High Skilled Migrants in Amsterdam

*A sociological study of the process expatriates go through, while deciding whether to stay in Amsterdam or migrate out of the city.*
University of Amsterdam
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High Skilled Migrants in Amsterdam:
A sociological study of the process expatriates go through, while deciding whether to stay in Amsterdam or migrate out of the city

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July 2011
Summary

In this Master Thesis the motivational arguments of high skilled migrants for staying in Amsterdam or leaving the city behind are analyzed, with the guidance of two supervisors, namely, Dr. J.M.J. Doomernik and Prof. Dr. E.R. Engelen. The research question that was asked beforehand, is: “What are the push and pull factors that motivate Western and non-Western high skilled migrants to stay in, or leave behind Amsterdam and how can policy makers anticipate on these factors?” The aim of the thesis will be to discover what motivates expats to stay in Amsterdam or to migrate out of the city. With the help of the push and pull theory –designed by Lee in 1966- a theoretical framework is made. Lee claimed that four groups of factors are important in migration processes: push and pull factors of the place of origin and of the destination site, intervening factors and personal factors. With the help of his theory, the focus of this thesis became clear: What are the push and pull factors of Amsterdam that motivate high skilled Western and non-Western migrants to stay or leave?

18 high skilled migrants, living and working in (or near) Amsterdam were interviewed and already written literature was analyzed in order to get the most valid answer on the research question. There was a distinction made on nationality and on duration of stay. It was expected that a difference in cultural background would not automatically lead to a difference in migration behavior. The motivations of Western and non-Western expats were thus compared. Besides this, there was another distinction, based on how long the expat has lived here. In this, there were two groups: the ones who have lived here for a longer period –three years or more- and the expats who have lived here shortly –up to three years-. The influence of the following three kinds of factors on above mentioned distinctive groups was studied, namely: economic, social and jurisdictional factors. The attractive and unappealing characteristics of Amsterdam may have been researched already but the focus on Western and non-Western expats, the inclusion of tax advantages as an important pull and also the factors that keep the migrants here, is what is innovative about this thesis.
From the 18 interviewees, 5 respondents wanted to leave the Netherlands and 2 were not sure if they would leave or stay, the other 11 plan to stay. There was no significant distinction between Western and non-Western migrants, there was however a difference between the different groups based on duration of stay, the ones who lived here shortly had a greater tendency to leave the city anytime soon. It became clear that the expats had little to complain about, when it came to Amsterdam, the most negative features were on national level. Especially the political climate played a negative role. Almost every interviewee claimed that the anti-immigrant movements in the Netherlands worried them and some –especially non-Western expats- felt personally discriminated by the politicians. These political developments had also its influence on social society, which has become less tolerant and more discriminatory against migrants. This has caused that many of the high skilled migrants feel unwelcome, which –as became clear during the study- was also influenced by the difficulty of the rules and the hard conditions that migrants must meet. The outcomes of this study complemented articles of other scholars: the political climate and the social discourse have an enormous influence on high skilled migrants’ perceptions of a country. Besides this, also the accessibility of economic opportunities, the level of available jobs and the image of a city influences the decision process of migrants. The job opportunities in Amsterdam, the image of the city and the social discourse were seen as the most positive features of the city.

In the end, it is advisable –if the Netherlands wants to improve its receiving climate- that the Dutch politicians try to be more cautious with their anti-immigrant statements and restrictive policies. It influences the opinions of expats, who have often more than one country to choose from, when it comes to work, and are more likely to migrate to a country where a more known language is spoken. High skilled migrants contribute to the economic development, because they bring along an enormous amount of human capital with their specific knowledge and their willingness to work. Thus, in order to create an environment wherein high skilled migrants feel welcome, it is important that politicians diminish their anti-immigrant statements and change the political and legal discourse in an open and migrant friendly one, so that the Dutch society becomes as tolerant as it once was.
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1. Introduction:

High Skilled Migrants Coming to Amsterdam: How to make them stay.

