings yet using similar data collection and analysis strategies

(Schofield, 2002). These studies compared the different cases among a certain potentially important dimension, even though the sites themselves could be very heterogeneous (Schofield, 2002). The cases need to be carefully selected, as they are expected to bring similar results, or conversely, predict contrasting results (Yin, 2009).

Both cases were already introduced in Chapter One as well as the reasons of the selection. As seen above, certain similarities need to be given, in order to draw conclusions from a multiple case study. The main reason for the choice of Estonia and Italy for this multiple case study is their contrasting minority policy, while having similar premises. The geographical distribution, the size of the minority population as well as historical treatments are partially similar (see Chapter One for more details), however, the policies differ strongly, which makes the two cases an interesting choice for a multiple case study. Estonia has been criticized of having a narrow and exclusive definition of who enjoys minority status in the country (see e.g., Cholewinski, 2005), as well as policies excluding ethnic minorities (see e.g., Sjöstedt, 2018). Furthermore, in the societal, political and economic context, Russian speakers are still disadvantaged (Jašina-Schäfer, 2021; Toomet *et al*., 2013). Since gaining independence in 1991, Estonia had two citizenship Acts (Poleshchuk, 2009). In 1992 the Act from 1938 was restored and called 'Resolution on the Application of the Law on Citizenship'. Everyone who was a citizen of Estonia before 1940 was automatically given the Estonian citizenship, all others needed to gain it through naturalisation which foremost affected the Russian inhabitants (Shoraka 2010). Therefore, the Russophone community turned into an immigrant community which came with a forced change in their identity categorization (Ehala 2009). As comparison, Lithuania, and many other former Soviet Union countries adopted the 'zero option' variant, thus when they gained independency all residents automatically acquired citizenship, thus there was no differentiation of ethnicity (Aasland and Fløtten, 2001).

The first Citizenship act of 1992 allowed a simplified naturalisation procedure without any language requirements for stateless people who were living in Estonia for more than ten years (Poleshchuk, 2009), and the option for a residency of three years and an additional Estonian language proof (Shoraka 2010). Yet, the earliest starting point of this period had to be March 30st of the year 1990. This made the option basically non applicable (Poleshchuk, 2009) and the earliest moment for gaining citizenship was thus 1993. This also meant that in

the first parliament election many inhabitants of Estonia, especially Russian speakers did not have the right to vote (Shoraka 2010).

The 1995 Citizenship Act, the second one, implemented more complex requirements for naturalisation, including a knowledge test of the Estonian constitution and the law of citizenship in Estonian (Shoraka 2010), which led the citizenship acquisitions drop sharply (Poleshchuk, 2009). Since 1998 a new amendment to the Citizenship Act makes it possible for children under the age of 15 to become an Estonian citizen if they were born after 1992 and whose parents have lived in Estonia for at least five years and are stateless. According to Article 21 of the Law on Citizenship, Estonian citizenship shall not be given to a person 'who has served in a career position in the armed forces of a foreign state or has retired from such a position, nor to his or her spouse who entered Estonia in conjunction with this service ' This mainly concerns former military servicemen of the soviet troops and their spouses (Shoraka 2010).The only way for former soviet troop members to get an Estonian citizenship is to being married for at least five years to an individual who obtained Estonian citizenship at birth (Article 21.2). Furthermore, it is not possible to hold a double citizenship if one of them is the Estonian one. Discrimination through this act reported at the courts was not granted (Poleshchuk, 2009).

The requirements to apply for citizenship in Estonia are still considered as 'too strict' by the ethnic non-Estonians, while the ethnic Estonians see them as 'normal and according to international standards' (Poleshchuk, 2009). South Tyrol in Italy, in contrast, is heralded as a European success story in in terms of minority protection and minority rights in Europe (Constantin, 2016; Medda-Windischer and Carlà, 2015; Larin and Röggla, 2019). The German-speaking population enjoys one of the most advanced systems of minority protection in the world (Carlà 2013).The 1972 Autonomy Statute gave the South Tyrolese most of what was aimed for (Alcock 2001). The 'package' contains both, power language policies, which guarantee the linguistic groups access to power and political decision-making processes, as well as relational language policies, which regulate the language use in several aspects of social life. The policies guarantee not only the same rights for German as for Italian speakers, yet they also have some special rules for German speakers, so called 'positive protection' (Carlà 2007). This different treatment of the language groups is

according to Verkuyten (2006) a crucial part of a functioning multiculturalism, and this distinct treatment can bring more equality in a heterogeneous society (Parekh 2000).

After 50 years the territory could finally be named 'Südtirol' again, furthermore the region remained in being primary legislative power for most factors of economic and social policies, namely culture, tourism, industry, housing, and trade (Südtiroler Handbuch 2019) as well as public health, public works, vocational training etc. (Alcock 2001). Secondary legislative power, thus laws enacted by the state can be changed by slight details from the region, mainly concerns education and sports (Südtirol Handbuch 2019).

The analysis and results will be presented in Chapters Five and Seven and first show the analysis of each case separately. Second, the results will be confronted and the similarities and differences in the cases will be unpacked, showing that similarities in migration aspirations of minority group members can be found in both countries; however, the migration aspirations of majority group members differ strongly. While minority group members prefer to migrate internationally, majority group members prefer internal migration or no move at all. Furthermore, the identification of the participants in both cases will be analysed and show the struggle of a categorization of the self between an ethnic and national identity, which again is similar in both case studies. However, the being categorized as European is favourable for all participants, and thus can be treated as a combining the concept of umbrella identity. Thereafter, Chapter Eight will discuss the outcome and conceptualize the empirical results in line with existing research, as well as present models concerning the migration cycle of minorities and the factors influencing the minority identities of the participants.

## 2.4 Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a widely used research strategy in social science, used by many researchers exploring migration (see e.g., Ellis and Chen, 2013; Gonzalez *et al.,* 2021; Hendry *et al.,* 2007; Hirad *et al.,* 2022; Kim, 2004; Sherwood and Liebling-Kalifani, 2012; Yakushko, 2010) as well as in minority studies (see e.g., Alessi *et al.,* 2017; Hendricks *et al.,* 1996; Mewborn, 2005; Litam and Chan, 2021). Those studies chose grounded theory due to its fit to the topics of migration and minorities. Litam and Chan (2021) e.g., utilized grounded

theory to what participants experienced and how certain processes unfold, concerning solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Ellis and Chen (2013, p. 253) argue that grounded theory is well-tailored to a multicultural perspective, "by examining how members of marginalized groups in society derive meaning from their experiences", thus it can be said that grounded theory is an appropriate method for investigating the topics of migration and minorities.

In 1967, the grounded theory method was first introduced by Glaser and Strauss, which was a novum for social research. In the early 21st century, it was developed further with respect to the idea of a researcher observing, recording and analysing data in a natural setting (Robrecht, 2015); however, Glaser and Strauss were the first ones to approach it from a strategic point and write up the method.

Grounded theory is the concept of a research to collect and analyse data to then construct the theory from the data itself. It takes up the initial data, going back and forth between the data and the theory and interacting with the collected data throughout the process (Charmaz, 2014); thus, data collection, the theory and the analysis stand in a reciprocal relationship to each other. The starting point is thus not a theory but an area of study and everything that is relevant to it is allowed to emerge (Strauss and Corbin, 1997). This type of methodology represents one of the most influential and widely used techniques in qualitative research (Strauss and Corbin, 1997). According to Glaser (2007), grounded theory can be used with any kind of data, yet it is mostly connected and used for qualitative research (see e.g., Charmaz, 2014; Strauss and Corbin, 1997). "The primary goal of grounded theory studies is to build theory" (Oktay, 2012, p. 16), and thus quantitative and qualitative data can be used to verify and generate theory, in some instances even both types of data are necessary. Not quantitative to test qualitative data, but rather as supplements and mutual verification (Glaser and Strauss, 2010).

The multiple case study in grounded theory is a spiral process repeating itself. The original concepts and categories developed at the earlier stage provide guidance on the following coding. Researchers need to analyse and compare with previous coding results or even make modifications to the established concepts and categories when new ones emerge which are hard to generalize (Su *et al.,* 2019).

The key element of grounded theory is that the hypothesis follows the analysis of the data and not the other way round, yet after formulating the hypothesis, the evidence is tested and details are added to it, adjusting to the outcome of the analysis. The hypothesis is strategically worked out in relation to the data in the course of analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 2010). The researcher needs to be free from preconceptions and let the data speak for themselves and adapt the theory to it; thus, the theory must come from data rather than from previous knowledge (Robrecht, 1995).

Grounded theory has four key components, namely: constant comparison, theoretical sensitivity, theoretical sampling, and theoretical saturation. These components are used in a combined way to develop the theory from the data (Oktay, 2012).

Theoretical sensitivity describes a personal quality of a researcher of having insight and the capacity to give meaning and to understand (Strauss and Corbin, 1997). This ability allows the researcher to go beyond the entities and identify characteristics based on familiarity of sociological theories and concepts (Oktay, 2012), thus a rich background of literature. However, two other sources of theoretical sensitivity are professional and personal experience, which can help to understand situations and circumstances if experienced in the field of research (Strauss and Corbin, 1997).

Constant comparison can be seen as the basic method of grounded theory, by comparing the individual cases and developing concepts. This process helps to make similarities and differences apparent and thus to create theory out of empirical data (Oktay, 2012).

Theoretical sampling describes the fact that in grounded theory the sampling strategy may change over the course of the study since the theory evolves out of the data (Oktay, 2012). In general, the flexibility of gathering data is higher in grounded theory; the method of gathering data can be shaped and reshaped in order to increase knowledge (Charmaz, 2014). The process of data collection is controlled throughout by the emerging theory (Glaser and Strauss, 2010).

The theoretical saturation stipulates that the researcher continue gathering data until the point of “saturation” even though this does not need to be reached for all concepts but rather for those considered to be core categories (Oktay, 2012). Presenting grounded theory can be a set of propositions or a running theoretical discussion, divided into conceptual

categories (Glaser and Strauss, 2010). The flexibility of grounded theory was advantageous for this study, as the data collection process could be adapted and expanded during the process. It will be shown in Chapter Four and Chapter Six that the presentation of the results for this study can be grouped into categories, according to the themes generated using grounded theory.

In the following sections, the validity and reliability of the study will be described as well as the role of the researcher and issues of positionality. Thereafter, the detailed procedure of data collection and analysis will be illustrated.

## 2.5 Validity and reliability of the study

Validity is a matter of trustworthiness and utility which the different stakeholders place into a study; thus, the researcher and the participants need to attempt to build validity throughout the different phases of the research, starting from data collection through to data analysis (Zohrabi in Benkharafa, 2013). Since the current study is a mixed method multiple case study, aiming to explore patterns of minority group members in the pre-migration period, the strategies for both quantitative and qualitative trustworthiness were taken into account. Even though in mixed research studies, the problems of representation, legitimation and integration must be dealt with, the issue of validity for mixed methods is still not widely discussed (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). Different strategies were used in the two case studies to test the trustworthiness of each of them. In general, multiple case studies have a higher generalisation potential than single case studies; furthermore, in this thesis it can be stated that the fact that certain data of both case studies indicate similar results is already a first validation of the research and the chosen samples. Furthermore, mixed methods reduce the threats to validity and reliability in general (Abowitz and Toole, 2010, p. 115)

Case studies need to maximise their quality connected to four critical conditions: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Yin, 2013).

To test *construct validity* is especially challenging in case study research (Yin, 2013). A construct is a variable which is not directly observable or measurable (Smith, 2005); thus, a collection of indicators need to be investigated to test it. Examples of constructs are e.g.,

self-esteem, social anxiety, or identification. Construct validity focuses on testing if the construct fits the selected variables. In this case, the questionnaire distributed in Estonia and Italy on migration imaginations was inspired by already existing measurement systems and other questionnaires used in other studies, which is a tool to improve the construct validity (a detailed description will follow in Section 2.7).

The traditional view on *external validity* is the question of generalizability, meaning to what population, circumstances, settings etc. can the results be generalized (Campbell and Stanley, 2011). However, this traditional aim of external validity was questioned by many qualitative scholars, while quantitative scholars have focused intensively on how generalizability can be enhanced (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Since this study contains qualitative and quantitative parts, the aim for external validity cannot be focused on fully, as the qualitative approach is not consistent with achieving generalizability (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Both case studies do however provide a similar outcome, which can be seen as in indicator for generalizability to a certain extent.

*Internal validity* is concerned with the congruence of the findings and the reality it tries to picture (Zohrabi in Benkharafa, 2013). One part of the internal validity check is the researcher's bias; thus, this thesis contains a paragraph highlighting the role of the researcher as an insider or outsider as part of the "reflexivity" strategy (see 2.6 Positionality). This paragraph highlights the possible bias which the researcher of this study might have introduced into the analysis of the data; in addition, it gives the reader an insight on how the interpretation of the data might have occurred.

Another strategy to strengthen the internal validity is triangulation, which was used in the Italian case study. The data for that case study were collected from different sources (primary data, newspaper archives, online articles, research reports). The exact strategy on the sampling methods is elaborated in the chapter on secondary data collection (Section 2.7). Triangulation can help to confirm findings and increase the validity of the data (Zohrabi in Benkharafa, 2013).

*Reliability* is concerned with the question of how and when the findings of the study might reappear again; thus, if the examination would be replicated would the findings be the same (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015)? The emphasis is whether that the same case would need to be

done over again, not another case study (Yin, 2013). However, in the social sciences the discussion is problematic given how the study of humans and human behaviour is never static and many factors are not the same day after day (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015).

A central strategy to increase the reliability is the in-depth and explicit explanation of the processes and phases of the inquiry. The researcher needs to elaborate every aspect of the study and explain the rationale of the study and the subjects in detail (Zohrabi in Benkharafa, 2013). The aim of this is to document a case study as precisely as possible so that any potential researcher wanting to repeat the procedure might obtain the same result (Yin, 2013). This chapter aims to provide a precise documentation of the procedure for data collection and analysis in order to fulfil this criterion of reliability.

## 2.6 Positionality

My position needs to be taken into account in order to maximise the internal validity of the study, as I am also part of the German speaking minority in Italy. Especially in qualitative research, issues such as race, gender, ethnicity but also socioeconomic status and formal education, will influence the position of the researcher (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). For this study it is crucial to mention that the researcher writing this is a member of the German speaking minority of Italy, which needs to be kept in mind and is especially important for this section. Being an 'insider' in research may be connected to the researcher's position in relation to a shared history, the membership of a specific group, shared values or relations to a specific organisation/group which is researched (Dhillon and Thomas, 2019). The research method for this dissertation was an online questionnaire, and as the participants had no personal contact with the researcher and thus unaware of any specific identifying characteristics of the researcher, their perspectives were not influenced. However, the questionnaire was indeed developed by the researcher from one of the groups under study; however, the questionnaire development process took place in close collaboration and under the supervision of my supervisors, as well as the ethics committee of the University of Kent approving it, meaning that the approach was verified for objectivity by third parties.

Even though in this research method the positionality of the researcher is less influential than in the observation or interviewing method, it still needs to be considered. The

identities of both the researcher and the participants might influence the research process, associated not only with the perception of others but also to biases connected to their own positionality in the society (Bourke, 2014). Therefore, the recognition of one's own biases is crucial for a researcher. The researcher's generation and class, as well as many other social factors (gender, ethnicity, etc.) influence the knowledge produced (Ganga and Scott, 2006). One concept looking into the positionality of the researcher is the insider/outsider approach. The difference between being an insider and outsider in research is whether one has shared living experiences with the participants or not (Dew et al., 2019). This approach encourages the researcher to reflect on their own position in relation to the participants and to acknowledge the similarities and differences between the researcher and the participants. These conditions shape different steps of the research process; the development of the questionnaire, the outreach to the participants and the data analysis too, as they are seen through the lens of the researcher's personal and professional experience.

The participants of this study belong to four different ethnic groups: Russophones and Estonians in Estonia, and German and Italian native speakers in Italy. The studied groups are students at high schools, 18 and 19 years old. In the present case, the researcher belongs ethnically to the white, German-speaking minority in the region of South Tyrol in Italy. The three years prior to the start of this study, the researcher lived in Tallinn in Estonia, working, and studying with people from both ethnic groups. Furthermore, the researcher is a white, female student, a migrant herself and a member of the German speaking minority of Italy. It also needs to be mentioned that this research project was begun in 2019, yet the writing phase of the project coincided with spring 2022 after Russia had invaded Ukraine; thus, it can be said that this military action did not influence perceptions during the data-gathering phase.

Being aware of the above-mentioned factors and reflecting on how to address them is crucial. The insider status brings benefits and challenges for the researcher; my easier access to the researched community, insightful interpretation, and representing the needs of participants can be seen as advantages (Dew *et al*., 2019); however, personal relations and expectations can cause a different interpretation of the same data when interpreted by an

outsider (Dhillon and Thomas, 2019). However, the idea of being a pure insider or outsider has been replaced by a more blurred picture of lines (Bruskin, 2019).

It is a common assumption that being an insider facilitates access to participants, at least up to a certain point, and makes it easier to ask and interpret more truthfully (Dew *et al*., 2019; Merriam *et al.,* 2001). This is, however, not always the case – as it was not here in the present study. The outreach in the case study in Estonia was much easier and faster for the researcher than in Italy, in which I was an insider concerning my own origin. In order to understand this difference between the cases, several factors need to be considered. In Estonia one very valuable and influential gate keeper was found, who set the researcher in contact with schools and authorities. In this case, the project MOVES, an EU project, was valued as an important contribution to the development of the country and educational system. Therefore, the schools were willing to participate and circulated the questionnaire to their students.

In Italy the situation was different. No gate keeper could be found, which might well have been attributed to Covid-19 and the unstable situations in schools; being closed for longer periods. In addition, school headmasters communicated that the field was over-saturated as too much research was done by previous researchers in the schools and the behaviour of the researchers was not always suitable for the situation. Therefore, for this study the researcher needed to contact the school authorities without any references and thus, the turnaround rate of the schools was quite low. Only two schools in South Tyrol were willing to distribute the questionnaire. After the rejection of the schools, other channels were used to locate potential participants, such as social media, personal contacts, and youth organisations. The number of answers improved slightly, yet, the expected number was not reached; furthermore, most of the participants found were German native speakers, which might be connected to the insider role of the researcher. Personal contacts in the German-speaking community and recommendations by word of mouth were established more easily within the German community and partially already existing. This system of distribution could, however, not reach the Italian community in the same way due to the division of the linguistic groups and the author's lack of personal contacts.

A main advantage of being an insider in the Italian case was the quick adjustment of the research strategy. When realising that the number of participants for a quantitative analysis

could not be reached, different data sources as survey reports and newspaper articles could be investigated. This was mainly possible because of knowledge of the languages and channels through the researcher.

The data in Estonia were collected two years prior to the outbreak of the Russian war in Ukraine; the data were collected in spring 2020 (April until May), while the invasion of Russia in Ukraine occurred in February 2022. However, while Russian minorities and the border regions to Russia are presently a sensitive topic, the conflict did not figure into the development of the questionnaire, the responses, nor to the initial analysis of the data.

Recognizing the positionality of the researcher, the awareness of one's own perspective and beliefs is a central element. Keeping this in mind is part of the analysis strategy and as a considerable amount of the research is qualitative, the own positionality and the possible bias is even more important. Nevertheless, through the awareness of their own positionality, the bias of the researcher was kept to a minimum in this research project (Noble and Smith, 2015).

## 2.6 Data collection

### 2.7.1 Settings and sample

The settings for the Estonian study consisted of eight Upper Secondary Schools in Estonia. The participants of the study were students from the graduating classes, and the data were collected remotely, through online questionnaires which were distributed by the teachers as part of their remote learning activities. Initially, the arrangement was to carry out the study with the researcher present in the classroom. Questionnaires were prepared for printing and distribution in these classes and planned for April 2020, just prior to the start of the students' final exam period. Due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, the Estonian schools were closed, and classes were reorganised to accommodate online learning. Furthermore, travel restrictions took effect and a journey to Estonia was no longer possible for the researcher. Therefore, the research strategy had to be readjusted, as was the case for most researchers globally (Torrentira, 2020), and the questions were modified and adapted, becoming an online questionnaire to be completed remotely. However, online surveys have

numerous advantages (Braun et al., 2021) as they are very flexible and their speed and timeliness is higher than offline surveys (Evans and Mathur, 2018). Furthermore, online data collection is low cost, the storage and visualisation of the data is easier, questionnaire development and contacting of the sample can be done online (Nayak and Narayan, 2019). However, some weaknesses of online surveys are the low response rate, the confidentiality and the ethical issue of trust from the participants (Nayak and Narayan, 2019). For this study the confidentiality and ethical concern was controlled by the supervisors as well as the ethics committee of the University of Kent. Nevertheless, as the next sections will show, the response rate was not in both cases as high as the original target was.

The data collection in Estonia started on April 14th, 2020, and the survey was closed on May 18th, 2020. The school system in Estonia is organised in three sequential levels: pre-primary education (up to 7 years of age), basic education (typical ages: 7 to 16); and upper secondary education (Years 10-12/13, typical ages: 16 to 18/19). Attending school is mandatory until the age of 17, that is, attaining the level of basic education; thus, upper secondary education is voluntary (OECD, 2016). The target population of this study was the students in their final year of upper secondary education institutions in Estonia (12th grade), whose educational aim was the continuation of studies at the higher education level (OECD, 2016). In 2019, Estonia counted a total of 7 052 students (Statistics Estonia, 2020); in 2021 a total number of 8 010 people graduated from upper secondary education (Statistics Estonia, 2022).

A non-probability sample technique was used for this study, precisely a convenience sample, thus the selection of the cases is mainly connected to reachability and availability (Djamba and Neuman, 2002). The survey was distributed among approximately 300 12th grade students in eight Upper Secondary schools. A total of 155 answers were collected from which 151 could be used for analysis[5]. A convenience sample may potentially not be as representative as probability samples; nevertheless, the target population in this study is very specific, so the group may still be represented well in the chosen sample.

[5] Four of the respondents gave uncomplete responses, which is why they could not be used for analysis.

Estonia has a total of 24 Higher Education institutions (Statistics Estonia, 2016) of which eight are private. The most prominent universities in the country are located in Tallinn, the capital, and Tartu, the oldest university city in Estonia. There are no statistics as to how many people study abroad; however, the education portal Haridussilm publishes the data concerning the Estonian universities, confirming that Tallinn and Tartu are the most commonly chosen (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2021). The study fees at public universities are free for Estonian students (people with the Estonian nationality), whereas private universities can require a tuition fee. Meanwhile over 100 programs are taught in English; the others are instructed in Estonian. It is worth noting that the first bachelor's degree with Russian as the language of instruction was established only in recent years at the Estonian Arts Academy (EKA) in Tallinn, in media graphics.

During the data collection period in Italy, most of the instruction was still organised with the schools closed and students attending classes remotely from home. Thus, the questionnaire was administered online and as the pandemic was still ongoing, the distribution was planned by the teachers. The first contact was made in April 2021, when the researcher contacted the headmasters of all schools in South Tyrol (38 schools). As the turnaround rate was not as expected within the first weeks (less than 20 people filled in the questionnaire), the alternative plan to reach out to more graduating students was through online contact and the snowball system. The original plan was to reach out to all High Schools in South Tyrol in person and to distribute the survey in person in class. As this was impossible, the online data collection started on the 16$^{th}$ of April and the survey closed on the 2$^{nd}$ of June 2021, with a total of 91 participants could be gathered.

The school system in South Tyrol consists of ten years of compulsory schooling until the age of 16. Generally. Schools are available with either German or Italian as languages of instruction, plus the schools in the Ladin valleys which are trilingual. Education starts with five years of primary school, typically from 6 to 11, three years of lower secondary school and then at the age of 14, pupils can decide between Grammar school, technical school or vocational school. The Grammar school has a duration of five years and finishes with a final state exam which allows the students to continue on into higher education if students do not immediately start to work. The technical school option ends with the state exam; it is

only vocational education which does not require the final state exam as compulsory part of education (Autonomous Province of Bolzano, n.d.). The target population of this case study were the last year students in technical and grammar school who sought to move on to higher educational. In the school year 2020/21 a total of 3 448 people graduated with a state exam in South Tyrol (ASTAT, 2022).

South Tyrol has a total of four universities, one is a Music Conservatory, one a theological institute, one a faculty for health professionals. The fourth institute is the Free University of Bolzano. The Free University of Bolzano offers a variety of Bachelor and Master studies in German, Italian and English. In South Tyrol, the universities require study fees of approximately 150 Euros for one academic year (Südtiroler Landesverwaltung, 2022). The most common options to study abroad are Austria and Germany. Innsbruck in Austria is only 70km away, and because of this proximity a viable option for many from the German-speaking community as it offers several universities and subjects with German as the language of instruction (among others there is the option to study Italian law in German). For their part, Vienna, Salzburg and Graz also offer higher education opportunities in a variety of fields; furthermore, public universities in Austria are attractive as education is without cost[6]. Options further afield are Zurich, Switzerland and Munich, Germany, which are relatively close to the Italian border. As for the universities within Italy, Trento is a major university town, as well as Bologna, Verona and Milan. In Italy higher education is given predominantly in Italian and tuition fees may be required, depending on the university and subject, with public universities charging from 900 Euros up to 4000 Euros per year (studyinitaly.esteri.it, n.d.; topuniversities.com, n.d.).

### 2.6.1 Questionnaire development

The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into the target languages. The same questionnaire was used for both case studies yet adapted to the circumstances. The main differences concerned questions about the nationality of the participants and the opinion towards compulsory military service, which is still in force for all male Estonians, while it is purely voluntary in Italy. Those adaptations will be explained more in detail in

[6] A basic fee of around 20 Euros per semester needs to be paid as long as the student is not exceeding the minimum study time plus two semesters (Universität Wien, n.d).

section 2.7.3, in which the content of the questionnaire is explained. For the Russian and Estonian questionnaires, native speaker professional translators were involved, who checked for comparability for both languages. Furthermore, the translation agency provided a four-eye system, thus a double-checked translation by two native speakers. The translation of the questionnaire into German was done by the researcher, as it is her native language. The Italian questionnaire was translated by an Italian native speaker and checked by an additional native speaker. The comparability of the Italian and German questionnaire was done by the researcher as well as several people fluent in both languages, always back-checking with the original questionnaire in English. Thereafter, all questionnaires were sent out to multiple people in their native language, to check for comprehension and usability, as well as for the technical part of the online survey before they were distributed. Through this testing of the questionnaire, complications in the process were successfully avoided.

The quantitative part of the data gathering consisted of 34 closed-ended questions, within a questionnaire which included both single choice and multiple-choice questions, as well as questions measured on a Likert scale. The questions were designed to be analysed through IBM SPSS and to provide quantitative data, using cross tabulation and frequencies.
Qualitative data gathering comes in different forms; in this case, as discussed above, the qualitative data was collected through open-ended questions via the survey, enabling qualitative analysis. Thus, the qualitative component of the study employed 10 open-ended questions in the same questionnaire as the closed-ended questions. “An open-ended response to a question allows the participant to create the options for responding” (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). As the completion of the open-ended questions was not compulsory in order to submit the questionnaire, the participants were free to decide if and to which extent they chose to answer the open-ended questions. This can be seen as a limitation, as the number of answers is naturally lower than the data gathered from the easy to answer, closed-ended questions; on the other hand, it gives voice to those participants who feel the need for a more in-depth statement regarding their personal perspective of the processed subjects.
Utilizing both types of methods, quantitative and qualitative within one framework, the validity can be improved, and the strength of both techniques can be incorporated (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

### 2.7.3 Questionnaire design

The first eleven questions collected demographical data from the respondents as to their age (under aged participants were not allowed to take part), gender, living situation, citizenship (this was only asked in the Estonian case, as the particularity of the "Alien passport" does not exist in Italy) and parental education and native language. According to Bourdieu *et al.* (1991), cultural capital is inherent to families or individuals and can be transmitted from parents to their children. Castles (2013) is one of the many scholars emphasising the connection between cultural capital and migration, grounded on Bourdieu's theory. The importance of various forms of capital – human, economic, social, cultural etc., – is often tested in studies about migration (see e.g., Pungas *et al*., 2016). However, as this is not the main interest of this research, only a short set of questions concerns this issue, and as the sample is quite homogeneous, the analytical chapter will show that the forms of capital do not influence migration decisions for the studied groups. However, in order to test for cultural and economic capital, and whether it is or is not an influence for migration decisions, the topic of cultural capital and economic capital was investigated via information about the economic situation of the family as well as the parents' education. All questions measured on a Likert scale feature both an dimensional rating (e.g., strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree) and a numerical scale (adding the numbers from 1-5 to the above-mentioned answering options, e.g., 5 – strongly agree, 4 – somewhat agree etc.), to assure the comparability independently of the language they answered in.

Previous research shows that language proficiency influences the individual's decision to migrate (see e.g., Aparicio Fenoll and Kuehn, 2016) and that future migrants take language differences into account when deciding to migrate (see e.g., Chiswick and Miller, 2015). Therefore, the following questions investigate the language proficiency and usage of the participants, asking them to self-evaluate their knowledge (providing a 5-point scale, ranging from: no knowledge at all, basic knowledge, intermediate, proficient, and fluent) and to indicate which language they use in a given list of situations. In the analysis section the questions on the usage of language in certain situations will be used to cluster the participants into ethnic groups.

Research on migration shows a link between the mobility patterns of the individual prior to the first move and migration plans (see e.g., Collins, 2008; Williams and Hall, 2000). This is also connected to the migration network theory, which states that international experiences of individuals will increase the probability of migration (for more detail see Chapter Four). Thus, previous research sees mobility patterns as a key variable to predict future migration; therefore, the prior migration experience of participants was investigated, as well as their international and internal mobility patterns in the past two years.

Identity and belonging are a central topic in migration literature and strongly connected to minority groups as well. Categorization distinguishes individuals in terms of belonging and not belonging. It is inclusive and exclusive at the same time (Guibernau,, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2010) and the self-categorization of individuals, for minority group members, is an especially important part of their identity formation process. Minority group members have a stronger need to explore their own ethnic identity (Phinney and Alipuria, 1990) as it is not as straightforward as it may be for a majority group member (see Chapter Six for more discussion of this point). Therefore, the following section addresses the identification of participants in connection with several aspects of daily life. These questions were inspired by the questions of the Eurobarometer, which investigates the topic of one's identification with a European identity and a national identity. The European identity has been suggested as being an additional umbrella identity, combining ethnic minorities and ethnic majorities and thus helping to overcome the separation of identities (see Chapter Six for more literature on this topic). In this case, the participants were asked to rank how they identified themselves on a scale of being European, Russian, Estonian or a combination of these identities. For the case study in South Tyrol, the question centred on the extent to which one felt European, Italian or South Tyrolian, or any combination of the three. Those questions were measured on a Likert scale, called "summated-rating or additive scales because a person's score on the scale is computed by summing the number of responses he or she gives" (Djamba and Neuman, 2002, p. 230).

A section dealing with Covid-19 was added to the questionnaire, as the pandemic required us to consider whether it influenced the overall migration aspirations of the participants. This was especially associated with many border closures within the European Union not to mention how international mobility was not as free as it had been before. Furthermore, the

pandemic situation reinforced how nation states will tend to act individually, and how different measures might reinforce the distinctions between countries.

Immediate emotions connected to the current situation influence the decision-making progress connected to the future, thus how a person feels in a moment can influence decisions about their future (Loewenstein and Lerner, 2003). Therefore, the satisfaction of the current living situation as a driver for migration decisions needs to be taken into account. This topic, as well as the differences in the perception of the current place of residency, will be theoretically further elaborated in Chapter Four. Thus, the following six questions concern the current living situation and the satisfaction of the participants investigated on a Likert scale and concerning different structural and emotional factors.

An individual's sense of personal belonging is connected to the society they are subjected in a particular place (Huot *et al.,* 2014). The imagination of a community (Anderson, 1983) is a central theory concerning migration plans (see more on this point in Chapter Four); thus, the participants were asked to self-evaluate their similarity to other inhabitants of Estonia/Italy, concerning different aspects of life. Furthermore, the overall similarity to inhabitants in other countries was made, namely Russian speakers in Finland (as in the minority speakers in Estonia) and Italian speakers in Austria or Germany. The question following this section was taken from Max Frisch`s Questionnaire (Frisch, 1992), asking the participants about their definition of home, formulated as a multiple-choice answer.

The following section investigated the future of the participants. The first question in this section asked about the plans after graduation, and whether the participants had decided to work or to study. The second question was a multiple-choice question about the chosen location, giving them popular options both abroad and within the country. The following seven questions ask about the reasons for the potential move, the feeling of belonging towards the current residency was asked, as well as how attached and happy the participants are about their current place of residence. Questions about curiosity and interest about the new place were asked, as well as the interest in improving language skills and employment opportunities. Thus, the section explores the imagination of the future, the migration imaginations and the hope and expectations connected to it. This goes in line with a recent branch of literature, looking at those imaginary and emotional factors of migration decisions; it is theoretically further elaborated in Chapter Four.

The next set of questions investigated the importance of several factors that might influence any decision the participants might take. Factors like geographical distance, tuition fees, and reputation, but also social factors like family and friends at the potential destination, were investigated. Furthermore, the perceived or imagined future life was inquired, that is, how the participants thought they might change their daily actions or not. Topics like religion, diet, media consumption and social life etc. were included. The following asked about how the participants would self-identify after their move, giving different options and a Likert scale, as well as an open-ended option, referring back to their identification prior the move in order to see if the participants had expected their identity to change after the move. This is one factor mentioned in migration literature (see Chapter Four for more information), yet it is usually asked after the migration has taken place, thus, this is a chance to see how future migrations envision change. Some more questions about the wider future followed, as well as the influence of Covid-19 on the participants and their decision to migrate or their choice of location. The last question gave the participants the option to express any further information if they indeed wanted to share.

The questionnaires in English are attached in the Annex.

### 2.7.4 Primary data collection procedure

The survey was generated in Google Forms, which according to Torrentira (2020) is a feasible, safe and convenient alternative to in-person data collection. The online questionnaires were made available in Estonian, Russian, German and Italian. The ethics guidelines of the University of Kent as well as the University of Porto and the MOVES program were respected in all good conscience while preparing the survey and collecting the data. The questionnaire was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Kent and the information about the rights of the participants was made available for all participants and school leaders in their native language and in English.

An informed consent form in accordance with the guidelines of MOVES and the guidelines of the University of Kent and the University of Porto was prepared and made available to all participants in the language they chose. Among other information, this contained, the permission to directly quote the participants, providing it be fully anonymous. The

participants needed to confirm their having read and understood the form before filling in the questionnaire. As this research project was ongoing during the Covid-19 pandemic, which made face-to-face data collection impossible for a long time, the remote modus of data gathering was chosen.

For the Estonian case study, the survey was distributed through a gate keeper in Tallinn, who contacted the headmasters of eight Upper Secondary Schools. Specifically, these schools were the Kiviõli Gymnasium, the Jõhvi Gymnasium, the Narva Eesti Gümnaasium, the Tallinn Tõnismäe Science Gymnasium, the Tallinn Nõmme Gymnasium, the Tallinn French Lycee, Tallinn Linnamäe Russian Lycee and the Narva Language Lycee. The location of the schools was chosen so that the data would reveal a broader picture and capture potential differences due to geographic locations. Four of the chosen schools were located in the capital, Tallinn, the others were situated in east Estonia, in Ida-Virumaa precisely, the region bordering Russia. A total of 151 answers were gathered.

For the Italian case study, no gate keeper was appointed, and for that reason the schools were contacted by the researcher. After contacting 17 High Schools with Italian as main language of instruction and 21 High Schools with German as main language of instruction, only two schools responded positively to the request to circulate the questionnaire. Specifically, those were the “Sozialwissenschaftliches Gymnasium und Fachoberschule für Tourismus Bozen”, which circulated it in German and Italian, and the “Oberschulzentrum Sterzing” circulating it in German. As other schools had refused to take part in the study, the flexibility of grounded theory research was used and the data collection strategy adapted. Through personal contact the questionnaire was additionally circulated in both Ladin-speaking graduation classes in South Tyrol through a teacher, and in one other German-speaking class. The remaining participants were found through social media. All together, a total of 67 German questionnaires and 24 Italian questionnaires were answered.

The table below offers a summary of all answers for both case studies (invalid answers were deleted), providing an overview of the participant demographics.

*Table 1 – Demographics of the participants (elaborated by the author)*

| | **Estonia** | | | | **Italy** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total number of participants | 151 | | | | 90 | | | |
| Age | 89 participants 18 years old (59%) | 59 participants 19 years old (39%) | 3 participants 20 years old (2%) | | 36 participants 18 years old (40%) | 44 participants 19 years old (49%) | 9 participants 20 years old (10%) | 1 participant 21 years old (1%) |
| Gender | 82 female (54%) | | 69 male (46%) | | 74 female (82 %) | 14 male (16%) | 2 non-binary (2%) | |
| Citizenship | 144 Estonian (95%) | 1 Russian (>1%) | 5 Estonian and Russian (3%) | 1 Other (>1%) | No data (From the place of birth and the nationality of the parents, it can be assumed that around 96% have Italian citizenship (eventually another additional) and 4% the citizenship from another country. | | | |
| Native language | 73 Russian speakers (minority) (48%) | | 78 Estonian speakers (majority) (52%) | | 67 German speakers (minority) | 24 Italian speakers (majority) | | |
| Household income | 43 above average (28%) | 95 average (62%) | 7 below average (5%) | 6 don't know/not applicable (5%) | 14 above average (16%) | 67 average (74%) | 7 below average (8%) | 2 don't know/not applicable (2%) |
| Parent's language | Both Russian 76 (50%) | Mixed languages 8 (6%) | Both Estonian 67 (44%) | | Both German 48 (53%) | Both Italian 11 (12%) | Both Ladin 4 (5%) | Both same but other 7 (8%) | Mixed language 20 (22%) |

### 2.7.5 Secondary data collection

For the Italian case, additional secondary data was used, as the target number of participants was not reached. One main advantage of grounded theory is the flexibility of gathering data; it is common to shape and adapt the method of gathering data throughout the process in order to increase knowledge (Charmaz, 2014). Thus, the data collection strategy was adapted, and the triangulation method was applied. As a strategy for the validation of social research, triangulation has become an important factor. The term refers to the observation of the research issue from at least two different points (Flick, 2004). The use of other sources, like documents, local newspaper articles etc., can function in conjunction with the data collected by the researcher. It can be vital for a case study to be grounded in multiple sources of data (Yin, 2009).

Thus, existing data reports concerning the case study were reviewed. The issue of brain drain[7] is part of the public discourse in South Tyrol, which is why several studies were

[7] "By definition brain drain is the permanent emigration of qualified persons" (Straubhaar 2000:12). Brain drain is not a new phenomenon. Since universities in Europe were established, young people have left their native places to pursue higher education (Pries 2003). This phenomenon is especially significant in the 21st century where many possibilities for

conducted on this topic, which touches upon similar points as the questionnaire. This might offer the reason, among others, as to why the turnaround rate of the questionnaires was lower than expected. Along with the national and regional research institutes (ISTAT; ASTAT) publishing research reports  are private institutions who have also invested in the exploration of the topic.

After revising the most recent research done in the area, the most relevant studies were chosen which address many topics similar to those the questionnaire developed for this research. These following four sources were chosen:

- ASTAT, A.P.B.-S.L. für S., 2018. Südtirol in Zahlen – 2018.
- ISTAT, 2014. The use of Italian language, dialects and other languages in Italy.
- Oberrauch, K., Perkmann, U., Romagna, F., 2019. Brain Drain – Brain Gain: Wie attraktiv ist Südtirols Arbeitsmarkt? WIFO Studie 2.19.
- Südstern – Das Netzwerk für Südtiroler im Ausland, 2014. Ansichten, Einstellungen und Perspektiven der Südsterne – Eine Studie über Südtiroler im Ausland mit Impulsen für die Zukunft Südtirols.

The first step was to find appropriate data reports which were critically assessed in their validity and credibility (O'Leary, 2017). Thereafter, a selection of the most essential parts was made to define the context of the investigation and to converge towards answering the research questions. Finally, the findings of the existing studies were synthesised and interpreted across the studies in order to provide a broader picture (Bowen, 2009; O'Leary, 2017). Furthermore, a document analysis was complementary and helped to understand the context as well as the general view on the phenomenon. The search for documents was made through several channels and provided a fruitful outcome. Hundreds of documents were reviewed, from which a total of 29 documents were chosen for analysis. The document search included online as well as archival search, on several platforms, newspapers, etc.

One archival research concerned the time period from January 2015 to August 2021 and included the three regional newspapers „Dolomiten", „Wirtschaftskurier (Wiku)" and „Zett". All three newspapers are written in German and gave a total output of over 300 articles

migrations, as well as the prevalence of globalization, are commonplace. Brain gain is the contrary phenomenon, thus the gain of highly qualified people.

from which 9 articles were selected for further analysis. Another archival search was done in the Italian language regional daily newspaper “Alto Adige” from January 2018 to August 2021 which produced a total of 19 articles concerning the topics, from which eight were chosen for analysis. For the archival search, the same terms were used in all archives in the respective language.

The online sources were blog posts from the platform “Südstern”, a community for people from South Tyrol living abroad. Another source was the online newspaper “Barfuss” and “Skolast”, which are both produced in South Tyrol. International sources were the German weekly newspaper “Die Zeit” and the Austrian newspaper “Die Presse” as well as the “BBC News”. Except for the archival articles, all analysed texts were openly accessible online (last checked: December 2022). All articles chosen for analysis, are listed in the table below.