In the last decennium a rise of international high skilled migration has been visible. More and more employees are sent abroad by their companies and often stay in a foreign country for a couple of years. In this thesis this specific migration process of high skilled persons is investigated. What motivates them to move to a specific country? And why do they decide to leave or stay after a couple of years? How do policy makers react on this? Push and pull factors of international migration have been very popular aspects to investigate and a lot has been written about this by scholars. Job opportunities, the economic climate and social networks are examples of expected high influential factors of the migration of expats (Harvey, 2010:01). Is this also true for the expats who are migrating to Amsterdam? With the help of the push-and-pull theory (designed by Lee in 1966), I would like to look more thoroughly into the question which factors keep the expats in Amsterdam -and which ones pushes them away-. The exact research question is: “What are the push and pull factors that motivate Western and non-Western high skilled migrants to stay in, or leave behind Amsterdam and how can policy makers anticipate on these factors?“

The main concepts of this research are thus the high skilled migrants, the governmental policies and the push and pull factors of Amsterdam. Therefore, the following three sub question are designed to help answering the complete research question:

1. What are the common characteristics of expats and what motivates their movement?

(A general overview of written literature)

2. What are the push and pull factors of the Netherlands for expats? (Literature and empirical research)
3. What are the push and pull factors of Amsterdam for the expats? (Literature and empirical research)

4. What can the authorities in Amsterdam and the Dutch government do to improve the receiving climate for high skilled migrants?

To examine the first sub question, literature that has been written already will be examined. The factors influencing high skilled migration will be researched and a general profile of expats will be set out. The literature will be obtained through the library of the University of Amsterdam and by searching the internet. In the empirical chapter, the two other sub questions will be answered. Here, the existing policies around the placement of expats in the Netherlands will be described and the receiving climate will be analyzed. Major push factors can be for example discrimination among Dutch natives against non-Western migrants or the economic fall of the last years. Taxation benefits can be an example of a pull for expats deciding to stay. However, also the conditions on the labor market or specific housing policies can be influential. The Dutch receiving climate can thus be very broad and with the help of literature and by interviewing several expats this will be researched. This part is mainly about factors involved at the national level, the last part of the empirical chapter will examine the push and pull factors for expats in Amsterdam, by interviewing and observing these migrants. With the analysis of the literature in chapter one, it can be discovered what scholars found to be the main factors in expat migration. These factors will be used in interviews, this way a comparison can be made with expats coming to Amsterdam. What drives them to move here? And how do they make the decision to leave or stay? The push and pull factors of Amsterdam have been broadly researched already, these researches could therefore be helpful in the process of finding the factors which keep the expats in Amsterdam instead of the factors that motivate them to move here.

The outline of the thesis will be:

- Chapter 2: Theoretical framework of international high skilled migration (literature review)
- Chapter 3: Methodological chapter
Chapter 4: Empirical research on national and city level: what are the push and pull factors on both levels? (literature review, observations and interviews)

Chapter 5: Conclusion/Policy advice: how can policy makers anticipate on the research outcomes?

It is attractive for the Netherlands to keep in high skilled migrants, as they contribute to the development of the (knowledge) economy. In this thesis, it will be studied if the Netherlands and Amsterdam are successful in this. As the quotation below indicates, politicians are eager to invest in attracting high skilled migrants and they are willing to design new policies to make the Netherlands as attractive as possible.

“Out of the group high skilled migrants often emerge professional entrepreneurs, who operate at international markets and who strengthen the knowledge infrastructure of top sectors. The new policies surrounding this are also supporting future entrepreneurs, who are not yet involved in the top sectors.” It seem like the Dutch government is willing to invest in attracting high skilled migrants, the question is if the politicians are successful in this. And what is the opinion of expats who already live here? In the next chapter a theoretical framework will be set up, so that the empirical findings, that will be analyzed in chapter four, can be understood and the questions above can be answered correctly.
Chapter 2:

A Theoretical Framework for the Analysis of High Skilled Migrants

Much has been written about migration processes and several theories have ruled the scientific world. From Castells' social network theory to Ravenstein's "laws of migration", the subject of migration has intrigued many scholars. Why do people migrate? What motivates their movement? And for how long? Is there a cultural difference in migration? There are many questions that can be asked about migration processes. In this thesis, the specific migration of high skilled people to Amsterdam is investigated. However, before we can study this migration process thoroughly, it is important that a theoretical framework is set up. This theoretical framework will be the focus of this chapter. Some of the question that will be looked at are: How can we place the existence of expats in a globalizing world? What role do the expats play? How do the global economy and the migration flows of high skilled people interact? This is the first topic to be discussed here; it will provide a general look into the notion of high skilled migrants in today’s globalized society.