*Table 2 – List of articles chosen for analysis (elaborated by the author)*

| Source | Name | Data | Author | Found through |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dolomiten | Ask the sh[8]: How do I get comprehensive information? (Original: Fragen Sie die sh: Wie komme ich zu umfassenden Informationen?) | 05.02.2016 | Erich Rainer | Archival search |
| Dolomiten | 880 000 euros for advancing research (Original: 880.000 Euro für Fortschritt der Forschung) | 18.07.2018 | Sabine Schrott | Archival search |
| Dolomiten | "Brain Drain is also a problem of towns" (Original: „Brain-Drain auch ein Problem der Dörfer") | 20.12.2019 | Ulrike Stubenruss | Archival search |
| Dolomiten | 1 Million to bring researcher to South Tyrol (Original: 1 Million, um Forscher nach Südtirol zu bringen) | 17.01.2020 | Ulrike Stubenruss | Archival search |
| Dolomiten | „Wants to come – Wants to stay" (Original: „Will.Kommen – Will.Bleiben") | 15.02.2020 | Ruth Passler | Archival search |
| Wiku | No main residence required (Original: Kein Hauptwohnsitz nötig) | 17.01.2018 | Sabine Gamper | Archival search |
| Wiku | Smart brains needed (Original: Kluge Köpfe gesucht) | 18.12.2019 | Elisabeth Franzelin | Archival search |
| Wiku | Demanding and retaining bright minds (Original: Kluge Köpfe fordern und halten) | 16.06.2021 | Sabine Gamper | Archival search |
| zett | What to do "when brains run back and forth"? (Original: Was tun, „wenn Gehirne hin und her laufen"?) | 15.12.2019 | Christoph Höllriegl | Archival search |
| Die Presse (AT) | Return actions for academics (Original: Rückholaktionen für Akademiker) | 03.10.2014 | Veronika Schmidt | Google search |
| Die Zeit (DE) | The Legacy of the Night of Fire (Original: Das Erbe der Feuernacht) | 11.06.2021 | Tanja Raich | Google search |
| Skolast | A futile search for identity (Original: Eine vergebliche Suche nach Identität) | 23.01.2021 | Simon Kienzl | Google search |
| suedstern.org | I am a South Tyrolean with German | 27.04.2015 | Stefanie Fuchs | Google search |

[8] Sh is the abbreviation for Südtiroler Hochschülerschaft, the South Tyrolian Students Union.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | mother tongue and Italian passport (Original: Ich bin Südtirolerin mit deutscher Muttersprache und italienischem Pass) | | | |
| suedstern.org | My South Tyrolean identity is only one of many (Original: Meine Südtiroler Identität ist nur eine von Vielen) | 09.06.2015 | Katharina von Tschurtschenthaler | Google search |
| suedstern.org | Search for new identities without losing old ones (Original: Nach neuen Identitäten suchen, ohne alte zu verlieren) | 02.06.2015 | Dumëne Comploi | Google search |
| suedstern.org | South Tyrol's future identity: bridge for Europeanism and globalisation (original: Südtirols künftige Identität: Brücke für Europäismus und Globalisierung) | 26.03.2015 | Roland Benedikter | Google search |
| barfuss.it | And when will you be back (Original: Und wann kommst du wieder?) | 14.02.2017 | Mara Mantinger | Google search |
| suedstern.org | Who are we? Views from "Südsterne" on the topic of "identity"(Original: Wer sind wir? Ansichten von Südsternen zum Thema "Identität") | 26.03.2015 | suedstern.org | Google search |
| suedstern.org | "Who knows who we South Tyroleans really are?" (Original: „Wer weiß denn schon, wer wir Südtiroler wirklich sind?") | 04.08.2015 | Philipp Mayrhofer | Google search |
| suedstern.org | We have the great opportunity to live in a borderland where we can choose the best from different cultures. (Original: Wir haben die große Chance in einem Grenzland zu leben in dem wir aus verschiedenen Kulturen das Beste aussuchen können) | 22.05.2015 | Elmar Mair | Google search |
| Alto Adige | Brain drain: 1,500 South Tyroleans leave every year (Orignal: La fuga dei 65ervelli: ogni anno senevanno1.500 altoatesini) | 22.03.2019 | Antonella Mattioli | Archival search |
| Alto Adige | At Unibz 200 students get interviewed by 77 companies | 06.04.2019 | Paolo Campostrini | Archival search |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (Original: A Unibz 200 studenti a colloquio con 77 aziende) | | | |
| Alto Adige | Brain drain, the Unibz alert (Original: Fuga di 66ervelli, l'allarme Unibz) | 30.05.2019 | Paolo Campostrini | Archival search |
| Alto Adige | "South Tyrol? Happy island starting to cough". (Original: «Alto Adige? Isola felice che inizia a tossicchiare») | 20.06.2019 | Paolo Campostrini | Archival search |
| Alto Adige | Vettori: 'Bilingualism problem for health care'.(Original : Vettori : «Bilinguismo problema per la sanità») | 18.07.2019 | NI | Archival search |
| Alto Adige | Brain drain, engineers ready to do their part (Original: Fuga dei cervelli, gli ingegneri pronti a fare la loro parte) | 14.11.2019 | NI | Archival search |
| Alto Adige | Work, how to avoid a 'local' brain drain(Original: Lavoro, eccocome evitare la fuga dei 66ervelli «locali») | 12.12.2019 | NI | Archival search |
| Alto Adige | Alert CGIL: 'Housing emergency and cost of living in South Tyrol'. (Original: Allarme Cgil: «InAlto Adige emergenza casa e carovita») | 14.01.2020 | Paolo Campostrini | Archival search |
| BBC News | South Tyrol's identity crisis: Italian, German, Austrian…? | 08.12.2012 | Bethany Bell | Google Search |

All the documents used in the research, were screened for credibility, that is, none of the texts were published in personal blogs or websites, but instead published through organisations or accredited newspapers/online magazines.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the methodology of this study to the reader, looking at the advantages of using a mixed model grounded research for the topic. Using quantitative and qualitative data offers the possibility to give a more holistic view on a case and helps to overcome the weaknesses of each of the approaches. Grounded theory – a theoretical approach kept in mind while collecting data and rejected or affirmed connected to the results of the analysed data – is common for minority and migration scholars, as it fits into a multicultural surrounding. This study is a multiple case study, investigating each one in its

respective settings and combining the results thereafter. Thus, the analysis of each case is interpreted separately first to better understand its specific situation and characteristics. The two cases studies apply different types of approaches yet elaborate on the same topics. The strategies to guarantee validity and reliability of this study were presented.

This chapter raises the idea of the positionality of the researcher and the possible bias concerning the study as a tool to maximise the internal validity. As the researcher is a female German speaker from the region of South Tyrol, as well as a student abroad, these factors need to be acknowledged in order to minimise the possible bias. This reflexivity strategy is part of the monitoring for validity and reliability of the study. Furthermore, close collaboration with her supervisors and the Ethics committee of the University of Kent helped to reduce any potential bias.

Furthermore, a detailed protocol of data collection and analysis was presented, as well as the description of the questionnaire, the choice of the sample, as well as the strategies to reach out to the participants. This section offered an elaboration of previous studies and sources which served as influence for the questionnaire development, which is one strategy to improve the validity of the study. Also, the process of secondary data collection is laid out, providing a traceable research process. The chapter lists all sources for the secondary data and the interpretation strategy elaborated in detail.

In Chapter Three, following here, the initial analysis will be presented. In order to prepare the data for the content analysis in Chapter Five and Seven, the participants need to be clustered into the two groups of majority group members and minority group members. Furthermore, the amount of secondary data is reduced to make it feasible for analysis. The chapter also offers an overview of analysis strategies to offer the reader an understandable protocol of the process of analysis.

# Chapter 3. Initial Data Preparation and Analysis

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce the initial analysis for both case studies separately. For the Estonian case, the strategy of analysis in IBM SPSS will be explained, along with how the participants were placed into groups of Russian speakers and Estonian speakers. As this phase does not yet begin analysing the main topics of this thesis and is more akin to a preparatory step, this chapter is theoretical and empirical. It describes the strategy of analysis as well as the first outcome. Furthermore, it explains the hierarchy of data in the Italian case, as primary and secondary data was used, as well as the strategies on how to analyse each of them. Thus, the reader will already get to know the first pieces of data, making the following analytical Chapters Five and Seven more comprehensible. Additionally, this chapter introduces the demographic characteristics of the data set, thus its factors are introduced and explained and facilitate the analysis in subsequent parts of this thesis.

## 3.2 Estonia

Previous research about Estonia and its Russophone minority was mainly focusing on the differences in the linguistic groups concerning separation in society (see e.g., Bolt and van Kempen, 2010; Kirch and Tuisk, 2011; Korts, 2009), language and minority rights (see e.g., Cheskin and Kachuyevski, 2019; Vozna, 2022), identity (see e.g., Jašina-Schäfer, 2021; Komori, 2022; Polese *et al*., 2020), and the labour market (see e.g., Kivi *et al*., 2021; Toomet *et al*., 2013). A few previous studies could be found investigating migration behaviours of Russophones from Estonia (see e.g., Aptekar, 2009; Pungas *et al*., 2016; Tammaru and Kontuly, 2011; Vorobeva *et al*., 2022). However, those studies focus on such issues as the outmigration of ethnic Russians from the main gateway cities in Estonia towards other parts of Estonia (Tammaru and Kontuly, 2011), the transnational network of Russophone migrants when already migrated (Vorobeva *et al.,* 2022), or the reasons to migrate, however investigated after the migration (Aptekar, 2009). Even though only a few studies focus on the topic of migration of Russophones from Estonia, they mostly argue that migration – be in internally or internationally – is connected to language laws and ethnic division (see e.g.,

Aptekar, 2009). However, the topic of migration of Russian speakers from Estonia is not yet a topic of public interest, meaning that little research has been done on the topic and an open public debate is inexistent. This is the gap that the present study is working to address by analysing data from the pre-migration period of Russophones in Estonia. Thus, given that the Estonian sample was considerably larger, and open-ended responses extensive, there was no need for additional secondary sources in order to produce sufficient findings. Thus, for the Estonian case study, solely primary data was used which was put into context with the results of the existing articles. The number of answers gained in the study (N=151) allowed for a quantitative analysis.

The quantitative part of the data analysis was carried out in IBM SPSS Statistics 26. The first step in the analysis was to distinguish the participants in two ethnic groups: Russian speakers and Estonian speakers. An initial concern in the study was the potential for causing some emotional tension in the participants when asking them to commit to an ethnicity during the questionnaire process along with the issue of a distinctive self-definition as a member of one of these two ethnic groups. In their study about ethnic identity of High School students, Phinney and Alipuria (1990) show that over half of the participants had not yet engaged in any self-identification with an ethnic group. To prevent this aforementioned psychological pressure on the students and to avoid any risk of poor reliability in the ethnic affiliation, the study focused instead on the participants' language usage. Previous research shows that language can be denominated as a core factor of ethnicity (Giles *et al.,* 1977; see also Safran, 2008). It was necessary to cluster the participants into only two ethnic groups, for simplifying the analysis and achieving more distinct results, even though distinction of solely two groups will never fit all individual cases. Furthermore, this kind of distinguishing of the participants by measuring language usage raises the possibility that they misidentify themselves in terms of ethnicity selected. This risk needs to be considered and acknowledged, yet this strategy of identifying the groups seemed more appropriate in the given setting.

A set of seven different situations were presented to the participants which were asked to choose if their language usage is primarily Estonian, primarily Russian, both languages equally or another language for each item. The same question was asked in the Italian case study, respectively, with the responses primarily Italian, primarily German, both languages

equally or another language. Those seven questions concerned the language usage at home, at school, with friends, leisure reading, TV/video consumption, language usage at a potential workplace, and the language setting on the phone. All seven items weighed equally and were structured into four units measuring which language is more used. Structured through the four units, a cluster analysis was made. In this study this was done to generate a neutral and objective categorization of the participants in Estonian and Russian speakers. Every participant will appertain to only one group, the aim is to cluster them in order to distinguish the two groups with as many similarities within the groups and as many differences between the groups (Malhotra and Birks, 2006).

Cluster analysis is used to reduce the cases into specific groups according to certain criteria. This unique technique allows for classifying cases into homogeneous clusters without previously known membership (Yim and Ramdeen, 2015). Thus, a number of individuals described by a set of numerical measurements, in this case the above-mentioned units, can be grouped into mutually exclusive classes (King, 2015). For this data set, the non-hierarchical cluster analysis was chosen, as it is a reliable technique to cluster participants into groups. It is a widely used strategy, as it is quick and simple to implement. Even though the choice of number of groups is arbitrary, in the case of the present data set, the main aim for the cluster analysis was to group the participants into the two linguistic groups, thus the number of clusters was already set.

Thus, a non-hierarchical cluster analysis was executed, demanding a pre-defined number of clusters. Different options for the number of clusters were tested in order to see if there might be an unexpected group arising, though the clearest distinction was found in the two-cluster option, which was also the aim of the distinction. When using the K-means cluster analysis the output can depend on the order of the data, therefore the cluster analysis was carried out multiple times while ordering the data in a randomised order. The cluster membership was constant, regardless in which order the data set was distributed. This argues for a reliable clustering of the data set.

*Table 3 - Final Cluster Centers, created in SPSS (elaborated by the author)*

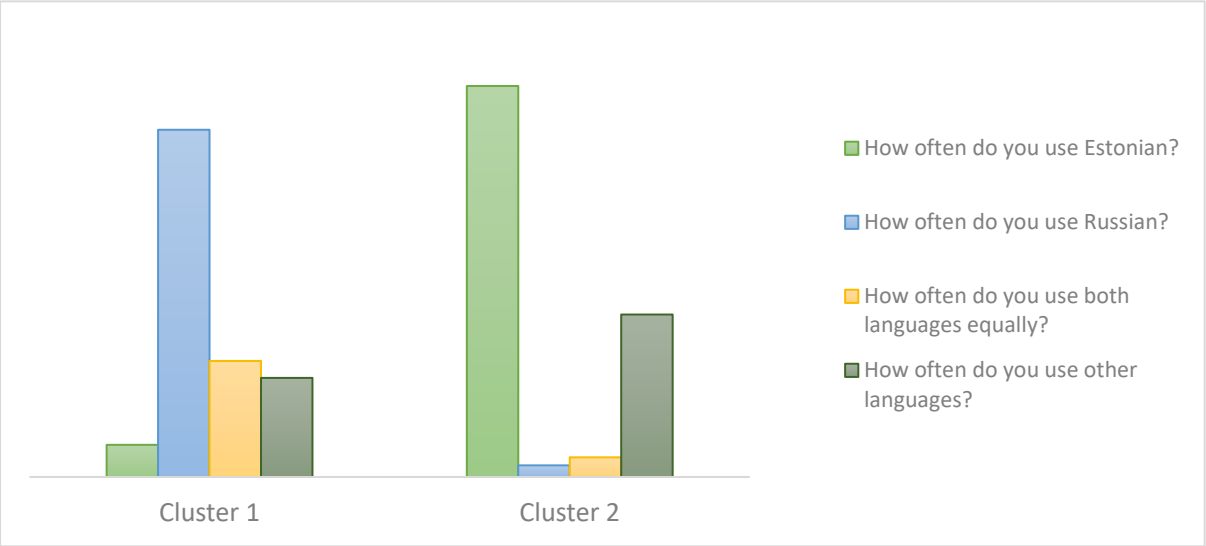
| Final Cluster Centers | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Cluster | |
| | 1 | 2 |
| How often do you use Estonian? | .36 | 4.38 |
| How often do you use Russian? | 3.89 | .13 |
| How often do you use both languages equally? | 1.30 | .22 |
| How often do you use other languages? | 1.11 | 1.82 |

*Table 4 - Anova table, created in SPSS (elaborated by the author)*

| ANOVA | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Cluster | | Error | | F | Sig. |
| | Mean Square | df | Mean Square | df | | |
| How often do you use Estonian? | 613.594 | 1 | .837 | 150 | 732.736 | .000 |
| How often do you use Russian? | 537.910 | 1 | 1.439 | 150 | 373.803 | .000 |
| How often do you use both languages equally? | 44.239 | 1 | .898 | 150 | 49.244 | .000 |
| How often do you use other languages? | 19.272 | 1 | 1.071 | 150 | 17.998 | .000 |
| The F tests should be used only for descriptive purposes because the clusters have been chosen to maximize the differences among cases in different clusters. The observed significance levels are not corrected for this and thus cannot be interpreted as tests of the hypothesis that the cluster means are equal. | | | | | | |

In this case, the ANOVA table shows the reliability and significance of the cluster analysis. "Univariate ANOVA with the cluster model as a covariate was performed to verify the significance of this as an independent factor for any observed differences in outcome" (Haldar *et al.,* 2012). As seen in the Anova table, the significance of the clustering according to the four factors is considerable, as the significance is lower than .05, which means that the clustering technique resulted in a sufficient output and the clusters can be used for analysis.

*Figure 1 -Bar chart of clusters (elaborated by the author)*




The above graph shows the distribution of language usage in the two clusters. Cluster 1 will be named Russian speakers and will thus represent the minority group in the country. As can be seen, the members use Russian as their main language, occasionally both languages and a third language, though rarely only Estonian.

Cluster 2 will be named the Estonian speakers. The graphs shows how its members favour the Estonian language in most situations; Russian or both languages are nearly absent in their frequent language habits, though third languages were mentioned more often. This may well be an indicator of how Estonians consume English-speaking media and/or have English-speaking contacts[9].

Cluster 1, the Russian speaking group, consisted of 73 members, and the Estonian speaking cluster 78 members. This equal distribution of participants makes it easier to compare the data of both groups, which can be seen as a convenience of the clustering.

Equally, in each cluster 67 participants originate from a monolingual parental home. The Russian-speaking cluster comprises more members with a mixed parental home, six, in contrast with two members from the Estonian-speaking cluster. No member of the Russian-speaking cluster came from a monolingual Estonian parental home, as opposed to nine of the participants, clustered amongst the Estonian speakers, having a monolingual Russian parental home. Furthermore, eleven of the Russian-speaking cluster answered the survey in

[9] It needs to be taken into account that Russian is a much wider spoken language with approximately 258 million speakers worldwide (statista 2022), while only 1.1 million people speak Estonian (VisitEstonia, n.d.). This particularly affects the options for media consumption of the two groups, as the variety and offerings for Russian speakers are much more multifaceted, which might explain this tendency.

Estonian, whereas only two of the Estonian-speaking cluster members answered the survey in Russian.

It can be assumed that the language chosen to answer the questionnaire is the language of instruction of the school frequented by the respective participants. Given this assumption, the cross-tabulation shows evidence that some ethnic Russian participants attend educational institutions where Estonian is spoken, whereas ethnic Estonians do not attend Russian-speaking schools.

After defining the cluster and specifying the characteristics of each cluster, the groups can be used for further analysis. The data were explored first through cross-tabulation. This method describes two or more variables at a time and links them to each other. The process of a cross-tabulation cross-classifies the categories of one or more variables to another (Malhotra and Birks, 2006). “Thus, the frequency distribution of one variable is subdivided according to the values or categories of the other variables” (Malhotra and Birks, 2006, p. 458).

Cross-tabulation is an easy way to find a statistically significant correlation and to test a hypothesis so the outcome is clear and definite. To test the statistical significance, the Chi-square test was used. It shows whether a systematic observation between the chosen variables exists or does not. It is adopted “to test for a difference among groups in terms of a categorical dependent variable” (Creswell, 2012, p. 613). The hypothesis is generally that there is no systematic association of the two variables; if the value of the Chi-square test is below .05 it can be stated that there is a statistically significant association of the variables, that is, that the cross-tabulation gives a statistically significant output (Malhotra and Birks, 2006). Furthermore, frequencies, cluster- and factor analysis were used to explore the gathered data.

The open-ended questions, along with the qualitative data derived from them, were used to support and explain the quantitative data. Thus, the answers were analysed and interpreted. Data analysis for the qualitative part is the process of making sense out of the given data, which involves reducing, interpreting, and consolidating what the participants have said or written (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). In this case the answers to the open-ended questions were grouped and interpreted according to topics and characteristics. Word count

was used as well as coding. Furthermore, some of the answers to the open-ended questions will be quoted anonymously in this thesis. A conjoint presentation of the outcome will be presented in chapter Five and Seven.

## 3.3 South Tyrol/Italy

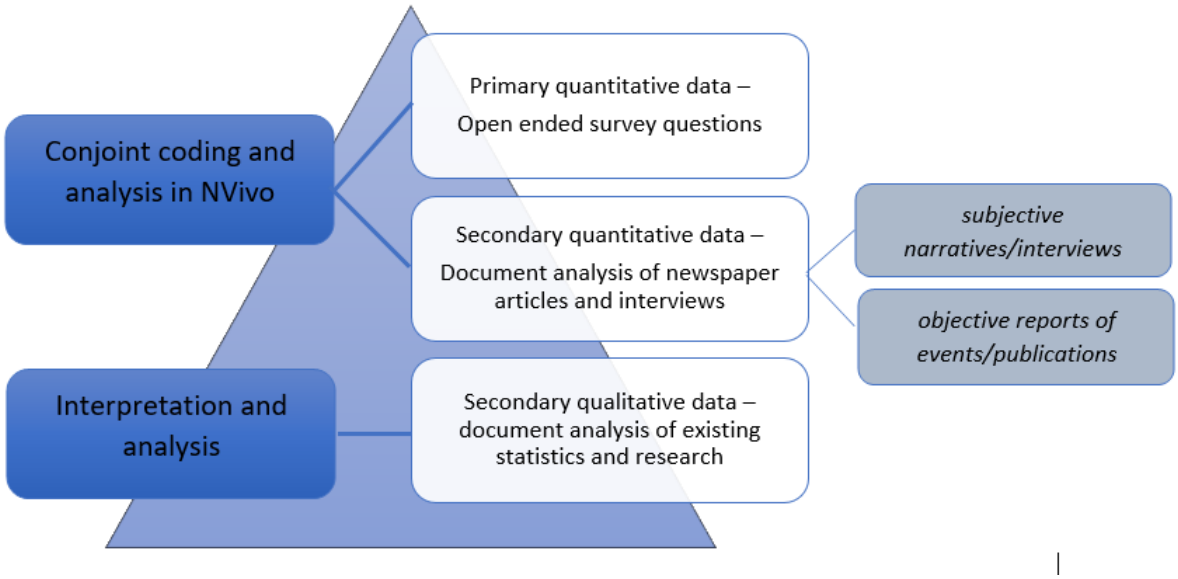
In this case study the quantitative approach is considered due to the nature of the phenomenon and data. As the interest of the researcher goes beyond the numeric and most suggestive factors inducing minorities to migrate and into a deeper understanding of emotional and societal drivers, a qualitative investigation through multiple data sources is utilized. The quantitative survey data collected by the researcher facilitates reaching a holistic understanding of the case, yet the data are handled converged in the analysis (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

According to Cheng and Phillips (2014), quoting the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the United States, primary data represent exclusively those data collected by a member of the research team in order to answer the specific research question. All other data, gathered by additional sources or for different purposes, are thus existing data and therefore the analysis is labelled secondary analysis of existing data (O'Leary, 2014). In this case study, a mixture of primary and secondary data was used in order to analyse the Italian case study. This stems from the lack of availability of certain raw data sets, thus data sets in which an own analysis could be made; therefore, the decision was made to work with the analysis reports of existing data as well as the analysis of documents. Using analysed documents and data presents the risk of the researcher having to rely on the description and interpretation of the data as the raw data did not serve as the basis of the analysis. Analysing documents is a different source of evidence, as documents are 'found' materials, where the researcher was not involved in collecting the data (Heaton, 2008; Bowen, 2009), and they contain text (words) or images (Bowen, 2009).

In this case study, three types of data and analysis can be distinguished. The first layer is the review and analysis of existing statistics, the second layer is the analysis of documents, with both steps grounded in the usage of secondary data. The last layer is the analysis of primary data, collected by the researcher, precisely the analysis of open-ended answers in a

questionnaire (see Figure 2). The analysis of all three types of data was not carried out sequentially but rather simultaneously.

*Figure 2 - Structure of the analysis (elaborated by the author)*




**Primary data analysis**

The primary data were mainly used as a source for quantitative analysis; however, some frequencies and analysis were done in order to illustrate trends among the participants. Even though they could not be analysed with IBM SPSS, as in the Estonian case, the data still offered the option to see trends in the groups. Thus, Chapter Five and Seven will display some tables, indicating percentages and numbers taken from the data set. However, the main source of data was the open-ended questions, which were treated as in the Estonian case, taking quotes from participants, and illustrating the subjective and emotional perceptions of the participants. This, in connection with the data from previous studies and the documents, offers a holistic analysis of the Italian case study. The new type of analysis concerned the secondary data, and that process will be explained in the following.

**Document review and grouping**

As a first step of this analysis, the meta-data of the articles need to be categorized. Thus, the documents needed to be distinguished in different groups. After reviewing the texts and researching the background of the publisher, the investigator could differentiate between *objective reports of events/publications* and the category of *subjective narratives/interviews.* A necessary step in document analysis is to investigate the context in which it was produced, for which purpose, and from whom for whom (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006).

A first evidence and tendency could be found in the number of results given during the search for documents regarding the research question. In order to find online articles and interviews, a Google keyword search was made in three languages, German, Italian and English. The keywords were the same in all languages, yet the output was very different. The investigation in German led to different communities and organisations engaging with South Tyrolians abroad ("Südstern", "sh.asus", "Südtiroler in der Welt"), while nothing similar was found in Italian, except partially translated webpages of the same organisations. In the process of analysis, it is not only important to see what is there, but also to see what is not there, that is, observing the gaps (Rapley, 2018), thus the outcome of the Google search provides evidence that most migrants from South Tyrol are German speakers or that the interest in the Italian migrant community is not focused on people from South Tyrol abroad. This might relate to the fact that Italian-speaking South Tyrolians can connect with the community of Italians abroad from any region, as they share the same language.

The documents were categorized in *objective reports of events/publications* and *subjective narratives/interviews,* the reports were mainly analysed through their meta-data, yet were not used for the convergent analysis with the primary data. This step was made, as the qualitative data analysis tries to explain a phenomenon with looking at a number of factors, rather than to look at quantity and numbers (Hankock and Algozzine, 2006). A total of 11 articles were chosen for the conjoint analysis with the primary data, which are listed in the table below.

*Table 5- Articles categorized as 'subjective narratives/interviews' (elaborated by the author)*

| Source | Name | Data | Author |
|---|---|---|---|
| Die Zeit (DE) | The Legacy of the Night of Fire (Original: Das Erbe der Feuernacht) | 11.06.2021 | Tanja Raich |
| Skolast | A futile search for identity (Original: Eine vergebliche Suche nach Identität) | 23.01.2021 | Simon Kienzl |
| suedstern.org | I am a South Tyrolean with German mother tongue and Italian passport (Original: Ich bin Südtirolerin mit deutscher Muttersprache und italienischem Pass) | 27.04.2015 | Stefanie Fuchs |
| suedstern.org | My South Tyrolean identity is only one of many (Original: Meine Südtiroler Identität ist nur eine von Vielen) | 09.06.2015 | Katharina von Tschurtschenthaler |
| suedstern.org | Search for new identities without losing old ones (Original: Nach neuen Identitäten suchen, ohne alte zu verlieren) | 02.06.2015 | Dumëne Comploi |
| suedstern.org | South Tyrol's future identity: bridge for Europeanism and globalisation (original:Südtirols künftige Identität: Brücke für Europäismus und Globalisierung) | 26.03.2015 | Roland Benedikter |
| barfuss.it | And when will you be back (Original: Und wann kommst du wieder?) | 14.02.2017 | Mara Mantinger |
| suedstern.org | Who are we? Views from “Südsterne” on the topic of "identity” (Original: Wer sind wir? Ansichten von Südsternen zum Thema “Identität”) | 26.03.2015 | suedstern.org |
| suedstern.org | "Who knows who we South Tyroleans really are?" (Original: "Wer weiß denn schon, wer wir Südtiroler wirklich sind?") | 04.08.2015 | Philipp Mayrhofer |
| suedstern.org | We have the great opportunity to live in a borderland where we can choose the best from different cultures. (Original: Wir haben die große Chance in einem Grenzland zu leben | 22.05.2015 | Elmar Mair |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | in dem wir aus verschiedenen Kulturen das Beste aussuchen können) | | |
| BBC News (UK) | South Tyrol's identity crisis: Italian, German, Austrian...? | 08.12.2012 | Bethany Bell |

The dataset was imported into NVivo in order to analyse the open-ended questions, while preserving the demographic data of the participants. Simultaneously the chosen documents from the above-mentioned sources in the category of *subjective narratives/interviews* were imported into NVivo.

The chosen strategy was a qualitative content analysis. This technique is appropriate for this case as it is a powerful tool to compress many words of text into fewer content categories (Stemler, 2000) as a foundation for analysis. As mentioned above, these categories are crucial for the grounded theory strategy and thus content analysis was chosen for this part of the data. Content analysis aims to find underlying meaning in a text which cannot be found through quantitative analysis, as it does not allow for the understanding of latent patterns within a text (Atkinson, 2017). The coding of qualitative data is indexing the data in order to organise it and assist the researcher's analytical thinking (Jackson and Bazeley, 2019) and is the most important step in qualitative data analysis (Wong, 2008). In the process of qualitative content analysis, the researcher develops categories, which are not characterized by one or more terms, but rather emerges in several different ways (Atkinson, 2017). All categories are segments or units which are potential answers to the research question (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). Yet, the codes or categories are always connected to the personal world view of the researcher (Jackson and Bazeley, 2019) and thus an appropriate questioning of their own role as a researcher is crucial.

Traditionally, coding was done manually, with Post-Its or colourful pencils, but with the development of software technologies, these older techniques are being replaced (Wong, 2008). As Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggest, the different data sources were analysed step by step. The documents as well as the qualitative data collected were coded openly (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015), which is the first step to find categories within each text which seem responsive to the research question. After reviewing the coding, the axial coding process was used to cluster similar data together. This process was strategically followed in

all documents and texts. This process leads to certain categories which are solid throughout all the data analysis and become more evident and saturated when going further in the analysis (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015).

Therefore, the qualitative data was coded and categorized and finally five groups of analysis were found. In the table below all groups are listed, with the preceding sub-categories which were connected to each other in a second step. Furthermore, an explanation of the categories as well as some illustrative examples are quoted.

*Table 6 - Categories of the data (elaborated by the author)*

| Name | Description | Sub-categories | Notes regarding Category | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Identification | Coding unit that describes the questioning and explaining of one's own identity | Search for identity; Multiple identities; Identity | This was the first category created and the one with the most connected references. The category serves the primary and the secondary data, although in different aspects. When combining the earlier categories of "search for identity" and "multiple identities", the data showed that this can be distinguished as pre- and post-migration viewpoints. | "[It is] complicated. I don't really know how to identify myself" "And that's why I no longer have a problem with my South Tyrolean identity. Because it is only one of many – even if it is an important one. But it no longer excludes my others." |
| Mother tongue | Coding unit that describes all considerations regarding one's mother tongue(s) | Separation Language; Minority | This category combines the opinion towards language and the minority status, as language is one of the topics most referred to. This category also includes the variety of explanations as to how language is linked to the belonging of participants. | "Practically no one knows our history and sometimes we don't feel like explaining for the 100th time why we, as 'Italians', don't speak Italian but German as our mother tongue." "I have many identities, for example I have a |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | different one in each language." |
| Belonging | Coding unit describing the feeling of belonging to groups, nation states and languages | Integration; Expectations; Separation; Nationality | A broad category, covering the feeling of belonging for people pre- and post-migration. The switch from "not really belonging anywhere" to "belonging everywhere" is connected to the migration experience and will be further elaborated below. | "As a member of the German-speaking minority, I feel neither Italian nor Austrian, but something in between..." "[…] there you might find a place where you feel completely at home." |
| Negative emotions | Coding unit describing the negative emotions of participants | Negative emotions; Expectations | This category was added in order to be able to combine all obvious and underlying negative sentiments of participants. In this category references from the pre-migration period or the early stages of migration were coded. | "When people from abroad refer to me as Italian, it triggers an unpleasant feeling in me" "In general, I have the feeling that you are the "outsider" everywhere, whether you move to Italy or Austria." |
| Nation states and the EU | Coding unit describes the opinions on national and international level concerning nationality and identification. | Nationality; European Identity; Minority; Study places | The category nationality was the one with the second most references. Even though it had many matches it was mostly connected to a desired change of nationality. The category was added to combine the participants' thoughts to nation states as categories. | "If international citizenship had existed, I would have given up mine without hesitation. Because I thought you could only have one identity." "Maybe [I would prefer the] Germany or Austria [for citizenship], but only because I can speak German if I have to go to an embassy or something abroad." |

Despite the grouping of the qualitative data, other strategies of analysis were used, e.g., a word count. A word count can be used for qualitative data to identify patterns more easily, to verify a hypothesis and to maintain analytical integrity (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Thus, it is a useful addition to the other types of analysis and offers the chance to obtain as much information as possible from the data. After this initial analysis, the results and discussions will follow in Chapter Five and Seven.

## 3.3 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the initial analysis of the data, the strategies used and the differences in the two case studies. In the following table the data collection of both case studies is compared to show the different approaches in a precise matter.

*Table 7 - Categories of analysis (elaborated by the author)*

| **Estonian case study** | **Italian case study** |
|---|---|
| • Quantitative and qualitative data analysis<br>• Data obtained from questionnaire; only primary data used | • Qualitative and quantitative approach<br>• Primary data obtained from questionnaire, secondary data from documents and previous research |
| Identical questionnaire (adapted to the context) | |
| • Analysis with IBM SPSS Statistics 26 | • Analysis with NVivo |

As seen above, the multiple case study approach involves studying the cases separately first, to next understand the differences and similarities (Stake 2013). For the two cases, different types of data were available and thus, the same phenomenon was studied using different single approaches. Mixed methods and multiple case studies are both strategies to reduce the threats to validity and reliability of research projects. As the outcome of both case studies are similar, it can be stated that it is an indicator for generalizability of the study.

Content analysis as an analysis strategy for the secondary data was chosen, as it offers a reliable tool to reduce a great amount of text into categories which is used as a foundation

for the grounded theory approach. The hierarchy of the data analysis for the Italian case was introduced, stating the differences between primary and secondary data. Furthermore, for the Estonian case, the grouping in the Estonian-speaking group and the Russian-speaking group is explained in detail, as well as the composition and features of the specific groups. This initial analysis can be seen as a starting point. This analysis is provided to show, firstly, how the classification for this study is constructed and that language is the distinct feature used. Secondly, this chapter shows how diverse and multi-faced[10] the groups still are and that for analytical reasons a categorisation needs to be made; however, the individual is always more complex.

The detailed outcome of the analysis of the data will be presented in Chapters Five and Seven; in each, one topic will be explored, introducing data from both case studies and concluding with a conjoint analysis. Furthermore, the data analysis will be grouped into categories in order to give a clear overview of the results.

Following here Chapter Four will introduce the literature on migration as well as the specific topic of minorities as migrants. It will offer a broad overview and more detailed insights on the topics of ethnic migration, migration dreams and imaginations, as well as the imagined community theory.

[10] This term is used in this thesis, to show that there are 'many faces' to the topic of identity and imaginaries, which is why it will be used throughout this dissertation.

# Chapter 4: Pre-migration period and the imagination of migration

## 4.1 Introduction

Migration is a fact of life that has coexisted with humanity for millennia, and contemporary scholars continue to grapple with the many complex reasons or factors that drive humans to migrate. In modern times, a key element underlying the notion of movement and migration is one's own imagination, the imagination of another place, and oneself living in this place (Salazar, 2011). This concept is central for the present study, exploring the pre-migration period of minority group members and the differences in migration imaginations of minorities and majorities and the eventual consequences and differences in migration behaviours. Even though the base for migration research was set early (see e.g., Ravenstein, 1889), the interest in the field grew steadily in the second half of the 20th century. Many models and theories have examined in depth the multi-faceted factors of migration, the movement, the decision-making process, and the consequences for society. Numerous scholars from a variety of fields do research on migration processes occurring globally and produce new knowledge about the types and circumstances of migration (see e.g., Bakewell *et al.*, 2012; Brettell, 2015; Castles, 2013; de Haas, 2011, 2021; Lee, 1966; Martiniello and Rath, 2010; Massey *et al*., 1993; O'Reilly, 2012). Migration is typically explained by classic migration theories, to be introduced in the next section, and for its part ethnic minority migration, as a subset of international migration, is generally explained by theories of co-ethnic return, also to be elaborated hereafter. Besides classic migration theories, research on migration imagination and how that influences migration flows and decisions will be introduced. The literature takes a fairly unnuanced look at ethnic minority migration, through co-ethnic return migration. On the other hand, if ethnic minorities are migrants, in the literature they are often not given special emphasis of the studied group to be regarded as ethnic minorities, but rather treated as all the other migrants, which is different in this study. Furthermore, the majority of migration literature looks at post-movement, but an emerging literature looks at migration aspiration. Therefore, this study fills a gap that is on ethnic minority migrants and on pre-migration aspiration and imagination.

For this thesis, the concept of migration as 'search' is important, whether it be the search for one's own identity or a place where one may fully belong. This search is based on the perception that the desired condition can be found in another place, which is why migration plans, as conceived by the person, are seemingly a step towards a better life. This research aims to work on combining the imagination of migration with the circumstances of living as minority group member, in order to identify specific factors for migration of minority group members. Transnationalism is one theory that is applicable to both classic migrants and ethnic minority migrants, thereby bridging the gap in some way; it will be further elaborated later in this chapter.

The chapter is theoretical and introduces the first part of the literature review relevant for this research. By looking at different migration theories, relevant for this study, this chapter aims to demonstrate the ways in which this thesis contributes to filling a gap in the literature concerning minority group members as migrants. The pre-migration period is connected to an imagined migration, rather than to an actual move, which is why Anderson's theory on Imagined Communities (1983) will be introduced as well as its critique and the different areas in which the theory was used and adapted. In order to conceptualize the migration aspirations and factors of the two groups here under study, an overall understanding of the research done on migration needs to be developed. Therefore, a short introduction into the initial understanding of migration movements will be presented, touching on the network theory and migration system theory as well as a short overview of the general field. Furthermore, ethnic return migration will be conceptualised as a commonly used theory to look at migration of minority group members. To gain a more holistic understanding of the decision-making process prior to migration, the body of literature on migration imagination and migration imaginaries will be presented, and the research on the migration as a happiness project.

## 4.2 Migration theories

Migration is one of the most interdisciplinary topics in the social sciences and it is approached from an array of disciplines. Be it anthropology, sociology, geography, history, political science, demography – migration is a subject for scholars in all those branches of research and each one examines it from a different angle (Brettell and Hollifield, 2022).

Migration was raised as an intellectual discussion in 1889, when Ravenstein published "The laws of migration". He was the first scholar to theorise migration, endeavouring to explain this global phenomenon with seven 'laws'. Nearly a century later, the first short definition of migration was published: "Migration is defined broadly as a permanent or semipermanent change of residence" (Lee, 1966, p. 49). The term migration itself is neither restricted to the distance of the move, nor to its nature of being internal or international, or whether it is voluntary or involuntary. In the common definition, solely two types of movements are excluded: first, the continual movements of nomads, and second, temporary moves of individuals (e.g. traveling for tourism or pleasure). Any act of migration includes an origin, a destination and a set of obstacles intervening (Lee, 1966). Taking into consideration the definitions of migration from the United Nations (2022) a central part of it is that migration is any move regardless of the cause. This shows how diverse and wide the topic is and thus, how multi-faced the theories on migration are (see e.g., Brettell, 2015; Brettell and Hollifield, 2022; Castles, 2013; de Haas, 2021; Massey, 1993; O'Reilly, 2012). Early authors in particular tried to come up with a general understanding of migration (de Haas, 2021). The main aim of migration theories is to explain the same phenomena, and as this has been done from a variety of different viewpoints, the following will present some theories in more detail to provide an overview of the existing research.

**Functionalist theories**

In the nineteenth-century especially, models and concepts were developed, focusing on generalisation and economic concepts. All of these theories explain why people choose to move after the factual migration, yet they do not address the initial decision-making process.

A great focus of this early literature was labour migration, connected to the different economic profile of the home and the destination countries, as it was one of the earliest approaches on migration. A migrant is seen as a *homo economicus* whose main driver is to expand their capital (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015). The neoclassical approach on migration are push-pull models, meaning that a certain set of factors push an individual or a group from a country, while other pull factors attract them to another place (Harris and Todaro, 1970). The focus lies in the differences in wages in the various countries and the costs of migration, movement is seen as an act for income maximization (Massey, 1993). Yet, push-

pull theories are criticised for being simplistic and unable to explain real-world patterns and processes (de Haas, 2021). Furthermore, they were assessed as being too static (Van Hear *et al.,* 2018) and as mixing the micro- and macro levels of migration and treating migrants as passive victims without their own will and capacity to decide (de Haas, 2021). The theory of the New Economics of Migration criticises the neoclassical approach in many ways, even though the neoclassical approach shaped the society's idea of migration strongly through their theory. The New Economics state that the theory mainly considers that individuals decide to move for better wages, yet the units to be considered should be families, households, or other cultural units. Furthermore, the New Economics of Migration claim that international migration and local employment are not mutually exclusive, and that movement does not necessarily stop when wage differentials are erased (Massey 1993).

Rather than discarding the contributions of the economic models, later theories based on cultural and emotional factors try to advance the understanding of the complex fabric of migration motivations. Thus, in the following, theories which expand beyond mere economic factors will be introduced, with a specific glimpse into the networks and systems of migration, which are crucial theories for the present thesis.

**Sociological theories**

According to Castles *et al.* (2014, p. 26) a general useful distinction amongst migration theories can be made; theories "on the *cause of migration processes*, and theories on the *impacts of migration for sending and receiving communities and societies*". For this study, theories on the cause of migration are of greater interest, especially those trying to explain the sociological factors of community and belonging.

Migration comes in numberable variations, with a set of different factors and characteristics. One of the core characteristics of migration might be said to be a 'search', whether it is in the field of labour migration – searching for a better economic situation eventually in form of a job or a better market (Borjas, 1989) – or lifestyle migration, as in the search for a better way of life (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009; Benson and Osbaldiston, 2014). Also relevant within the concept of search is the desire for an ancient homeland, that is, for co-ethnic return migrants (Tsuda, 2010; Kasbarian, 2009) or migration from high-risk environments, which reflects the search for safety (Raleigh, 2011). Even though the reasons

for migration may vary in their essence, the main synergy is the migration process as an imagined improvement with respect to a specific area of hardship in the individual's current life. However, the point of departure for the physical move is the realisation (imagination) that the desired condition is achievable elsewhere, which is a key element of this research.

Within the broad scope of the literature addressing migration, a classical distinction is drawn between the micro-level and the macro-level approach. The macro approach can be seen as a top-down approach whereas the micro approach, however, tries to investigate the individuals' decision-making processes and psychological factors (see e.g. Brettell and Hollifield, 2022; Cadwallader, 1992). Nevertheless, this is only one distinction; migration theories can also be conceptualized in terms of their level of analysis – the individual, the household, the national or the international. Despite this relevant variety of approaches, the theories cannot be seen as incompatible even though the models reflect different research perspectives (Massey, 1993).

Therefore, for this study the more interesting angle is that which looks at structures affecting migration and individual migrants' agency in deciding on migration. Haas (2021) defines the terms as follows:

> *Agency* reflects the limited – but real – ability of human beings (or social groups) to make independent choices and to impose these on the world and, hence, to alter the structures that shape and constrain people's opportunities or freedoms. *Structure* can be defined as patterns of social relations, beliefs and behaviour. Factors and institutions such as class, religion, gender, ethnicity, networks and markets as well as cultural belief systems all sustain inequalities and social hierarchies and limit the opportunities that people have – or perceive they have – and the economic, social and cultural resources which they can access – thus significantly constraining their freedom or agency as well as their ideas, knowledge and self-consciousness. (Haas, 2021, p. 14)

The interaction and interconnection of structure and agency are complex and interdependent; structure is part of the agent and the agent is part of the structure (O'Reilly, 2012), so one is shaped by the other. On the one hand, agency concerns people's abilities to take their aspirations and to transform them into a changed position in society, yet those capabilities are influenced by the outside world and the structural conditions (Van Hear *et al*., 2018). According to Bakewell (2010), one of the first scholars to focus on the

importance of disentangling structure and agency, it is crucial to find a balance of structure and agency in the analysis of migration.

Haas (2021) distinguishes one group of hybrid meso-level theories – for this study most interesting – focusing on 'internal dynamics', such as network theories, migration system theory and causation theory. Thus, this theoretical chapter will present an overview of these theories to provide an idea of the work done in the field.

The network theory advocates the idea that migrant networks are interpersonal ties between migrants, nonmigrants in the destination and the origin, and former migrants, which manifests itself as a form of social capital. This leads to declining costs and declining risks of migration and thus increases the likelihood of movement (Massey *et al.*, 1993). For the initiation of migration, processes factors such as shared culture and language, geographical proximity, colonialism, warfare and labour recruitment play a crucial role (Massey and Parrado, 1998), yet after the settlement of a critical number of migrants in the destination the choices of the pioneer migrants influence the subsequent migration (Castles *et al.*, 2014). If conceptualized in this way, some factors differ strongly from the previous theories; this theory argues that acts of migration alter the context in which future migration decisions are made and that migration becomes independent from the original factors which caused it through the formation of networks (Massey *et al.*, 1993). The original network theory proposes that someone with previous international experience is more likely to migrate again, as well as an individual who is related to someone with prior international experience or someone living abroad (Massey *et al.*, 1993).

While Migration Network Theories focus on the role of social capital, migration system theory looks at how migration is linked to flows of goods, ideas and money, that is, how other forms of exchange are connected to migration (Castles, 2013). The Migration System Theory is based on the work of Mabogunje (1970), who looked at migration flows in a circular and self-modifying system. Migration systems link people, families and communities over space, which leads to a structuring of migration flows; migration is seen as a process with a feedback mechanism which influences future migration patterns (Bakewell *et al.*, 2012). Thus, this information flow, transmitted back to the place of departure, may influence people's preferences and migration aspirations (Castles, 2013) and may consequently lead to almost organized migratory flows from one geographical area to

another (Mabogunje, 1970). Even though Migration System Theory is commonly used, it cannot explain why or how a system comes into being; thus, it is unable to explain why some initial migration leads to migration system formation while others do not. Furthermore, it offers little understanding of the drivers of migration systems (Bakewell *et al.*, 2012). Nevertheless, recently some scholars have looked into the agency of pioneer migrants of migration systems in order to fill this gap (see e.g., Bakewell *et al.*, 2012)

Both Migration Network and Migration System Theories acknowledge the macro, micro and meso structures of migration, including state policies and the role of governance, and informal social networks such as family connections and communities (O'Reilly, 2012).

The above introduced migration theories are concepts, used in a variety of contexts to investigate the aspirations and trends for specific types of migrations. Some of these migration types are e.g. lifestyle migration (see Benson and Osbaldiston, 2014; Torkington, 2010), student migration (see Arenas, 2021; King and Raghuram, 2013), ethnic return migration (see e.g., Tsuda, 2010; Wessendorf, 2007), amenity migration (see e.g. Abrams *et al.,* 2012; Moss and Glorioso, 2006) etc. This literature on migration places the focus on specific groups and special circumstances for which factors like emotional bonds, cultural imaginaries and Imagined Communities play a greater role than for other types of migration. The theoretical models mentioned above cannot be used to fully explain the mentioned forms of migration, yet the concepts facilitate the understanding of underlying structures.

The studied groups in this thesis are two minority groups in Europe, Russian speakers in Estonia and German speakers in Italy. Usually, minority or diasporic groups are handled as a consequence of migration; thus, the research into migration of minorities focuses on ethnic return migration and second-generation migration (see e.g. Tsuda, 2009; Wessendorf, 2007) to understand the patterns of the movement. Furthermore, ethnic return migration can be seen as part of either migration network theories (see e.g., Haug, 2008) or migration system theories (see e.g., Tsuda, 1999).However, the literature lacks the aspect of minority group members as migrants, not necessarily connected to ethnic return migration, but instead it sees their status as minorities as a starting point for migration plans and imaginations. There are a very few articles which look at ethnic minority migration from a wider angle than solely as ethnic return migration (see e.g., Lendák-Kabók *et al.*, 2020; Oliver, 2017).

### 4.2.1. Ethnic return migration

This thesis investigates the migration plans of the German minority in Italy and the Russian minority in Estonia. In the existing literature, minority group members were mainly connected with ethnic return migration, which broadly stated, examines minority group members or diaspora members, who decide to move back to their homeland, whether it be their actual country of departure or an ancient homeland where the individual has never lived. Yet, within the literature there is the argument that ethnic return migration happens not just for ethnic reasons, rather, it is instrumental. Ethnic return migrants are drawing on their ethnic status to get permission to move but are moving for economic / instrumental reasons. Tsuda (2010) argues that even if ethnic return migration seems to appear driven by ethnic reasons, most of the migration occurs in the direction of lesser to more developed countries and is thus more strongly connected to greater job opportunities or a better standard of living. In general, return migration aspirations are similar, reflecting the motives for one's original migration, namely, economic or social factors, which can be supplemented with additional factors such as nostalgia (Olivier-Mensah and Scholl-Schneider, 2016).

However, ethnic migration was conceptualised in different ways and for this reason the terms 'ethnic migration', 'ethnic return migration' or 'roots migration' are all examining similar phenomena with a different focus. Return migration in the literature refers to those migrants returning to a country of origin that they themselves have left and where they perhaps no longer feel relevant Tsuda (2009) defines two types of ethnic return migration, namely, the return migration of first-generation migrants, that is, the people who themselves took the decision to migrate, and next the later-generation descendants, who at a certain point decide to return to their 'ethnic homeland'. This ethnic return migration increased as a result of historical event in the 20th century, caused, for example, by the collapse of the Soviet Union, or the end of World War II (Tsuda, 2010).

First and later generation return migration are two separate phenomena. The first-generation migrants experienced a move before and have a different perception and imagination of the homeland, given that they formerly lived there. For first generation

migrants, the reason to migrate was often to increase the human capital[11], which is why this type of return migration is mostly studied under the theme of economic umbrella. On the other hand, the New Economics of Labour Migration interpret return migration as having achieved those goals set for the time abroad (e.g. earning a higher salary for that period and accumulating savings) and thus returning to the sending country (Cassarino, 2004).

Looking at second generation return migrants, the reasons differ substantially and are mostly connected to an imagined homeland or to an existing migration system. For members of the second-generation migrants, growing up in a transnational society, the homeland of the parents is associated with nostalgic fantasies. This can lead to a migration to this ancestral 'land of one's kin' with the expectation to find an ideal homeland and a strong sense of belonging (Wessendorf, 2007). This type of ethnic migration is not only disputed for second generation migrants but can also include later generations or members of diasporic groups or minority groups.

The classical definition of diaspora is a group of people dispersed after a traumatic/violent event in their homeland to two or more foreign destinations (Cohen 2008, Tölölyan 2007). Shuval (2000) names the groups historically associated with a diaspora, such as the Jews, Greeks, and Armenians; furthermore, Cohen (2008) adds Africans and the Irish to this list. These groups are 'victim' or 'classical' diasporic groups (Cohen 2008, see also King and Christou 2011, Brubaker 2005, Tölölyan 2007).

The discussion on Diaspora has increased in interest over the last 20 years, with the term having been stretched to accommodate several groups into the definition (Brubaker 2005; Safran 1999). Many migrant populations have been conceptualized as diaspora, including labour migrants maintaining strong ties to their homeland, transborder linguistic categories, basically any and every nameable population that is somehow dispersed in space (Brubaker 2005). There are around three dozen transnational communities to date, which were named diaspora in the one or another way (Tölölyan 2007). The 'myth of return' is a central part of diaspora literature and the concept of a constructed utopia as a way of resisting the lived sociocultural realities is discussed among diaspora scholars (Singh, 2001). The nostalgia and

[11] When talking about return migration in this section, refugees and people fleeing for political reasons are not taken into account, as their motives are very much different from the ones presented here and the focus of this study.

fantasies surrounding the homeland as well as the longing of their parents have been transferred to the second-generation migrants. However, depending on the individual's tendency, this nostalgia is either integrated into the diasporic identity or has led to a decision to migrate to the homeland of the parents (Wessendorf, 2007). Second generation migrants are likely to live in a more transnational space and often nostalgia for the homeland is an essential narrative present in their identity, especially given how many of them may not have achieved full inclusion and acceptance in the society (Reynolds, 2008).

Research shows that discrimination is correlated to higher return migration intentions (Groenewold and De Valk, 2017). However, the dream of a better home might be broken by the new and strange reality, coming with a loss of cultural comforts and eventually experiences of discrimination, which can lead the migrants to start missing their country of departure (Teo, 2011).

Second generation migrants often undergo the painful experience of the parents: living in a place but dreaming of another (Wessendorf, 2007). Experiencing the feeling of not being fully accepted and integrated encourages the dream of returning to a 'home' where the quality of life is perceived as being better (Reynolds, 2008).

Looking at the migration of minorities in a context different from that of ethnic migration is rare. Nevertheless, demographic changes will make this a crucial topic in the foreseeable future as the number of world immigrants was and is increasing constantly (Kislev, 2018). The migration behaviour, the aspirations and the integration in the host country of people belonging to a minority in their country of origin might differ crucially from the experience of the majority counterparts (Kislev, 2018).

The scant literature on the migration behaviour of minorities, not treating it as ethnic migration but rather as migration in a 'third' country, is usually based on the broad literature of minority groups. This body of literature assumes minorities generally have a lower level of education and/or suffering from a lack of economic capital, which influences the migration decisions and experiences (Kislev, 2018). Even though minorities in most countries do experience some form of discrimination, not all minority groups are necessarily less educated and have less human capital than the majority in the country. Therefore, this general assumption should not be accepted, and indeed it has been refuted in the specific

literature (Kislev, 2018). The lack of literature concerning this topic is a clear indication of a gap in the research focusing on minorities as migrants. This is where the present study tries to step in and contribute to the general discussion. Most ethnic minority migration is explained by theories of co-ethnic return, which is connected to an imagined homeland and community. The basis for this type of migration is, again, the imagination of a place where the individual imagines that they belong. This is often not only referred to as a geographical destination as it may refer to a community which seems to be their 'own'.

Ethnic return migration has been conceptualised within different theoretical constructs – the Theory of Neoclassical Economics, the New Economics of Labour Migration, or Transnationalism – but what is most relevant for this thesis in the Network Theory (Cassarino, 2004). From a Network Theory approach, migration flows are connected to the network of an ethnic group, even though diffused over borders.

This can be theorized through the approach of Anderson (1983), introduced in the next section.

## 4.3 Imagined Communities

As seen in the literature on ethnic return migration, people living in a transnational reality often dream about and imagine a place where they fully belong, an actual home. Imagination as a central component involved in a migration decision and a first step to the dream conceptualization about migration is connected to several factors which are imagined. One part of the imagination of a 'better home' is the imagination of integrating a community at the destination, which Anderson (1983) theorized in the framework of nation states.

Anderson coined the term Imagined Community, in its initial context mainly connected to nation-states, yet used for several different communities in the literature meanwhile. For the original idea, Anderson (1983) proposed that the nation-state[12] is an imagined political

[12] The twentieth century is impressed by the concept of nation-states as a crucial component of international relations (James, 1996). Nevertheless, the nation, in the prevailing way of general understanding, is a modern phenomenon that was not implemented before 1884 (Hobsbawm, 2012). However,, several scholars see a development towards a change of this concept through globalization (James, 1996) as it increased interconnectedness and has brought about worldwide

community, as any community larger than primordial villages or face-to-face contacts. He quotes Gellner (1964) who writes "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist" (Anderson, 1991, p. 6). Nevertheless, Anderson criticizes this view, as in his eyes Gellner implies that 'true' communities exist, which according to Anderson is not the case, as all of them are imagined. Even today a relevant number of people are not able to travel around their nation's territory and can only attain a clear idea of their territory, the limits and boundaries of the nation's territory as 'imagined' through media and education (Guibernau, 2012).

According to Anderson, nations are limited and sovereign and imagined as a community. *Limited* because they have borders outside of which other nations exist. Nations are imagined as *sovereign* because the aim was a free nation, and the final dimension thereof is a sovereign state. Lastly, they are *imagined* as communities because a nation in Anderson's approach is conceived as a horizontal comradeship, regardless of the actual inequality (Anderson, 1991).

Anderson reserved the concept of Imagined Communities to be applied solely or mainly to nations (Beck, 2011); nevertheless, it has been used by various scholars in recent years to theorize several topics across disciplines. A current approach of the Imagined Communities' concept is interconnected with social media and online communities (see e.g., Gruzd *et al.*, 2011; Kavoura, 2014). Social media uses its own language and special symbols and so it can create an Imagined Community with shared interests or ideas (Kavoura, 2014). Beck (2011) applies Anderson's concept to cosmopolitanism. Other scholars implemented the theory of Imagined Communities to the development of language learning, e.g., Norton's works (2000) about nonparticipation in second language classrooms. In his work about migrants who acquire the language of the host country as a second language and their behaviour, he found the Imagined Community of the individuals to be their most important measure and judge when learning the language. Depending on which community they imagined

interdependence (Guibernau, 2012). Nation is derived from the classical Latin word *nation* - birth, race, nation, class of person. Therefore, the word nation is connected to the idea of blood ties, even though it was misled from the original sense in recent decades and used as a synonym for state (Connor 1978) or in other imprecise ways (Hobsbawm, 2012).

themselves to be part of, they decided about the way to handle the language. Kanno and Norton (2003) mention the theory in relation to a study among Japanese emigrants and their 'private, Imagined Community' back in the homeland, which gave them an important sense of direction. Yet it was disappointing when going back to what was their Imagined Community and they faced the actual situation.

Originally conceptualized by Anderson as referring to members of a nation-state who knew of each other's existence but had never met (1986), the concept of Imagined Communities has since been expanded both within and beyond the borders of the nation-state, applied to Catalans (Calvet, 2016) or the Turkish-German diaspora (Madenoglu, 2020).

Applying the theory of Imagined Communities to diasporic or minority groups can help to understand the connection of the minority group members to the ancestral (ethnic) homeland. Through frequent visits to their 'homeland' (Oeppen, 2013), strong connection through the media consumed (Goirizelaia and Berriochoa, 2019; Odabasi, 2019), and old stories told within the community, a feeling of belonging to this community is created. Information flows back and forth (Sheffer, 2003) and both a network and migration systems are created. The minority group members imagine themselves belonging to the community of inhabitants of their 'home country', even though they might have never lived there.

This approach is shared by many people living in a diasporic or minority community, as transnationalism is a bond for this Imagined Community abroad.

**Transnationalism**

In members of ethnic minorities, transnational behaviour can be found, as in Diasporas (Tölölyan, 2007), first- and second-generation migrants, and several other types of groups (Leichtman, 2005). Thus, the issue of transnationalism is crucial in the everyday life of a minority group member. The concept of transnationalism was introduced in 1992 by Glick Schiller, *et al.* under the umbrella of migration studies. They describe transnationalism as opposition to the original idea of assimilation thus "as the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement" (Glick Schiller *et al.,* 1992, p. 1). Even though the first definition was tailored to migrants, recent scholars argue that transnational behaviour does not necessarily need to be rooted in a migration (Cohen, 2008) but is built upon a society of nation-states as it is a linkage

across the respective border (Vertovec, 1999). Transnationalism is connected to a collective memory of another place; in diasporic communities this can be a specific location (Cohen 2008) which might be connected to a desire towards this place, be it specific or unspecific. Political ties between the two countries is part of the definition of transnationalism by Glick, Schiller *et al.* (1992), yet Leichtman (2005) argues that the definition of transnationalism for second or later generations of immigrants, and in this case also for ethnic minorities, needs to be revised, as movement between the two countries and economic or political embeddedness no longer have the importance they once did. Research shows that transnational behaviour fosters intentions of return migration and might lead to actual migration (Groenewold and De Valk, 2017). This can also be seen as a system or network, as connecting two countries increases the likelihood of movement (Massey, 1993).

Roots migrants (Wessendorf, 2007), or ethnic migrants' decisions are strongly shaped during the pre-migration period. Through frequent visits to the 'homeland' and cultural and social integration there, the nostalgia and expectations concerning that country are shaped. Those frequent visits are common amongst ethnic minorities too, especially in the two studied cases. First, the borderland is the country in which the native language of the minority is the majority language; thus, the distance is minimal and the social barriers to enter very few. Language is a crucial part of the membership to a group or separation (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1992; Tajfel, 1992), meaning that being able to travel to a country where their own language is omnipresent and represented in all facets of daily and community life lowers the barriers for a trip there. This desire, image, and collective memory can be reinforced by the consumption of specific media (Singh, 2001). Transnational programming (Crane *et al.,* 2016), as well as music (Singh, 2001), play an important role in the development of a cultural identity. Transnationalism is often associated with social institutions and everyday practices, and one of the best ways to observe these practices is the culture and the media consumed as well as produced (Vertovec, 1999). According to Crane *et al.* (2016), media is consumed by regions that share the same language and culture, as this is the concept of cultural discount which the consumer can identify more easily with. Thus, many media operators' audience is not necessarily bound to borders; instead, the service is consumed in different countries by migrants or diaspora. New technologies, along

with faster and cheaper communication is certainly supportive of greater transnational behaviour (Vertovec, 1999; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007).

German speakers in Italy have a strong bond to Austria and Germany, not only because of geographical vicinity but also through similar culture and shared media consumption (Radio, TV, newspapers etc.). However, the consumption of certain media might let the minority or diaspora imagine the 'homeland' in a symbolical and romanticized way, which might not exist like this (Singh, 2001). With the new ways of communication, emotional lives are increasingly performed over distance and space (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015), which is the case for both case studies mainly connected through online communication in their native language.

As this study concerns the pre-migration period and not the activity of migration, the aspirations and imaginations concerning the move are of interest. The present thesis questions whether there is a difference in migration imaginations of minorities and majorities and if this leads to distinctive migration behaviour. To conceptualize this, the next section presents literature on migration imaginations and aspirations, focusing on the pre-migration period.

## 4.4 Imaginaries and utopian dreams of destinations

Even though the motivations underlying mobility are various, the ability to imagine other places and lives is the point of departure for any move (Salazar, 2011). This thesis agrees with Salazar with regard to the need to distinguish between imagination and imaginaries. Any time an individual reflects on the possibility of migration, they are engaging in an imagined future. They envision successful employment, happy family reunification, personal safety, job security, etc. This is the case as well for those who imagine feeling that they belong among those who speak a shared language. 'Cultural imaginaries' are shared social imaginaries, based on a set of collective knowledge, notions, and images (Cooke, 2016); thus, cultural imaginaries are not individual but rather shared with a group of people. This might be a whole nation, a region, a household, or any familiar collection of individuals. The theory on cultural imaginaries is a combination of Anderson's (1982) Imagined Communities, as well as Appadurai's (2002) geographical imaginaries and Hall's (1989)

cultural representation theories. The term Cultural Imaginaries is commonly used in the place of culture or cultural knowledge (Strauss, 2006). Yet, Cultural imaginaries are not only constructed concerning one's own society or culture, but about other geographical places too. Thus, destinations are becoming socially constructed places, carrying meaning and often crafted and mediated through power (Viteri, 2015). These cultural imaginaries may be influenced by targeted advertisement, social media, or ancient stories, told over generations. Fortier (2012) uses the term migration imaginary concerning the 'image' of migration perceived in society, connected to desires of enrichment, integration, and cosmopolitanism on the one hand and anxieties of invasion, loss, and chaos on the other. According to her theory, the imaginary of migration shapes the understanding of culture, citizenship, national borders, and the relationship to others. Thus, not only are geographical places a cultural imaginary, but also the act of migration itself, often connected to the imagination and the desire of socially beneficial developments.

Studying U.S. citizens who are residents in a region of Ecuador, Viteri (2015) argues that imagining places and the wellbeing to be enjoyed at those places are motivating factors for migration. The migrants resign themselves to their unfulfilled dreams where they presently live (in his study he cites the insufficient public health care system in the U.S. as one example) and inject into those dreams the expectations of a paradise abroad. The longing for a better place, a place where to feel at home is seen, namely in co-ethnic return literature, as an indicator for certain missing factors in the current country of residence (Bolognani, 2016) and therefore the imagination of a migration and a projection of their own dreams. This is mainly associated with the ethnic return migration because the group which that branch of research focuses on is experiencing the minority or diasporic status. Yet, there is a gap in the literature connecting the longing for a better place not necessarily with a 'home'- or 'land of one's kin' but instead with the present emotions of minority group members during the decision-making process. Bolognani (2016) argues that return fantasies, be they of migrants or minority group members, are an indicator for a struggle for well-being. While this does not necessarily need to be reduced to return fantasies, it can be applied to all kinds of migration imaginations. His approach is central in the research of Humbracht et al. (2022), which looks into transnational relationships, visits and digital contacts of migrants. They look into the migration networks and how they are maintained

after a migration, as well as how they influence attachments between people and their own emotional situation.

For Dantzer (2017), migration is a possible way to imagine a happier future, thus the individual aims for happiness through migration. This is rooted in symbolically ascribed values of happiness or success to certain places, which already prior to the migration is quite significant in the mind of the prospective migrant even though, in reality, they are far away and in the future. Dantzer (2017) goes on to propose looking at migration as 'mindwork', done both prior to migration and ongoing throughout the process, as an emotional and mental process. The journey of migration can be seen as an enterprise of happiness invested with hope. The concept of hope in connection with migration has become part of the more recent branch of literature, taking emotional factors into account. In the majority of the literature, especially early research, emotions are seen as inconsequential and not viewed as crucial for the migration decision. Yet, this tendency oversimplifies the analysis of migration and omits important factors needed to understand the behaviour of prospective migrants (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015). Thus, in recent years, more studies have emerged, analysing the emotional aspect of Migration (see e.g., Humbracht *et al.*, 2022; Ķešāne and Weyher, 2021).

Pine (2014, p. 96) explores *'Migration as hope'*, examining the migration aspiration of different contexts of Polish migration. He defines hope as a

> complex, many-layered notion resting on the capacity for imagination, on a sense of time and of temporal progress, on a desire to believe in a better future or in the possibility that something can change, and to some extent on uncertainty. Hope is also always mirrored or shadowed by its opposite, despair .

Hope as expectation and desire for 'something better' is a crucial element motivating migration processes (Mar, 2005) and has recently been conceptualised as an important factor for migration decisions in different studies (see e.g., Collins, 2018; Glaveanu and Womersley, 2021; Pettit and Ruijtenberg, 2019; Rydzewski, 2020). When talking about hope, imagination of the future is a central point, and it is imagined through references of the past and utopian dreams. What this 'good' future looks like exactly will depend on the socio-cultural position of the individual, yet many different cultures have phrases for hope

and movement (Pettit and Ruijtenberg, 2019). The emotional experience of migration is connected to the imagination and expectation of happiness; hope encompasses the time of waiting before the migration, the movement itself, and the expectations and achievements (Mar, 2005). These emotions and expectations are created prior the migration and shape the decision making process as well as the life before the departure, thus, the pre-migration period, which explains the importance of the concept for this thesis.

## 4.5 Imagining mobility in the pre-migration period

While the majority of the research has been focused on the time period after migration, there is a growing body of literature on migration aspirations, which is when the imaginations and dreams are still not influenced by the actual experience. However, the imagination of the migration in most studies is reconstructed and therefore it might be influenced by the events that have occurred (Salazar, 2020). The difference between actual emotions, experienced in the moment and imagined or remembered emotions, needs to be properly acknowledged (Svašek, 2008).

A small branch of studies is exploring the imagination of mobility as a process, which starts prior the actual move and is not exclusive to people who migrate but can be found in mobile as well as in immobile people (Koikkalainen and Kyle, 2016). This process was named 'cognitive migration' by Koikkalainen and Kyle (2016) and it includes imagining oneself living in a destination not only socially but also emotionally. According to this theory the minds of people start migrating while the physical body is still in the same place; a sort of mental time travel is preparing the individual for the possible future. Human tendency is to imagine happiness as something that will take place in the future, and thus the relationship between happiness and migration is more complex than implied by economics (Gardner, 2015). Ahmed (2010) rethinks happiness in her book, also talking about migration in connection with happiness. She argues that even if it is our aim and wish to be happy, we do not necessarily know what we wish for in wishing to be happy. "Happiness: a wish, a will, a want" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 2). Prospective migrants hold explicit and implicit dreams, yet they are not fully aware of the implicit dreams (Wohlfart, 2015) which are connected to emotions and imaginations of the future place of residence. When living in one culture, some humans tend to dream about another culture, one more ideal than their own, yet after experiencing

this new culture, the dreams might be broken (Teo, 2011; Wu and Wilkes, 2017). Nevertheless, this dreaming and hoping gives individuals the opportunity to wait, to strengthen their discipline and even to transform the self in anticipation of a future project (Mar, 2005), in this case the migration project.

The role of emotions in decision making is important because they have two natures: the immediate emotions, which are the ones experienced during the process of decision making, and the expected emotions, which are the prediction of the emotional consequences of the decision (Loewenstein and Lerner, 2003). Thus, investigating the pre-migration period means exploring the migrant's state of mind at precisely this stage; the expected future emotions influence the person's decision, yet the current emotions do so as well. Therefore, if an individual experiences certain negative emotions connected to a lack of belonging or the perception of being excluded from the national society – as is the case for minorities – a migration imagination can, firstly, offer a good solution to their current emotional state, with the imagined mobility itself, next functioning as a type of resilience strategy. Individuals do not necessarily need to be in the same space to react emotionally to each other's existence (Svašek, 2010), which can be connected to the Imagined Community in the chosen destination, and the already existing emotional bond to the imagined mobility.

The decision to move may trigger different feelings in the person who moves, but also in the ones left behind. Those feelings range from hope to fear, guilt and anger, and they may be prone to arise before departure (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015; Svašek, 2010), that is, in the pre-migration period. Pine (2014) argues that the decision to migrate is strongly and in many ways connected to hope, depending on the given situation, and thus to dreams and imagination of the future. Yet, the topics of imagined future and mental time travel have been mostly explored in neuroscience, cognitive, social, and clinical psychology; however, the contact to migration research has been very little to date (Koikkalainen and Kyle, 2016). In general, migration can be said to be looked upon as a happiness project, thus as a pathway for long-term well-being (Gardner, 2015).

## 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has offered a brief overview of the existing literature, as a point of departure for the empirical exploration. A general overview was given of common migration theories, the Network Theory and the Migration System Theory. While migration theories are helpful in understanding why people have moved, after the actual move, the emerging literature on migration imaginings is a promising field in which to conduct research. As this thesis is focusing on the pre-migration period and the factors influencing migration aspirations, the imagination of the future migration plays a crucial role. Also, while co-ethnic return migration is one helpful way to understand ethnic minority migration, there has not yet been much research on ethnic minority beyond the co-ethnic return literature. This thesis proposes to combine these two emerging fields of literature to support the empirical work.

Migration of minorities can be conceptualised within the framework of Network Theory or Migration System Theory. This goes in line with the concept of Imagined Communities and transnationalism. All these approaches look at networks and systems between two places or communities and how these connections shape migration aspirations. This is especially interesting for minority groups, as their situation differs from that of majority group members. Furthermore, the period before the migration is strongly shaped by existing networks and communities.

This chapter showed a gap in the literature concerning minorities as migrants beyond the ethnic return migration perspective, looking at aspirations, emotional factors prior the migration and the influence of transnational systems on possible migration decisions. Furthermore, the exploration of the pre-migration period is still rare in the literature, and thus there is a lack in the knowledge about the emotional factors during the decision-making progress of prospective migrants.

After conceptualising migration networks and systems and bringing those theories together with the imagination of migration, the next chapter will be empirical and present the first set of the collected data. Having a general understanding of how migration systems work and which role imaginations play, the following chapter will present the specifics of the cases and bridge the results to the existing literature.

# Chapter 5: Fernweh, or The dreams of Migration

## 5.1 Introduction

The literature on migration imaginings makes the case that the imagination of a place and oneself in that place is the first step to migration (Salazar, 2011). Dreaming and imagining the self in a future destination is a crucial stage during the pre-migration period. For the present study, data was collected among potential future migrants before their physical move. This data will provide new insights into the processes and emotions occurring prior to a move and the aspirations and expectations involved with the migration.

This first empirical chapter in this thesis demonstrates that minority group members have a higher tendency to migrate. The imagination of a vital future community and the dream of a place of belonging are key concepts underlying the decision to migrate. Both minority and majority group members imagine a community in the future as a part of their aspirations; however, minority group members associate this with feelings of exclusion and discrimination experienced in their current place of residency. Thus, the preliminary mind-work done in the pre-migration period, together with the imagination of the self in a better future after migration, function as a coping mechanism to ease the negative emotions in the current society. This chapter demonstrates that dreams and imaginations are essential to migration and that migration is expected to improve the current situation. Migration in the pre-migration phase is seen as a very positive development, connected to imaginations and dreams of the self in the future.

Results and analysis from both case studies will be presented and a joint discussion will follow. In the first part, the results of the Estonian case study will be given, concerning the migration plans of the participants; this part will examine both internal and international migration and whether or how it is connected to the ethnic background of the participants. Furthermore, the chosen destinations will be analysed. The participants provided information about their migration aspirations and emotions concerning the current place of residence. Thereafter, the imaginations and expectations of participants will be analysed.

A similar analysis for the Italian case study will be done, with the primary data supported by secondary data and previous studies. Also, for this case the migration plans and destinations will be analysed, as well as the aspirations and imaginations concerning the move.

In the final part of the chapter, the results of the analysis of both case studies will be combined in order to see if similarities and differences can be found in the cases. This can offer stronger statements, which might be more general concerning minority groups in Europe. The concluding remarks will sum up the generated knowledge from this first empirical chapter and show that minority group members have a higher tendency to migrate. Furthermore, in line with previous research, economic factors are influential for the decision; however, the data also point to hope for improvement of the current societal situation for minority group members through migration. This is connected to a lack of feeling of belonging and a separation of the ethnic groups in the society. The imagination of a community in the destination and the dream of an improvement of the current situation are factors that encourage minority group members to opt for a decision to migrate. However, the migration decisions are not connected to an ethnic return migration, but rather to other EU countries. Therefore, this empirical chapter shows that minority group members have a broader variety of factors for migration decisions and do not need to be exclusively treated as ethnic return migrations. Furthermore, it shows that migration towards another country, even when a shared language exists between the individual and the destination country, is instead more connected to a migration network and Imagined Community than to an ethnic return migration.

## 5.2 Russian Estonian migration dreams

> Nineteen-year old Evgeny[13] lives in Tallinn with his parents and siblings. Evgeny speaks Russian, it is his mother tongue and the main language used in his family. His father holds the Russian citizenship, but his mother and the rest of the family have the Estonian citizenship. Even though Evgeny speaks Russian at school and with friends and family, his level of Estonian and English is good. He visits Russia frequently, and he generally travels a lot, also through the EU. His family does not

[13] All the names of the participants presented are pseudonyms, as the anonymity of the participants was guaranteed.

> struggle with money, and he works besides school. His everyday life, friends, family, school, and his workplace are all Russian language dominated, so is the media he consumes and the social media he uses. After graduation, Evgeny is planning to move to Finland for his studies.

Evgeny is one of the Russian speaking participants in the Estonian case study. He lives in Tallinn, where just over one-third of the inhabitants are Russian speakers; indeed, about one half of Estonia's Russian-speaking population lives in the capital (Tartuensis, n.d.). Evgeny's story is representative of many of the respondents in Tallinn; members of the two language groups do not meet in their daily life, even though not quite two-thirds of the inhabitants of Tallinn are Estonian speakers.[14] Growing up in a nearly completely Russian speaking reality, Evgeny plans to move to Finland, which is not what scholarship on co-ethnic return migration would predict for migration in such a case. Indeed, Anderson's concept of Imagined Communities (1991) as well as literature about ethnic return migration suggest that members of a diaspora or minority feel drawn to return to their ethnic homeland (see Cohen, 2008; Safran, 1991). The example of Evgeny shows that this is not always the case, hinting that there are more complex mechanisms at work; indeed, many of the Russian speakers in this study who were planning on leaving Estonia were not intending to go to Russia.

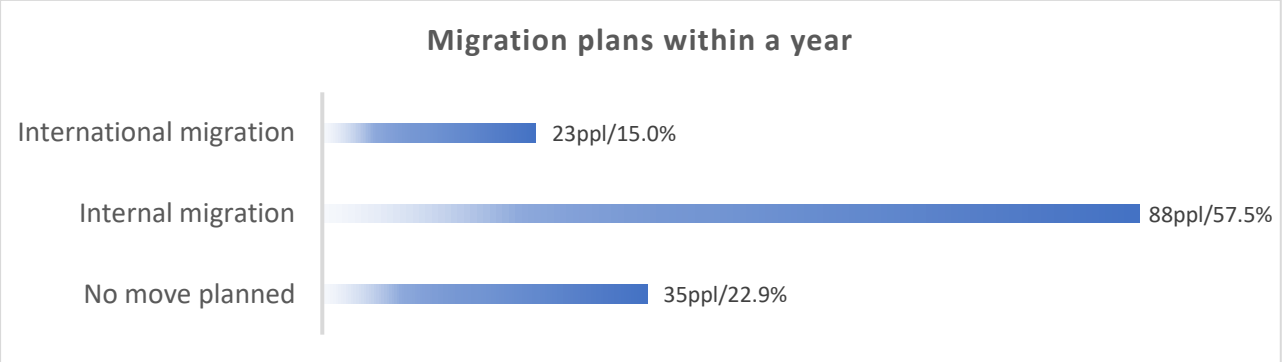
This chapter shows the migration trends of minority and majority group members, questioning if there can be found differences in the aspirations. Indeed, the data of this study indicates a higher tendency for minority group members to migrate internationally, connected to a lack of feeling of belonging. However, the reason for these migration plans cannot be situated within the sphere of co-ethnic return; rather, it is an imagination of a future community in which the participants see themselves as fitting in better that emerges as a central factor. This chapter will conceptualise the pre-migration period of minority group members beyond the aspects of co-ethnic return, examining it from an angle of the imagination of a better place.

[14] Considering other nationalities, the largest share of foreigners in Estonia are Ukrainians, Belarussians and Finns, followed by over 200 other ethnic nationalities (Statistics Estonia, 2021). However, for this study the ethnic groups of interest are Estonians and ethnic Russians.

### 5.2.1 Migration plans

The primary data collected in the Estonian case study draws a clear picture of the migration plans of the participants. Looking at the overall numbers, internal migration is the most frequent option for all participants in the Estonian study, both minority and majority. A total of 57.5 % (88) of the participants indicate to move internally, whereas 22.9 % (35) do not plan to move and 15 % (23) are moving internationally, shown in Figure 3 below.

*Figure 3 - Migration plans Estonian case (elaborated by the author)*




This figure shows a general tendency for internal movement in the data; however, it does not distinguish between the ethnic groups.

> Born to two Estonian native speakers, Reimo, 19 years old, also lives in Tallinn too with his family. His daily life is fully Estonian; his school, friends and work are mainly Estonian-speaking, though he does speak a bit of Russian as well. He has visited some European countries and travels more than once a year. Both of his parents have a university degree, and the family is financially stable. Reimo is planning to migrate to Amsterdam for his studies.

Participants Reimo and Evgeny are both the same age and live in the same city. Both are planning to move internationally, yet their realities could not be more different. Evgeny does not have any contact to Estonian speakers, and Reimo does not interact with Russian speakers, thus their realities are mutually exclusives even though living in the same city. Tallinn is divided; sports clubs, schools, nightclubs etc. are segregated (Poleshchuk, 2016); thus, contact between the ethnic groups remains scarce (Korts, 2009).

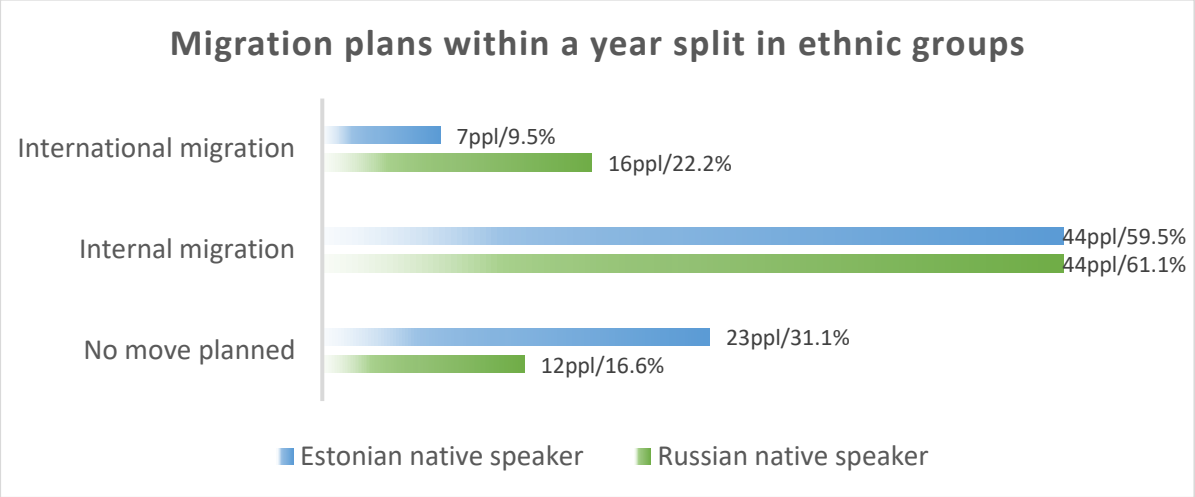
The data collected shows a significant difference in the plans to move for the members of the minority and the majority group. As seen in Table 8 below, a remarkably higher number of Russian speakers decide to move internationally, more than double that of the Estonian speakers. However, a much greater number of Estonian speakers decide to stay in the current place of residency. The internal migration is equal in both clusters. With a Pearson Chi Square Test result of .031, these results can be seen as statistically significant. Thus, this cross-tabulation is statistically significant.

*Table 8 - Chi-Square test of Cross-tabulation 1, created in SPSS (elaborated by the author)*

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 6.953[a] | 2 | .031 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 7.107 | 2 | .029 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 6.855 | 1 | .009 |
| N of Valid Cases | 146 | | |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.34.

*Figure 4 - Migration plans within a year according to ethnic groups*




Over 22% of the Russian native speakers plan to migrate internationally, while only 9.4% of the Estonian speakers have this same plan. Thus, it can be said that migration plans of the two ethnic groups differ strongly, and that the tendency to migrate for Russian native speakers in Estonia is higher than for titular Estonians.

A tendency can be seen that Tallinn, as the capital, is more attractive for people to stay in the current place, in contrast to smaller communities throughout the country. 80% of the

participants who have no move planned are currently living in Tallinn. 51.2% of the participants who plan to move elsewhere in Estonia come from a town or city in Ida-Viiruma in East Estonia, whereas 34.5% of those moving internally live in Tallinn. Most of the prospective international migrants live in Tallinn, 59.1%.
When looking at these numbers, it should be taken into account that nearly half of all participants were living in Tallinn at the time the survey was conducted.

As Collins (2008) states in his research about international student mobility, migration is connected to previous and other forms of mobility, which has already been connected in previous studies (see e.g. Williams and Hall, 2000). This goes in line with the Migration Network Theory introduced in Chapter 3, stating that previous international experience facilitates migration (Massey, 1993). In order to test the data concerning the previous mobility experience of the participants, a set of questions regarded travel experience, the frequency and the destinations, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Of consequence is the fact that the data in this study do not confirm a connection of migration plans to previous travels. No correlation could be found between the travels of the recent years and the migration decision of the participants in this study, which fortifies the difference in migration plans for the minority and majority group, as any previous travel experience can be excluded as a factor of influence. Regardless of a person's trips to Russia, Finland or other countries, the migration decision of the study participants was not influenced. Nevertheless, the data shows that Russian native speakers do visit Russia more frequently than Estonian native speakers, which most probably has to do with their relatives still living in Russia as well as the ease and low price associated with such travel. As seen above, the frequent trips to Russia are a part of the transnational space the minority group members live in, and the connection to the country in which the own language is the majority language is palpable (see Chapter 3.3, Transnationalism). Furthermore, the frequent trips to Russia can be seen as a connection to the Imagined Community on the other side of the border, which is influencing the everyday life of the Russian speakers.

Another factor which needs to be considered is the individual financial situation of the participants. Even though research on student decision-making about college indicates that cultural, social, and financial capital can influence the decision of the students (Paulsen and St. John, 2002; Perna, 2006), no evidence was found to support this argument in the data of

the present study. Participants were asked about their financial situation, as well as the educational level of other household members in order to test for any influence of social and financial capital on migration. The data showed no correlation between those factors and the migration plans of students; thus, contrary the literature cited above, for this sample social and financial capital did not influence migration plans. However, the sample of participants is specific in this case, as all schools chosen are high quality gymnasiums. Most of the research on student mobility shows that the majority of students who move belong to the middle or upper class (King and Raghuram, 2013). This is reflected in the examination of the perceived financial situation of the individual's family, as solely 5.2 % of the participants state that the economic situation of their family is below average, while 62.1 % state it as average and 28.1% as above average. On the one hand this tendentiousness of the data could be seen as a limitation of the study, on the other hand the homogeneity of the sample allows for focusing on the ethnic affiliation rather than the social class. Thus, for this sample it can be stated that neither the previous travel experience nor the financial capital of the students influences the migration plans so the focus will be laid on the aspirations expressed by the participants.

Looking at the participants who plan to move abroad, at least for the minority group members, the assumption following the ethnic return migration literature would be a tendency to go to Russia or other countries connected to their ethnicity. In fact, only two participants plan to move to Russia (both to St. Petersburg), while one participant of South Korean origin is planning to move to South Korea. For the other participants, regardless of their ethnicity or native language, the United Kingdom is the main destination (9 participants, or 39% of all participants who migrate internationally), followed by the Netherlands (3 participants, 13 %) and Russia (2 participants, 8.6%) and Finland (2 participants, 8.6 %) equally. The other destinations mentioned were Austria, Latvia, Lithuania and Spain with each country mentioned by one participant as planning to move there. This data clearly shows that the migration of Estonian minority group members is not an ethnic return migration but rather a migration phenomenon itself. The two participants choosing Russia as their destination can be called outliers in this study, as they do not mirror the general tendency of the data. Thus, it can be stated that the outmigration of young ethnic Russians in Estonia (that is, born after the collapse of the Soviet Union) cannot be

categorized as ethnic return migration. The receiving countries are in the west, mainly in the EU and the UK. Different countries have a different attractiveness to international students, which might be connected to language barriers, economic conditions, university quality or the portability of human capital from the country of origin (e.g. knowledge, language, school diploma) (Arenas, 2021). The data shows that the United Kingdom receives the most migrants from Estonia, which might be connected to the language spoken. It should be stated here that according to Statistics Estonia (2021), in the year 2021, the main destinations for Emigration from Estonia do not align fully with the data of this study. The top destination for emigration was Finland, which received 2690 people migrating from Estonia. Thereafter, Russia is the next favoured destination (341 migrants), Great Britain (219 migrants), and the US and Sweden (Statistics Estonia, 2021). However, those are overall numbers, including all age groups and without differentiation for ethnicity or previous experiences.

Nevertheless, the statistics from Estonia show that migration flows exist between EU countries and Estonia, which seen from a Migration Network Theory angle, can enforce further migration towards those countries (see e.g. Massey, 1993). On the other hand, the high number of migrants to Russia is an indicator that ethnic return migration is indeed an issue for the ethnic Russians in Estonia, yet, not for all minority group members, as it is shown in this thesis. The chosen sample for this study were especially young Russian speakers with Estonian citizenship, who grew up in a financially stable situation and are generally not disadvantaged in their human capital when compared to their ethnic Estonian peers.

Thus, it can be stated that the data show a higher tendency of minority group members to migrate, though not as ethnic return migration, which is contrary to the ethnic return literature presented in Chapter 3. This points to new patterns in the approach of ethnic minorities as migrants, even though the likelihood they will migrate is higher, the tendency is not to return to an ‘ancestral homeland’ but in this case, further to the west. The choice of the destination countries can be connected to existing migration networks, yet the aspirations for the planned move will be elaborated through the data in the next section. After seeing the patterns of migration plans, this study is interested in the aspiration and

rationales for the migration plans of the minority group members, which will be elaborated in the following.

### 5.2.2 Migration aspirations

As seen above, among the Russian minority group members, the plan to migrate internationally is widespread. Looking at the reasons for those plans, several differences can be found between the minority group and the majority group members. In this section the aspirations of the two groups will be explored, in terms of whether and how they differ. One of the factors that emerged from the data is the difference in career opportunities between the two groups; Russian native speakers are still discriminated against in the labour market and hope for better employment opportunities lie abroad. Another aspect is the imagination of happiness in their future destination, mainly a factor for Russian speakers. Looking more closely at their social circumstances, the data shows a perceived discrimination amongst minority group members, which influences their perception of the current place of residence and facilitates migration plans.

> Evgeny chose to move to Finland because in his eyes the employment opportunities are much better there, and the universities in Finland offer higher quality education than those in Estonia. He expects to improve his language skills through the move. Evgeny is sure he would be much happier living somewhere else other than in Estonia; he is curious about other cultures, yet proud of his native language. Evgeny does not feel a sense of belonging either in Tallinn or in Estonia and has the strong desire to leave the country. He feels like a minority in his daily life and would gladly choose another citizenship if it were possible.

Evgeny is not content living in Tallinn. Even though his contacts with the Estonian majority are infrequent, he feels like a minority. Concerning Evgeny's experience and emotional situation in Estonia, many factors can influence the decision for him to migrate, which are exclusive to minority group members.

The participants of the study planning to migrate (internally and externally) were asked if they felt the need to leave their current place of residency as an indicator of their level of comfort with the societal circumstances that they presently live in. The data does not show

a large difference between the majority and the minority group members, as the answers of the two groups were nearly equally distributed. However, one exception was found where the groups differ strongly; a much higher percentage minority group members strongly manifest their desire to leave their current place of residence (9 participants, 7.8% of minority group members), in contrast with the majority group members (1 participant, 0.9% of majority group members). This factor is connected to the emotional relationship to the current living circumstances and not based on 'objective' factors, yet it illustrates the 'push' felt by minority group members. As seen in the literature on migration as a happiness project, emotions play a crucial role in the decision-making process (Loewenstein and Lerner, 2003). Looking at the data, the status of many minority group members is the urge to leave their current place of residency; those immediate emotions experienced during the process of decision making about a potential move can influence their migration aspirations.

> Reimo, an Estonian speaker, feels a strong sense of belonging to both Tallinn and Estonia and is satisfied with the options provided, yet Amsterdam has top universities in his field of interest, which is why he chose to go there. He is very curious about the Dutch culture and is looking forward to improving his language skills. Reimo is very proud of his native language, yet he thinks he might be happier living somewhere else. He does not feel like a minority at all and can fulfil all his needs in Tallinn. He is happy with his Estonian citizenship and would not change it for any other in the world.

Reimo's aspirations are very different from Evgeny's. He is curious, wants to see the world, and experience a new culture, yet all of this while feeling good living in Estonia. He is happy in Tallinn, but even so, he decides to move because of the options for his education and future career.