The specific migration characteristics of these high skilled persons will be analyzed next. What pulls them in and what pushes them away? What are their general motives for migration? The basis of the theoretical framework will be formed with the help of claims made by Ravenstein (1885) and Lee (1966). These authors wrote important articles on migration flows and can thus be used to support the push and pull theory that forms the theoretical basis of this thesis. We will start by looking into the factors that motivate highly educated people to migrate on state level. What creates a tie with the receiving country? An analysis of this migration flow on a local level will be next. What are the push and pull factors of cities? What makes expatriates adjust? The personal background of the migrants is a very important part of this and will be discussed at the end of this chapter. Do differences
in cultural background play a significant role in the decision making process of expats? Do German people consider other factors more important than Moroccan migrants?

A theoretical framework can be made with these different assets and this will help give direction to the research of high skilled migrants to Amsterdam.

2.1 – Globalization and the Highly Skilled

Most scholars agree on the fact that the global migration flow of high skilled migrants is increasing. However, the exact number of high skilled migrants that are moving seems to be difficult to estimate. Scholars made rough estimates of the total number of expatriates in OECD-countries. It was calculated that in 2007 40% (29 million) of the 73 million migrants in the OECD countries were highly educated. And this number is expected to increase much faster over the coming years (Dunnedijk, 2008:07).

Typically, high skilled migrants are defined as ‘having a university degree or extensive experience in a given field’ - specialists, managers, technicians, investors, they could all be examples of expatriates. Most of them want to get the most out of their investment in their education and therefore migrate in search of the most rewarding job (Iredale, 2001:08). In a globalized world, interconnectedness increases and intensive economic and social networks are set up. This means that migration flows increase and people can move faster and further away. The opportunities are bigger and the possibilities are endless. Where in this picture do the high skilled migrants fit?

States have opened up their borders to stay in the 'game' of the international economy and in doing so, they made it possible for migration flows to flourish. High skilled migrants play a role in this international game. Blue-collar jobs such as manufacturing and construction are not the only participants in the international economy, white-collar jobs are very important as well. High skilled professionals can sell their knowledge all over the world. Their specific knowledge is usually (locally) scarce and therefore expensive (Straubhaar & Wolter, 1997:175). In this sense, the knowledge of the expatriate is needed because it is so specific and unique. Enterprises may also hire high skilled
workers because the international knowledge of the expat can contribute to the development of the company. Moreover, the internationalization of the firm can help strengthen its development (Straubhaar & Wolter, 1997:176).

Globalization has an influence on the international labor market, since it for example influences the mobility of people (supply side) and the accessibility of cities all over the world (demand side). There is a renewed labor network that includes all major cities. Highly educated people leave their country when opportunities are bigger abroad. These migrants bring their personal human capital\textsuperscript{1} along, and therefore are of enormous economic value. The loss of high skilled people could mean a downturn in a country's economic development while being a push for the economy of the receiving country (Lowell & Findlay, 2001:06). Expats could be of great influence on the economic development of a country and are thus worth researching. In figure 2.1 the development process of a region that attracts high skilled workers is illustrated. The authors (Florida et al., 2007) stated that the three main factors important in attracting human capital were tolerance, the presence of a university, and consumer services. When a region has developed these factors intensively, this will attract highly educated people, which will in its turn lead to an increase in human capital and in technology. These increases will then cause economic development of the region (Florida et al., 2007:627).