Comparing the Russian minority and the Estonian majority, the economic factor still needs to be considered, as the literature suggests a difference in the possibilities in the local labour market. A higher number of Russian speakers are unemployed than titular Estonians (Aasland and Fløtten, 2001; Lindemann, 2009) and Russian speakers are to a higher percentage working in lower paid jobs (Kivi *et al*., 2021). Certain studies indicate that this difference stems from the lack of Estonian language skills of the minority group members as well as structural discrimination (Poleshckuk, 2016). Yet, even if the non-Estonians speak

Estonian, their occupational status is significantly lower in their first job when compared with Estonians (Lindemann, 2009). This internalised fear in terms of entering the labour market is mirrored by the collected data. A great difference can be found in the perception of work opportunities in the new place, as minority group members see this factor as crucial for the decision to move. From the minority group members planning to move internally or externally, 23.3% (27 participants) strongly agree that the employment opportunities will be better at their chosen destination, while only 7.7% (9 participants) of the majority group think so. This is especially true in north-eastern Estonia (Ida-Viiruma) where the circumstances are worse than in other parts of the country. Approximately half of the participants in the study live in this part of Estonia, and the region faces the lowest employment rate, the lowest life expectancy and the lowest life satisfaction within the whole country (see e.g., Jašina-Schäfer, 2021; Prause *et al.*, 2019). The factor for employment opportunities was tested with respect to place of residency, considering that a city like Tallinn might be perceived as offering more opportunities than smaller towns in the countryside. However, what we see is that this is not the case. Also, for the participants of our study living in Tallinn, the employment opportunities in their planned destination seemed better as well. This said, it needs to be acknowledged that participants answering this question from Narva, for example, were without exception Russian speakers. Nevertheless, the possibilities abroad are perceived as much better, especially by Russian speakers throughout the country. In 2005 a survey in Tallinn was carried out and found that both Estonians and non-Estonians perceive the opportunities for various spheres of life as unequally distributed. Factors such as making career in politics, obtaining a good education and achieving economic welfare were researched and all of these issues were perceived as being easier to achieve for Estonians (Poleshchuk, 2009). Thus, even though the participants in the present study identified themselves as mainly economically well off, their fear of not finding a job and worrying about money is internalised, having been learnt while growing up in the conditions mentioned above (low employment and life expectancy) and ethnic group.

The Russian-speaking participants in this study expressed concerns over their financial situation, whether they intended to migrate internally or internationally; in contrast, this is not such a prevalent concern of the majority group members. As evidence of the hardships facing ethnic non-Estonians it should be noted that they run a higher risk of poverty and

social marginalisation, their average annual income is around 20% lower than the average annual income of ethnic Estonians, and minority group members are overrepresented in the population of the homeless and in the prison population (Poleshchuk, 2016). This is strongly supported by the data of the present study, which draws a clear picture of how they might rightly have fears over potential money concerns after their move.

*Figure 5 - Money worries according to ethnic group (elaborated by the author)*


34% of the minority group members agree or strongly agree that they will be struggling with money after the move, while only 8.7% of the native Estonian speakers do agree and none of them strongly agrees. With a Chi-square test result of .000 this is a statistically significant difference between the two ethnic groups. Thus, this is a factor which needs to be taken into account. Bringing this even further, it shows that the risk for minority group to migrate is perceived as much higher than for the majority group members, yet they still have a higher number of prospective migrants. Going back to one traditional theory on migration, the assessment of the risk and costs of migration are crucial for the decision to move. If the risk is high (in this case, for economic instability) the 'push factors' need to be very strong.

Connecting migration and the search for happiness or an imagination of a happier future has been researched by Dantzer (2017), who connected previously ascribed values of places to the imagined happiness by prospective migrants (see chapter 3.5). Asking participants in this study if they believe they would be happier somewhere else shows a tendency of prospective migrants to imagine themselves being happy in a different place.

*Table 9 - Cross-tabulation 3, Ethnic group*migration plans*expected happiness, created in SPSS (elaborated by the author)*

| | | | I think I would be happier living somewhere else | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
| Russian Native Speaker | No move planned | Count | 5 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| | | % | 7.2% | 4.3% | 1.4% | 2.9% | 1.4% |
| | Internal Migration | Count | 3 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 6 |
| | | % | 4.3% | 17.4% | 14.5% | 15.9% | 8.7% |
| | International Migration | Count | 1 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 5 |
| | | % | 1.4% | 1.4% | 11.6% | 0.0% | 7.2% |
| Estonian Native Speaker | No move planned | Count | 5 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 0 |
| | | % | 7.2% | 2.9% | 13.0% | 7.2% | 0.0% |
| | Internal Migration | Count | 7 | 3 | 19 | 10 | 2 |
| | | %l | 10.1% | 4.3% | 27.5% | 14.5% | 2.9% |
| | International Migration | Count | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| | | % | 0.0% | 0.0% | 1.4% | 4.3% | 4.3% |
| Total | No move planned | Count | 10 | 5 | 10 | 7 | 1 |
| | | % | 7.2% | 3.6% | 7.2% | 5.1% | 0.7% |
| | Internal Migration | Count | 10 | 15 | 29 | 21 | 8 |
| | | % | 7.2% | 10.9% | 21.0% | 15.2% | 5.8% |
| | International Migration | Count | 1 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 8 |
| | | % | 0.7% | 0.7% | 6.5% | 2.2% | 5.8% |

With a statistical significance of .002 for the Russian native speaking cluster and .016 for the Estonian native speaking cluster, it can clearly be stated that there is a difference in people's opinions, depending on their wish to migrate. As the data show, international migrants in particular think that they will be happier somewhere else. In general, the expectation to be happier somewhere else is distributed quite equally among the ethnic groups, yet there is one factor in which they strongly differ. 17.4 % of the Russian native speakers strongly agree that they would be happier somewhere else, while only 5.8% of the Estonian speakers think so. Even though the outcome is not too heterogeneous, this is a remarkable difference. This belief in being happier somewhere else can be seen as an indicator for discomfort in the current society or place of residence (Bolognani, 2016). This is confirmed by the qualitative data. One of the Russian-speaking participants states

> "[I would want to move to] a place where I'd be happier, and where the rights of Russian speakers would be not infringed upon."

Especially for Russian speakers the discrimination in the Estonian society is still a perceived as real threat, with the stigma of 'being Russian' in Estonia strongly connected to negative emotions.

This research supports existing research (see e.g., Groenewold and De Valk, 2017; Teo, 2011; Reynolds, 2008) which argues that discrimination and belonging to a minority group can play a crucial role in migration aspirations, as these factors are connected to the social context in which the individual lives. Discrimination is one of the main topics in the Estonian/Russian speakers' relationship in Estonia (see e.g., Polese and Seliverstova, 2020; Trifonova, 2021; Włodarska-Frykowska, 2016). Russian speakers feel discriminated against in many ways (be it perceived or real discrimination). That said, day-to-day relationships are viewed as reasonably good; however, there is a lack of integration in labour market and within social and political activities, which produces a certain sense of social exclusion for the Russian minority (Aasland and Fløtten, 2001). Another Russian-speaking participant states:

> "[…] in other countries I would feel even more like a stranger."

While the present quote reflects a deeply-felt lack of belonging to the current place of residence, there is recognition that prospects might not be better elsewhere. The data shows that for minority group members the reasons to migrate are more often 'push reasons', internally and internationally. An important factor for minority group members to move internally is that they want to leave their current place of residence. Another factor for internal migration of minorities is their desire to improve their language skills, which implies less opportunities to speak Estonian or English in the current place of residence than what they imagine in another part of Estonia.

The data shows that Russian speakers are more likely to migrate, yet the destinations are manifold and not definitively linked to an ethnic return migration. The reasons for this are, on one hand, the hope for better employment and/or education, but also the discrimination in the Estonian society and the lack of belonging. Russian speakers in Estonia perceive their opportunities for employment and education as being better abroad, given how within the

country there is still a disparity in earnings and job opportunities between the two ethnic groups. This is a strong factor for the minorities to migrate, which goes in line with previous research which states that economic reasons for migration for the most part play a role (see e.g., Olivier-Mensah and Scholl-Schneider, 2016; Tsuda, 2010). However, in this case it is only one of the factors influencing one's decision to migrate. A strong driver for minority group members is the feeling of discrimination and overall division in society, which contributes to a lack of feeling of belonging. This is a reason not only for international migration – the search to find a place where the ethnic identity is not as relevant as in Estonia – but also for internal migration, where improved Estonian language skills might lead to more integration into Estonian society. Thus, it can be conjectured that the Russian minority in Estonia might not be aiming to migrate to any 'kin state', but instead to develop further in the direction of the EU and of the West and to become part of this society.

### 5.2.3 Migration imaginations

A significant part of the imagination of migration is connected to the community and to imagining the self in the future place as a starting point for any planned migration (Salazar, 2011). According to the Theory of Cognitive Migration by Koikkalainen and Kyle (2016), individuals imagine themselves living in their future destination and envision their social and emotional conditions. As the present data were collected in the phase prior the migration, these imaginations could be grasped without their having been influenced by later events occurring during or after the actual move.

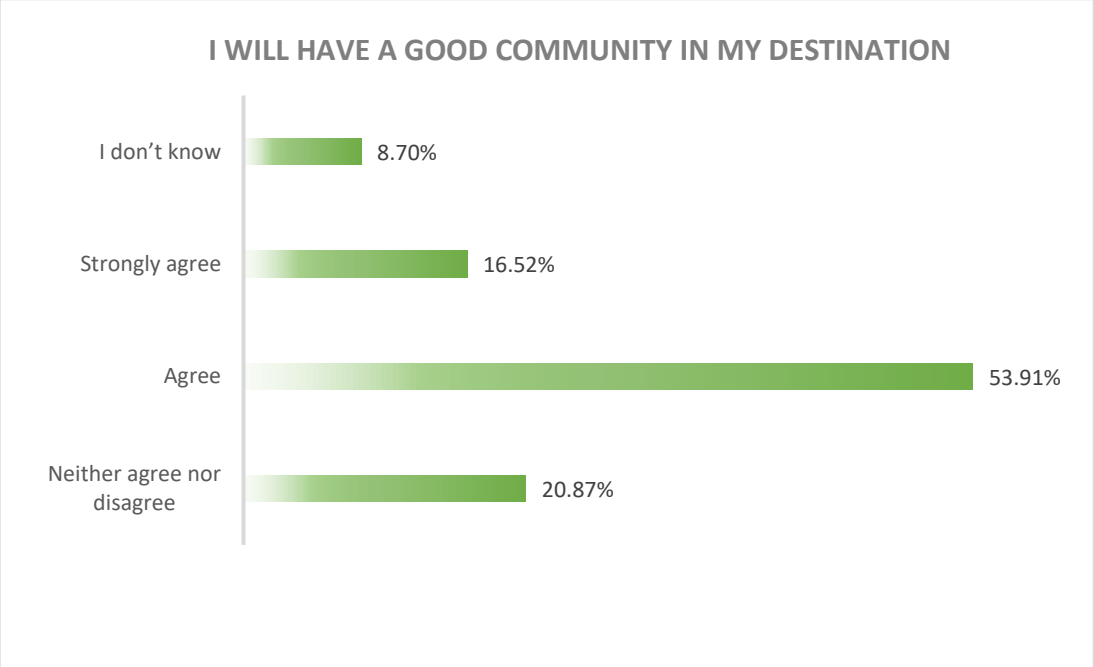
> Evgeny is looking forward to a great community, which he imagines having in his destination, Finland. He believes that the community there will be much like him and that he will be the same person among them as he is now. He can imagine staying in Finland and not returning to live in Estonia. Yet, his dream destination is the US.

Evgeny is picturing himself in a nice community in Finland where he is connected to people who are like him and where he feels belonging. When imagining his future after the migration, he imagines a positive outcome as well as happiness in the destination, to the extent that he might consider staying there forever. Evgeny's perception is influenced by the emotions he is presently experiencing in his life; he does not feel belonging and feels

discriminated against as a minority. Consequently, and in line with previous research (see e.g. Dantzer, 2017; Gardner, 2015), he believes that migration will lead to long term happiness.

For this thesis, the participants were asked whether they imagined themselves as having or as living in a good community a year after their prospective move. Interestingly, all participants, regardless of their ethnic background, imagined themselves as having a strong community. For those who were unsureabout the question, not a single participant chose the option to say that they do not think so (see Figure 3 below).

*Figure 6 - Imagined community Estonia (elaborated by the author)*




This very positively connotated imagination of a community in the destination is connected to the hope placed in migration. As Pine (2014) argues, hope is a driver of migration, and in this case, it is the hope for a good community, which at this stage of the migration process is still an Imagined Community.

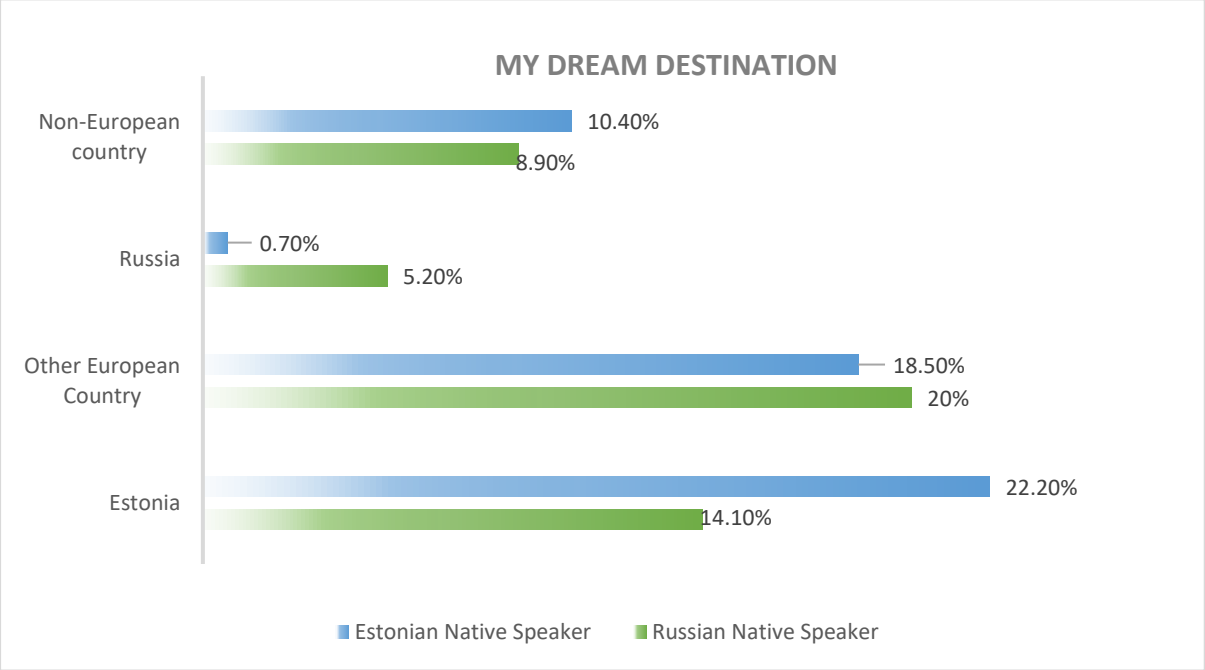
> Reimo is certain that he will have a good community in the Netherlands and will find new friends even though he does not expect the people to be like him. He is planning to return 1-2 years after finishing his studies, to make his living in Estonia.

Reimo, just like Evgeny, is imagining a supportive community at his destination. However, these two differ significantly in terms of their aspirations, reasons, and emotions, but

concerning the move, they share the same imagination and hopefulness about their future social life.

The data collected concerning the imagination of migration draws an interesting picture. Asking the participants to imagine themselves after their move in different situations shows no difference between the minority group and the majority group members. The participants have different opinions or perspectives on their life after the migration, yet certain tendencies can be seen. However, those tendencies do not differ between the ethnic groups. Thus, it can be stated, that even though the migration aspirations and reasons for the move differ, the imagination of the migration still has similar tendencies in both groups. Furthermore, one part of the data collection was to ask the participants about their dream destination (Figure 4 below).

*Figure 7 - Dream Destination Estonia (elaborated by the author)*




Looking at the data, it can be stated that there is a higher tendency of Estonian speakers to favour Estonia as their dream country, while a higher percentage of Russian speaker would choose Russia as dream destination. Yet, the differences are not statistically significant but indicate a trend. However, in the categories other European countries and Non-European countries both groups are nearly equal, no difference is statistically significant. Russia as dream destination was only mentioned by 5.2% of the Russian speakers, which can be seen

as an indicator that this percentage is involved in ethnic return fantasies, however, the bigger part of the group is not.

Thus, also looking at the dream destinations of the participants there is not a statistically significant difference between the majority and minority group. Therefore, overall, even though the migration plans and aspirations differ strongly in the two groups, the imagination of the outcome and the dreaming of a potential migration are similar regardless of the group membership, despite a small group of Russian speaker involved in ethnic return fantasies.

### 5.2.4 Summary of the pre-migration period in the Estonian case

Summarizing, it can be stated that the migration plans and migration aspirations in Estonia differ strongly amongst those in the Russian minority and the Estonian majority. Many more Russian speakers plan to move internationally although Russia is not a top destination, with the preference being other European countries. Estonian speakers are more likely to choose not to move at all, while the internal migration is equal between the two groups.

Looking at the migration aspirations, a significant difference can be seen. Russian natives feel excluded from the society and believe that they will be happier somewhere else. They have a stronger desire to leave Estonia to find a 'better home' abroad, where they really belong. Also, economic reasons play a role, for Russian speakers especially the expectation of better employment opportunities will be found abroad. For Estonian speakers, the main reason for migration are better educational options and curiosity about other countries and cultures. Based on the data analysis it can be clearly stated that Russian speakers are influenced by negative emotions connected to their minority status, which favors their plan to migrate.

Concerning the imagination of the migration, both groups are very similar and a great distinction cannot be made. All participants who plan to migrate are sure that they will have a good community in their destination and expect to be happy there. The data shows how crucial the imagination of a community is, which yet is not tangible but still influences migration decisions and is a motivating factor. This goes in line with the research on migration imagination (see e.g., Salazar, 2011; Viteri, 2015). As seen from the literature, this

longing for a better place can be connected to a struggle of wellbeing in the current country of residency (Bolognani, 2016), which can be validated from the data. Russian minority group members sense a discrimination and separation in the Estonian society, which they hope to overcome when conducting a migration in another country. Especially in the pre-migration period the immediate emotions experienced during the time of decision making are crucial, as they influence the decision (Loewenstein and Lerner, 2003). Therefore, the negative emotions connected to exclusion in discrimination in a society do influence the decision of minority group members to migrate and might function as a 'push-factor'. A few scholars found that discrimination is a strong factor for migration decisions, also connected to co-ethnic return migration (see e.g., Kunuroglu et al., 2018; Ruyssen and Salomone, 2018; Yilmaz Sener, 2019). Thus, it can be said that, as the literature suggests (see chapter 3), one factor for migration of minorities decision is the economic side, like better employment and educational opportunities, yet, exclusion and discrimination in the current residence as well as the imagination of a 'better place' and a convenient community in the destination are the central factors for minority group members to decide for a migration. Furthermore, even though the migration plans and aspirations differ, the imagination of an improvement after the migration and the expectation for a suitable community does not differ between the two ethnic groups. Both ethnic groups have the idea of migration imaginings, yet for the titular Estonians it is more often internal, while for the Russian speakers it is rather international.

In the following section, the migration plans, aspirations, and migration imaginations of German-speaking Italians will be explored, first as an independent analysis. Second the results will be brought together with the Estonian case study, to see similarities and differences and develop a model trying to explain the migration aspirations of minority group members.

## 5.3 German Italian migration dreams

The German-speaking minority in Italy is concentrated in the northern region of South Tyrol, which shares a border with Austria and Switzerland. According to ASTAT (2020), 26.06 % of the population is Italian speaking, 69.41% German speaking and 4.53% Ladin speaking. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the schools are divided according to the language group, and the

respective other language is introduced as a second language. For this thesis, primary data was collected among the different linguistic groups; in addition, existing data from previous studies was considered when examining migration plans of minority and majority group members in the region, as well as the underlying reasons and expectations with respect to any possible move.

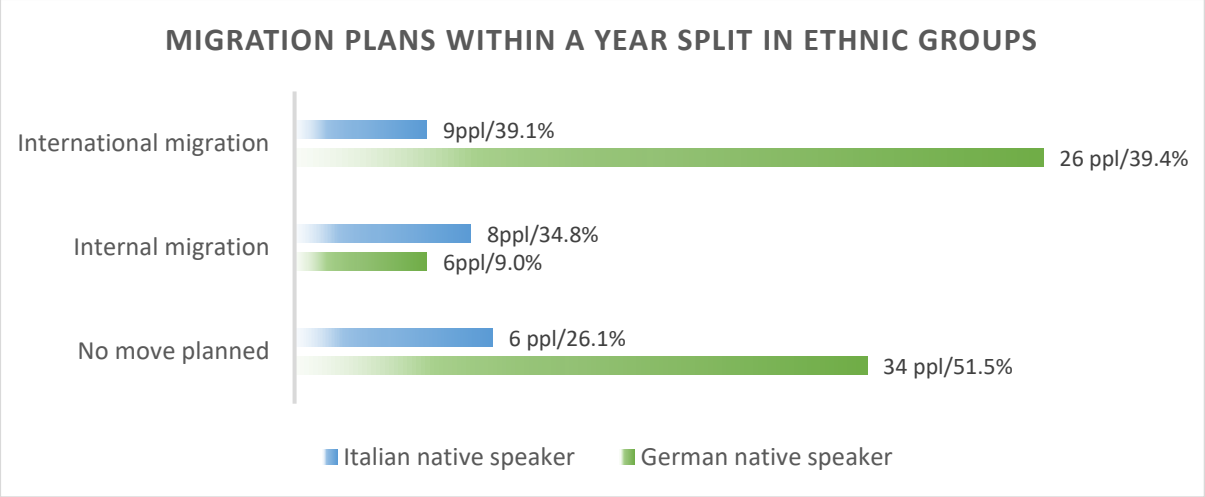
### 5.3.1 Migration plans

> Daniel is 19 years old, both his parents are native German speakers, just as all his friends and schoolmates. He lives in a small town close to the Austrian border, with a couple of hundred inhabitants, and attends school in Vipiteno. He does not feel like a minority even though he is a native German speaker in Italy and according to him, his skills in Italian are at the Intermediate level. His school is a German-speaking school, he consumes German-speaking media, and his working place is exclusively German-speaking. He travels quite frequently to other EU countries but also to other parts of Italy. Daniel will move to Innsbruck, Austria for his studies.

Daniel is typical for the German-speaking respondents of this study. Innsbruck is the most common destination for the German speakers in this sample, which is confirmed through the official statistics which state that Innsbruck is the top destination amongst people from South Tyrol who study in Austria (ASTAT, 2020). And even though Daniel is migrating internationally, Innsbruck, his destination, is not even 60km away from his current High School, although separated by a border. Daniel lives in a completely German-speaking world, yet within Italian territory.

Looking at the collected data, two thirds of the respondents plan to move either internally or internationally. Over 50% (34 participants) of the German speakers plan to move internationally, while only 9% (6 participants) plan to move internally; for the Italian speakers 26% (6 participants) plan to move internationally and nearly 35% (8 participants) plan to move internally. Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that the sample size in the Italian case is not as large as in the Estonian case, and the proportion of participants from the two linguistic groups is imbalanced. Still, the data can be used as an indicator of trends.

*Figure 8 - Migration plans according to ethnicity Italy (elaborated by the author)*




The data show a higher tendency for minority group members to migrate internationally, which can be clearly interpreted from the data. This is in line with previously conducted studies concerning this topic. The Provincial Statistics Institute in South Tyrol (ASTAT) gathers and publishes data about the education of the youth every year. The latest publication from 2021 states that the most popular places to study are Italy and Austria, with a slightly higher number favouring Austria when compared to Italy. The year 2019/20 marked the first time since 2016/17 that more people from the region started their studies in Italy as opposed to Austria (56% in Italian Universities, 44% in Austrian Universities) (ASTAT, 2020). Unfortunately, no data is available for students in other countries, as the statistics for other countries mostly just indicate the citizenship but not the specific region (ASTAT, 2020). Furthermore, there is no available data about the native language of the students from the Provincial Statistics Institute, and thus a connection cannot be drawn between the native language and the choice of the place to study.

Oberrauch *et al.* (2019) found that the main areas of emigration are the German-speaking areas in Europe, the so-called DACH countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland), followed by the other provinces of Italy. What makes the study by Oberrauch *et al*. (2019) extraordinary, compared to the statistics presented by official bodies, is that their research considers the native language of the participants. Thereby, they found that 86,3% of the emigrants from South Tyrol are German native speakers, 11,5% are part of the Italian-speaking community and 2.2% are native Ladin speakers (Oberrauch *et al.,* 2019). This shows a much greater mobility amongst native German speakers, thus in this case, the minority group members.

When studying in Italy, the most common universities for the participants are those close to the region. 46.7% of all South Tyrolian students who matriculated in Italian universities chose to study within South Tyrol, showing that they migrate within their cultural territory or do not move at all (ASTAT, 2021). The remaining students choose primarily Trento, Verona, Bologna, Milan and Padua. The percentage of students from South Tyrol studying at an Austrian university increased to 18.1% in the last ten years (ASTAT, 2021).

> Eleonora is 19 years old and lives together with her parents in a small town close to Bolzano. She goes to an Italian school in Bolzano and all her friends are Italian speakers as well. She consumes Italian media and reads in Italian for leisure. She travels to other provinces in Italy frequently, yet she has not left the Italian territory recently. Her German language skills are basic; her English is much better. Eleonora will move to Rome for her studies.

Eleonora is part of the Italian-speaking community in the South Tyrol region and has very little contact with German speakers. She considers to move to Rome 640 km away, where she can study in her native language without leaving the country. Compared to her German-speaking counterpart, Daniel, Eleonora is contemplating moving 10 times farther away, whereas Daniel only moves 60 km away, but crossing an international border to Austria. Both decide to study in their native language and to move, however, Daniel, even though moving fewer kilometres, passes a border and is thus an international migrant.

As seen in the primary data collected in Estonia, the sample consists of participants frequenting high quality gymnasiums (secondary schools). The participants in the Italian case study are largely estimating their own financial situation as average or above average. South Tyrol is one of the richest provinces of Italy, with one of the lowest unemployment rates (3.7%) within the country (Aussenwirtschaft Austria der WKÖ, 2021). Furthermore, according to Pokriefke and Atz (2016), there is no income inequality between the ethnic groups in South Tyrol. Thus, it can be said that the financial situation does not differ between the linguistic groups, and given that South Tyrol is wealthy, such a condition may not influence one's migration plans.

It can be read from the collected primary data that for German speakers the city most frequently chosen for their migration was Innsbruck (35% of all German-speaking

participants who plan a move) followed by Vienna (25%), while for the Italian speakers Rome was the top destination (35.7% of all Italian-speaking participants who plan to move), followed by Verona (14.3%). Thus, the tendency for German speakers to go abroad, and for Italian speakers to migrate internally, can be seen as affirmed. This pattern is consistent in the collected data, as well as in the reviewed data reports.

What can be taken from the collected data, as well as from the secondary data, could be interpreted as a tendency for German speakers to opt for ethnic return migration. According to Wessendorf (2007) the decision for minority group members to move to an ancient 'land of one's kin' can be connected to the expectations to find an ideal homeland. This may be linked to an experience of feeling discrimination or a lack of feeling of belonging, being a minority in one's place of residence (Reynolds, 2008). In order to identify whether the described tendency of German speakers to move abroad can be connected to an ethnic migration, however, in the literature concerning the emigration of the region, co-ethnic return migration is not a commonly mentioned factor for the proven phenomenon of migration towards German-speaking countries (see e.g., Oberrauch, 2019, Südstern, 2021). Thus, the aspirations and imaginations will be explored in the next section, and whether minority group members participating in this study have displayed aspirations which could typically be linked to co-ethnic return migration.

### 5.3.2 Migration aspirations

Looking at this case study, the picture differs from the Estonian case. German speakers in this study tend to indicate aspirations to migrate to German-speaking countries, while Italian speakers tend to indicate aspirations to migrate to Italian-speaking regions of the country. It seems likely that these migration plans are connected to the native language of the participants.

> Daniel decided to move to Austria for his university studies because he is very curious about the culture there and interested in getting to know how people live there. He does not feel like a minority currently in his day-to-day life. The university in Innsbruck has good ratings in his field of interest and there he can study in his

> native language. Many of Daniel's friends will move to Innsbruck too, so he does not need to face the new situation alone.

Daniel is mentioning a variety of reasons for his choice: friends moving with him, curiosity, and interest in the new place but also the quality of education. However, he does not mention anything regarding kinship or a possible 'return' to an ancient home, as the literature on ethnic return migration would suggest. Also, the research by Oberrauch *et al.* (2019) aimed to examine the reasons that people have given for leaving or moving from South Tyrol. Generally speaking, the tendency points to job opportunities and wages as the main factors although personal reasons are often named. Thus, the conscious reasons mentioned are not connected to linguistic or ethnic preferences. Czubinska adds a new thought on migration theories in 2017. She tries to explore more unconscious reasons for migration, underlying the common named conscious reasons of economic improvement and new opportunities. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the underlying reasons, which the migrants might not even be aware in the very moment.

Looking at the secondary data concerning migration, the main topic covered by the media is the brain drain from South Tyrol, mostly present in local and regional newspapers. It is a widely acknowledged fact that South Tyrol is losing 'brains' to other EU countries, mainly to German-speaking countries. While the daily German language newspapers have published several articles about the studies and reports concerning this phenomenon, the biggest regional newspaper in Italian has published a much smaller number concerning the topic. This can be seen as an indicator that it primarily concerns the German-speaking population of the region, while the Italian-speaking population is not nearly as affected by the topic. This goes in line with the study of Oberrauch *et al.* (2019), showing that, primarily, German speakers are the group moving abroad most. On the other hand, if Italian speakers from South Tyrol were to move to a different region of Italy, this will not be shown in migration statistics, as they, by definition, are staying within the domestic territory. This can explain the media coverage of the 'brain drain' in the German media from the region.

> Eleonora will move to Rome for her studies because she does not feel that she 'belongs' to Bolzano or South Tyrol and has an ardent desire to leave the place. She feels like a minority in her daily life. She has chosen a very good university for her studies and is moving together with her partner to Rome. She believes that the

> people she will meet in Rome will be more like her, more than those in South Tyrol. She is not afraid to feel like a foreigner there and is not planning to come back after her studies.

Eleonora has decided to move, yet stay within the territory of Italy, choosing a place where she expects to be more integrated. Upon moving to the capital of Italy, she expects to find people who are more like her and to escape the society of South Tyrol.

The primary data collected indicates that the Italian speakers in South Tyrol do not feel that they strongly belong to their current place of residence. This can also be sensed looking at the evaluation of their own role as a minority. While most native German speakers do not feel like a minority in their daily life, Italian speakers do feel this. This is most likely connected to the majority of German speakers in the region and a division of the two groups. Yet, it might also be connected to the 'proporz' policy[15,] which mirrors the proportion of the language groups in public administration, yet also means that certain job offers are restricted to one language group. And as the majority of the inhabitants of the region are German speakers, the majority of those jobs are reserved for members of that linguistic group. The Italian-speaking population claims that the minority protection unfairly disadvantages the Italian language group and thus should be scaled back, yet the German speakers have no interest in changing the measures (Larin and Röggla, 2019). Therefore, it can be said that Italian speakers feel a perceived or real exclusion and discrimination of the society, and moving to another region of Italy where their native language is the majority language gives them the expectation to be more fully integrated. Looking at the quantitative data, Italian speakers show a greater engagement in co-ethnic return migration than German speakers, even though native Italians do not cross a border, but rather move more towards the south of Italy.

On the other hand, the exclusion of German speakers on a national level still needs to be considered. Even though the German-speaking population enjoys one of the most advanced systems of minority protection in the world (Carlà, 2013), this is restricted to within the

[15] The composition of the South Tyrolian government needs to reflect the numerical proportion of the language groups; thus, all three groups need to be represented by an adequate number of politicians. Hence, no single language group was ever ruling politically; they always needed to form a coalition with a party representing the other language group (Wisthaler, 2016). This principle of proportion also affects all governmental administration and judicial appointments, except the police force (Carlà, 2007).

region. When seeing the bigger picture, South Tyrol is too small and too unique to anyhow influence the larger Italian system of which it is part. South Tyrol is a 'small world' of its own (Woelk, 2013). Thus, all policies and strategies aim to protect the 'small world': the language, the culture, etc., yet it does not open itself to the Italian nation and thus limits the inhabitants subconsciously. Thus, even if there is no discrimination of exclusion of the minority group members within the region, there is a substantial exclusion from the rest of Italy, be it in the labour market, the society as a whole, or in terms of political participation. As one German-speaking participant stated, "In general, I have the feeling that you are the 'outsider' everywhere, whether you move to Italy or Austria."

Thus, it can be stated that in South Tyrol, both ethnic groups feel discriminated against to an extent. The German speakers struggle with the fact that they are Italian citizens, while not fitting into the typical characteristics of the Italian state and feeling excluded on a nation-state level. For their part, the Italian speakers in South Tyrol feel that they are not integrated into the society, as the majority of the inhabitants is German-speaking.

Connected to this discrimination felt on both sides, the role of segregation plays a crucial role. It was especially mentioned by many Italian-speaking participants, as one of the participants stated:

> "I think the division between the two dominant cultures in South Tyrol is still very strong. A person cannot integrate fully."

The South Tyrolian society is based on linguistic separation and the protection of both language groups; this system encourages linguistic segregation, yet it enables a peaceful coexistence but not one of togetherness (Carlà, 2007). The fact that it was mostly Italian speakers who mentioned the division and separation is an indicator of their struggle in their current place of residence and their hope to belong better in a different place if they move to another region of Italy. This is mostly felt on a social level of integration and mingling, described by another Italian-speaking participant:

> "South Tyrol is a place were growing up and living is great, it's our home. But for young people, it's a very closed environment, where it is difficult to interact between the different communities. That is a shame!"

Living in a bilingual world is mostly seen as something positive, and the perception has changed, as formerly speaking two languages was seen as an unavoidable side effect of the political situation. Presently bilingualism is now perceived as an advantage within the European network (Eichinger, 2002). However, the emotional side of the segregation of cultures is a challenge for members of both ethnic groups in terms of integration and feelings of belonging. The majority of the population of all three linguistic groups assess the 'socio-political cohabitation' generally as 'not a problem' and argue that it will even get better in the future (Larin and Röggla, 2019). Nevertheless, being conflict-free and having an advanced minority status does not automatically come with a feeling of belonging within this transnational society. As one of the German-speaking participants stated "I always feel like something in between."

Both linguistic groups mention moving to a place where they would feel a stronger sense of belonging. For both groups it seems, migrating towards a destination where they imagine themselves belonging more completely, being fully accepted as they are, is a good solution for the current situation in which they do not feel fully integrated in their homeland. Thus, the research indicates the aspiration to leave South Tyrol might be similar for both linguistic groups and connected to a lack of integration and mixture of the different linguistic societies.

### 5.3.3 Migration imaginations

Looking at migration imaginations is only possible when collecting data from before the move, as retrospectively those imaginations can be influenced by the events have actually occurred (Salazar, 2020). Therefore, the primary data in this study can give an impression of the imaginations of the participants.

> When Daniel imagines himself living abroad, he thinks of having a great community of people and having less contact with Italians in general. Overall, he thinks that he is very much like people in Austria, also quite similar to people in Switzerland. He imagines himself fitting into the Austrian culture very well and being just as the other people living there. Daniel is not sure if he wants to settle abroad for longer or if he wants to return to South Tyrol.

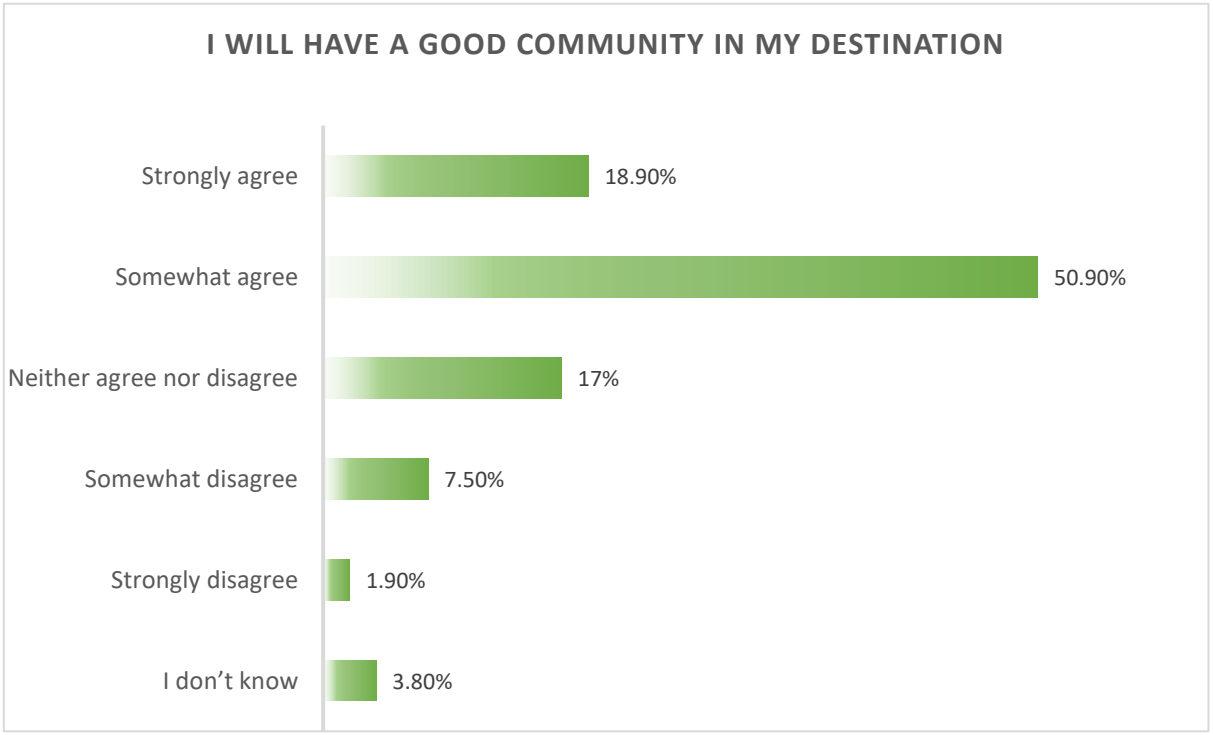
Daniel has a clear picture of himself living abroad; he imagines himself as being part of a community, having friends and being integrated. He imagines himself being happy there, and he associates symbolically ascribed values of happiness or success to Austria and Innsbruck already (Dantzer, 2017), even though he did not yet undertake the move. Thus, this imagination of another place is definitively part of the pre-migration period, as also mentioned by one of the German-speaking participants who stated "[…] there you might find a place where you feel completely at home." This quote makes it very clear that a migration is in many cases connected to a longing or a search, in this case a search for a place of belonging. There can be seen a sense of hope, an imagination of a place of happiness, in line with the literature presented in Chapter 3.4. A great tool of imagination lies in how it allows people to fill the gap between themselves and the imagined reality, and thus it can be seen as a mental process which produces the reality which is simultaneously producing it (Salazar, 2020). Thus, the imagination of the future influences the present of the individual, and the data of this research indicates that this imagination is functioning as a coping mechanism to address a lack of feeling of belonging and exclusion in the current surroundings.

> Eleonora is sure that the people in Rome are very similar to her and that she will be integrated there very well. She does not have family or friends there, yet she is eager to leave South Tyrol and start a new life in a place where, in her eyes, she will finally fully belong.

Eleonora and Daniel have similar imaginations about their life after the move; they imagine themselves being happy at their destinations and accepted. In this case, this is especially interesting as seen above: both linguistic groups feel excluded and treated as a minority in a certain way. The primary data shows a general tendency of similar imaginations. As in the Estonian case study, imagination of a good community in the destination is not connected to group membership, neither is it to the internal or international migration plans. As seen in

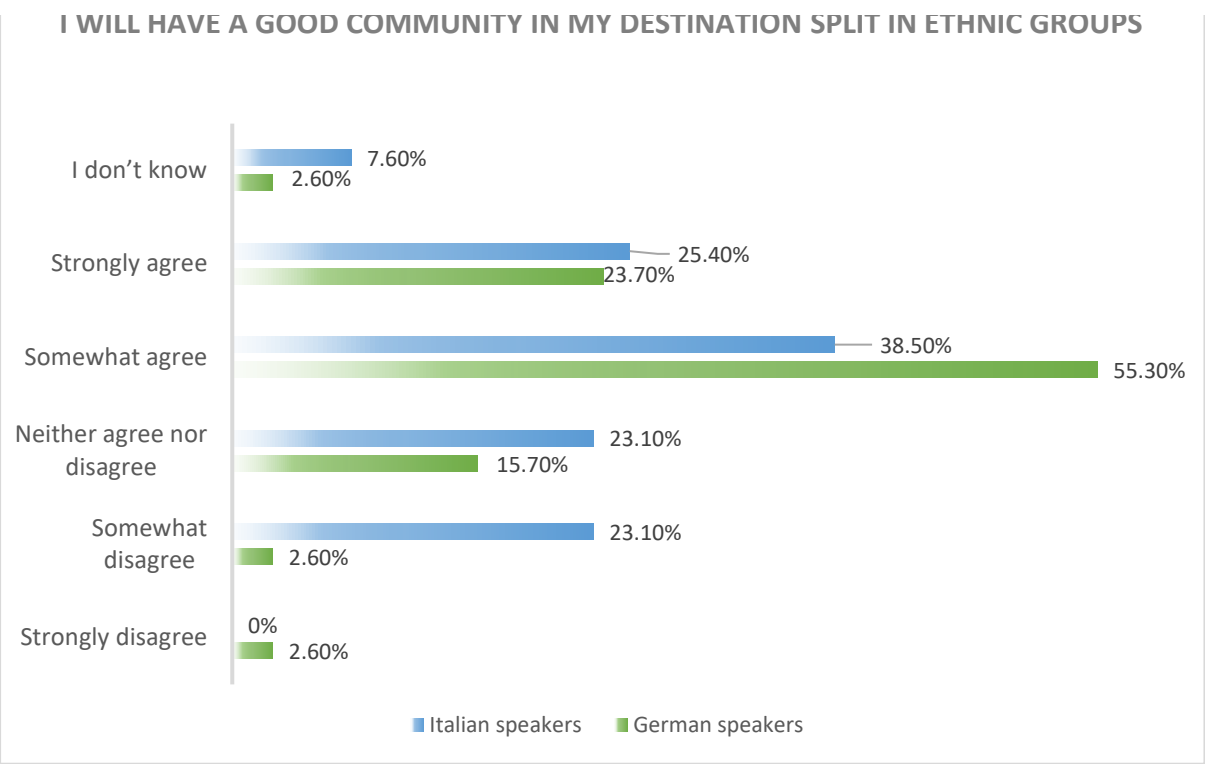
Figure 6 below, all participants, regardless of linguistic belonging, imagine a good community and thus a welcoming environment in their destination.

*Figure 9 - Imagined community Italy (elaborated by the author)*




Around 70% of the participants agree or strongly agree, that they will have a good community in their future place of residence. Breaking it down into language groups (see Figure 9), the data show lesser insecurity among the Italian speakers than the German speakers.

*Figure 10 - Imagination of the community in the destination (elaborated by the author)*




However, both charts show clearly that the most common answer is that people expect to enjoy a good community in their future place of residence. This is connected to the mindwork done prior the migration. Koikkalainen and Kyle (2016) argue that the migration already starts prior the actual move, when the individuals imagine themselves in the destination and how they will feel emotionally and socially. Connected to the Imagined Community Theory by Anderson (1983), the data show that the participants are already imagining a community in the place they are planning to move to. This is a strategy on the one hand, to prepare for the move, and on the other hand to build a feeling of belonging in the future place of residence. However, it can also be interpreted as a coping strategy to nurture this Imagined Community concurrently to feeling excluded of the current community the future migrants live in.

To summarize the imagination of migration, it can be stated that it is similar for all participants, as their expectations, dreams and the hope for a better future are overarching.

### 5.3.4 Conclusion on the pre-migration period of the Italian case

For the Italian case it can be stated that the probability for minority group members in South Tyrol is higher to migrate internationally. The most common countries for migration for German minority group members are Austria, Germany and Switzerland. The higher mobility of German speakers is shown by primary and secondary data. Italian speakers from the region tend to stay within the country opting to either study within South Tyrol or to move to Trento, Verona, Turin or Rome, in other words, to migrate internally. However, German speakers do not show any typical features of co-ethnic return migration, while Italian speakers show a tendency to migrate due to ethnic reasons.

Looking into the migration aspiration, an interesting trend can be observed. Both linguistic groups feel excluded, yet on different levels. The Italian speakers who are the majority in the country, feel excluded from the greater society in the region of South Tyrol, as the German speakers make up the majority in the territory. On the other hand, German speakers feel excluded on a state level, as they are non-natives in Italian and envision fewer opportunities for themselves within the country. Therefore, both linguistic groups try to move to a place where they feel they are part of a majority, and where they hope to establish the sense that they fully belong. As the aspirations are similar, it cannot be clearly said that German speakers are ethnic migrants, even though they move to German-speaking countries, yet with the similar hopes and wishes as the Italian speakers. Both groups mention the fact that the societies are separate as an important issue, which makes it difficult for the language groups to meet and thus in turn influences their feelings about the society negatively. However, it can generally be said that Italian speakers feel more excluded and discriminated in South Tyrol, which is one factor why their aspirations to move to different regions of Italy could instead be connected to ethnic migration motives. Furthermore, Italian speakers expect to move to a place where people are more alike them and where they would be integrated fully, sharing the same culture and native language. Migration as a happiness project (Gardner, 2015), as well as a project for more belonging, indicates a lack of these in the current situation and thus migration imaginations can be seen as a coping mechanism for perceived or real exclusion in the current society.

Furthermore, in terms of imagination of the migration, the groups are similar. Most participants imagine a good community after the move, a place with people like themselves and a happy life. This can be seen as a preparation for the move, a previous mindwork (Dantzer, 2017), which is part of the pre-migration period; this is also connected to the hope for a better life after migration, to become happier and to improve their own situation which is are motivating factors to migrate (see e.g., Collins, 2018; Glaveanu and Womersley, 2021; Mar, 2005; Pettit and Ruijtenberg, 2019).

To bring these results together with the Estonian case study, the next section will combine the output of both case studies and a conjoint discussion will be made. This will help to reveal similarities or differences in the cases and help to determine which results can be generalised and which factors are specific for a certain context.

## 5.4 Conjoint discussion

Using the results of both case studies, this section aims to analyse patterns, similarities, and differences across the Estonian and the Italian case. The above data is organized by the themes of migration plans, migration aspirations, and migration dreams. Chapter Six and Seven will focus on the literature and data results concerning identity and belonging.

Looking at the first theme, migration plans, a strong similarity was found between both case studies: there is a clear tendency of minority group members to choose international mobility over immobility, while majority adolescents either migrate internally or not at all. This is a clear outcome in both groups, and can be confirmed by existing reports concerning the Italian case (see e.g., Oberrauch *et. al.*, 2019), yet no previous studies concerning emigration of Russian Estonians could be found, except the statistics of emigration which do not differentiate between the linguistic groups (see e.g., Statistics Estonia, 2021). However, one strong differentiation between the groups needs to be considered: the choice of destination differs strongly. While Russian Estonians chose different European countries (the UK is the most common destination country), German Italians choose mainly German-speaking countries (Austria, German and Switzerland). Typical patterns identifying an ethnic migration could not be found among the participants, neither in the secondary data. No participant mentioned a nostalgia for the 'homeland', which is typical for ethnic migration

(Reynolds, 2008), neither was the word 'kin state' ever used. There is no indicator that the longing expressed by their parents for a former 'home country' was transferred to the next generation, as it would be exemplary for ethnic migration (Wessendorf, 2017). Furthermore, no participant could feel any connection to 'returning' when migrating to a German-speaking country[16], thus the 'myth of return' (Singh, 2001) cannot be found among the participants or in the secondary data. Therefore, the migration plans of German Italians cannot be categorized as ethnic migration. For the Russian Estonians, the tendency to move 'to the West' is much stronger than the migration to Russia or other dominantly Russian-speaking areas. Thus, in both cases the minority group members do not conduct an ethnic migration, but rather try to change their surroundings in order not to be labelled as minority anymore. The minority status is often connected to a negative bias and this can influence the identity of the individual (which will be elaborated further in Chapters Six and Seven). Thus, in this case the migration decision is connected to an Imagined Community abroad and to the division of societies and exclusion in the country of origin. In order to uncover the factors influencing migration decision, the migration aspirations found in both case studies need to be compared.

Looking into the aspirations of the participants in both case studies, some similarities come to light. It needs to be acknowledged that economic factors, like a perceived better labour market or educational system, play a role in the decision. Yet, this study is more interested in the underlying aspirations. In both case studies, minority group members feel a strong need to leave the current place of residence; they feel 'pushed' away. This is not the case for the Estonian majority group. Yet, it is so too, for the Italian majority group in the study. In the Estonian case study, Russian speakers feel discriminated against and deprived of their rights. In line with previous studies, Russian Estonians still face a higher degree of discrimination in the country (see e.g. Aasland and Fløtten, 2001; Lindemann, 2009; Trifonova, 2021), which is a driver for migration. Italian native speakers feel 'pushed' away from the region just as much as the German minority group. German and Italian speakers in South Tyrol feel excluded and discriminated yet in response to different factors. Italian speakers feel excluded from the society and not fully accepted; they feel that they will

[16] This could also not be found for prospective migrants to Austria, even though the grandparents of most inhabitants of South Tyrol were considered Austrians before the national borders were redrawn.

"never be fully integrated". On the other hand, German speakers feel excluded on a state level, that is, not in their daily life but rather in the possibilities they have within the rest of the country. It can be stated that seen from a nation-state level, German speakers are indeed a minority group, whereas Italian speakers in South Tyrol are a *regional minority group*, sharing many emotions with other minority group members.

From the data collected, it can be drawn that different negative emotions are connected to the current place of residence of all the participants, except Estonian native speakers. As seen in the data, minority group members, along with the Italian majority group members, do not have such a strong feeling of belonging to the place of residence. This, in connection with the status as a (regional or national) minority group membership, might lead to defining a coping strategy to counterwork the negative emotions. Therefore, it can be said that the emotional backdrop for minority group members in the pre-migration period is clearly a feeling of not belonging to the current place and the imagination of being happier after the migration.

According to Findlay *et al.* (2005), student migration is driven by intentions rooted in the past but also by imagined future benefits. The minority group members try to change their situation through a move and hope for a change.

Bolognani (2016) argues on the resilience of the 'return fantasies', thus diverting the attention from the outcome of mobility to thoughts and their effect on current life. This can be adapted to the current case as well, even though the adolescents do not have 'return fantasies', but rather 'arrival fantasies', to a place where they fully belong, which offers an emotional way of mastering their daily challenges as a minority, which among others is the lack of feeling of belonging in the majority society.

Imagined happiness in another place as a driver for a migration decision was found in the quantitative and the qualitative data. This expectation of being happier somewhere else can be seen as a 'cultural imaginary' (Viteri, 2015), thus imagining places and the wellbeing there serves as a motivational factor for migration. In line with Czubinska (2017), the imagination has become a more observed topic in recent discourse about migration. Bolognani (2016) lays the focus on the wish and the fantasy itself, rather than on the actual move, as a part of the process of identity building, eventually helping to overcome traumas

or as a response to the given socio-political context of the individual. Yet, this topic is still not sufficiently researched, as most scholars focus their research on the outcome of migration, the integration, the return etc. while neglecting the role of fantasies of migration and the physical life of migrants (Bolognani, 2016).

In the table below the similarities and differences of the two case studies are summarised to offer a better overview of the outcome of the data collection.

*Table 8 - Conjoint analysis of both case studies (elaborated by the author)*

| **Estonian case study** | **Italian case study** |
|---|---|
| • Minority group members are more likely to migrate internationally (22.2% of minority group members vs. 9.5% of majority group members of the sample)<br>• Majority group members are more likely to stay in the same place (31.1% of majority group members vs. 16.6% of minority group members)<br>• The internal migration is equal for minority and majority group members (59.5% of majority group members and 61.1% of minority group members)<br>• The destination countries are mainly European countries (the UK ranking first) for both linguistic groups | • Minority group members are more likely to migrate internationally (51.5% of minority group members vs. 26.1% of majority group members of the sample)<br>• Majority group members are more likely to move internally (34.8% majority group members vs. 9.0% minority group members)<br>• The main destination countries (for the minority group) are Austria, Germany and Switzerland |
| • Aspirations for the international migration plans are<br>o Russian speakers feel they do not fully belong and want to leave Estonia<br>o Economic factors (more job or career options, better study opportunities etc.) | • Aspirations for the international migration plans are<br>o German speakers feel they do not fully belong and want to leave Italy<br>o Economic factors (more job or career options, better study opportunities etc.) |

| | |
|---|---|
| ○ Finding a better social place (e.g., less discrimination)<br><br>• Aspirations for the internal migration plans are<br>○ Economic factors (more job or career options, better study opportunities etc.)<br>○ Improvement of Estonian language skills for Russian speakers | ○ Finding a place where to fully belong (e.g., same native language, not being a minority)<br><br>• Aspirations for the internal migration plans are<br>○ Italian speakers feel they do not fully belong and want to leave South Tyrol; they are a regional minority<br>○ Finding a place where to fully belong (e.g., same native language) |
| • Imagination of the migration<br>• Both linguistic groups imagine a great community at the destination<br>• Both groups imagine being happy there and feeling a greater sense belonging | • Imagination of the migration<br>○ Both linguistic groups imagine a great community at the destination<br>○ Both groups imagine being happy there and feeling a greater sense belonging |

## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the migration dreams, aspirations, and imaginations of minority group members in Estonia and Italy. Both case studies were analysed separately, before the results were combined in the discussion. This chapter has shown that minority group members plan international migration more frequently than their majority peers, and the data indicate that indeed many of them execute the move. This can be said for both cases, Russian speakers in Estonia and German speakers in Italy. To a certain extent, economic factors play a role in this decision, as in better job opportunities and better education abroad, thus representing upwards mobility. This might be connected to the fact that both Estonia and Italy are among the countries with fewer opportunities and lower income within a European context. Estonia has one of the lowest minimum wages in Europe, at 584 Euro per month (Eurostat, 2021), while Italy has no minimum wage. The purchasing power standard (PPS)

per inhabitant is an important tool to measure income inequality in the EU; with 14 331 in Estonia and 17 764 in Italy, both countries are on the lower end seen within an EU context (Eurostat, 2021). However, in the Italian case, it needs to be considered, that South Tyrol is one of the wealthiest regions of the country, and thus it cannot be fully treated as other regions of Italy or the mean of all regions.

One of the core differences in the migration plans in the two case studies are the destination countries. Prospective migrants from Estonia favour European countries (the UK holds the top rank), while prospective international migrants from the German minority in Italy mainly move to Austria, Germany and Switzerland, thus neighbouring German/speaking countries.

This chapter acknowledges the economic reasons for migration, which also in these case studies, play a role. Yet, the data explore underlying factors for migration plans as well.

In the Italian case, the minority group is concentrated in a small territory, within which they enjoy many rights and opportunities. Yet, looking at the whole nation, the German natives from South Tyrol do not have many options for upwards mobility. On the other hand, Italian native speakers in South Tyrol feel quite excluded and perceive their chances within the region as lower. In the Estonian case, the discrimination of Russians can be seen as both perceived and real, as previous studies show a higher tendency for the Russian speaking population to be unemployed as well as to suffer discrimination on an institutional level (see above). Nevertheless, the Russian speakers also feel the separation of the two linguistic groups strongly in their daily life; they feel excluded and discriminated against. Thus, longing for another place is strongly connected to the negative emotions affiliated with the membership in a minority group (in the Italian case this can be applied to both linguistic groups), which might function as a driver for migration plans. Thus, these negative emotions can be seen as a main factor for the migration plans. The participants do not feel a strong sense of belonging to the current place of residence and wish to leave said place.

Furthermore, all participants who plan to migrate imagine themselves being happier in their destination. They expect to find a strong community there and to improve their overall state of happiness. They imagine a community abroad prior the move, and project the currently missing factors for happiness onto their future destination. Many participants feel sure of

finding people who are more similar to them in the current place and to find a place they fully belong. Those expectations mirror the lack in the current situation, which again is connected to the segregation of the language groups and the perceived or real exclusion felt by many of the participants.

Thus, in more general terms, it can be said that minority group members have a higher tendency to migrate, be it to a 'kin state' or to another country, which offers the prospective migrants the option to dream about a better future. For all minority group members, this is connected to the segregation of the population and the resulting exclusion, leading to roadblocks to more complete integration in the overall society.

As this first set of data shows, there is a cleavage between how minority group members and majority group members identify their role in society, how they perceive their surroundings, and this influences the decision. It could be shown that exclusion and discrimination favour the migration decision, as well as the separation of the linguistic groups. This is strongly connected to the identity of minorities and how the ethnic groups interact with each other. Examining these topics more closely, the next chapter will introduce literature on minority identities and social identities, thus how they function in groups and which struggles minority group members face while finding their own way to define their identity. This literature is introduced to show that the separation of societies is a threat for minority identity and that the struggle to categorize the self within this divided society is challenging. In this chapter it was already tangible that minority group members search for belonging, for a community and for a way to make sense out of their perceived life 'in-between'. This will be elaborated more in depth, through the next theoretical chapter and thereafter in the empirical chapter, presenting the data about the categorization of the participants and how this influences their migration aspirations. This supports the argument that migration of minority group members needs to be treated separately from the migration of majority group members, as the challenge to find or categorize the self is stronger for minority group members.

The next chapter will introduce the next part of the literature review, looking at minority identity and the change and adaptation of the identity in the process of migration. Furthermore, it will look into the research of transnationalism and the social identity within a group and in a majority-minority situation.

# Chapter 6: Minority identities

## 6.1. Introduction

Identities are complex and manifold. Especially for ethnic or linguistic minorities, one's own identity is consistently in question as it is not as straightforward as the identity of a majority group member. Furthermore, one's context and society contribute as crucial factors for forming the identity of an individual.

In the previous chapter, the imagination of a better life connected to finding a home or a place of real belonging was presented. The chapter was empirical and showed the differences and similarities in migration aspirations and plans for minority and majority group members, pointing out that minority group members have a higher tendency to migrate, given how they experience a feeling of exclusion from the society. Digging deeper into the migration behaviour and the connected factors, this chapter is the second part of the literature review in this thesis and introduces studies and literature with respect to the identity of minority group members. As seen from the data in Chapter Five, migration aspirations in this study differ strongly from minority to majority group members, which is why the identities of minorities will be explored, in order to understand which factors are crucial for these differences in migration intentions between the group. Starting with a general introduction on minorities, how they are defined and what theories are connected to them, the later sections will identify the differences in the identity components of minorities and majorities. Therefore, the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979) will be introduced as well as the theory of the European identity as an umbrella identity for minority and majority group members. Thereafter, the influence of migration on identity will be elaborated, and how the fact of being a minority influences the current identity and the expectations for an identity change after the migration. Furthermore, the connection of language and identity is shown, as it is the most distinctive feature for the studied groups in this research. In presenting the literature on those topics, the discussion from the previous chapter on migration of minorities is expanded. As it was shown, discrimination (perceived or real) and the segregation of the two societies influence the migration aspirations of minorities; however, it does not influence the majority group. Furthermore, the data

showed that this is not connected to the wish for a co-ethnic return migration, thus the identities of the minority group members need to be explored further, going beyond the most prevailing factors. This theoretical chapter shows the diversity of minority identities, which factors influence it, and in which relations they are constructed. Connecting this to the migration plans and the imagination of a happier future, a holistic picture of the situation of the pre-migration period of minorities can be drawn.

This theoretical chapter serves as a preparation for Chapter Seven, which will introduce the collected data concerning the ways in which the participants identify and elaborate on belonging and self-categorisation. Through connecting the collected data and the theory on minority identities, this research offers an understanding of the processes happening before the migration of minorities and which factors influence this time period.

## 6.2 Minorities – Definition and introduction

The term 'minority' itself is constructed in relation to another in whichever sense major group, whether linguistic, ethnic, religious; thus a minority group differs in one or several aspect from the majority group. Defining the term minority is and was a challenge, given how there is still no universally agreed-upon definition (Jackson-Preece, 2014; United Nations, 2010). The United Nations does not provide a sole definition for minorities in the political sense, yet there are several definitions used in the different countries of Europe, overlapping in certain aspects (Jackson-Preece, 2014). Concerning the Italian and Estonian case, those different definitions are elaborated in Chapter One, showing that Italy listing those groups who have been given special minority protection rights within the territory; Estonia, on the other hand, grants this protection only to "Estonian citizens" (see page 22). One early attempt towards a more universal definition was made by Francesco Capotorti in 1977 as special rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities in the 'Study on the Rights of Persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities'. He states that minorities can be defined as

> "A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the State – possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population

and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language" (Capotorti, 1977).

This definition was criticized especially because of the term 'nationals of a state' (Jackson-Preece, 2014; United Nations, 2010), as it excludes stateless people. A common attempt is that minorities possess both objective as well as subjective characteristics, which on the one hand can be religious, ethnic, linguistic, etc., and on the other hand include the feeling of belonging of the members (Jackson-Preece, 2014; United Nations, 2010). The term minority can be supplemented by several prefixes to categorize the respective group more precisely. Anderson (2017) equates the term 'indigenous minority' with the widely used terms of 'ethnolinguistic', 'regional', 'traditional' or 'national' minorities, which can be defined as non-immigrant minorities. The category which best describes the two groups of my case studies is given by Anderson (2017) with the term 'cross-border minorities', which occur when a language minority may culturally – but not necessarily politically – represent the linguistic majority across the border in the neighbouring country, i.e. the international boundary does not precisely coincide with the ethnolinguistic frontier, thus creating what may be called an 'overspill effect'. Both the Russian speakers in Estonia and the German speakers in South Tyrol can be typified in this category. According to Medda-Windischer (2017), both studied groups fulfil the criteria to be 'old minorities', that is, a "community whose members have a distinct language, culture or religion as compared to the rest of the population and who have become minorities through redrawing of international borders" (Medda-Windischer, 2017, pp. 26-27). Their co-ethnics are dominant in numerical sense in another country, which might play the role of an 'external national homeland' (Medda-Windischer, 2017). In this thesis I refer to the two groups as ethnic or linguistic minorities. For easier readability, I call the two studied groups in this study ethnic and linguistic minority interchangeably.

Just as the term minority itself is constructed in relation to another group, many theories on ethnic minority identities assume that the ethnic minority identity is defined in relation to the dominant majority group within the territory (Verkuyten, 1997). These social comparison processes are seen as a central point in intergroup evaluation and self-definition. Thus, being a minority can be seen as imbuing a cultural identity, seeing oneself

in relation to a cultural Other, that is, the idea of comparing 'us' and 'them', which can be the start of racism, hatred and exclusion (Clarke, 2008).

### 6.2.1. Minority policies and group rights

It was exactly when national cultures within western nation-states became more credible that the existing minorities and ethnic communities started to claim the protection of their linguistic individuality, culture, and religion, which then demands a redefinition of the national identity of the country where they became citizens (Guibernau, 2012). The nationalist idea represents a mono-lingual, mono-ethnic, mono-religious and mono-ideological society as the 'best' society (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1992) and it is concerning how the political power within a nation-state is distributed (Lawson, 2004). Yet, nearly no state is actually as homogeneous as represented in a nationalist conception. The reality is different from the mono-ethnic ideal; most states consist of a 'title' nation and smaller groups of minorities which coexist in the same territory (Arts and Halman, 2005). Thus, the question for a democratic nation-state is how to accommodate a national, linguistic, or ethnic minority within the structure of the nation-state without impacting individual rights (Casals, 2006). Minority rights and multiculturalism challenge group-based hierarchies (Verkuyten, 2006) as in heterogeneous societies it might be needed to provide certain groups not only with specific treatment but also with additional rights, to offer the group greater equality with respect to the rest of the society. Such rights could manifest themselves as special or disproportionate representation in governmental bodies in order to give substance to the principle of equal citizenship (Parekh, 2001).

Group rights emphasise the limitation of democratic systems and aim to achieve equality between identity groups in the domain of political and civil rights. The discussion surrounding group rights does not judge whether diversity itself is good or bad, rather it focuses on the normative conditions of social justice and democracy in the context of cultural diversity. In many cases, the struggle of the minorities within a majority society end up being issues of political autonomy, official language, cultural policy, representation in international institutions, educational curricula etc., which inevitably arise because cultural minorities will naturally resist the idea of assimilating the policies imposed by the state (Casals, 2006).

However, this point of view gained many more supporters in recent years and mostly in western societies. The rule, especially in the 20th century, was instead to put the element of conflict into the forefront and thus the states would use various strategies to push the minorities out, such as assimilation, expulsion and genocide. This perception changed at the beginning of the 21st century in Europe and served to change the perspective on minorities from a threat to an added value to the society (Pan *et al.*, 2018). Yet, this transition has been slow and has clearly not been fully achieved in all European nation-states.

Language rights gained more attention under the umbrella topic of minority protection and became part of the academic discourse. The central point is not the discussion of whether an individual shall be able to speak and maintain their own language in the private domain; this is a general human right. Language rights rather concern the topic, if and how the speakers of minority languages have the right to use their native language in public and civic domains, such as in education or conversation with official entities (May, 2017). Yet, alongside this discussion, criticism has grown louder, especially with respect to the idea of linking language closely to ethnic identity. Another critical point is the 'forced immobility of minority language speakers', meaning that by giving minority language speakers the option to use their native language in all settings, their possibilities in the broader society are reduced. The opportunities would be much greater for them when learning a majority language (May, 2005), as employment, higher education and public careers are mostly closely linked to the abilities of using the majority language. This argument can mainly be used for small minority languages, spoken by few people (e.g., Ladin in South Tyrol), rather than for languages which are a minority language in one country or territory, but being majority languages in another territory with a greater community of speakers (e.g., Russian in Estonia, or German in South Tyrol). However, also for that kind of minority language users, the knowledge of the majority language influences the work life in the majority society and facilitates successful cohabitation.

Language and group rights do not have international standards; instead, they are part of minority protection policies which differ around the world. How strongly language and group rights differ has already been shown in the Introduction chapter (Chapter One), when comparing the policies concerning minorities in Estonia and Italy.

These cultural differences can be seen as problematic, especially when more than one culture shares the same location, as other cultures are seen as causing problems for the dominant cultures. Many societies in the western world are ethnically diverse and multiculturalism is a way to theorise the practice of how to deal with diversity. Multiculturalism can be understood as a set of beliefs, a framework for policies, an ideology, or a guideline for education (Verkuyten, 2006). According to Modood (2016) Multiculturalism is a "political accommodation of minorities". The term itself emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in Canada and Australia, with an initial policy focus on schooling and an extension of schools, as in diversity of religions, language, and curricula. From that starting point the perspective was to meet such cultural requirements in the whole society (Modood, 2016).

As people share common values and ways of life with their in-group, a strong desire to keep it that way is a way to feel secure. Thus, a fear of 'losing' these beliefs and homogeneity generates strong feelings of ambivalence towards other cultures (Clarke, 2008). If a society is homogeneous, it is a straightforward endeavour to define equality for all individuals; it is presumed that the universal norms, behaviours, motivations, and social customs of all individuals (or nearly all) are very much alike. In contrast, in a heterogeneous society citizens are more likely to disagree to a certain extent about which issues are important, thus dissimilar treatment for individuals or groups in a heterogeneous society could bring more equality in order to not discriminate (Parekh, 2001).

Emotions have a strong everyday relevance in group relationships as well as in ethnic relations with the majority society or community (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015). If an ethnic minority group faces hostile behaviour from another group (in this case the majority) individuals might react differently; some may reject their own ethnic identity, whereas others may emphasize their solidarity within the group and show more pride (Liebkind, 2006). Multiculturalism offers a varying treatment to minority and majority groups, according to their social status and needs; therefore, the evaluation of both groups is distinct. Minority group members regard it as a chance for upward social mobility, while majority group members view it as a threat to their social status (Verkuyten, 2006). Thus, besides the political perspective, group relations play a crucial role in the discussion surrounding multi-ethnic societies.

The relationship between social, national and ethnic identity is a central topic when discussing minority groups. The relationship between ethnic and national identity may be theoretically independent, yet the relationship varies (Liebkind, 2006). To elucidate on this, the next paragraph will provide an overview on identity theories connected to the status of minority groups.

## 6.3 Minority identities

Identity has been conceptualized in several different disciplines and studied intensively in recent decades (Hall, 1996). In earlier historical moments, identity was not so much an issue as it was assigned rather than selected or adopted (Howard, 2000) and thus was a simpler concept than it is presently. The term was initially introduced by Freud in the context of psychoanalysis, the introduction of 'identity' into social analysis occurred in the United States in the 1960s (Brubaker *et al.,* 2000). Identity according to Hall (1992) was conceptualised in three different historic stages: (a) the enlightenment subject, (b) the sociological subject, and (c) the post-modern subject. The enlightenment subject was strongly centred around the individual, constructed among an inner 'centre' of the human being, which emerged when the individual was born and essentially stayed the same throughout their lifetime. The sociological subject takes the 'significant other' into consideration and combines the inner core with the interaction to the outside world or society; thus, the identity is not self-sufficient anymore, but rather constructed with the relationship to the 'outside'. Therefore, this approach bridges the 'inside' and 'outside' of an individual and enables us to internalise the meanings and values of cultural identities. Yet, the sociopsychological approach was criticised for its monolingual and monocultural bias. According to Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001) this bias leads to conceptualising the world as consisting of homogeneous and monolingual cultures and individuals moving from one group to the other, which makes the approach less easy to adapt to multilingual individuals who might be members of multiple communities. The more ethnographically oriented sociolinguistic approach sees identities as more fluid and constructed in linguistic interactions. This fits in the third approach; Identity as a post-modern subject is the concept of no fixed or permanent identity (see also Howarth *et al.,* 2014; Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2015). The subject is changing and shifting amongst several identities as the cultural

landscape becomes more unstable, and the subjects can feel comfortable with different possible identities, which mirrors Clarke (2008, p. 527), who states, “We have multiple identities to choose from in a given context.”

At the same time, this approach makes the process of identification more complex and problematic. Currently, we are in a time where identity is conceptualised as through several different approaches and traditions, which are co-existing but not in unison (Howard, 2000), yet the post-modern approach is predominant.

For this research the cultural and ethnic identity in particular is crucial, as members of minority groups are often defining themselves through separation or differentiation from the majority group.

A key player in the early research on identity was Erikson. He conceptualised the *ego identity*, the *personal identity* and the *social identity* (Schwartz, 2001). He states that

> “The conscious feeling of having a *personal identity* is based on two simultaneous observations: the immediate perception of one’s selfsameness and continuity in time; and the simultaneous perception of the fact that others recognize one’s sameness and continuity.” (Erikson, 1994, p. 22)

Already in this early definition of a personal identity, it is made clear that one’s own identity is never isolated, but rather developed in a relationship to others. The individual identity is not restricted to the self but encompasses group identities as well. The group is part of the individual identity (Abrams *et al.* in Wheelan 2005-06). According to Bourdieu *et al.* (1991) identity is fundamentally perceived by others and recognized. Human beings define themselves in accordance with one or several social categories (Liebkind, 2006; Weldon, 2006) such as gender, race, or ethnicity, which forms the individual's self-definition (Deaux 1993; Simon *et al.,* 1977). For centuries the identity of individuals was shaped by a small territory where family, religion work, etc. where concentrated; the individual’s identity was shaped by their role in this territory and it still today emerges within a system of social relations (Guibernau, 2013). Yuval-Davis (2010) claims that even in modernity most people would consider themselves in the majority of cases as ‘naturally’ belonging to a particular local, national or ethnic collective. One’s social identity is a central topic for ethnic minority

group members, as their 'otherness' can be seen as a crucial and essential part of their identity. According to Goffman (1969), social identity is about the categories and attributes one person holds in the relation to others. When meeting a stranger, assumptions about this person's nature are made and attributed to that individual (Clarke, 2008); thus, a certain social identity is ascribed from one's surrounding society. According to Verkuyten (1997, p. 568),"identities refer to what people conceive themselves to be in a specific context, or to which category they belong." This implies a distinction between 'us' and 'them', thus a concept of people who belong and who do not belong. Looking at identity from this perspective, they are constructed through comparisons with others (Verkuyten, 1997). In political real, and especially right-wing views, cultural identity has been used to pathologize other cultures, and reinforce one's 'own' along with one's incompatibility with other cultures (Clarke, 2008).

Tajfel and Turner introduced the Social Identity Theory in 1979 to explain intergroup behaviour. Social Identity Theory focuses on how individuals identify themselves in terms of group membership and its influence on the individuals' identity. The theory suggests that social groups afford their members a sense of identification via a comparison with in-group and out-group subjects, meaning the social identity accrued from those characteristics an individual deprived of the social categories he sees himself a member of. Individuals strive for a positive social identity, that is, a positively perceived in-group in comparison to some significant out-groups. Furthermore, if the individual is not satisfied by their own social category, one will try to join a more positively related social category.

### 6.3.1 National and Ethnic identities

In this day and age, many individuals have nationality by birth, which can be seen as one type of social identity, distinguishing between individuals of different nationality. National identities are one of the most important identities for "ethnic native Europeans" (Clycq *et al.,* 2021, p. 653), yet ethnic minorities mostly do not share the same collective identity and might not develop the same shared feelings connected to a national identity. Especially in diverse areas across Europe, the (in)compatibility of the ethnic and national identity is an important issue as ethnic minority group members in particular are strongly connected to their ethnic identity (Fleischmann and Phalet, 2018). However, in Europe ethnic identity is

often seen as a threat to national cohesion, thus the discussion on national identity divides the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' even more (Alba and Foner, 2016). In the European context, ethno-cultural diversity is not a core element in the imagination of national identities (Clycq *et al.,* 2021); instead, they are seen as static categories mainly associated with ethnic majorities (Agirdag *et al.,* 2016). People are deeply attached to their national identity and culture, and being so, the aim to assimilate a national minority is unrealistic, which is shown in the development of most national minorities in western democracies to being more insistent in their rights and status as nations (Kymlicka and Straehle, 1999).

Previous research shows that ethnic majorities identify strongly with national identities (Clycq *et al.,* 2021), which inspired a branch of research to examine a suited identity which could serve as a shared identity which crosses ethnic, cultural and linguistic lines (see e.g., Brummer *et al.,* 2022). One option for a shared identity could be the European identity (see e.g., Agirdag *et al.,* 2016; Clycq *et al.,* 2021). The European identity seems to be less culturally and ethnically exclusive, but it tends to be defined more often in civic terms (Agirdag *et al.,* 2016). That is, when being defined 'European' one does not need to fit into certain ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural categories as it is perceived for national identities (Agirdag *et al.,* 2016; Brummer *et al.,* 2022). National identities are experienced as exclusive for minorities, while they are still the most important identities for majority group members (Alba and Foner, 2015). This is one of the reasons why minorities do not identify strongly with the national identities of the countries they live in, which in itself is connected to experienced discrimination or unequal treatment and provokes a loss of sense of belonging to the national group (Fleischmann and Phalet, 2018; Fleischmann *et al.,* 2019; Verkuyten, 2016). In reaction to this, ethnic minority group members might go in search of a more inclusive collective identity (Clycq *et al.,* 2021), which can serve as a bridge between them and their direct surroundings.

Recent research shows that in a European context, minority group members perceive national identities as less attractive than do majority group members (Fleischmann and Phalet, 2018). In many countries, national identity is represented as an exclusive ethnic category rather than a civic category, not including the ethnic background of minorities (Agirdag *et al.,* 2016).

The Self-Categorization Theory is based on the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner and was first introduced in 1985 by Turner. According to this, social identification process assembles the self in a framework of the in-group and out-group environment, whereas intracategorical similarities and intercategorical differences contribute to the self-categorisation. In other words, the self-categorisation is influenced by the similarities "to some class of stimuli in contrast to some other class of stimuli" (Turner and Reynolds, 2011 p. 403).

In the case of minority groups, one of the essential categorisations is one's ethnic identity. Members of ethnic minorities show a greater need to explore their ethnic identity than their peers from majority groups (Phinney and Alipuria, 1990) and ethnic identity is psychologically more important for ethnic minorities (see e.g., Verkuyten, 1995, 2005). According to Liebkind (2006, p. 78) the meaning of the term 'ethnicity' comes from a "real or imagined common descent and shared culture" and its main ingredients are culture and history. A person cannot choose into which ethnic group they are born, yet the extent to which the ethnic identity matters for one's total identity still remains in everyone's own power. Thus, the ascribed aspect of ethnicity can be just as important as any other social identity. However, as this part of the identity is transmitted in the very beginning of socialisation, ethnicity can be the most pervasive part of an individual's identity (Liebkind, 2006). Identity is a heterogeneous set consisting of all identities and names given and taken up by an individual (Tabouret-Keller, 2017). Yet, during one's lifetime identities are endlessly recreated, according to social constraints, interactions, encounters and wishes which are unique to every individual. Highly salient ethnic or cultural identities are often the basis of conflicts, especially when the belonging to such groups has historically affected the status or wellbeing of the group members (Casals, 2006). Status, power and group size are three factors which all influence the dynamics of the intergroup relations (Sachdev and Bourhis, 1991). From the ethnic relations approach, power differentials are the basis of ethnic conflicts, as they lead to status differentials (Sachdev and Bourhis, 1991), whereas the social psychological sees group number and power just as important as wealth and other factors (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). The responsibility of minority policies is to try to avoid inter-ethnic conflict and guarantee a legal basis for living together peacefully.

Ethnic identity is a dynamic construct; thus, it changes and evolves depending on the context (Liebkind, 2006). Deaux (1993) emphasises both the importance of the context for ethnic identity and the importance of the change of context, which points to how identity needs to be adjusted depending on the reference point as it is seen from the subject. In the two case studies, the predominant distinguishing characteristic is the language. Language is introduced at a very early age to create group solidarity (Giles *et al.,* 1977) and is a key component of identity (Howard, 2000; Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2015). Language is a crucial part of one's membership to or separation from a group (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1992; Tajfel, 1992), and it can be seen as a core factor of ethnicity (Giles *et al.,* 1977; see also Safran, 2008). According to Tabouret-Keller (2017) one's language and one's identity as a speaker of this language are inseparable. Identifying oneself as speaker of a language implies identifying others who have a different identity; thus, this type of identification is a means of differentiation and opposition. Sometimes the link between language and identity is so strong that a single feature of language can be enough to identify someone's membership to a certain group (Tabouret-Keller, 2017), may it be through pronunciation, dialect or the use of single words, specific for this group. Yet, according to Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001), in a world of global communication and migration the simple view of "language equals identity" does not satisfy reality anymore and thus cannot be used as base for research analysis.

Furthermore, the status of being a member of a minority is not generally regarded as favourable, given that it is widely viewed as associated with suppression and generally negative connotations (Lemay and Ashmore, 2004). Thus, ethnic minority group members may want to change their social identity, yet this should not necessarily mean that the cost should imply a loss of their ethnic identity (Liebkind, 2006).

Several recent studies have approached this topic of ethnic/national identity and the different ways to identify the idea of a collective identity, besides that of an ethnic and national identity, which could be attractive and available for both minority and majority group members (Clycq *et al.,* 2021). This development is recent, as the diversification in European societies is steadily growing. A supranational identity can function as a unifying category for combining ethnic minority and national identities (Agirdag *et al.,* 2016).

## 6.4 Common In-group Identity Model (CIIM) and the European Identity model

The CIIM gives an alternative approach on how to tackle the identification challenges of ethnic minorities connected to a national and an ethnic identity. The Common In-group Identity Model (CIIM) was introduced by Gaertner *et al.*in 1993. It is synthesized among the social categorization approach to intergroup behaviours (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). CIIM proposes the theory that intergroup bias can be diminished by transforming group member's cognitive representation from two groups into one. This change in perception of group boundaries might transform cognitive processes which formerly led to out-group bias toward a more harmonious in-group relationship. This theory builds on the idea that out-group hostility is not necessarily a bias against the other, but rather a preference of in-group members, thus rather a 'pro-in-group bias' (Gaertner *et al.,* 1993, p. 3).

The CIIM conceptualises a re-categorisation, that is, not eliminating the former categorisation, but rather reshaping it from separate groups into a single group. This superordinate group can be introduced by new factors for categorisation, while the initial group identities are maintained. In other words, the in-group and out-group members come to realize what they have in common allowing a subordinate identity can take over.

Since the introduction of the theory, it has been tested in various settings by several scholars (see Eller and Abrams, 2004; with regard to an EU identity, see Curtis, 2014). It was stated by Eller and Abrams (2004) that future research should investigate whether the CIIM could be conceptualised for the majority and minority relations, especially in the context of international contact within the EU, as the idea of dual identity might be beneficial for intergroup attitudes.

Seen in a European context, the superordinate category of Europe can be seen as an umbrella identity, while the national or ethnic identity does not need to change (Curtis, 2014). The topic of European identity is relatively young in research, yet it is interdisciplinary in social science and often connects the European identity with territorial or social identities (Waechter, 2016).

The research carried out by Waechter (2016) shows that the European, the national and other identities can be important for the same person. Multiple as well as hybrid identities

combining national, ethnic, and European identities were found among the participants. Furthermore, it was found that for young participants it was easy to add a new identity, especially if they expect their life situation will improve because of their identification as European.

A number of studies reported that ethnic minority youth prefer to identify as European rather than with their national identity, while minority and majority group members are alike in the strength of identification as European (Agirdag *et al.,* 2016; Brummer *et al.,* 2022; Clycq *et al.,* 2021; Teney *et al.,* 2016). The European identity is imagined as an inclusive and multicultural identity, which may offer a reason as to why ethnic minorities are more attracted to the European and not to a national identity (Brummer *et al.,* 2022). European identity can be seen as an exemplary type of cosmopolitanism (Keatin, 2016), and, in combination with other identities, serves to develop a hybrid identity (Waechter, 2016). Furthermore, a European identity can help to overcome the division between the different countries in Europe (Jugert *et al.,* 2019).

Collective identities such as 'European' are not stable or objectively given; instead, they are combined and collectively created and are partly dependent upon the stories, images and vocabularies which are associated with 'Europe' (Brummer *et al.,* 2022). Carbaugh (1996) claims that different social identities can be enacted by people depending on where the individual is, who they associate with, and how their particular situation is characterised. The European identity finds itself less in conflict with ethnic identity than a national identity; thus, it can combine the positive aspects of national identity without risking losing the ethnic identity (Agirdag *et al.,* 2016).

Giampapa (2004) found in his research on identity of Italian Canadians that some identities are negotiable while others are not. Thus, depending on the situation and surroundings, the participants have found ways to re-articulate their identities in their multiple spaces and worlds. They also challenge the undesirable, imposed identities and attempt to reconfigure them. People seek out feedback, which confirms self-definitions and verifies the self-categorisation (Lemay and Ashmore 2004, see also Deaux 1996; Ellemers *et al.*2002).

According to Brummer *et al.* (2022, p. 182), the imagined European identity "includes respect for cultural and religious diversity", which might give ethnic minorities the

opportunity to increase their social status and to feel an authentic sense of belonging to a society (Clycq *et al.,* 2021). Europe is presented as being dynamic and multinational (Agirdag *et al.,* 2016), which is another reason the category is more easily accessible for minorities and majorities.

The European identification and the national identification are not mutually exclusive and in an ever-diverse Europe, the European identity has a greater potential to serve as a unifying category than national identities (Agirdag *et al.,* 2016).

According to Agirdag *et al.* (2016), the European identity can serve as a middle ground for majority and minority group members and has the potential to become a shared, unifying identity. Exploring the different types of identity and how an individual categorises oneself is strongly connected to a feeling of belonging. In order to identity with a certain category, a person must feel to belong to it up to a certain point. Looking at the European identity, it seems likely that identifying as European is connected to a certain extent to the feeling of belonging to a European community. In the last Eurobarometer study (2021) 56% of European citizens declared to identify as European. Italy has a higher than average proportion with 64%, while Estonia had a lower than average proportion with 21% of citizens identifying as European (Values and identities of EU citizens: report, 2021). Even though the European Union does not fulfil all of Anderson's (1983) factors for being an Imagined Community, the connection can still be drawn, other scholars have done (Toplak and Šumi, 2012). The European community, if seen as a shared identity and thus as a part of the own identity, is a community which is imagined, as it is a larger community than primordial villages or face-to-face contacts. Yet, it does not share a language and has not an all-European media, thus the average European is not fully informed of what is happening in the European community (Toplak and Šumi, 2012). Nevertheless, recent theories show a development of European identity especially among certain groups. Furthermore, Norton (2001) offers another definition of Imagined Communities, saying that they "[…] refer to groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination." (p. 8), so if this is adapted the European community can be seen as an Imagined Community as well.

Anderson's theory (1983) was often used to theorise language learning (see e.g., Kanno and Norton, 2003; Teng, 2017) in connection to an individual's future visions and how it

influences one's present. Thus, future events and future communities not only influence the behaviour of the current situation, but also the current identity. Norton (2001) links an Imagined Community to an imagined identity, constructed through imagined relationships between the self and other people with whom no direct connection can be drawn in practice (Teng, 2017 quoting Norton, 2001). Not only can language learners envision a potential future community (Ahn, 2021), but future migrants can also imagine a community which they will be part of (see Chapter Four). Through this imagination of the future self, the view of the self 'in the here and now' is also influenced (Ahn, 2021).

## 6.5 Identity (change) and migration

Norton (1997) defines identity in an interesting way for the present research, as he states that identity is the relationship of people to the world, how this relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future. Norton (1997) adds the imagination of the future to his definition of the identity and further relates it to a desire for affiliation, security and safety. In this view a person's identity can shift in accordance with changing social and economic relations.

Much research has been conducted to explore the change of identity after migration (see e.g. Huot *et al.,* 2014; Kosic and Triandafyllidou, 2003; Timotijevic and Breakwell, 2000), yet less research has been carried out on the pre-migration period, looking into the imagined identity change and how the migration plans influence the current identity of individuals (see e.g., Barkhuizen and de Klerk, 2006; Varjonen *et al.,* 2013). Some scholars mention how one construes oneself in the future as a part of a person's identity (Bhugra, 2004; Norton, 1997), thus even in the pre-migration period, the identity is already influenced by the planned migration. Previous studies suggest that when people migrate from one culture to another it is likely that their cultural identity changes when settling in the new place (Bhugra, 2004). Yet, this can also be seen vice versa; imagining the self in a different cultural context in the future, might change their own perception of identity already in the current situation.

Ethnicisation and polarisation often lead to a hierarchisation in the society, associated with ascribed attitudes for members of certain groups (Sachdev and Bourhis, 1991).

Categorisation and identification are thus relational and strongly connected to the society and given context (Cuddy *et al.,* 2008). Therefore, a change of context can provide wider and more open opportunities for an individual to identify and explore their own identity or categorisation. Migration or diaspora scholars mention the myth of return and the utopia of a homeland as a strategy of resilience for diasporas to overcome daily challenges (Singh, 2001). This idea of the imagination of a place and the imagination of a (back)migration has not received much attention in the migration literature to date, and only recently have a few articles been published on this topic (see Bolognani 2016; Salazar 2020; Viteri 2015).

As identities are constructed in relation to others and in a certain cultural context, migration challenges one's own identity (Varjonen *et al.,* 2013). "Immigration is almost always very painful" (Haiwen quoted in Teo, 2011). What in this quote is described as painful can be connected to a re-negotiation of the own identity. Through migration, the context of the individual changes and therefore the identity and how a person sees the self is subject to change. In the process of migration there is never a clear cut between being here and there, or here and elsewhere; it is always an in-between, a being in both places (Dantzer, 2017; Pine, 2014). For ethnic minorities, identities are already a more complex topic than for majority group members (see earlier sections in this Chapter). Thus, investigating the imagined or expected identity after the migration is even more complex than for majority group members. Barkhuizen and de Klerk (2006) argue that identities of future migrants are imagined, as they do not yet know the circumstances and events of the future life after migration. Nevertheless, they picture their identity and change of identity in a certain way. The emotions arising before and during a migration stem from an interaction of the individuals with their surroundings, not isolated in the migrant bodies or minds (Svašek, 2010) as well as their imagination of the future. For ethnic minorities, ethnic return migration literature suggests that e.g., while living 'abroad' (thus in the country they are a minority), a part of their identity was based on the longing for the 'homeland', which they lose when migrating back. They hope to find homes, but they still might feel like strangers (Wessendorf, 2007). Thus, the identity was constructed in a transnational space and the distinction between 'us' and 'them' and the dream of a migration can become a part of the identity. The way people imagine the world and themselves in the world is crucial for the construction of identity (Clarke, 2008), thus, even for ethnic minorities who do not plan to

move ‘back’ to their homeland, the longing for belonging and the minority group membership is a crucial part of their identity. Varjonen *et al.*(2013) conducted research among ethnic Finns in Russia planning to move ‘back’ to Finland. In their pre-migration data, they found that the predominant expression of how the participants defined themselves was via a Finnish identity. This Finnishness stood in contrast to Russianness, distinguishing the self as a minority group member from the majority group. This was found connected to the Russian context, which goes in line with the cultural identity theory. Giampapa (2004, p. 193) quotes Keith and Pile (1993, p. 2) stating that “in positioning the self, one is imagining the self in a particular space.” When planning a migration, the imagination of a community abroad plays a crucial role (see Chapters 4 and 5). Yet, when talking about ethnic minorities as future migrants, an imagined identity may well be just as crucial as an Imagined Community. Giampapa (2004) argues that spaces in which identities are negotiated are multiple and shifting. Those spaces, in his view, are not only geographical, but also imagined, drawing on transnational connections unifying through differences. When ethnic minorities imagine themselves after a migration experience, they might change the way they imagine their own identity. It is not important whether this imagination is more fictional than real; it influences the identity construction and is thus concrete and has real consequences for the world (Clarke, 2008). In other words, even if this identity might be partially imagined, it is real for the individual.