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{RegionalDevelopment.png}
\caption{Regional Development}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{1} “Human capital refers to the stock of competences, knowledge and personality attributes embodied in the ability to perform labor so as to produce economic value. It is the attributes gained by a worker through education and experience (Wikipedia, 2011)”
Some scholars doubt the fact that the migration of high skilled people is only positive. They see expats ‘taking over’ jobs that natives would normally do. And they also argue that the pulling in of expats may generate economic changes that increase the demand for their services and as a consequence, lessen the effect of increased supply on compensation (Regets, 2007:03). Other scholars have reacted by arguing that the high skilled migration complements -and not replaces- the native workers. To them, the positive economic development and the increase of scientific knowledge that is created by these new high skilled migrants, are of greater influence (Regets, 2007:03).

To understand the flow of high skilled migrants completely, a meso and macro analysis is needed. What are the conditions on city level that enable this specific migration type? And what conditions facilitate this kind of movement on state level? Of course, there is also an international level besides the national and city level, namely the stage on which the international labor market, the economy and politics are intertwined. In this thesis however, the focus will be on the city and national level of high skilled migration. We assume that the migration of the highly skilled migrants has a positive effect on receiving countries, that they are therefore wanted and that these migrants only move on to developed countries. We also assume that the international labor market enables these migrants to move and we will therefore only focus on specific local and national conditions that may
restrict or allow migration flows of the highly skilled. The migration theory that forms the basis of this thesis will be discussed in the next paragraph.

2.2 – Ravenstein & Lee's Migration Theories

As said before, a theoretical framework is essential in order to make a proper analysis of the expats in Amsterdam. The push and pull theory forms a large part of this framework and Lee is one of the famous scholars that came up with this view on migration: in 1966, he wrote an article about the concept of push and pull factors. He was strongly influenced by Farr and Ravenstein, who both wrote influential papers on migration flows as well. In 1885 E.G. Ravenstein wrote his famous 'the laws of migration' -built on the claims made by Farr in 1871- in which he looked into the movement patterns of people within the United Kingdom. He compared the English, Scottish and Irish migration trends with each other and provided the reader for example with figures about the migration numbers. He analyzed the internal migration within the United Kingdom and designed a framework that was used by many scholars after him (Ravenstein, 1881).

The focus in Ravenstein's article was thus on the internal migration of the United Kingdom. He wrote his article in the nineteenth century and a lot has changed since then. Transport facilities have increased, technologies have improved and it is now possible that people travel greater distances than ever before. Despite these changes in migration flows, Ravenstein's theory remains very
influential. He designed several rules or principles of migration that are still often used. The laws of Ravenstein are set out in figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2: Ravenstein’s Laws of Migration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ravenstein’s “Laws of Migration”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <em>The majority of migrants go only a short distance.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>Migration proceeds step by step.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>Migrants going long distances generally go by preference to one of the great centers of commerce or industry.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>Each current of migration procedures a compensation counter current.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>The natives of towns are less migratory than those of rural areas.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <em>Females are more migratory than males within the Kingdom of their birth, but males more frequently venture beyond.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <em>Most migrants are adults: families rarely migrate out of their country of birth.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Large towns grow more by migration than by natural increase.

9. Migration increases in volume as industries and commerce develop and transport improves.

10. The major direction of migrations is from agricultural areas to the centers of industry and commerce.

11. The major causes of migration are economic.

Source: Lee (1966)

Lee used Ravenstein's theory to study international migration flows. He considered Ravenstein as ‘the last person to make a detailed comparison of the volume of internal migration or the characteristics of migrants within a goodly number of nations (1966:49).’ He stated that every form of migration, no matter how long or short, it always involves a place of origin, a destination site and an intervening set of obstacles. This statement gave him the inspiration to come up with the four most important factors of migration: the characteristics of the place of origin, the characteristics of the destination site, intervening obstacles and personal factors (Lee, 1966:50), see figure 2.3. The first two categories of factors can be called the ‘push and pull’ factors. This could, for example, mean the international character of a city (pull), or the high crime level (push).
The push and pull factors will probably differ per situation: every migrant has his or her own story to tell about the place of origin or the destination site. We can, however, assume that migrants can be divided into groups because many share the same basic ideas. The push and pull factors of the place of origin are based on direct and long term contact. This is entirely different when it comes to the factors of the destination site. Most expats have seldom been to their destination and hold only indirect knowledge of the place. Needless to say, there is always some uncertainty when it comes to judging a destination site. Other factors, like the age or the gender of the migrant, can also influence the formation of the push and pull factors (Lee, 1966:50).