Varjonen *et al.* (2013) found, that identities are negotiated over and over again. In their research ethnic Finns defined themselves as Finnish when living in Russia; however, when they moved ‘back’ to Finland the definition changed. Participants defined themselves in a variety of ways, using alternative labels which might be a way to avoid a controversy between their own chosen identity and the identity ascribed from others. This research indicates that ethnic minorities might change their identity through a migration and add categories and labels, and develop a more diverse and multifactored identity. This was also found by the contributors to the Tsuda (2010) volume (see e.g., Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2010). In a European context, student mobility is supported to develop a shared identity and membership across European countries. The students are young and have the ability to learn from each other and thus develop a sense of Europeanness (King and Raghuram, 2013). This falls in line with other studies. In her research Keating (2016) found those cross-

cultural European activities and the sense of European identity, as well as medium or high level competences in a second European language. Having a European sense of belonging can help reconcile two identities, e.g., for immigrants the identities of the origin and destination country (Teney *et al.,* 2016), or for ethnic minorities their ethnic and national identities. Research has found that certain groups are more likely to identify with Europe than the overall population of Europe (Waechter, 2016), which can be stated as well for ethnic minorities.

## 6.6 Migration plans as coping strategy for identity struggles

To date, no research has been conducted to examine the role of a planned migration (regardless of whether it was carried out or not), on the individuals' identity before migration and its connection to a planned migration. This might be due to the lack of data gathered during the pre-migration period in research in general. Yet, as the literature about Imagined Community and identity suggests, the imagination of oneself in the future influences the individual's identity in the here and now. A planned future migration connected with an Imagined Community in the destination might influence the identity already before the start of the migration project. Bolognani (2016) points out the resilience of the 'return fantasies', thus changing the attention from the outcome of mobility to the thoughts and their effect on the individual's current life.

Discrimination, separation, and the struggle of belonging challenge the identity of an individual, which is especially the case for minority group members, also connected to stereotypes and meta-stereotypes, which cause negative emotions towards the out-group (Vorauer and Kumhyr, 2001) and to their own sense of belonging. Individuals strive for a positive social identity, thus a positively perceived in-group in comparison to some significant out-groups. Yet, minority group members feel less positive about their group membership, as it is usually connected to a low status (Sachdev and Bourhis, 1991). As the minority group status is connected to the place of residency, mobility might be seen as a good option to transform one's social identity by changing the social context. The comparison of in- and out-group members is also connected to stereotypes ascribed to the out-group or meta-stereotypes presumably described from the out-group. Gordijn *et al.* (2008) found that prejudice, cultural stereotypes and meta-stereotype influence the feelings

about an interaction with the other social group. Prejudice is mostly depending on the group as well as on the context (Cuddy, 2008). Groups have ambivalent stereotypes, partly a positive evaluation about a certain factor, and a negative evaluation on the other (Cuddy, 2008). The term meta-stereotype is used to refer to a person's beliefs regarding the stereotype that out-group members hold about his or her own group, and on trend those meta-stereotypes are mostly negative. If people believe another individual holds preconceptions about them which do not go along with their self-concepts or which are negative, this influences the interaction with that person (Vorauer *et al.,* 1998). Another aspect is the tendency of lower status group members (minority group members) to experience self-directed negative affects after interacting with a high-status group member, connected to prejudice (Vorauer and Kumhyr, 2001), which again is connected to the meta-stereotypes.

Therefore, negative stereotypes or meta-stereotypes can lead to intergroup threat. The Intergroup Threat Theory (Stephan, 2016) makes the distinction between realistic and symbolic threats; thus, a group perceives another group to be in the position to potentially harm them. Those threats, be they concrete or hypothetical, have an effect on intergroup relations as the response to a perceived threat is likely to be negative. An important factor of this theory is that it concerns the perceived threat, regardless of it being an actual threat or not. Especially in the time of identity formation, thus ordinarily during adolescence, these factors are crucial as the attribution of meanings and importance given to one's place of origin is a significant factor in migration decisions (Barwick, 2017). Young adults belonging to a minority feel like they do not belong to their country of residence, because they do not correspond to the expected features of a person from that country and because they perceive a threat from the majority group and experience stereotypes and meta-stereotypes. It is the adolescent members of a minority group who face a greater challenge in either accepting the majority group's negative perception towards them or rejecting it in a search for their own identity (Phinney, 1989). As those emotions are not only connected to the group but also to the place and one's surroundings, mobility might play a role in the search for an independent identity from minority adolescents. Bolognani (2016) places the focus on the wish-making and the fantasy itself, rather than on the actual move, as a part of the process of identity building, eventually helping to overcome traumas or serving to

respond to the individual's given socio-political context.

## 6.7 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the definition of minorities, and how different types of minorities are named and divided. In this study, the terms ethnic minorities and linguistic minorities are used interchangeably to name the two studied groups, also because language is the main distinctive feature distinguishing the minorities and majorities in both case studies. Language as main distinctive feature was used, as the participants themselves showed the main interest in this topic. Even though the cultures differ in many factors, for the participants themselves, language was the most important one. Therefore, this was approach was provided by the data and is therefore the focus of the analysis of this research.

Minorities are always constructed in relation to another group; thus, a main factor is the differentiation between 'us' and 'them'. Therefore, the topic of the identification of minorities is crucial. While for majority group members, the national identity is often favoured, ethnic minorities prefer a culturally diverse identity. The ethnic identity plays a crucial role, but generally multiculturalism is essential for ethnic minorities. This, along with the imagination of the own identity and of the own future, influence the identity of ethnic minorities. In the particular case of the pre-migration period, one's own imagination of the self after the move is mirrored in the current identity. Another aspect of the minority identities is the longing for belonging, as well as the living in between two cultures, which leads to not feeling fully part of one group on par with the feeling of being different. Yet, a crucial part of identity is also adaptability, and depending on the situation and the context, an individual can choose from a set of identities which are more or less one part of the identity.

In the following chapter, empirical data concerning the identities of the participants will be presented. The different components of the identities will be elaborated and in which intensity the factors are important for the participants in this phase of pre-migration. The data examine the self-categorisation and definition of minority group members and point to which factors the participants mentioned themselves. As this theoretical chapter showed,

minority identities are very diverse, have several different features, and change with respect to the surroundings.  It is precisely these findings that will be substantiated through the data as well, specifically defining the most important aspects for the studied groups. This can be reconnected to Chapter Five, showing the separation of society and how minority group members feel a lack of belonging. The characteristics of the minority identities can show how different the perceptions of the two groups are in terms of their own status and the society they live in. Thus, also the migration patterns can be explained by looking at the negative emotions connected to one's own status and imposed categorisation. To this end, the data in the next chapter will elaborate the topics which have been introduced and treated theoretically in the present chapter.

# Chapter 7: Searching for an imagined identity

## 7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave a theoretical overview on identity theories, especially the identity components of minority group members. The presented theories showed how multi-faced minority identities are and underscored that they are re-negotiated constantly, as per the surroundings of the individual. As seen in Chapter Five, minorities in this study have a higher tendency to migrate internationally, due to their feeling little or no sense of belonging. Thus, the identity and categorisation is pivotal when minority group members decide to migrate. In this context, the theories of self-categorization, concerning group identity, the comparison of ethnic and national identity, and the European identity as an umbrella category were presented. Keeping the group relations and various factors of identity conceptualisation of minorities in mind will enhance the reading of the data presented in this chapter.

One's own identity is built in connection with the surrounding groups and environment. Thus, a minority group member tries to make sense out of their own nationality, ethnicity, language, and current living situation. In the following, the data concerning identity will be presented from both case studies. The discussion combines both data sets and lays out the challenges of identity building from minority groups and how this impacts migration. In order to structure the analysis, the above presented theories on identity components will be used. First, the data from the Estonian case study will be introduced, structured into the ethnic/national identity, the self-categorisation of the participants, the differentiation and belonging, and finally the influence of migration on their own identity. Thereafter, the Italian data will be presented according to the same categories. After summarising the data, a conjoint analysis will show that in both case studies minority group members prefer to identify with several categories, rather than only with their ethnic or national identity. It is rare to self-categorise as a minority; however, the self-categorisation as a minority does not influence migration decisions, while the belonging to a minority group favours migration decisions. Furthermore, the data show a correlation between feeling similar to people in a

nation and migration patterns. The chapter will be concluded with a short summary of the central points, taken from the data.

## 7.2 The Russian Estonian Identity components

As seen in the previous chapter, the identity of an individual consists of several components and is multi-layered. In the following sections the data concerning the identity of the participants are presented in order to analyse the different components existing and to assess the influence they have on a migration decision of minorities. The differences in categorisation and identity of the individuals, connected to their belonging to a minority group or a majority group, will also be elaborated.

### 7.2.1 Ethnic, national, and European identification

As we have seen in the theoretical Chapter Six, the identity of minority group are multi-faced. One crucial component is the national/ethnic identity, and the intensity of the individual's identification with it. As previous research shows, minority group members are strongly connected to their ethnic identity (Fleischmann and Phale, 2016), while the majority group in a country can connect to the national identity (Clycq *et al.,* 2021), which can be affirmed by the data of this research.

> Evgeny cannot define himself as Estonian, not at all. When asking him to use his own words, he defines himself as "Russian who was born in Estonia". Evgeny strongly identifies as Russian, or Russian and European, those being the categories he feels comfortable with. Estonia is his land of birth, and he is an Estonian citizen, but his identity is tied to being Russian.

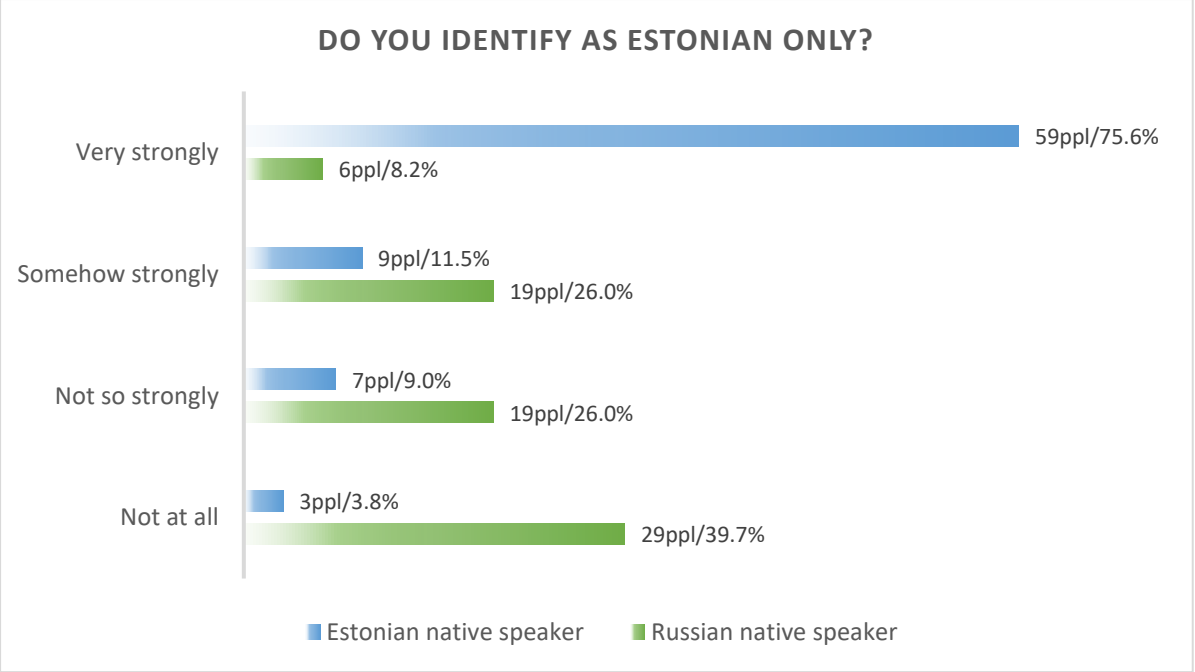
Evgeny, the participant already introduced in Chapter Five, cannot identify with the national identity, as he does not see himself as Estonian. He instead connects with his ethnic identity and sees himself as Russian but also as European. This goes in line with previous research, presented in Chapter Six (see e.g., Liebkind, 2006; Verkuyten, 1995, 2005), as well as with the general tendency of minority group participants in the Estonian case study (65% do not identify with only the Estonian identity, see tables below). The ethnic identity is a strong point to distinguish the self from the other. In this case, Evgeny mentions Estonia as his

place of birth, which does not influence his identity but rather expresses his legal status, as he has an Estonian citizenship. Even though neither the place of birth nor the ethnicity in which one is born into can be chosen, it is still the individual's own decision as to how important the ethnic identity is (Liebkind, 2006).

In the data collection, the identification with a single or multiple cultures was investigated with questions inspired by the Eurobarometer survey (Kantar Belgium, 2019). The participants were asked how strongly they identify as Russian, Estonian, Russian and Estonian, Russian and European, Estonian and European, or, finally, Russian, Estonian and European. This gave the opportunity to choose between a single and multiple categories and also to specify the intensity of the identification with one category. The categories were pre-set; however, the last question in this section was open-ended and offered the participants the opportunity to articulate whether they define themselves in a different way.

A definite tendency was found that the Russian native speakers do not identify as solely Russian (only 24.7% of the Russian speakers identify strongly as only Russian), while Estonian native speakers prefer to identify mainly with only their national identity (39.7% of the Estonian speakers strongly identify as only Estonian). However, over 94% of the participants hold Estonian citizenship, only two participants (1.3%) have Russian citizenship, while five people (3.3%) have dual citizenship – Russian and Estonian. Nevertheless, the difference of how strongly Estonian speakers and Russian speakers identify as Estonian only is striking. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between group belonging and the identification as Estonian. The relation between these variables was significant, $X2$ (3, N = 151) = 73,365, p = .000.

*Figure 11 - Identification according to ethnic group (elaborated by the author)*




The collected data clearly show that most Estonian speakers (75.6%) identify very strongly as Estonian, while only 8.2% of the Russian speakers do so. On the other hand, 65% of Russian speakers ticked "Not at all" or "Not very strongly" for the item asking whether they identify as Estonian, while only 12.8% of Estonian speakers ticked those same responses on the question of identifying with the national identity. This confirms previous research, stating that ethnic majority prefer the national identity, whereas this identity is not as appealing for ethnic minorities (see e.g., Clycq *et al.,* 2021; Fleischmann and Phalet, 2018).

> Reimo identifies strongly as Estonian, and as Estonian and European. He feels safe in the Estonian community and connected to a European community. He expresses a feeling of being quite similar to the other people living in Estonia, yet also connected to Finland and the other Baltic countries, Latvia and Lithuania.

Reimo, as an ethnic Estonian, feels a strong connection to the Estonian community and identifies as Estonian. Yet, Reimo also identifies as European, and as Agirdag *et al.* (2016) state, the European and the national or ethnic identity are not mutually exclusive but can function side by side. This is a general trend in the data, as 54.7% of the Estonian natives strongly identify as Estonian and European, 30.7% ticked the response of "Somewhat strongly" as both Estonian and European.

*Table 11 - Identification (elaborated by the author)*

| | | Estonian only | Russian only | European only | Estonian and European | Russian and European | Russian and Estonian | Russian Estonian and European |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not at all | Russian native speaker | 39.7% | 23.3% | 12.9% | 14.1% | 7.1% | 10.0% | 7.1% |
| | Estonian native speaker | 3.8% | 88.0% | 24.3% | 2.7% | 87.8% | 78.4% | 79.2% |
| Not so strongly | Russian native speaker | 26.0% | 21.9% | 18.6% | 25.4% | 22.9% | 15.7% | 8.6% |
| | Estonian native speaker | 9.0% | 9.3% | 30.0% | 12.0% | 9.5% | 10.8% | 8.3% |
| Somewhat strongly | Russian native speaker | 26.0% | 30.1% | 35.7% | 43.7% | 37.1% | 37.1% | 30.0% |
| | Russian native speaker | 11.5% | 2.7% | 30.0% | 30.7% | 2.7% | 8.1% | 8.3% |
| Very strongly | Russian native speaker | 8.2% | 24.7% | 32.9% | 16.9% | 32.9% | 37.1% | 54.3% |
| | Russian native speaker | 75.6% | 0.0% | 15.7% | 54.7% | 0.0% | 2.7% | 4.2% |

As seen in Table 11 above, the identification of the two groups differs strongly. While Estonian native speakers mostly identify as Estonian only and as Estonian and European, Russian native speakers prefer to identify as European, Russian and Estonian. Thus, the preferred self-identification of the Russian native speakers is the combination of three identities. The data show how strongly the identification of the two groups differ. As Chapter Five showed, both groups feel a segregation of the two society and very few contact is given between the groups. Looking at the table above, this is also reflected in the way people define themselves. The in- and out-group dynamics influence the feeling of belonging (Merino and Tileagă, 2011) and this data show different groups belonging among the two ethnic groups, which links back to the feeling of belonging the participants expressed (see Chapter Five). Furthermore, these results reflect previous research stating that minority identities are multi-faced and that the European identity can function as an umbrella identity for minority and majority group members (see Chapter Six).

The Estonian native speakers prefer their national identity over a choice that combines a national and an additional umbrella identity. For Russian speakers the national identity, thus Estonian, is one of the least favoured, while solely the ethnic identity is also less popular. According to the summary of eight studies by Verkuyten (2006) among young adults

concerning assimilation or integration, a consistent result was that minority group members prefer multiculturalism, meaning that they can keep their values and beliefs, much more than majority group members. According to Dovidio *et al.* (2007) these preferences can be applied to ethnic minorities too. “Multiculturalism encourages group identities and tries to ensure that all citizens can keep their identities and take pride in their ancestry and culture” (Verkuyten, 2006, p. 168)

Yet, the table reveals another interesting finding: Russian speakers, in part, also identify as Estonian and European (16.9% very strongly and 43.7% somewhat strongly). This sentiment is not as strong as with the Estonian speakers (54.7% very strongly and 30.7% somewhat strongly); however, that identity is nearly as accepted as Russian and European (32.9% very strongly and 37.1% somewhat strongly). As previous research states, the European identity is more ethnically inclusive than a national identity (Agirdag *et al.,* 2016) and thus it is easier for minority group members to identify with it than with a purely national identity. Furthermore, the Estonian native speakers, the second favourite identification is Estonian and European. This tendency confirms previous research, verifying that minority and majority group members are alike in the strength of identification as European (see e.g., Agirdag *et al.,* 2016; Brummer *et al.,* 2022; Clycq *et al.,* 2021; Teney *et al.,* 2016).

The data can be interpreted that minority group members show a greater plurality in their self-identification and can relate to multiple cultural options, while majority group members favour identifying with their national identity. Those multiple identities might be shaped and influenced by experiences, stereotyping and discrimination (Khanlou *et al.,* 2018), which as shown in Chapter Five is still a great part of the experience of minorities.

This can be confirmed by the quantitative data. When asking about self-identification, precisely the description of oneself in a single sentence, it is apparent that minority group members mostly include a contrast in their description.

> “I am from Estonia, but I am Russian”.
>
> “I would say that I come from Estonia, but I myself am Russian”

Such quotes indicate an identification with the country and their ethnicity, yet a clear contrast of the two cultures. Varjonen *et al.* (2013) found similar data, when researching

ethnic Finns in Russia. When they were defining themselves the emphasis was on the fact that they are *from* Russia, but not Russians. Just as the participants in this study stress, that they are *from* Estonia, but they are Russians. This differentiation establishes a clear delineation of 'us' and 'them', and goes on to underscore the distinction between the nationality ("I am from Estonia[…]") and the identity which is actually chosen and accepted by the participants ("[…] but I am Russian."). Again, this shows that the self-definition of minority group members is strongly connected to their multicultural surroundings and their need to define themselves in contrast to the other group.

On the other hand, the majority group members define themselves as Estonian. As shown in the literature this is common among majority group members (see Chapter Six), and most of them do not add any further explanation although in a few cases a geographical description is indeed included. This falls in line with the quantitative data, showing that majority group members identify with the national identity. The difference there is that the questions for the quantitative data gave pre-set categories, which added the layer of being able to indicate their feeling European as well. In the qualitative data no participant mentioned a feeling of being European; thus, it can be stated that this is not a natural category or identity a participant would likely express in their own words. However, when offered as an option, many participants could identify with it.

Minority group members try to create their own way to self-identify, as this quote shows:

> "I define myself as a citizen of the world with a Russian heart"

It bears noting that one's own ethnicity is generally expressed or described in stronger terms, in a more emotional way, with more pathos. Here, citizenship and nationality instead are expressed as demographic facts which are mentioned without any emotional addition or affiliation.

> "If the frame of reference is (the dominant culture in) the state of residence they might describe themselves as simply 'Russian'. However, if the context is (the dominant culture in) the external homeland they might tend to accentuate the traits which set them apart from the Russian core group" (Kolstø, 1996, p. 614)

Kolstø's statement shows how crucial the context is, explaining why the statement above was formulated in the respective way. It brings out the challenge of combining a geographic

location with an ethnic belonging, and as stated above is mostly solved through a contrast of both for the minority group members. Adolescents from minority groups must face and take up the challenge of developing their identity and self-define while they are living in a context in which their ethnic identity is a crucial part of the daily life. Bias and segregation of different ethnic groups are a reality in many places with a minority population, and especially during adolescence the need to explore one's own identity is crucial. Minority group members do not have a distinct identity; they prefer to identify with multiple cultures, as they feel that they belong a little bit everywhere but nowhere exclusively. Migration is a good tool to explore those multi-faced identities, and the change of context facilitates the development of an identity independently from the minority status and possible group bias. Thus, it can be stated that the data show a difference of identification in the two groups, Estonian native speakers identify with their national identity, however, can also see themselves as European and Estonian. Russian native speakers prefer a multi-layered identity, Russian, Estonian and European and prefer their ethnic identity over their national identity and favour the layer of the European identity as well. This goes in line with the literature in Chapter Six and the empirical data in Chapter Five, which underscore a division of the ethnic groups and a lack of feeling of belonging of the minority group members.

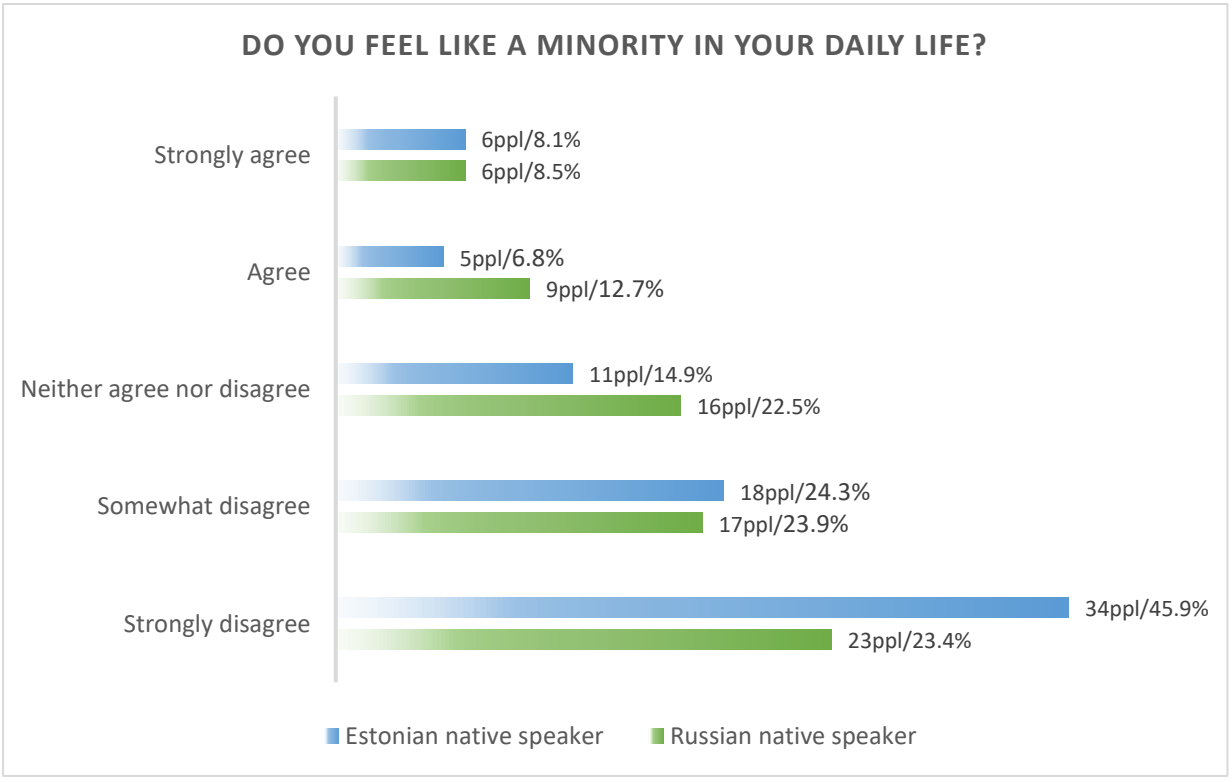
### 7.2.2. Self-categorization

The data presented in Chapter Five showed a higher tendency of minority group members to migrate. To explore which factors influence this trend, this section looks at the subjective feeling of being a minority, showing that the feeling of being a minority is not connected to migration plans while the actual membership of a minority group increases the probability for a migration decision (see Chapter Five). As seen in Chapter Six, the self-categorization is crucial for identity and sometimes the ascribed categories do not fit one's own self-perception. According to the objective factors, Russian speakers in Estonia are a minority, yet their self-categorisation as minority is more complex. Firstly, the term 'minority' and belonging to that group has a general negative connotation (Lemay and Ashmore, 2004). Next, in the Estonian case there are several regions where the Russian speakers are numerical majorities as in the north-eastern part where ethnic Estonians are often the

minority group and Russophones the majority group (Aasland and Fløtten, 2001). And thirdly, the Russophones in Estonia can be seen as a cross-border minority (Anderson, 2017), that is, a neighbouring country has the minority language as official state language. This factor influences, for example, the type of media consumed as well as the opportunity for cross-border travel and connections. Furthermore, Sotto-Santiago (2022) found in her research, that minority group members do not self-identify as 'minority'. The data in this study show a similar picture, the feeling of being a minority is not distinct and thus not an influencing factor for migration decisions, while the belonging to a minority group is.

Looking at the data, Russophones do not self-categorise strongly as a minority in their daily life. Only 8.5% "strongly agree" to feel like a minority as shown in the figure below. Furthermore, it shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the self-identification as a minority in the clusters.

*Figure 12 - Categorization as minority (by the author)*

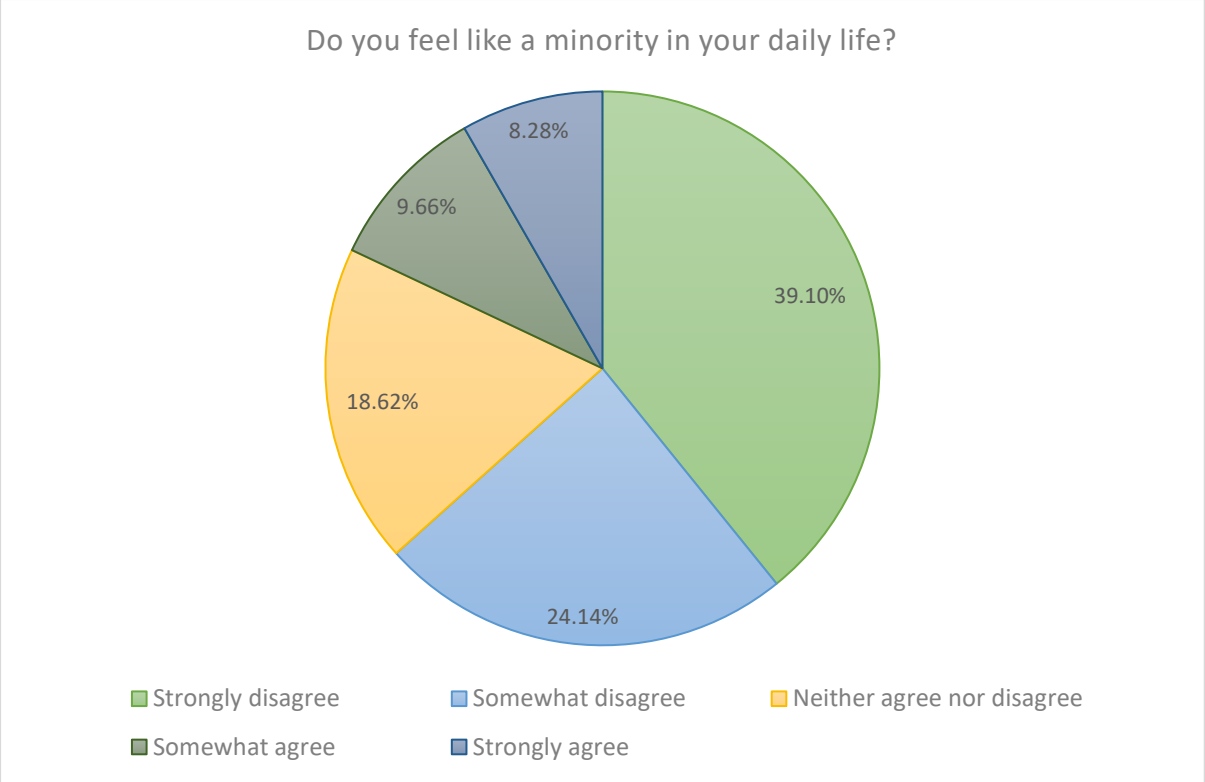



However, Russophones and Estonian speakers are not fully equal in the category of strongly disagreeing, as 32.4% of Russophones "strongly disagree" while 45.9% of Estonian speakers "strongly disagree". Furthermore, 12.7% of Russophones "somewhat agree" to feeling like a minority, which is just under twice the percentage for Estonian speakers (6.8%). Thus, even

if there is no statistical significance, a slight tendency can be found pointing to how Russian speakers feel slightly more like a minority than Estonian speakers. The fact that a big difference has not been uncovered but rather a minor trend has to do with the microsystem of every individual, which consists of family, close friends, one's own community, and for youth, their school setting, which is the level or time period in which cultural identity is learnt (Khanlou *et al.,* 2018). Most participants are mainly surrounded by peers with the same ethnic identity due to the division of the school systems and the society (see Chapter Five) thus they do not self-categorise as minorities because, in fact, they are not in their daily life. The phrasing of the question included the detail of 'daily life' intentionally, as minority-majority regions are a common phenomenon, along with the segregation of the ethnic groups (see Chapter One), which would explain how few interethnic contacts might occur on a daily basis. As Khanlou *et al.* (2018, p. 66) state, "there are innumerable day-to-day experiences that shape identity", thus the literature states that being among their own ethnic peers influences this categorisation, which geos in line with the data of this study. The self-definition needs to be meaningful in the given social context (Simon *et al.,* 1997), thus defining oneself as a minority while living in nearly exclusive Russophone surroundings is not a logical self-categorisation. Also, Deaux (1993) claims that identity changes in accordance with the reference point, so if a participant attends an educational institution with mainly students and staff from the same ethnicity, the feeling of being a minority need not necessarily arise (see Deaux, 1993). Furthermore, if the interaction of ethnic groups does not occur in the neighbourhood and via daily contact, there is nearly no overlapping point and thus no intra-group comparison on a daily basis. This can be related to the fact that peers surround themselves with people from the same ethnic background and therefore are not exposed to the other ethnicity (Kirch and Kirch, 1995).

Overall, only 17% of all participants responded strongly or somewhat strongly to feeling like a minority in their daily lives, with a far greater number of participants not feeling like a minority. However, the majority and minority group members do not differ in their self-identification to a significant extent. The graph below shows that general the tendency is not to categorise as minority. This data is contrary to the actual group belonging, as seen from a national point of view, Russian speakers are a minority in the country. However, the membership in the minority group is not connected to the feeling of being a minority.

*Figure 13 - Categorization as minority overall Estonian case (by the author)*




Nevertheless, the theories do not explain why Estonian native speaker would consider themselves a minority in any case, as they are they are ethnic Estonians living in Estonia. This lesser but existent expression of Estonian speakers feeling that they are a minority within their own country may be associated with the fact that there are approximately one million Estonian native speakers in Estonia and around 150,000 elsewhere in the world (Asu and Teras, 2009). Very few studies have been conducted concerning Estonian as a 'medium-sized language' and the consequences for the speakers' feeling of belonging and identity, as their communication in their native language is confined to a small social and geographical context (Soler-Carbonell, 2015). However, this limited range of the language can be seen as one of the reasons that Estonian speakers in this study feel nearly as much a minority as the Russian speakers. The relatively small community of Estonian native speakers has comparably few resources in terms of media, literature, movies, etc. produced in their native language, especially when contrasting it to the volume of Russian-language media. No correlation was found in the feeling of being a minority and the current residence of the participants. Contrary to the theory of majority-minority territories, that is, places where the minority group is a numerical majority (Cameron *et al.,* 1996; Camarillo, 2006; Kasinitz *et al.,* 2006) which would indicate that majority group members feel like a minority in such areas,

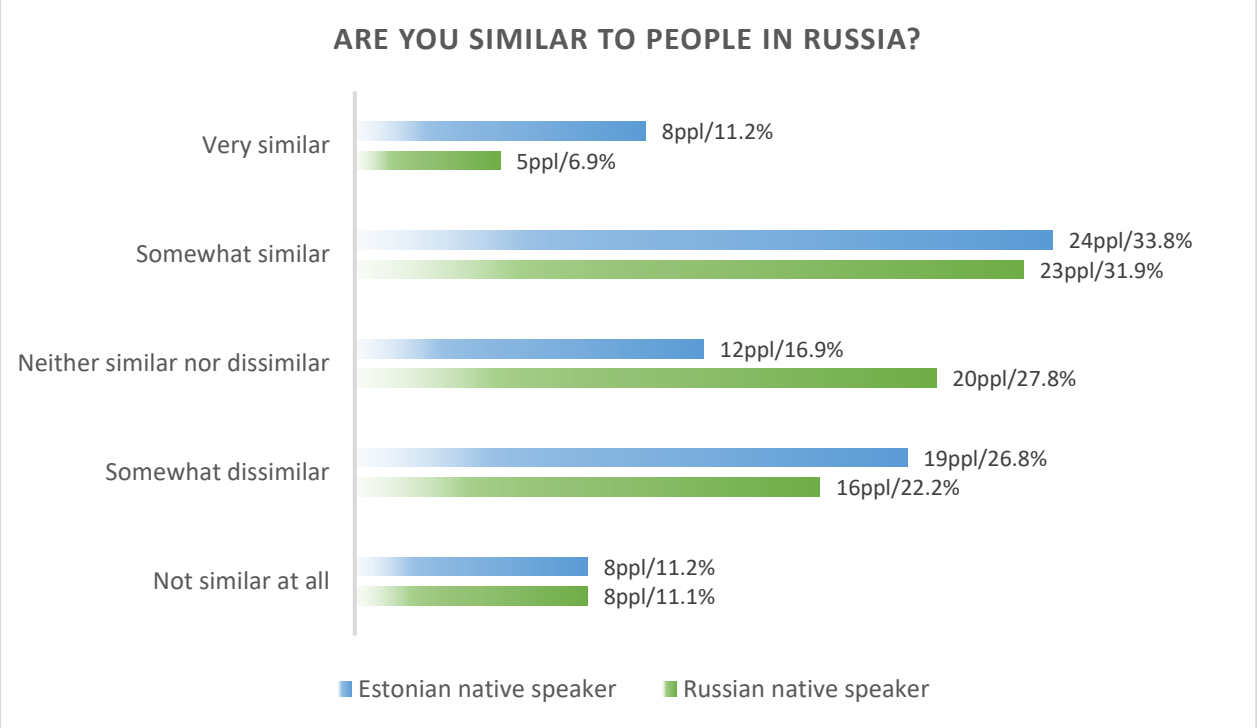
this cannot be confirmed by the data of this case study. Ida-Viiruma is clearly a minority-majority area; nevertheless, the place of residency does not influence the feeling of being a minority for any of the groups; Estonian speakers in the region do not feel any more a minority than their counterparts who for example live in Tallinn. Thus, the outcome cannot be explained by the minority-majority areas in which native Estonians would actually be the minority. As seen above, the categorisation of being a minority is negatively connotated and thus, not gladly chosen to define the self.

However, the data shows that there is no connection between the feeling of being a minority and the migration trends, whereas there is an actual correlation between the membership of a minority group and the migration decision (see Chapter Five). Therefore, it can be stated that the self-categorisation of being a minority does not influence the migration plans, while the actual belonging to a minority group does.

### 7.2.3. Differentiation and belonging

As the Theory of Imagined Community (Anderson, 1983) suggests, any community bigger than face-to-face contact is an Imagined Community. It can be assumed that people sharing the same language and culture feel a stronger sense of belonging towards each other, regardless of their nationality or belonging to a territory. Adapted for use in this study, the theory would suggest a strong feeling of similarity from the minority group members to people in Russia. The data show no evidence for this. Estonian and Russian native speakers have a nearly equal perception of their similarity to people in Russia; there is no statistical evidence that Russian speakers feel closer to the Russian community than Estonian speakers, as depicted in the figure below.

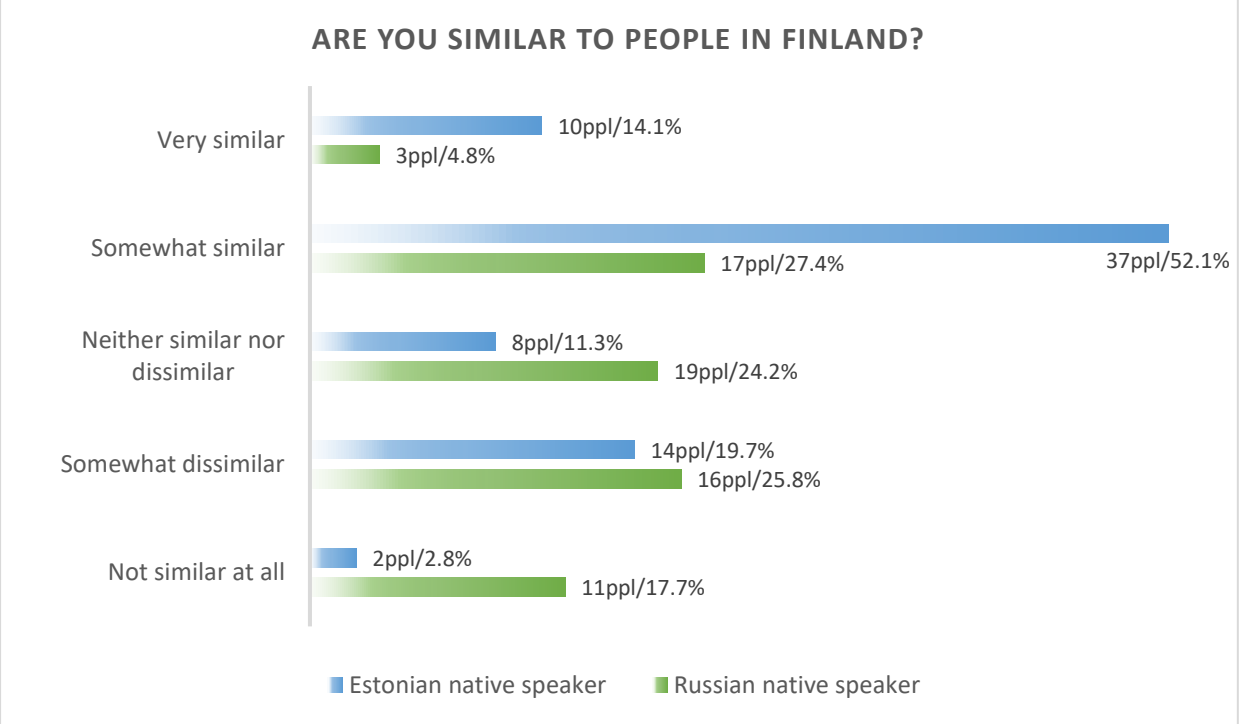
*Figure 14 -Similarities to people in Russia (elaborated by the author)*




This trend can partially be explained by the lack of feeling of belonging of Russophones. The living in-between two cultures and the knowledge that there is no place they actually belong is already part of their identity (Clarke, 2008). In fact, the participants hold Estonian citizenship, which means that they are different from people in Russia, and most of the participants are aware of this differentiation. Furthermore, as seen from the data in Chapter Five, the trend for migration plans is instead in the direction of other EU countries as opposed to Russia, as the former is tied to the expectations of better opportunities. Thus, the connection to Russia, as the literature on co-ethnic return migration would suggest (see Chapter Four), cannot be found among the participants of this study.

On the other hand, Estonian speakers feel a strong connection to the people of Finland. With a statistical significance of .001 it is very clear that the minority and majority group express a great difference of opinion on the issue of similarity to the Finns. In other words, Estonian speakers feel very similar to people in Finland, while Russian speakers do not feel any similarity at all.

*Figure 15 - Similarities to people in Finland (elaborated by the author)*




The hypothesis of the Imagined Community can therefore be adapted for majority group members Estonia, as they note their similarity to both the Finnish community and the country. This can be immediately seen in a certain correspondence of the languages, as the Estonian and Finnish language share the same Finno-Ugric linguistic roots and Finnish (Suomi) is the closest language to Estonian (Eesti) (Asu and Teras, 2009). This might again be connected to the fact that the Estonian language is a 'medium-sized language', as mentioned above, which gives limited options for the speakers if they do not learn a second language and the connection to people speaking a similar language might be felt stronger. Furthermore, as seen in Chapter Six, language is a crucial part of one's identity, and thus a similar or shared language influences the feeling of belonging to a group.

As Tajfel and Turner (1979) suggest, individuals try to change their social identity towards a more positively categorised group if they are not satisfied with their current category. Seen from a global point of view, the reputation of Finland as a Scandinavian country is superior to that of Estonia, a former Soviet country. For its part, the reputation of Russia is inferior when compared with the EU-member and recently emergent country of Estonia. Thus, the desire for an improvement in one's social identity might be a factor for the self-

categorisation of the participants. This is mirrored as well in the degree of proudness about the native language and culture. In those categories, Estonian native speakers show a much stronger positive opinion concerning their native language than Russian speakers.

The outcome of the comparison shows interesting trends. The Russian native speakers see most similarities with other people in Estonia or people in other EU countries. This goes in line with the migration trends seen in Chapter Five, as Russophones choose European countries for their migration rather than Russia. The Estonian speakers, on the other hand, see slightly more similarities to Finnish people than to Estonians, even though also the number for Estonia is high. As a general trend, it can be stated that Estonian native speakers see more similarities to other people in general, while Russian speakers are more hesitant to declare themselves similar to people in any nation. The overall numbers show that Russian speakers tend to feel not similar at all or somewhat dissimilar more frequently than Estonian speakers. The biggest discrepancy between the two groups can be sensed about the comparison with Finnish people. Thus, it can be stated, that Estonian native speakers feel a strong connection to the Finnish community, while the similarities to the Baltics, Russia or the other EU countries do not play an important role.

The data show clearly that the Russian speakers generally lack a feeling of belonging or sameness, regardless of the country or nation in question. They feel a stronger connection to Estonia and the EU but nevertheless, the differentiation of 'us' and 'them' is stronger than for the majority group members. The minority group constructed their identity in a transnational space, knowing that they do not fully belong. Therefore, the differentiation and distinguishing between oneself and the other is part of their identity, along with the feeling of being a stranger anywhere (Wessendorf, 2007).

Yet, the connection to Estonia and to the Estonian territory is still present, as one participant mentioned:

> "A Russian-speaking Estonian can love his homeland just as much as an Estonian speaker."

Nevertheless, besides distinguishing the self from the majority group, this participant says clearly that Estonia is his "homeland" and that he loves it. Despite this, the identification with the national identity might not be fully fitting; one's identification with the homeland,

that is, the territory, seems easier to accept for minority group members as well. The distinction and belonging of the ethnic groups is quite important for both minority and majority group members. It shows a great desire and need to distinguish the groups, to show an in- and out-group behaviour.

Thus, it can be stated that the trend for Russian speakers is to feel similar to people in Estonia and in other EU countries, however, not to people in Russia. This is in line with the fact that they feel closeness to the European identity as well and choose to migrate to other EU countries. Thus, the tendency goes towards the west and the EU, in trying to change the own social identity to a category which is perceived more positively (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). The imagination of a community in the EU that Russian speakers belong to and can relate to is one factor which facilitates migration plans to the West. On the other hand, Estonian speakers mainly feel connected to people in Finland and Estonia, also falling in line with previous research, showing that they prefer their national identity. Finland is very positively connotated, given how it is a neighbouring Scandinavian country, and how the similarities across the two languages facilitate a feeling of commonalities.

### 7.2.4 Identification imaginations and migration

Generally speaking, and looking at previous research, it can be stated that the identity of an individual changes after a migration (see e.g., Huot *et al.,* 2014; Kosic and Triandafyllidou, 2003; Timotijevic and Breakwell, 2000). Nevertheless, when looking at the overall number, nearly 70% of the participants who are planning to migrate internally or internationally think that their identity will not change. Nevertheless, some research was carried out which reveal that expectations about migration rarely meet the migration reality, as it is a quest for utopia, inspired by dreams (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009). This can be connected to their young age and the fact that it is their first migration experience, meaning that they have not yet experienced yet what it means to live abroad. On the other hand, participants had already added their 'migrant self' to their current identity, placing them mentally already between the here and there, the now and then, and being so, they believe that this is their fixed identity now, which will not undergo a change through the actual move. According to Dantzer (2017), migration is a mindwork, which starts prior the actual physical move, thus the individual tries to imagine the self after the migration and how it will be. Furthermore,

as seen in Chapter Five, the overall expectation of the migration experience is very positive, the participants imagine having a good community there and are already in a transnational space mentally. The general tendency, in the Italian case study, but also in the Estonian case study, is an extreme positive imagination of the migration and the time thereafter. Thus, participants imagine migration will improve their situation and make them happier but not change them as a person. However, few outliers have a different perception and think that they will change through migration, towards a more positively connotated self. The few participants making this observation think, and partially even hope, that their identity would change.

> "I think it will change. If everything goes as planned, then in 5 years in an Estonian team I will inevitably identify myself more closely as Estonian."
>
> "Yes, because I will start living in Estonian society and my identity will possibly change."

These two participants express their use of migration as a tool to change their own identity. The participants articulate a hope for change in their identity, a hope for development. In this case, this occurs through an internal migration, in what they hope, a more Estonian society than the present one. Thus, the aim is improvement and the expectation of becoming a more accepted part of the society and to leave the minority characteristics behind. Thus, also for those individuals, the aspirations for migration are similar, the wish to improve the situation of being a minority. The wish, the fantasy of migration can function to help overcome previous traumas (Bolognani, 2016), which in this case is connected to treatment from society due to being a minority group member. The minority identity, and everything connected to it, is perceived less positive, even by minority group members themselves (Sachdev and Bourhis, 1991). Thus, changing the surroundings changes the status, as it is always connected to the place of residence (for more details see Chapter Six). Along with the previous data, this shows that minority group members strive to improve their social status, and as migration is viewed as a very positive development, it can be used for just this purpose. However, participants do not imagine any change to their own identity, but rather only a change in their surroundings meant to improve the perception of their own group membership.

### 7.2.5 Conclusion Estonian case

The Estonian data can offer some insights as to the identification and categorisation of the participants. It shows clearly that Estonian native speakers identify mainly as Estonian, while Russian speakers prefer to identify as Russian, Estonian and European simultaneously. Both groups are similarly affiliated to identify as European, thus the data is consistent with previous studies that majority group members identify stronger with their national identity, while minority group members prefer their ethnic identity in combination with the European identity. Furthermore, it can be stated that both groups nearly equally identify with European as an additional identity to their national/ethnic identity. Thus, the idea of the European identity as an umbrella identity for minority and majority group members is at work in this sample, as it was already shown in previous research in Chapter Six (see e.g., Curtis, 2014). The data show that minority identities in this case consist of three important factors, the ethnic identity, the national identity, and the European identity. This is clearly revealed in the quantitative and the qualitative data, as well as in the migration trend towards the EU.

Another point appearing in the data is that the participants, regardless of their group belonging, do not very strongly indicate that they consider themselves as minorities in their daily life. Thus, the feeling of being a minority is not connected to migration trends; however, as Chapter Five showed, the membership in a minority group is associated with a greater likelihood to migrate. First, this feeling of not being a minority in one's daily life, even in a society marked by considerable separation – an issue mentioned by many participants as being a key element in their self-definition – is noted since schools, neighbourhoods, etc. are usually frequented by peers from the same ethnic identity. This separation was already mentioned in Chapter Five, especially seen as a threat by the minority group members. Second, the self-categorisation as a minority is rare (Sotto-Santiago, 2022), as such a status is perceived negatively. This explains the discrepancy between the feeling of being a minority and the actual belonging to a minority group.

Furthermore, there is a clear difference in the self-perception of the participants, and how similar they think they are to other people. Generally speaking, the minority group members feel fewer similarities to any group than the majority group members. While Russophones

feel very similar to other people in Estonia and the rest of the EU, Estonians feel slightly more similar to people in Finland than to the ones in Estonia. Russophones feel quite similar to people in other EU countries, even more than Estonian speakers. This goes in line with the migration trends of minority group members, as they tend to move towards the west, other EU countries are the top destination. Nevertheless, the minority group members build their identity in a transnational space and struggle to feel fully belonging to any group. Thus, they struggle to express a strong relationship to any group, despite their ethnic peers. It is hard to articulate the struggle of belonging, identity, group relations, especially for minority adolescence, and thus consciously or unconsciously, it may be channelled into a fantasy (Bolognani, 2016). However, Estonian speakers feel strongly connected to Finns and other Estonians, both languages are very similar, and Finland is perceived more positively than Estonia. Russian speakers feel a connection to the EU and Estonia, both perceived more positively than Russia. Thus, both groups strive for the connection and membership in a higher social group, which goes in line with research on group relations (see Chapter Six).

Finally, most of the participants believe that their identity will not change through the migration. This data does not fall in line with previous research, stating that migration changes one's own identity; however, it needs to be acknowledged that there is no data to the author's knowledge on the assumption of a future character change in other migration studies, as most of the data is collected after the migration. The trend of participants to not believe that their identity will change can be connected to the mindwork done prior to migration. Bolognani (2016) indicates that even the imagination and the dream of migration can be used as help to overcome traumas, that is, a tool to address negative emotions. Minority group members use migration plans to overcome the negative emotions connected to their membership in a minority group, the stereotypes and the struggle of not feeling belonging in the society. As the perception and imagination of the future migration is nearly completely positive, these dreams and plans function as a resilience strategy for the struggles faced in their life as minority group members.

The next section will present the second part of the data analysis from the Italian case study and look at similar factors associated with the identity of participants, before the results will be combined in a conjoint analysis of both case studies.

## 7.3 The German Italian identity components

As done for the Estonian case study, the Italian data will be grouped into different topics concerning the identity of the participants. In this case, a combination of primary and secondary data will be presented in order to analyse the identity factors of the minority group members in South Tyrol.

### 7.3.1 Ethnic, national and European Identification

> Daniel is very proud of his native language and does not identify as Italian, but very strongly as South Tyrolian and European. For him, even though his nationality is Italian, he cannot identify as Italian because it does not feel right to him.

Daniel has an opinion similar to that of most of the German-speaking participants: identifying as Italian is difficult for him. Instead, they feel more South Tyrolian and European, and his national identity does not fit with how he would categorise himself. Even though he accepts his nationality as being Italian, it does reflect his personal identification.

> Eleonora cannot identify as South Tyrolian, but rather as Italian and European. She feels connected to the Italian community and is very proud of her native language and culture.

Eleonora's position stands in stark and parallel opposition to Daniel's, and it exemplifies the condition of many of the Italian speakers in the study. She feels very Italian, is proud of her language and struggles to define herself as South Tyrolian. The difference between the two groups is shown very strongly in these two examples.

The data from the Italian case study shows similarities to the data gathered in Estonia.[17] One point in which the data is very much alike is the self-identification of the participants. The most favourite identification of German speakers in South Tyrol is South Tyrolian, Italian and European, that is, a combination of all three given categories, as was the case for Russian speakers in Estonia.

[17] One differentiation was made in the questionnaires, while Estonians could choose between 'Russian' or 'Estonian', in this case study, participants could choose between 'Italians' and 'South Tyrolians' in all related categories.

Nearly 80% of the minority group members identify strongly or very strongly as South Tyrolian, Italian and European. In general, all three of the identities simultaneously is the most favourite "very strong" identification for German speakers, at over 49%. To identify as South Tyrolian and European follows with nearly 70% of participants, yet with a higher number of people identifying "somewhat strongly" as such (44.8% chose "somewhat strongly", 25.4% chose "very strongly"). Thus, the data shows that minority group members in the Italian case study prefer to identify with their ethnic, national and European identity, or with the ethnic and European identity. This very much resembles what appears in the Estonian data.

The data concerning the majority group members differ strongly on this point. Over 82% of the majority group members identify "strongly" or "very strongly" as "only Italian" (in comparison, 74% of the minority group members do not identify at all or not very strongly as only Italian). Yet, the second most popular identification among majority group member as very strongly is "Italian and European" (43% identify with it "very strongly", 35% as "strongly"). Here again, a strong similarity to the data from the Estonian case study can be seen; the majority group members prefer solely their national identity, or alternatively a combination from the national and European identity. This goes in line with previous studies (see Chapter Six), stating that the national identity is still the most important one for majority group members in a country (e.g., Alba and Foner, 2015; Clycq *et al.,* 2021). On the other hand, ethnic identities are very important for minority group members (see e.g., Fleischmann and Phale, 2016), which in this case is shown by the data, as the participants choose mainly South Tyrolian, Italian and European. Nevertheless, minority group members choose the option with multiple identities, rather than "only South Tyrolian". The fact that ethnic minorities as well as majority group members like to identify as European as well as an added category to their ethnic or national identity is consistent with the theory of European identity as an umbrella category for both groups (see e.g., Agirdag *et al.,* 2016; Clycq *et al.,* 2021) presented in Chapter Six, as well as with the data from the Estonian case study.

When working with and analysing the qualitative data, the texts were grouped according to certain topics. The topic with the most connected references was 'Identity'.

When doing a word count throughout the data, the term 'Identity', after 'South Tyrol' and

'Italy', is the most used word. The analysed articles leave the feeling of running in circles. The same questions return over and over again, "Do you feel Italian or Austrian?", or similar questions which leave the minority group members struggling to answer. Asking "Where are you from?" – seemingly a simple everyday question – has a much deeper meaning for minority group members trying to explain their identity. All answers are slightly different, yet the essence is the same. Identity, especially minority identity, cannot be forced into a single term: it needs explanation, variety and it might change according to the context. When analysing the primary data concerning the identity of the participants, a clear tendency can be found. The analysis shows a strong search for identity and insecurity in the participants prior to their migration. The participants do feel "in-between" or "not belonging anywhere", rather than mentioning multiple identities in their own words. As one participants clearly states "I am still searching for my identity." This can be connected to the Self-categorisation theory by Turner in 1985 (Turner and Reynolds, 2011), which states that one's own social identity is framed in an in- and out-group environment. For the minority group members in the study these groups are yet not clearly distinguished: what is in-group, what is out-group? Is language the main factor, is it nationality, or place of birth? These questions are part of the identity development of the adolescents, so they are still generally insecure about their answers, which are apprehensive and diffuse, also shown below by the quote of one participant who remarked:

"It is complicated. I don't really know how I should identify myself".

Furthermore, a longer explanation of heritage, native language and nationality are common; thus, the question of identity cannot be answered easily by the participants. Frequently, this is connected to negative connotations (as in a participant's observation: "As a South Tyrolean, you always have to explain and almost "justify" yourself.") As one's own identity is also connected to a collective identity, and thus to a difference or a sameness with certain groups (Brubaker *et al.*2000), the participants calling themselves something "in-between" are not able to fully identify with one group. A strong indicator of this is the statement made by one participant

" When people from abroad refer to me as Italian, it triggers an unpleasant feeling in me".

In this case “Italian” is an imposed category, which is inconsistent with the participant’s self-categorisation (Barreto, 2002), and it does not cover the different layers of the identity. Furthermore, it implies some features minority group members cannot necessarily fulfil or assume, connected to stereotypes and expectations which a categorisation of “Italian” entails (see the theory in Chapter Six).

Especially when talking about nationality or citizenship, the data show that in the common understanding this is interchangeable with identity. Many participants answer in a way which gives the impression that a different citizenship would legitimize their identity or even change it. Yet, this might relate to stereotypes which are usually ascribed to a nationality, and which might not fit the self-categorisation of the participants. Being Italian implies certain things in the common understanding, and to not fulfil those expectations is a standard encounter for minority group members. Thus, in this case, the discussion on citizenship or dual citizenship, or even the proposal that one participant offers of “international citizenship”, are usually a discussion about identity rather than legal status.

> “If international citizenship had existed, I would have given up mine without hesitation. Because I thought you could only have one identity.”

This quote shows very clearly how strong the perception about the connection of citizenship and identity is. As minority group members hardly identify with the national identity (here, Italian), many start questioning their nationality or citizenship as well, as national identities are seen as static categories (Agirdag *et al.,* 2016), which do not include ethnic minorities.

The data make it very clear that the question of identity, belonging and nationality are crucial for ethnic minorities and that, especially in the pre-migration period, most of them have not yet found a clear answer for themselves.

### 7.3.2 Self-categorisation

For Daniel the other people in Italy are different from him; they (mostly) have another native language, but also in terms of culture, politics, and leisure activities etc. He does not see a lot of similarities with other Italian nationals. With people in South Tyrol, he feels very much connected and feels that he shares their way of life. He feels uncomfortable if people

approach him as Italian, as he cannot identify as that. He is part of the German minority but he cannot connect to Austria nor to Italy in a way to fully identify with one of the two.

Daniel's example shows that an imposed category can create negative emotions in a person. He is struggling with the way people see him ("Italian") and the way he sees himself ("South Tyrolian"). For him, the similarities are mainly connected to the language spoken, which prevents him from feeling similar to other people in Italy. Language is a central part of one's identity (see Chapter Six) and often connected to the nationality of individuals. Participants of this study mentioned language as the main point of distinction between the groups, which is why the main focus is laid on language in the analysis. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the differences between the groups are manifold, including culture, diet, partially religion etc. However, the topic of language and belonging was also mentioned by other participants, in a different setting.

> "Maybe [I would prefer] German or Austrian [citizenship], but only because I can speak German if I have to go to an embassy or something abroad."

Thus, the lack of ease or skill in speaking Italian in certain situations, especially concerning authorities, makes a very clear point of differentiation. As shown in Chapter Six, language is a crucial part of one's own identity, and one influential point of demarcation that distinguishes between 'us' and 'them'. Thus, the category of being 'Italian' is naturally connected to the Italian language; however, not all nationals of Italy share Italian as their native language. The quote above, firstly, shows the practical issues of the minority group belonging which may influence their comfort in a broader picture. Secondly, it is an example for the occasional contact between the two linguistic groups, connected to an inability to speak the other's language effectively, which corresponds with the data analysed in Chapter Five. Furthermore, the view from the outside challenges the individual's identity. As this participant states:

> "Practically no one knows our history and sometimes we don't feel like explaining for the 100th time why we, as 'Italians', don't speak Italian but German as our mother tongue."

This quote shows how strong the connection of language and identity is, as well as the challenges encountered when explaining one's own identity when confronted with

stereotypes or misunderstanding. Language is a crucial part of identity and is an essential part of differentiating between groups (see e.g. Blommaert and Verschueren, 1992; Tajfel, 1992). The participant has the feeling of constantly needing to explain or even give excuses for their 'being', and the frustration is palpable in the quote. Again, the stereotypes connected with being 'Italian' are a factor the participant is struggling with, as this person cannot fulfil the societal expectation to speak Italian. Thus, the data show a strong connection between language and identity and how it emerges as the primary factor associated with a feeling of belonging to a group. The problem of categorisation is also made very clear by another participant who states:

> "When people from abroad refer to me as Italian, it triggers an unpleasant feeling in me".

This sentence clearly states the issue of being categorised by others and how it influences the individuals' emotions. Even though the participant is, in fact, an Italian citizen, all the stereotypes, imaginations and pictures that being called "Italian" will impose upon an individual are far from coinciding with his own perception of the self, as already mentioned above. This meta-stereotype concerns the beliefs of a person regarding the stereotypes ascribed to this group and can cause negative emotions (see theoretical basis in Chapter Six).

Looking at the daily life of the participants, the data show different tendencies. The primary data show a picture similar to the Estonian case study. The feeling of being a minority in one's daily life is not strong in either of the groups; however, some differences can be detected. In South Tyrol, 34.7% of the Italian speakers feel "somewhat strongly" or "very strongly" a minority, while 15.4% of the German speakers feel "somewhat" like a minority, and none of them feels "strongly" like a minority. In the Italian case, it can be stated that the German speakers feel even less like a minority than the Italian speakers. 70.7% of the German-speaking participants do not feel like a minority in their daily life, compared to the 42% of Italian speakers do not feel so. As a matter of fact, it can be said that German speakers are not a minority in the entirety of South Tyrol, while Italian speakers are in some towns. Yet, as shown by Verkuyten (1997), identities are connected to a specific context and in this case the context given was qualified by adding the detail "in your daily life", and as shown in Chapter One and in Chapter Five, we have seen how the societies are separated.

This means that in the daily life of the participants, ordinary contacts with the other ethnic group are very infrequent, which might influence the feeling of being a minority. This is similar to what has been stated in the Estonian case above. However, in this case it is quite clear that Italian speakers feel their minority status more keenly than German speaker, which falls in line with the tendency seen in Chapter Five. Italian speakers are involved in co-ethnic return patterns; one factor for this is connected to the feeling of being a minority in South Tyrol, in contrast with the other regions of Italy.

One essential finding emerging from the qualitative data is that the word "minority" was never used as self-description. However, objectively seen, German speakers in Italy are a minority; when discussing identity, belonging and one's own perception of it, the term "minority" itself was never used. In the region of South Tyrol, Italian speakers are the minority; nevertheless, they did not use the word. This goes in line with the Estonian case study as well as the research of Sotto-Santiago (2022), stating that the word "minority" was not used by minority group members when asked to self-identify. Thus, the categorisation of the participants itself is more connected to descriptions of how they feel concerning identity and belonging. This, however, is connected to the fact that the term "minority" and general assumptions about the status of minority group members have a negative perception (Lemay and Ashmore, 2004). However, the minority status is connected to a certain territory (see Chapter Six), so this categorisation is obsolete when a minority group member leaves the country of residence. Thus, the minority group status and the negative perception of it influences migration decision, as it can change the status of the individual.

The data show first, a great discrepancy between the way people categorise themselves and how they are categorised from outside. Connected with stereotypes and societal expectations, these trigger negative emotions in the minority group members as well as the constant feeling of not belonging to their ascribed category. Furthermore, one of the main factors involved in grouping oneself is language, which is a central factor of one's own identity and a principal way to distinguish the 'us' and 'them'. Although the feeling of being a minority is not very strong among participants, it is slightly stronger among Italian speakers. This is another indicator for the strong separation of the two linguistic groups, as there is very little contact in their daily life habits, similar to the Estonian case.

### 7.3.3 Differentiation and belonging

In her daily life Eleonora feels like a minority. She feels more similar to people from other Italian regions as opposed to people in South Tyrol. When looking at other EU countries, she cannot find many similarities.

Eleonora is struggling with the division of the two languages and cultures in South Tyrol. In her eyes the separation is very strong, and being or feeling fully integrated in society has become impossible.

> Eleonora is struggling with her position as an Italian speaker. She confesses to not feeling integrated and goes on to mention how difficult it is that the language groups are separated. She is strongly connected to other Italian regions and does not feel affinity to people in the region.

In her case, this might be mainly connected to the language, as she sees more similarities with people living farther away, yet speaking the same language, than with her neighbours who have a different native language. This corresponds with the data presented above; however, it is also connected to a feeling of belonging, which is lacking in Eleonora's perception, as already seen in Chapter Five.

> Daniel feels many similarities to the other people in South Tyrol, and very few similarities to the people in the rest of Italy. In his perception he is very much like people living in Austria. Daniel does not feel Italian, nor does he feel Austrian. Rather, he feels something in between, or perhaps neither. Therefore, his wish is to have dual citizenship so that he could appreciate his identity more fully.

Daniel shows the opposite opinion to that of Eleonora. He does not feel similar to other people in Italy, but rather to the people in Austria. Here again, the argument of language can be mentioned. As Daniel shares his native language with the majority of people in South Tyrol, but with mostly all people in Austria, his idea of sameness is strongly connected to people in Austria and to his native language.

The question of belonging is, alongside the issue of identity, the main issue raised by the participants. The primary and the secondary data show a similar picture: the topic of belonging and differentiation is crucial for minority group members.

The primary data in the Italian case, in contrast with the Estonian primary data, has an additional category. In the Italian case, the minority is exclusively situated in the territory of South Tyrol, thus a very small part if the territory of the Italian state. Thus, in this case it needs to be distinguished between the feeling of belonging to that specific territory and to the 'rest' of the Italian national territory.

The primary data show a difference in the perceived similarity to other nations in the majority and the minority group members. Over 68% of the German speakers think that they are similar or very similar to people in Austria, while only 34% think that they are similar to people in other Italian regions. On the other hand, 45% of the majority group members feel affinity to other people in Italy. Overall, it can be stated, that Italian speakers feel similar to other people in Italy, while German speakers feel very much similar to people in Austria. For German speakers, people in Germany are also quite like them in their perception, yet people in Switzerland not so much. This goes in line with the migration patterns of both groups: Italian speakers tend to migrate internally, to other regions of Italy, while German speakers mostly migrate to Austria. Thus, the feeling of sameness to other groups is also connected to the idea of an Imagined Community in the destination (see Chapter Five).

Interestingly, when asked about the similarities with other EU-countries the main answers are "I don't know" or "neither similar nor dissimilar" for the minority group members. This is an indicator of the general struggle that minority group members feel on the issue of similarities, which has already been revealed in the Estonian case study. Thus, they are unsure about similarities to other EU countries, while the majority group members have a more distinct opinion, very few participants ticked the option of "I don't know".

Examining one's own perception of similarity and differences in comparison to other nations or groups offers an idea as to how the participants define themselves in group relations. In this case it is very clear that both minority and majority group members feel some sense of belonging to a group (Austrians or Italians from other regions). Yet, there is still a number of

participants unsure about their belonging, who cannot see many similarities with other groups. This can be connected to a part of the minority identity. As seen in Chapter Five, in the Italian case, both groups can be seen as a minority and feel discrimination and separation from the other group. Therefore, the struggle to find belonging might be an issue for both groups in the region of South Tyrol.

The category "Identification" includes most references in the qualitative data and provides indicators for the importance of the topic for the participants. As one of them states "I have always felt in between", thus in between two or more cultures, which another interviewee has noted more precisely: "We grow up between two cultures […]", meaning all people from the area.

Overall, the participants show a great awareness of the topic, and of the question of one's own identity question. The main point to take away from the data collected prior the migration is that the participants do not really know how to identify. Some identities are more comfortable for them, whereas some others do not feel right. But there is no distinct and clear idea on how the individual's own identity can be named or defined.

> "As a member of the German-speaking minority, I feel neither Italian nor Austrian, but something in between..."

Very often the term "in between" was used. This shows that the participants grew up in a transnational space and that they still need to negotiate their identity. Furthermore, it leaves the impression of the need to select either one or the other option. The participants feel compelled – be it from their own internal need or from external pressure – to find a distinct identity, to be able to describe themselves and to express belonging to one group. As one's own identity is constructed in the relationship to others (see e.g. Abrams *et al.* in Wheelan 2005; Verkuyten, 1997), a crucial element of one's own identity is how an individual sees the self, compared to others. Therefore, the questions of sameness and differences towards other nations is important to understand the minority identities. Yet, this also is the basis of the idea of belonging to one group being exclusive. Especially in the pre-migration period, the idea of validation of one's own identity is very strong. Talking about citizenship as validation of the identity or the perception from the outside, the struggle lays in the discrepancy of the felt and the perceived identity from the outside.

One important term, used by many participants was “Belonging”. The category of belonging consists of several different sub-categories, such as Integration, Expectations, Separation, and Nationality. Belonging to a group or category is a crucial part of the identity of an individual (Liebkind, 2006; Weldon, 2006), yet, as seen above, fully belonging to a group is one of the biggest challenges for ethnic minorities.

It can be stated that in the Italian case, minority group members struggle to feel fully belonging to one category or group. They cannot see themselves as very similar to other communities and struggle with the feeling of being in-between two or more cultures; however, they feel affinity to people in Austria who speak the same language. Italian speakers, on the other hand, feel connected to people living in other regions of Italy, speaking the same language. Both expect to improve their situation when moving to a community where they imagine more frequent encounters with people more similar to themselves than in the current society. Thus, this explains one part of the migration pattern.

### 7.3.4 Identification imaginations and migration

> Daniel imagines himself having less contact with Italy and people in Italy. He dreams of building up his identity as more European since he will be living abroad.

Daniel is one of the few who believes that the move will influence how he identifies. He is moving to Austria and is looking forward to leaving Italy behind and finding a place where he fully belongs. He hopes to become more European, as he will accumulate international experience with his studies. Yet, this is not the general trend in the data.

A main differentiation between the data of the two case studies needs to be made. In the Italian case, the primary data was collected prior to the migration, just as it was in the Estonian case. Yet, in this case study, secondary data were used as well, consisting of existing studies and testimonials of migrants belonging to the German minority in Italy. Therefore, a comparison can be made here between the pre- and the post-migration period, which emerges as an interesting case especially for identity development.

When the participants for the primary data study were asked directly whether they thought that their identity would change, it was just as in the Estonian case: most of them believed that their identity would not change. Some participants did mention their belief that their

identity might change, especially in how they might feel more Italian or European when they plan to study abroad, but this is not the norm of the data but rather some single outliers. Thus, the general trend of the primary data was the perception that one's own identity would stay the same, regardless of a move, be it national or international. Despite this, the expectation of an improvement of one's own situation and feeling of belonging was found. According to previous research, identities change through migration (see Chapter Six); nevertheless, this is not part of the imagination and the expectation of future migrants.

A clear distinction needs to be made between the primary and the secondary data, which per se can serve as factor to analyse the differences in the data. The primary data were collected prior the migration or the planned migration, while the secondary data consist purely of text concerning migrants, which made the step already. A great change in the identity definition of participants can be found which compare the primary and the secondary data. A development of descriptive abilities for one's own identity is shown; in addition, a more significant identification can be seen. Having multiple identities seems to be common ("I have many identities") and more importantly, fully accepted.

> "And that's why I no longer have a problem with my South Tyrolean identity. Because it is only one of many - even if it is an important one. But it no longer excludes the others."

This is a crucial change of tone and perception of one's own identity and the need to explain oneself. As one migrant states, when thinking about the time period prior to the migration:

> "If international citizenship had existed, I would have given up mine without hesitation. Because I thought you could only have one identity."

This view had changed during or after the migration and makes accepting one's own heritage easier. This can be an indicator that one's own identity was explored through the migration process, which could be one of the reasons for the migration itself. Thus, even though the prospective migrants cannot imagine that they will change their identity, previous studies and the secondary data show that it is mostly the case.

Verkuyten states, already in 1997, that minority identities have a higher complexity, and it can be quite difficult for adolescents to achieve any awareness of such an issue as identity. Thus, migration offers the opportunity to function as a driver where minorities can find these identities and situate themselves in their most comfortable cultural and social surroundings. Migration can help individuals to accept their own multiethnicity and sense of belonging to more than one culture and place. There is a misunderstanding in the inevitable connection of the land of birth and home, or the ethnicity and home, which has and still is politically abused for certain decisions (Tucker, 1994). Thus, taking the self out of the habitual context will change the perception of one's own status and thus the definition of one's own identity.

> "I have many identities, for example I have a different one in each language."

The data show a strong change between the identity statements before and after the migration. In line with the literature (see Chapter Six), it can be stated that minority group members struggle to find and define their identity, and thus, they may choose to change the context in order to explore their ethnicity further. As already seen in the Estonian case study, migration is seen as a positive happening in the future, so the expectations and imaginations are connected to positive emotions. Thus, the imagination is to change the context, but to keep one's own identity, and thus by shifting the social circumstances the own categorisation can be transformed into a more positive one. Especially, as in the Italian case, participants tend to migrate to destinations where they expect people to be like them and to have a good community there.

### 7.3.5 Conclusion Italian case

Looking at the data in the Italian case, the identification of the minority and majority group members differs strongly. While Italian native speakers strongly identify as Italians, minority group members identify as South Tyrolians, Italians and Europeans mostly. This shows that minority group members prefer a multi-faced identity, while the majority group members prefer to identify with their national identity only. For both groups, the European identity as an additional category is accepted and being so, it can work as an umbrella identity. This

corresponds with previous research (see Chapter Six) as well as the data from the Estonian case study.

Minority group members struggle with the discrepancy of the self-categorisation and the ascribed identities, which are connected to stereotypes. Italian speakers in South Tyrol feel more like a minority in their daily life than the German speakers of this province, which is one point where the data differ strongly with respect to the Estonian case study. In the Italian case study, participants question their citizenship, as for them it is strongly connected to identification. However, the feeling of being a minority and the migration plans are not strongly connected.

When asked about the feeling of belonging, the participants, most from the minority group members, struggle to express their feeling of belonging to a certain group. They feel similar to Austrians, yet not similar to other people living in Italy. This is in clear contrast with the majority group members, who feel affinity to other people in Italy, given how the language differentiation was mentioned as a main reason. This shows that the feeling of being similar to the society in a destination country tends to facilitate migration plans to this country.

The identity change and how it is connected to migration can be seen clearly when comparing the primary and secondary data. Before the migration, the general perception is that the identities will not change, yet, the secondary data clearly show that the identity does change through the migration. Participants, answering the questionnaire in the pre-migration period, will expect the surroundings to change, while they themselves (their core identity) will stay the same. They imagine that their status will improve thanks to their decision to migrate, that they will feel more belonging and find a community where they can fit in. However, previous research shows that identities change through migration (see Chapter Six) and in this specific case it mainly has to do with accepting that identities are multi-faced and that they do not need to be defined with one word or a simple description. The minority identities after the migration are more diverse and ethnic, or national, and any other identity can exist without being exclusive, meaning that the different characteristics of minority identities are distinct.

## 7.4 Discussion

Minority groups face the challenge of developing their identity and seeking to self-define, while they are living in a context in which their ethnic identity is a crucial part of their daily life. Bias and segregation of different ethnic groups are a reality in many places with minorities, and especially during adolescence the need to explore one's own identity is crucial. In the table below, the results of both case studies are compared to examine the similarities and differences and to understand which results can be more generalised.

*Table 12 - Comparison Italian and Estonian cases according to Identity*

| Estonian case study | Italian case study |
|---|---|
| • Solely primary data collected prior the migration was used for this empirical chapter | • Primary and secondary data was used in the Italian case study, primary data collected prior the migration, secondary data from after the migration |
| • Minority group members prefer a wider definition of their identity (54.3% identify very strongly as Russian, Estonian and European, 30% somewhat strongly), this is their preferred definition. However, they can also identify as Estonian and European (16.9% very strongly, 43.7% somewhat strongly)<br>• Majority group members primarily define as Estonian (75.6% of Estonian speakers define themselves very strongly as only Estonian), and also as Estonian and European (54.7% identify very strongly as Estonian and European)<br>• Self-definition in the minority group members' own words is often built as a contrast ("I am from Estonia but I am Russian"), showing the difficulties of defining their own identity and the plurality of minority identities | • Minority group members mainly identify as South Tyrolian, Italian and European (49% of the minority group members in the study identify very strongly as such, 30% somewhat strongly), and South Tyrolian and European (25.4% very strongly, 44.8% somewhat strongly)<br>• Majority group members prefer to identify as only Italian (34.8% identify strongly as such, 47.8% somewhat strongly) or Italian and European (43% identify strongly, 35% somewhat strongly)<br>• The feeling of being "in between" and "not belonging" is very strong in both groups<br>• Self-definition is connected to the native language and the nationality, language is the main point of differentiation for both groups |

| | |
|---|---|
| • Minority and majority group members do not differ significantly in their feeling of being a minority. Minority group members feel slightly stronger like a minority; however, defining oneself as minority is not common | • Neither of the groups defines themselves strongly as a minority, however Italian speakers feel slightly more like a minorities in their daily life. When asked about self-definition, no one used the term minority<br>• Minority group members feel uncomfortable when being defined by others and put in certain categories |
| • Estonian native speakers see many similarities with the people in Finland, more than to people in Estonia<br>• Russian speakers feel similar to Estonians and to people in other EU countries, however not similar to Russians. This goes in line with migration trends of the groups<br>• Generally, Russian speakers feel less similarities to other groups than Estonian speakers | • German speakers see many similarities with people in Austria, more than with people in Italy<br>• Italian speakers find themselves very similar to people in other regions of Italy<br>• Both groups feel equally similar to other EU countries<br>• Belonging is one of the most used words by participants and in the secondary data collected |
| • Most of the participants are sure that their identity will not change after the migration, because it is pictured as a very positive development. The participants decide to change their surroundings, in order to change their social categorisation, thinking that it will not influence their character | • Most of the participants are sure that their identity will not change after the migration<br>• The secondary data, collected after the migration experiences, makes clear that the understanding of identity changes after migration. It is easier to put one's own identity in words, and the plurality is more easily accepted |

Minority group members have a multi-faced identity; thus, they do not identify with a single nation, culture or language, but rather with different aspects of different cultures and a combination of them. As the quantitative data shows, minority group members clearly prefer a broader definition of themselves, one that includes several identities. This confirms the results of previous studies, according to the combination of an umbrella identity with their own ethnic identity (Curtis, 2014). The feeling of being stereotyped causes an

avoidance of out-group contact and if inevitable a hostile reaction towards the out-group members (Vorauer et al., 1998), which exacerbates the division between the groups. The data show the struggle to find a distinct identity among the minority group members. They prefer to identify with multiple cultures, as they feel to belong everywhere a bit but nowhere exclusively. Migration is a good tool to explore those multi-faced identities, and the change of context facilitates the development of an identity independently from the minority status and possible group bias. In the Italian case, a comparison of the data before the migration and after the migration can be made. In the pre-migration period, an insecurity about one's own identity can be seen; the participants are confused and do not want to be put into a single category where they feel will not fit. After the migration, minority group members accept the fact that they have multiple identities and that all of them can function in a parallel way and do not need to exclude each other.

One interesting part of the data is that in both case studies the majority group members identify strongly with their national identity; it is the most chosen among all of them. This reflects previous studies which underscore that national identities are indeed one of the most important for majority group members (see e.g. Agirdag *et al.,* 2016; Alba and Foner, 2015; Clycq *et al.,* 2021). This can be confirmed through the data from both case studies. Furthermore, in both cases the second most chosen option of majority group members was their national identity along with the European identity. This is an indicator that the European identity could indeed serve as an additional identity which does not replace the ethnic or national identity, but rather functions as an umbrella category which can be accepted by majority and minority group members. This goes in line with the Theory of the European Identity presented in Chapter Six as a combining factor and a common ground for people with a variety of identities in Europe (see e.g. Curtis, 2014; Waechter, 2016).

Another aspect in which the data of both cases present a similar picture is in regard to the self-definition as a minority. Most of the participants do not feel like a minority in their daily life, regardless of their ethnic identity. However, in Estonia Russophones feel slightly more like a minority, and in South Tyrol Italian speakers feel slightly more like a minority, however those trends are not strong enough to be significant. This result is due to several factors; one is the separation of the societies, which is in place in both cases (see Chapters One and Five), which offers the individuals a daily reality in which there is little to no contact with the

other ethnic group, thus in their daily life they are not minorities. Besides a few participants (regardless of the group relationship), which feel strongly like a minority in their daily life, the general trend is rather to the contrary. Another factor is how the question was worded. The focus was intentionally placed on the daily life, not on the general feeling of belonging. Thus, the participants were invited to think about a typical day in their life, and this shows how strong the separation of the societies is. It needs to be taken into consideration that even though the predominant trend was that the participants did not consider themselves a minority, some of them in fact did, and those were not exclusively minority group members. This might be connected to the factor that in both cases so called minority-majority regions exist, that is, territories in which the national majority is a minority in numbers. In this case factually the majority group members are a minority, which might have influenced the answer. For the Estonian case an additional factor can be named. Estonian, as a language, is medium-sized, which limits its usability and forces the native speakers to learn at least one other language if they want to be able to communicate outside of their home territory. Thus, the data show that defining the self as a minority is rare, which goes in line with previous research (see Chapter Six) and that the feeling of being a minority is not connected to migration plans, while the actual belonging to a minority group is an indicator for a higher likelihood of migration (see Chapter Five).

As seen above and shown clearly by the data, the participant group themselves according to language, and despite all the differences which characterize the groups, for the participants themselves, language is the most distinctive feature. Seen this, throughout the whole data collection period and also looking at the secondary data, the analysis is mainly built on the differences in language usage. However, it needs to be acknowledged that also other cultural features, religion, diet, traditions etc. are part of the identity of the participants, even though this thesis does not focus on them.

Another factor in which the data of the two case studies offers a similar picture is the perception of similarities with other nations. In Estonia, the native Estonian speaker feel more similar to Finnish people than to Estonian people; in Italy the native Germans feel more similar to Austrians than to other people in Italy. The cases here are not completely similar. Finnish and Estonian share similar linguistic roots, yet are not the same language, while the German speakers in South Tyrol share the same language with people in Austria.

Nevertheless, in both cases, the group feels a strong connection to another nation, a nation in the north, which has a higher societal status than their own nation. On the other hand, Russophones in Estonia feel similarities to other EU countries; here, the trend points to movement towards the west. Italian speakers feel connected to people in other regions of Italy. In both cases and in all studied groups, people feel similar to those countries which are the main destinations for migration plans. Thus, the data indicate that there is a correlation between the perceived similarity to people from a place and migration plans. This conforms with the Imagined Communities in the chosen destinations (see Chapter Five) and the fact, that the future migrants in this study imagine being happier and having a good community after the migration; indeed, they expect the migration to bring a very positive development.

When asked about the self-definition of the minority group members, the nationality and the ethnicity are mentioned. Thus, it is important for them to distinguish from the majority group and indicate their belonging to their ethnic peers. This is valid for both case studies and very typical for minority group members, as their identity is more complex than that of majority group members. Also, the self-definition is based on a contrast in many cases, as they try to bring together the complexity of language, nationality, belonging, etc.

Furthermore, the data show that prior to the migration, participants cannot imagine that they will change their identity through migration. However, most previous research and the secondary data in this study show that identities do change through migration. However, before the move is conducted, participants perceive migration as being a very positive happening in their life and imagine being happier in the destination. As seen above, they imagine themselves as changing the context and disposing of their status as minority group member in their destination, thus leading to an improvement of their social identity without changing the own.

The main takeaway points of this part of the data analysis is that minority group members have a complex and multi layered identity; however, the European identity can function as a combining characteristic for minority and majority group members. Furthermore, self-defining as a minority is rare, as it is connected to a negative social status, and it is not a daily reality of many minority group members. When combining the data of the first analysis and the present chapter, a correlation between perceived similarities with people of a nation and migration plans can be found. This falls in line with the research on Imagined

Communities (see Chapter Four), which was also already analysed in the empirical Chapter Five.

## 7.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the second part of the study's data, focusing on identity and migration; data from both case studies were presented and discussed. Based on the analysis and the literature presented in Chapter Six, it can be stated that minority group members prefer to identify with multiple cultures and not reduce their identity into one distinct category. They combine nationality with their ethnicity, and add the European identity when given the option. The European identity can function as a combining category for minorities and majorities. Nevertheless, the minority participants are still in a stage of confusion and searching for their identity. The data from after the migration in the Italian case, shows an improvement in the descriptive abilities of minority group members. They describe having several identities, and all of them exist in parallel, as they have finally understood that they are not forced to choose one single identity. This is an indicator that the migration can function as a process of clarifying one's own identity and belonging. Migration can be used as technique to explore their own identity in a different context and thus to help develop a more distinctive view of the self. Furthermore, the perception of migration is very positive prior the actual move, connected to the imagination of an improvement and a community in which the individual fits. This is verified through the fact that participants feel similar to the people in the most common migration destinations; thus, migration is also seen as a social act, improving the community in which one is surrounded.

The next chapter will discuss the outcome of the data collected and analysed in chapters Five and Seven in this thesis and brought into a bigger picture. The substantial take away points will be elaborated and discussed, and two models based on the data from this study will be presented. The first model concerns the migration cycle of minority group members, the second model illustrated the different fragments of minority identities.

# Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusion

## 8.1 Introduction

This study aimed to explore migration intentions and imaginations of minority group members, seeking to identify whether there were differences in the migration patterns of minority and majority group members and to identify underlying reasons for migration decisions. In the course of researching migration aspirations of minorities, it emerged that the identity and categorisation of the participants plays a crucial role, as they contribute to social relations and subsequently to migration imaginations. This concluding chapter will discuss the results concerning migration intentions and imagination, as well as identity factors of minority group members.

The previous chapters presented the collected data and presented several concepts concerning migration and minorities: theories on migration networks and migration systems as well as ethnic return migration were introduced; furthermore, the concept of identity and group relations as a second theoretical framework were presented as those are the fields this research endeavours to contribute to. With data from two case studies the topic of minorities as migrants was explored, concerning the imagination of migration in the pre-migration period and the identity features of minorities. Data from the study indicate that minority group members have a higher probability of migrating, as well as demonstrating a connection between an Imagined Community and migration decisions. With quantitative and qualitative data, these topics were researched from different angles and in the following sections, the key findings will be discussed and implemented. In this chapter, the results presented in the chapters above will be debated and the substantial outcome presented, illustrated through two models based on the data. Thereafter the theoretical and practical implications of the findings will be elaborated. The chapter will end with concluding remarks, summing up the process of the research and pointing out the contribution that this thesis makes to the landscape of migration and minority research.

## 8.2 Main findings of the study

Drawing on the data gathered, some broad findings of the study can be put forth, taken from the multiple case study analysis developed through an analysis of the data of both cases. Rethinking the findings on the two main topics of migration and minority identities, a more general picture can be drawn, concerning the imaginations, intentions and identities of the participants. In some aspects the data were surprisingly similar, especially with respect to the migration plans of the minority groups, the positive imagination of their future community, and the identification of participants with different categories. In other aspects, the two case studies differ strongly, above all in the ethnic return migration intentions of the Italian-speaking participants and the feeling of not belonging of the Italian speakers in the region of South Tyrol. The specific circumstances of the case need to be taken into account to realise what factors were in play to influence this outcome, which, especially for the Italian case, is based on the fact that Italian speakers are actually a minority in the region of South Tyrol. Thus, the fact that Italian speakers feel and act differently from other majority group members is obvious. However, this too shows that those emotions, such as a lack of feeling of belonging and a reaction to it, which for their part aid in developing a migration intention, is a trend in the behaviour of minority group members in both cases. In this study, three of four groups acted in this manner; all three of them are minority groups to a certain extent (Italian speakers were already called a regional minority earlier in this study), which gives even stronger indication that those results will be substantial for multiple minority groups.

The analysis concerning the data on migration plans clearly shows a higher probability of minority group members in this study migrating internationally. The consistent findings in both case studies suggest that the probability for migration is higher for minority group members in Europe. This can specifically be connected to minority groups with features similar to the two researched groups; both minority groups are linguistic and ethnic minorities with a significant number of members compared to the majority group. Furthermore, both groups belong linguistically to a larger language group, which is the dominant language in a bordering country. However, the future migrants in both minority groups do not act as typical ethnic return migrants, as the literature would suggest (see

Chapter Four); instead, they opt for a destination which is perceived as more developed than their current place of residence. The literature looks at minority or diasporic migrants mostly as ethnic migrants. Thus, this study contributes to that branch of literature in expanding the view on minority migrants, acknowledging that even though they belong to a minority, their aspirations to migrate do not necessarily need be connected to an ethnic return migration. It can be seen that minorities struggle with their status as minority group members, and in changing the context through migration, they aim to improve their social status and be rid of the label of being a minority. Looking at the factors influencing the migration decision, quantitative and qualitative data were taken into account as well as secondary data. It can be stated that better job opportunities as well as other economic factors are regarded as drivers for minority migration. Yet, this is not necessarily bound to minority group members, but is rather a universal factor of migration. The factors of more interest were those distinguishing the groups, and thus specific for minority group members. One central driver only found in minority group members was the search for a 'place where I can fully belong'. Especially for minority group members the question of belonging is crucial in their daily life and in their decision-making process. This is connected to discrimination, stereotypes and stigmas, which minority group members are more likely to face than majority group members (see previous research in Chapter Six).

This leads to another key result shown by the data. The migration dreams of minority group members are connected to a hope for a better place as well as to the imagination of finding a community in which they fully belong. As previous research states (see Chapter Six), the status of being a minority group member is often connected to a lower social status and to conflicting feelings with respect to the out-group. In this study, minority group members note the negative emotions which they feel arising from the separation of the society and perceived or real exclusion. This lack of feeling of belonging to the society in the country of residence is a strong driver for migration, which differs strongly from the aspirations for most majority group members. In this point the Italian data is different; Italian speakers tend to migrate towards other regions of Italy as they too, do not feel fully belonging to the society in South Tyrol. However, as mentioned above, Italian speakers in this specific context, can be seen a minority too. Thus, it can be stated that the pre-migration period and the decision-making process of minority and majority group members differ with respect to the societal challenges minority group members are facing.

However, the separation of society and the lack of feeling of belonging concerning the specific features, such as language and culture as a driver of migration, are unique to minority group members. This study also shows that even though the belonging to a minority group increases the probability of migration, the migration destinations are not necessarily connected to an ethnic return migration in the sense of intending 'to return home', but rather to the feeling of a mental affinity and conceived connection to the destination country. And this leads to the next key finding of the study, migration paths tend to go towards countries to which the future migrants feel connected and expect a positive community awaiting them. This can be connected to the Migration Network Theory as well as to the imagination of a community (see Chapter Four); however, it is clearly shown that regardless of the destination and of the language in the destination country, future migrants picture themselves similar to the people there. This connection is created prior to the migration, through the media consumed, the people already living there, and other connections; however, the expectations to achieve an improvement in their own social status is central for the decision to migrate of minority group members.

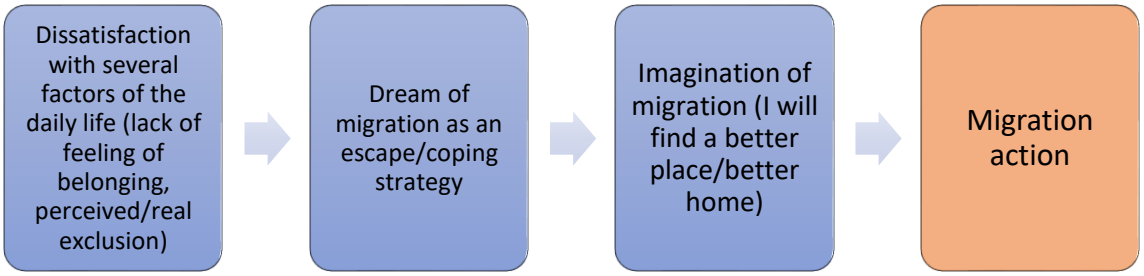
The second main topic addressed in this study concerns the identity of participants, looking at the categorisation and identification of participants according to their ethnic and national identity as well as their relationship to the European identity. Furthermore, the influence of a migration decision on the identity of minority group members in the pre-migration period was researched. Minority group members cannot identify solely with their national identity; the preferred identification is the ethnic identity and the national identity as a geographical location of birth. This differs very strongly from the identification of the majority group members, which, in both case studies, which points to the preference to identify with their national identity primarily. The European identity as an additional category to the ethnic or national identity is frequently chosen by both groups. One of the findings of this study was that ethnic minorities prefer to define themselves with several categories: the ethnic, national and European combined is frequently chosen. Thus, it can be said that the European identity functions as an additional identity for minorities and majorities, and minority group members prefer a more diverse way of identifying.

As the participants were in their pre-migration phase, there is no option to compare an earlier or later identification of the participants, and if or how it changed. Yet, some indicators could be found that the imagination of a community in the destination and the connection to this community is already in place before the actual migration. This imagination can already influence the current identity of the participants and may be used as coping mechanism for their current situation. This approach shifts the focus from the move itself towards the reasons for migration intentions; the factors of dissatisfaction in the current place of residence can be seen as migration drivers. Thus, seeing migration as a process, starting before the physical move, as has already been done in some studies (see Chapter Six), shows the interplay of dissatisfaction factors in the present, and expectations of change in the future. This aids in the understanding of which struggles minority groups are facing, how this influences their identity and why it increases the likelihood to migrate. In order to illustrate this way of looking at migration as a process starting before the physical move, a model will be introduced in the next section.

## 8.3 The pre-migration process of minority group members

This study takes up the migration process, starting prior to the actual move, inspired by dissatisfaction with certain factors and the imagination of an improvement through migration, as depicted in the illustration below.

*Figure 16 - Migration process before the move (elaborated by the author)*




This process of migration, connected with emotions and expectations, is shown in the figure above. Looking at migration as a process starting before the actual move has been a topic in the literature previously (see e.g., Dantzer, 2017). The model above focuses on the pre-migration period, which is the time in which this study is situated. Through researching the aspirations and intentions of minority group members, this model was developed. The process prior to the act of migration starts for participants in this study with a dissatisfaction in the current place of residence. For minority group members, this is connected to a lack of feeling of belonging due to their status as minority group members. In both case studies the societies are separated strongly, which is the basis for their feeling of being excluded. Seeing this as a starting point for migration, a dream is developed, meant to change the context and thus erase the factor responsible for the dissatisfaction. From here, an idea is built, one that a migration could potentially help with the factors of dissatisfaction, especially when they are connected to the status as a minority. The imagination of the migration starts, picturing it in a very positive way. In the pre-migration phase the migration is imagined as solely positive, bringing a better community and improving the factors which were not satisfying for the individual before. All of these steps are done before the migration itself and is especially interesting to understand aspirations for migration. Minorities migrate with a certain set of expectations, the dream of finding their identity, finding a place where they fully belong, a place in which they find a community more like them, yet it may happen that once living abroad, they realise that the place they belong is still their country of origin. This

would be the next step to research and will be presented as future research proposal later in this chapter.

Younger minority group members are particularly unsure about their belonging. Yet, after living in a transnational space throughout their lifetime, the dream of migration, the longing for another or a better place has become part of their identity itself. Exactly because the longing for another place has always been a part of the identity, there is a strong connection between minority identities and migration. This leads to the second topic in this research, the components of the identity of minority group members during the pre-migration period.

## 8.4 Minority identities in the pre-migration phase

As shown by the data in this study minorities have a multi-faced identity and question and readapt their identity constantly. To explore the different factors of minority identities in the pre-migration period is especially interesting because those factors influence migration decisions and expectations first, and then the interactions and actions during this time period before the actual migration. This is crucial in order to switch the view of minority migrants from ethnic return migrants to the multi-faced aspirations, minority group members have to migrate. Furthermore, it offers an idea on which factors influence the cohabitation of different ethnic groups and respects the pre-migration phase as first part of migrations. Thus, combining the data and previous research it can be stated that the identities of minorities in the pre-migration period consist of several factors, shown below in the illustration.

*Figure 17 - Minority identity components (elaborated by the author)*

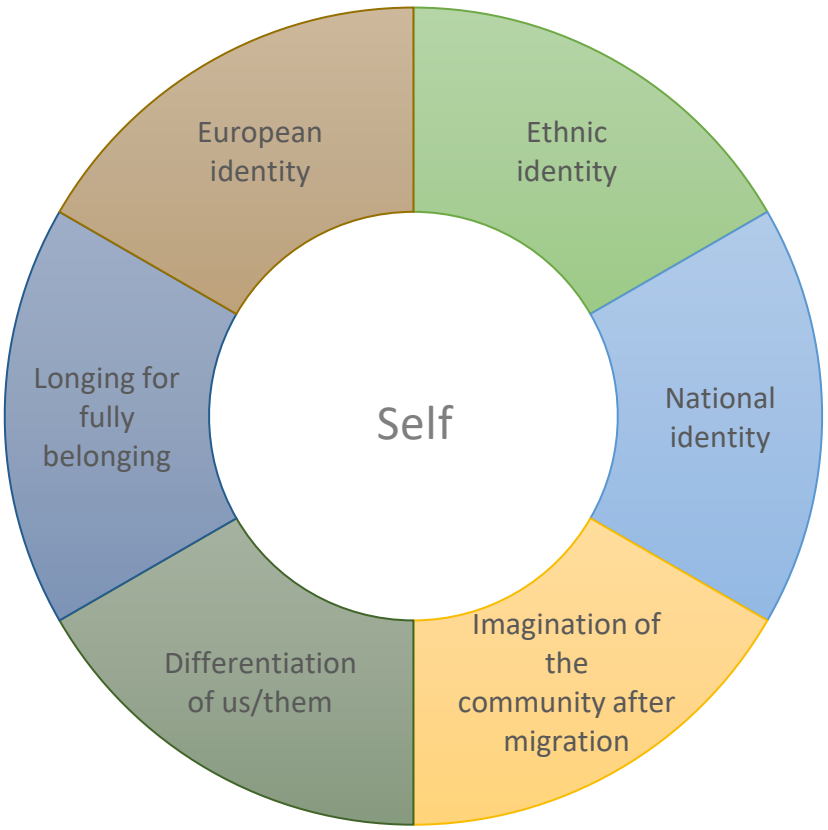



Figure Seven illustrates the main components of minority group members identities during their pre-migration phase according to the data gathered for this study. Those components are specific for the studied groups in this thesis. For every individual the components have varying levels of significance, and in a different context the self shifts more in one direction and further away from another, meaning that some components will take on greater importance in a certain context. For example, as previous research states (see e.g., Kolstø, 1996), the ethnic identity might be appreciated as stronger in a context where it is the main distinguishing point than in another context where it matters less or not at all. Shifting the context implies shifting one's own identity, readapting the different parts according to the surroundings and renegotiating which parts should be in the foreground.

The national, ethnic and European identity are three categorisations which all play a role for minority group members. The national identity is connected with the place of birth and the citizenship of the individual. As seen in Chapter Six and Seven, majority group members identify more strongly with the national identity according to previous research and to the data in this study; however, it too needs to be taken into consideration as one of the many components for minority group members. Foremost among these is how national identity is especially relevant in legal situations. The fact that one participant had considered changing his citizenship to avoid needing to speak Italian in the embassy when living abroad (see Chapter Seven) shows that those legal procedures do influence the perception of the national identity. However, for minority group members the data show that the Ethnic identity is more important than the national identity. They prefer to identify with multiple categories, and the ethnic identity is always part of it. The ethnic identity is the crucial part which differentiates the minority group members from majority group members. A central factor of the ethnic identity is language, which is the greatest distinguishing feature between ethnic groups (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1992; Tajfel, 1992) especially in this study, and one of the earliest cultural features an individual is introduced to. However, as this study and previous studies state (see Chapters Six and Seven), the European identity can function as unifying category for both groups. For minority group members the European identity offers a more inclusive category, as it comprises several languages, cultures and ethnicities and thus, has a low threshold allowing the inclusion of people from several backgrounds. Therefore, it can be seen as an additional layer, which can be combined with the ethnic and the national identity. This is especially important to keep in mind when looking at the strong feeling of differentiation and separation of majority and minority group members. From an early age both groups cohabitating in the same territory differentiate strongly between the 'us and them', reinforced through laws and systems like the separation of schools. In both cases, significant division of societies exists; children attend different schools and very little contact happens on a daily basis between the language groups. This enforces from an early age on a distinction between same and the other, the in- and out-group, which as shown in previous research (see Chapter Six), can be the basis for conflict or negative emotions towards the other group. This interacts with the feeling of a lack of belonging and therefore the longing for a place where to fully belong. This is another crucial part of the minority identities, which combines with other

characteristics. However, the living in between two cultures and the longing for a place featuring all needed characteristics for a minority group member to fully belong, are so strongly developed that they will even be part of the identity after the migration. However, participants cannot imagine that their identity will change after the migration; nevertheless, previous research shows that this is indeed the case (see Chapter Six). In this specific case, dissatisfaction and imagination of a community leads to a wish for migration (see the cycle above). This wish and imagination of the self in the future, of the self after the migration, and in an Imagined Community is already part of the minority identity, as it is used as a coping strategy for current problematic situations and negative emotions which can be tackled with the dream of the self in a better place. In the imagination of future migrants, the migration solves many of their problems, changes their perception from the outside world, and in this case, releases them from the minority status they have taken on since birth. Thus, the component of the imagination of a community awaiting the future migrant mirrors the dissatisfaction with the current place (see Figure Six above) and is not only a component of the identity, but also a driver for migration. Furthermore, this can be called an identity characteristic because whether or not the move is carried out, it will remain part of the individual's identity. However, the future migrants do believe that changing the context will not change their identity, but the literature (see chapter Six) states clearly that migration changes the identity of most individuals. Thus, the above illustration is specific to the pre-migration period of minority group members.

Being aware of the multiple components of minority group members in the pre-migration phase facilitates an understanding of the migration patterns and contributes to the literature on minority identities and how they are changing in specific moments, like the pre-migration phase. Furthermore, it shows that the migration process starts very much before the move is conducted and influences the previous life of migrants already, as well as how they act and perceive themselves in the society.

## 8.5 Implications

This study contributes to the field of migration of minorities, which is mostly seen as co-ethnic return migration (see Chapter Six). However, this thesis shows a different approach concerning minorities as migrants with imaginations and intentions, which are not solely

bound to ethnic return migration. Minorities as migrants should receive more attention in the literature of migration, as the reasons and motives for this group of migrants differ strongly from majority group members. Minority group members feel a lack of belonging and an exclusion of society, which is one factor facilitating migration which is not found among majority group members. Living in between two cultures and struggling with fully identifying with one category is challenging for many minority group members. However, the imagination of a community in the destination country and the wish to improve one's own social status also play a role in migration decisions. However, young migrants in particular do not necessarily tend to move 'back' to any kind of former homeland, but rather to move farther, to better developed countries with better opportunities and where the label of being a minority group member is no longer important. Thus, they rather migrate regardless of their ethnicity, not necessarily towards ethnically similar people but towards their own chosen community where they feel a connection. Thus, on the topic of the ethnic identity of migrants, not automatically relating it to an ethnic migration, but rather seeing it as an emotional factor shaping the behaviour of the person, is a crucial consideration in interpreting the outcome. This way of looking at minority migration is not the common attempt in the literature on ethnic return migration; however, it is a new angle to research the migration intentions of this specific group. In this study the sample consisted of young minority group members, mostly under the age of twenty. This new generation has a different view on their own ethnicity, growing up with internet and access to media in any language, the connection to a possible 'kin state' changes, as the possibilities are much broader than those available to earlier generations. While older minority group members are often bound to what they already know and to which language they speak when making a migration decision, the younger generation has more options to choose from. Therefore, for many generations, ethnic return migration was a much easier move than migration into any other country; however, the new media, the opening of borders and the languages spoken by more recent generations change these preconditions significantly. Thus, the perception of the research of minority migrants will and should be transformed in the coming years, opting for a more open approach, acknowledging the multiple reasons for minority group members to migrate. However, as this thesis shows, the reasons for migration can be many and varied. The label of 'ethnic return migrant' relies strongly on structures and suggests an inevitability, while this thesis argues that the decision to move is

an individual one, and one that comprises all the complexities that individuals manifest. By essentializing members of an ethnic minority to their native language / ethnic minority status, this complexity is lost; thus, it is important to see ethnic migration from different angles, which is done in this thesis.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the two territories chosen for the case studies differ greatly in their policies concerning minority protection (see Chapter One). While South Tyrol is seen as a flagship case in minority protection, Estonia on the other hand was criticised for not working to assure sufficient protection of minority rights. However, the data show that in both cases minority group members feel excluded from society and are struggling with the segregation of the communities. In the Italian case study those feelings expand even to the Italian speakers in the region, as they are numerically inferior and feel excluded and discriminated by German speakers. Thus, even though the political approach is very different, the social situation is quite similar. As in this study the focus is laid specifically on the societal situation of minority group members rather than on other aspects of minority realities, it can be shown that for the daily life and the emotional landscape the minority protection policies do not have a strong impact. However, this outcome does not imply that minority protection rights are not important, it instead shows that they have little impact on the individuals themselves. In both case studies the participants have EU citizenship, which gives them the option to travel freely and the same rights within the EU as for majority group members. And even though the Italian system offers strong protect to minority groups in the areas of language and education, the daily experiences are not necessarily shaped through these policies. Thus, reciprocally the question arises as to whether the policies for minority protection are tackling the issues of the daily reality in a modern minority territory in the European Union or whether they need to be developed and adapted to address current societal challenges.

Keeping in mind the outcome of this study, working towards a united society in places with minority group can improve the overall life satisfaction of both groups. The separation is connected to negative emotions, especially for the minority group members; therefore, they are trying to improve their social status through migration. However, the data also show that identifying as European can function as a bridge to bring the two groups together and ease their feeling of separation. In both cases, the ethnic groups frequent different schools

meaning that the contact between the groups is reduced from an early age on. While this measure is mainly in place to protect the minority groups and languages, the backdrop is the strong separation of societies. Regardless of the social status of the individual, his or her economic situation, education, etc. the label of being a minority group member is always part of the identity and influences the intergroup contact. The language one speaks, as most distinct feature of the minority and majority groups in this study, would not be problematised as much as it is at the moment if policies towards mixed schools and mixed teaching languages would be implemented. In reducing the contact of the groups, the potential for conflict increases and the ability to communicate with each other is not naturally encouraged. Thus, this study contributes to rethinking the concept of cohabitation between different language groups, reflecting previous research, stating that a common identity, the European identity for example, improves the cohabitation. However, the data show that even though this category is accepted by both sides, it is yet not integrated into the daily life of minority and majority group members and the separation is still strongly in place.

Investigation on the pre-migration period with data gathered during this time contributes to the literature on migration imaginations and the general research on migration. The participants answered the questionnaires without having been influenced by the experiences which they would (or may) come to amass during the migration act itself, and in this way they give an unfiltered view on the expectations and imaginations connected to migration. The mainly positive imaginations shown through the data shed light on the needs and hopes connected to a change of context, and simultaneously reveal the factors which are not fulfilling in the current life of participants (see migration cycle illustration above). Thus, a different understanding of the interplay of migration plans and life satisfaction can be drawn and problems are pointed out, which are connected to the context of minority group members. This study is one of the few collecting data during the pre-migration period; however, it emphasises the importance of investigating this period more and acknowledges it as being a crucial part of the migration experience.

Certain limitations need to be acknowledged as well. As seen in the Methods chapter, the COVID pandemic broke out during the course of this research and altered the data collection process (see Chapter Three). Furthermore, the groups chosen for this study were

very specific, and expanding on the topics with other groups with similar features would improve the generalizability of the results. However, this can serve as a foundation for a set of future studies which will be elaborated below.

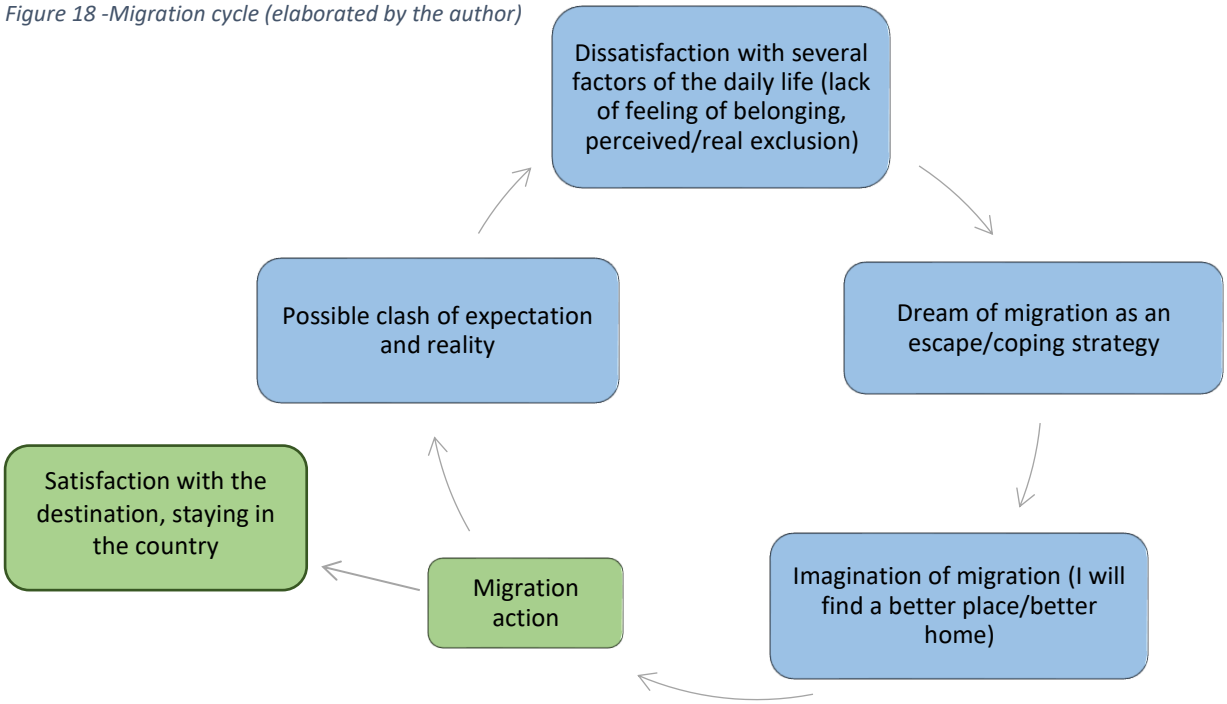
## 8.6 Future research proposal

As seen in the previous chapters, migration is connected to a set of dreams, expectations, and imaginaries, built up in the pre-migration period and influencing the aspirations and decisions of individuals. The data collected suggests that minority group members are more likely to migrate after school. When asked about their hopes and dreams, they expressed their hope to find a better place, a home. Yet, when taking the step to migrate, a different process gets started. Few studies address the topic of the shattered dream of migration and the backdrop many migrants experience. The lack of data concerning this topic is connected to the fact that emigrants usually do not share those experiences willingly with outsiders (Wohlfart, 2015), as its connotation is one of shame and connected to people's incapability to understand the obstacles of migration, which are outside their person experience.

To investigate the consequences of migration of minorities, a long-term study concerning the minority migrants would be an opportunity for future research. In addition, there is the study of these youth on the path of identity-finding abroad, as well as looking into the potential remigration, and what factors play a role in this process. As suggested in Chapter Six, the actual move might bring a very different outcome from what is expected and in turn a remigration might be considered. Alternatively, the dream of migration turns into a dream of coming home again, connected with a nostalgia for the place of origin. The figure below is an expansion of Figure 7 and functions as a hypothesis of what could possibly happen after the actual move.

For example, a cultural shock may occur when an individual enters a foreign society and disregarding how open-minded and willing to learn that person is, a number of familiar cornerstones are removed, and this leads to anxiety and frustration. Cultural shock is a result of numerous stressors connected to the contact with a foreign culture (Winkelmann, 1994). This concept is a factor that prospective migrants cannot imagine and picture.

*Figure 18 -Migration cycle (elaborated by the author)*




However, the circumstances and intensity of the cultural shock depend among other on previous experiences with foreign cultures and on the preparation of the migrant, but also on the degree of difference of the host and the home culture (Winkelmann, 1994). Thus, in the first migration these differences will be felt stronger than in later migration experiences, and for this group of people it is the first migration. In the recent literature, one main group in focus of the research of cultural shock are international students (see e. g. Presbitero, 2016), as they suffer more than others from a cultural shock when moving to another country (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011). If a student encounters a cultural shock the likelihood of achieving a sense of identity or a satisfaction with life is much lower, as well as coping with daily stresses (Presbitero, 2016).

Therefore, when a migration did not work out as expected, which can be due to several reasons, the same coping mechanism as before the migration starts developing: the dream of another place, but this time, it is the dream of home. This is especially interesting for members of cultural minorities. When living in their country of origin, they felt like something in-between, not really belonging, excluded. Living as a migrant makes you wander back and forth in both realities, while not knowing to which one you belong and not being able to establish in any of them (Teo, 2011).

Thus, after the move, two possible outcomes can be achieved: first, the migrant successfully overcomes the cultural shock and adapts to the new environment. This might lead to a

permanent migration and is the basis for the brain drain from many countries, which especially in the Italian case is happening frequently. In the Estonian case, there is a lack of data to track if there is a trend of brain drain, especially from the minority group. The second possible outcome after the migration is that the dream of migration turns into a dream of coming home again, projecting the fantasies of a better place onto it. This is connected to a realisation that the expectations could not be fulfilled, and rarely does a place provide a complete feeling of belonging for ethnic minorities. Transnationalism was part of the identity before the move, and still is part of the identity afterwards, as the homeland is now the missing part. Nevertheless, when the decision to finally remigrate is made, one can experience a reverse cultural shock. This has mainly to do with the change in one's own identity during the time abroad, as well as the changes occurring in the society and people in the country of origin. Thus, this research could be used as a basis to investigate the development of minority group members after the migration and test the hypothetical model (Figure 9).

## 8.7 Conclusion

In Estonia and in Italy, minority groups of a significant size are part of the population. In Estonia the Russian speaking minority group make up 25% percent of the inhabitants (Willis, 2019), in the region of South Tyrol in Italy nearly 70% of the population are native German speaker (ASTAT, 2020). Those are just two examples of many regions in Europe, where a minority group makes up a significant percentage of the inhabitants of a territory. In migration literature mostly there is no distinction made concerning the ethnic origin of the studied individuals. However, if ethnic minorities are the main studied groups, the focus lies regularly on ethnic return migration (see e.g., Reynolds, 2008; Tsuda, 2009, 2010; Wessendorf, 2007); in this study the focus is taken away from the approach of ethnic return migration and directed towards a more holistic understanding of migration of minorities. By not reducing the aspirations for migration of minorities to ethnic return wishes, this thesis aims to give minority group members a voice and agency to avoid categorising them as ethnic return migrants only. In Italy the topic of brain drain is already discussed and acknowledged as a trend (see e.g., Ferrario and Price, 2014; Kofler *et al*., 2020) which mainly

concerns minority group members in the region, on the other hand, in the Estonian case there are still no studies exploring the emigration of minorities and their source.

However, systematic studies of migration patterns of ethnic or linguistic minorities in the EU are still very limited, especially studies focusing on the pre-migration period of the minority groups. Therefore, this study fills in this gap and researches the migration imaginations and intentions of ethnic minorities in Estonia and in Italy. The main research objective was to show that there is a difference in migration intentions between minority and majority group members, which could been shown through the collected data in both case studies. Furthermore, this study aims to investigate the aspirations and imaginations connected to the planned migration, and as the data show, they are strongly associated with the imagination of a community in the destination and the belief in being able to improve one's own social situation. This, again, is linked to the segregation of peoples in societies and the lack of feeling of belonging of minority group members.

The study was carried out using quantitative and qualitative data form the years of 2020 and 2021, as well as studies from the years before. It is a mixed model design, applying grounded theory in a multiple case study.

The key outcomes of the study show a higher tendency of minority groups to migrate in both cases, connected to the separation of societies with a high percentage of minority population. However, contrary to what previous research would suggest, participants did not engage in ethnic return migration, but rather migrated to other countries in order to reverse their minority status. This is linked to the ascribed stereotypes and the negative perception of minorities, however, bound to the social context. Thus, by changing the context, minority group members hope to improve their social status. Two models were introduced, first a migration process model, based on the gathered data and previous research, showing that the basis for migration intentions of minority group members is a dissatisfaction with certain aspects in their current residence (e.g. exclusion from the society). However, the pre-migration period is impressed by the very positive idea of migration and the imagination of a good and welcoming community in the destination. This concept is especially important when trying to understand migration flows and the emotional factors during a migration process. For this research the minority identities are crucial, as they differ strongly from the majority identity which influences migration

behaviour. Therefore, as second model, illustrating the minority identities was developed. It reveals the different characteristics of the identity of minority group members during the pre-migration phase, based on the data gathered in this research. All components play a role for the minority group members, and they influence the self-categorisation as well as the aspirations for migration.

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# Appendix

MOVES Survey

Carmen
Tasser

Introduction:

Estonia/South Tyrol is one of the places in Europe where many people often speak more than one language daily. Schools are also available in different languages. Does going to school in one language make a difference for where you want to go after school? That is the main question this survey is interested in.

You have been selected for this survey because you are in your last year of school.

* Required

1. Welcome to this Survey. Please tick ALL the boxes if you agree to take part in this survey.*
   Along with the invitation link to this survey, you received two documents, one available in your native language (*in each translation, this says Estonian, Russian, Italian or German not "your native language"*). and they are also available HERE (link).

   These explain how I will use, store and protect the data you share here; this is to ensure that you are protected. Please read these documents, and tick the boxes below, to show that you have read, understood and agree with the documents. Thank you.

   Check all that apply.

   - ○ I have received, read and understood both information sheets and I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any
     reason.

   - ○ I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission
     for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I agree in the collection, processing and storage of my personal data, in the way

described in the Information Sheet Collection

- I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published and a made-up name (pseudonym) is used.

- I agree to take part in the above research project.

This survey has three different sections and overall, it will take you between 15 and 25 minutes to fill it in.

## Part 1: Introductory Questions

There are no "right" or "wrong" answers; I just want to know what you think! There is generally always an option like "I don't know" or "Inapplicable", therefore you always have the option to choose that answer in case you don't feel that you can answer this question.

1. How old are you? *

Mark only one oval.

- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21

2. With whom are you living at the moment? (choose one)

Mark only one oval.

- Mother only
- Father only
- Both parents, mother and father
- Not applicable
- Other:

3. Do you think that the economic situation of your family is compared to most other families in Estonia/South Tyrol (choose one)

Mark only one oval.

- Below average
- Average
- Above average
- I don't know
- Not applicable

4. What is the native language of your mother? (choose one)

Mark only one oval.

*Answer options for the Estonian case study*

- Estonian
- Russian
- Not applicable
- Other:

*Answer options for the Italian case study*

- Italian
- German
- Ladin
- Not applicable
- Other:

5. What is the highest degree or level of education of your mother? (choose one)

Mark only one oval.

- No schooling completed
- Compulsory education
- Trade/technical/vocational training
- High school degree

- University degree
- I don't know
- Not applicable

6. What is the citizenship of your mother today? (choose one)

Mark only one oval.

*Answer options for the Estonian case study*

- Estonian
- Russian
- Undefined citizenship ("Alien passport")
- Not applicable
- Other:

*Answer options for the Italian case study*

- Italian
- Austrian
- Not applicable
- Other:

7. What is the native language of your father? (choose one)

Mark only one oval.

*Answer options for the Estonian case study*

- Estonian
- Russian
- Not applicable
- Other:

*Answer options for the Italian case study*

- Italian
- German
- Ladin
- Not applicable
- Other:

8. What is the highest degree or level of education of your father? (choose one)

Mark only one oval.

- o No schooling completed
- o Compulsory education
- o Trade/technical/vocational training
- o High school degree
- o University degree
- o I don't know
- o Not applicable

9. What is the citizenship of your father today? (choose one)

Mark only one oval.

*Answer options for the Estonian case study*

- o Estonian
- o Russian
- o Undefined citizenship ("Alien passport")
- o Not applicable
- o Other:

*Answer options for the Italian case study*

- o Italian
- o Austrian
- o Not applicable
- o Other:

10. (Only for the Estonian case study) Which citizenship/s do you hold? (choose one or multiple)

- o Estonian
- o Russian
- o Undefined citizenship ("Alien passport")
- o Other:

10. *(Only for the Italian case study)* In which city/country were you born?

Part 2: About your current life

This paragraph will ask questions about your current daily life; please check the box that is the best answer for you. If you are not sure about a question, please still try to answer it but you can always skip a question.

11. With which gender do you identify? *

Mark only one oval.

- ○ Female
- ○ Male
- ○ Other

12. Please rate how proficient you think you are in the following languages.

Mark only one per row.

*Answer options for the Estonian case study*

| | No knowledge at all | Basic knowledge | Intermediate | Proficient | Fluent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | | | | | |
| Estonian | | | | | |
| Russian | | | | | |
| Finnish | | | | | |

*Answer options for the Italian case study*

| | No knowledge at all | Basic knowledge | Intermediate | Proficient | Fluent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | | | | | |
| Italian | | | | | |
| German | | | | | |
| Ladin | | | | | |

13. Which language do you use in the following situations primarily? Please tick the box which fits the most to you.

Mark only one per row.

| | Estonian/Italian | Russian/German | Estonian and Russian equally/Italian and German equally | Other | Not applicable |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| At home | | | | | |
| At school | | | | | |
| Talking to your friends | | | | | |
| Reading for leisure | | | | | |
| Watching television series/YouTube videos | | | | | |
| In which language is your phone set | | | | | |
| In case you work, which language do you use at your work place? | | | | | |

14. Have you ever lived in another country than Estonia/South Tyrol for more than 3 months?

Mark only one oval.

- o No
- o Yes
- o I don't know/remember

15. If yes, please specify in which (one or multiple)

16. In the past two years, how often have you visited the following places?

Mark only one per row.

*Answer options for the Estonian case study*

| | Never | Once or twice | 3 to 5 times | More than 5 times |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Finland | | | | |
| The United Kingdom | | | | |
| Another EU country | | | | |
| Russia | | | | |
| Another continent | | | | |

*Answer options for the Italian case study*

| | Never | Once or twice | 3 to 5 times | More than 5 times |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Germany | | | | |
| Another region of Italy | | | | |
| Another EU country | | | | |
| Austria | | | | |
| Another continent | | | | |

17. Thinking about how you identify, some people have one strong identity, others have more than one. What about you? Please rank each of the following, according to whether you feel this identifies you not at all (1), strongly (4), or somewhere in between.

Mark only one per row.

*Answer options for the Estonian case study*

| | 1-Not at all | 2 – not very strongly | 3 – somewhat strongly | 4 – very strongly | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Estonian only | | | | | |
| Russian only | | | | | |
| European only | | | | | |
| Estonian and European | | | | | |
| Russian and European | | | | | |
| Russian and Estonian | | | | | |
| Russian, Estonian and European | | | | | |

*Answer options for the Italian case study*

| | 1-Not at all | 2 – not very strongly | 3 – somewhat strongly | 4 – very strongly | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Italian only | | | | | |
| South Tyrolian only | | | | | |
| European only | | | | | |
| Italian and European | | | | | |
| South Tyrolian and European | | | | | |
| South Tyrolian and Italian | | | | | |
| South Tyrolian, Italian and European | | | | | |

18. If you identify as something else, please specify here

19. According the current situation of the worldwide Covid-19 Pandemic, to what extent do you agree or disagree on the following statements?

Mark only one per row.

| | 1- strongly disagree | 2 – somewhat disagree | 3 – neither agree nor disagree | 4 – agree | 5 – strongly agree | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Being part of the EU is making me feel safe in these days | | | | | | |
| I am glad about the actions taken by the Estonian/Italian government | | | | | | |
| In these days I feel more connected to the people in Estonia/Italy as a community | | | | | | |
| The current situation makes me realize what the benefits of the EU are | | | | | | |

20. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement from 1 to 5 as 1 - strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree

Mark only one per row.

| | 1- strongly disagree | 2 – somewhat disagree | 3 – neither agree nor disagree | 4 – agree | 5 – strongly agree | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am proud of my native language | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I think I would be happier living somewhere else | | | | | | |
| I think my culture is the best one | | | | | | |
| I am curious about other cultures | | | | | | |
| I feel like a minority in my daily life | | | | | | |
| I can fulfill all my needs in my current living location | | | | | | |

21. If you could have another citizenship instead of the one you have now, would you want it and if so which one?

Please answer with Yes or No, and in case of Yes, which citizenship. Think also of the option of a dual citizenship and eventually name both.

22. How similar do you think you are to the majority of people in Estonia/South Tyrol/Italy *(for the Italian case study both was asked)* on the following points? Please rate it for each of the items on a scale from 1-5 (1- not similar at all to 5- very similar).

Mark only one per row.

| | 1-not similar at all | 2 – somewhat similar | 3 – neither similar nor dissimilar | 4 – somewhat similar | 5 – very similar | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Language used | | | | | | |
| Political attitude | | | | | | |
| Ideals of family | | | | | | |
| Religion | | | | | | |
| Types of media consumed (TV, news, social media) | | | | | | |
| Ideas of beauty | | | | | | |
| Gender roles | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How you spend your free time (places frequently visited etc.) | | | | | | |

23. How similar do you think you are overall to the people in the following countries? Please rate it for each of the items on a scale from 1-5 (1- not similar at all to 5- very similar).

Mark only one per row.

*Answer options for the Estonian case study*

| | 1-not similar at all | 2 – somewhat similar | 3 – neither similar nor dissimilar | 4 – somewhat similar | 5 – very similar | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Estonia | | | | | | |
| Finland | | | | | | |
| Other Baltic states | | | | | | |
| Russia | | | | | | |
| Other EU countries | | | | | | |

*Answer options for the Italian case study*

| | 1-not similar at all | 2 – somewhat similar | 3 – neither similar nor dissimilar | 4 – somewhat similar | 5 – very similar | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other regions of Italy | | | | | | |
| Germany | | | | | | |
| Austria | | | | | | |
| Switzerland | | | | | | |
| Other EU countries | | | | | | |

24. What would you consider home for you? (choose one or multiple)

Check all that apply.

- o A village/town/city
- o A language area
- o A part of the world A country
- o An apartment
- o A group of people (Family/friends etc.)
- o Other:

25. Do you have something you would call a second home? And if so, what is it?

You can name one or more options

*Military service (only for the Estonian survey)*

Are you a call-up selectee for the compulsory military service already?

Mark only one oval.

- o No
- o Yes
- o I don’t know/remember

If yes, which one of the following statements is true for you (if not or you don't know, skip this question)

Mark only one oval.

- o I am looking forward to my military service I don't mind doing the military service
- o I will apply for an exemption
- o I don't want to go but I know I need to
- o I will not do military service, no matter if I pay a fine
- o Other:

*Organizations (only for the Italian survey)*

Can you imagine becoming part of one of the following organizations somewhen in your lifetime? Tick the ones which would be interesting for you

Mark as many ovals as you want

- The Italian military
- The Alpini
- The Schützenverein
- Other:

Part 3: After school

The following section contains questions about what you are planning to do after you finish school. If you have a plan, even though it might not be fully clear yet because of application deadlines etc., please answer according to the scenario which is

26. What is your plan to do after graduating from school? (Please choose one)

Mark only one oval.

- Start to work - I already have a job waiting for me I want start working but I haven't found a job yet
- Study at a Higher Education Institution - I decided already about the subject and Institution
- I would like to study at a University or other Higher Education Institution, but haven't decided where or what
- I don't have any plans yet
- Marriage and family planning
- A gap year for travelling
- Other:

27. Following the plans you just named, where do you think you will be one year from now? Please choose one *

Mark only one oval.

*Answer options for the Estonian case study*

- I am not planning to move within the next year
- In Tallinn (if not located there now)
- In Tartu (if not located there now)
- In Finland
- In the United Kingdom
- In St. Petersburg
- In Moscow
- Other

*Answer options for the Italian case study*

- I am not planning to move within the next year
- In Bolzano (if not located there now)
- In Innsbruck
- In Vienna
- In Salzburg
- In Graz
- In Munich
- In Verona
- In Milan
- In Bologna
- Other:

28. How strongly do you agree or disagree on the following statements about your potential move? Please rate every item on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 strongly disagree - 5 strongly agree).

Mark only one per row.

| | 1- strongly disagree | 2 – somewhat disagree | 3 – neither agree nor disagree | 4 – agree | 5 – strongly agree | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I don't feel that I belong where I live now. | | | | | | |
| I am not satisfied with the options existing in the place I live now | | | | | | |
| I want to leave the place I live in now | | | | | | |
| I culture in the place I move to is interesting for me | | | | | | |
| I am curious about the place I will move to | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| In the place I will move to, there are better employment opportunities | | | | | | |
| I want to study in my native language | | | | | | |

29. There are different statements below according the the reason for your potential move within the next year. Please rate how important or unimportant those statements are for you on a scale of 1 - unimportant to 5 - very important.

Mark only one per row.

| | 1- unimportant | 2 – slightly important | 3 – moderately important | 4 – important | 5 – very important | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The university I chose is very good/the best one for my subject. | | | | | | |
| The university I chose is the closest to my home offering my subject | | | | | | |
| The tuition fee is low | | | | | | |
| Many of my friends go/are there too | | | | | | |
| I have family there | | | | | | |
| My partner lives or moves there too | | | | | | |
| I want to improve my language skills | | | | | | |

30. If you imagine yourself a year from now, how do you think your life will be? Please rate the following statements from 1- strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree

Mark only one per row.

| | 1- strongly disagree | 2 – somewhat disagree | 3 – neither agree nor disagree | 4 – agree | 5 – strongly agree | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| My language skills in one or more languages will be improved | | | | | | |
| I will worry about money | | | | | | |
| I will have a good community there | | | | | | |
| I will have the same group of friends as I have now | | | | | | |
| I will consume the same media as I do now(newspapers, TV shows etc.) | | | | | | |
| I will eat the same diet as I do now | | | | | | |
| People in the place will be similar to me | | | | | | |
| I will practice or non practice religion the same way as I do now | | | | | | |

31. I asked you before how strongly you identify as Estonian, Russian, European/South Tyrolian, Italian, European or a mixture of them. If you think of your life in a year from now, do you think this identification has changed? And if so, how?

32. If you think about your plan for after school and your surroundings, do you think any of the below mentioned had an influence on how you decided? Please tick all you think had an influence on your decision.

Check all that apply.

- Parents
- Brothers/Sisters
- Wider family
- Friends D Teachers D Partner
- Famous celebrities
- Media
- Online platforms
- Other:

33. If you think of yourself in a year from now and the place you will be living by then, how do you think you will you identify there? Please rate each of the items below from 1 - I strongly disagree to 5 - I strongly agree

Mark only one oval per row.

| | 1- strongly disagree | 2 – somewhat disagree | 3 – neither agree nor disagree | 4 – agree | 5 – strongly agree | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| International student | | | | | | |
| Local student | | | | | | |
| Migrant | | | | | | |
| Foreigner | | | | | | |
| Traveler | | | | | | |
| Foreign worker | | | | | | |
| Returnee | | | | | | |

34. Will you identify in a totally different way?

35. Do you consider returning to your homeland after you have completed your studies/work abroad?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, right after I completed my duties
- Probably 1-2 years after I completed my duties
- Probably 3-5 years after I completed my duties
- I don't know
- I don't want to return
- I stay within Estonia/South Tyrol for my studies/work
- Other:

36. Did you prepare already for the move? (Visa, University application, looking for an apartment, job application etc.) Please choose one

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, I am mainly done with it and ready to move
- Partially, but it is still in progress
- No, I haven't started preparing for the move
- Yes, I started preparing, but I am not sure how Covid-19 will affect my plans
- Yes, but Covid-19 is making me rethink my plans
- I am not sure if it will work out, so I didn't start preparing
- Other:

Part 4

37. If there was no issues with money, visa, family, friends, transport, job, studies - if you could freely choose, where would you move to? (You can name a country or a city)

38. How likely do you think it is that you are settling in another country for more than five years at any point in your life? (Please choose one)

Mark only one oval.

- Not likely at all

- Not so likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

39. Imagine yourself being in a country, far away from here such as Australia or the United States. You meet a local person who is interested in getting to know you. Imagine this person asking you "Where are you from?" How would you answer within one sentence while trying to give the person a most precise answer?

40. The current situation with Covid-19 is influencing all of our life and different countries imposed different reactions in this situation. Are you following the response of different countries towards corona virus and if so, will it influence any eventual move in the future?

Mark only one oval.

- I am not following the international reaction on it
- Yes, I am following what other countries do and I will rethink if I might want to move there any day in the future
- I am following the reactions, but it will not influence any of my future plans
- Other:

41. Is there anything else you would like to tell me on any of these topics?