Next to the push and pull factors of the place of origin and destination, there are the intervening factors. Distance is one of the most studied factor. Nowadays, distance is no longer regarded as the greatest intervening obstacle; legislation is assumed to be of greater influence. And
one could also think of physical barrier (such as a border wall) (Lee, 1966:51). The last category of factors concerns personal aspects. Household composition, cultural background, intelligence, education or the awareness of conditions elsewhere, are all examples of personal factors that could influence migration decisions. These factors cannot be generalized, because emotions and irrational reasons are part of personal experiences (Lee, 1966:51). Examining these factors could, however, give a view of how high skilled migrants think. Do they migrate wherever their employer wants them to? Do they perhaps migrate to specific countries? Could the personal motives of the expats be generalized within their group?

Above, the explanation of the concept of the push and pull theory was explained in a very general way. Below, a more specific description of this theory will follow, regarding the unique case of high skilled migration flows. What pulls expatriates in? And more importantly, what keeps them there? What factors are most influential in this process?

2.3 - Push & Pull: National Level

Understanding the factors that influence high skilled migration can be very useful for states. Bringing the highly skilled into your country -and national economy- increases the amount of human capital and thus strengthens the economic development. Educational systems could be improved to develop the receiving professional climate. This will then form a strong pull for foreign students and workers. Policies could also be set up to simplify the (legal and social) life of expats in the receiving country. High skilled workers contribute to the human capital in a state. By investigating the factors concerning this migration flow, states could improve their receiving climate for migrants and could in that way strengthen their economic development (Capuano, 2009:01).
So, what have scholars found out already? What makes high skilled workers want to move to a foreign country and what makes them deciding to stay? What are the push and pull factors of a specific country? One would expect that economic factors such as job opportunities, employment conditions or higher wages are the biggest influences on the decision to migrate (Lowell & Findlay, 2001:03). However, Harvey (2010) analyzed the significance of social networks and transnational ties in migration flows, he came up with an entirely different conclusion. According to him, scholars in the field of micro economy have argued incorrectly that individuals’ decision to migrate is rational, and that they will only move if their income will increase significantly (Harvey, 2010:03). According to Harvey, not only economic factors (such as the ones mentioned above) influence the decision to migrate: social factors are important as well. Social ties such as the possibility to keep in touch with your family or the connections with other expats you have in a receiving city play an enormous role in the decision making process (Harvey, 2010:03).

As stated above, many economic scholars assume that high skilled migrants decide to move because of rational choices based on underlying economic factors. It is true that these people have invested much in their education, and one could therefore assume that these high skilled workers are in search of jobs that equal their educational level? It can thus be argued that high skilled workers would only migrate if they know for sure that their new job is worth their educational investment. States with a stable economic climate (which -for example- secures jobs, provides better economic information and can possible also ensure higher wages) have thus a bigger “pull” than states that do not secure these factors (Eich-Krohm, 2009:02).

Is that all there is to the story? Not only Harvey disagreed with the economists, Wang & Kanungo (2004) also claim that the social networks of expats are researched too superficial. Their study tested the adjustment of expats, by measuring the relationship between their social networks and psychological well-being (Wang & Kanungo, 2004:776). A social network is simply a group of people or organizations who work, live or just hang out together. This network provides support and
information and takes away uncertainty when a person enters a whole new and unfamiliar environment. This is very important for people in normal situations, let alone in one where you are completely by yourself. As Wang & Kanungo said: “Although the expatriate can keep in contact with his/her home social network through communication technologies, such as e-mail, telephone or fax, this type of social interaction is usually not helpful at all due to long distances. Therefore it is important for expatriates to take action in various ways to initiate social networks in local country and thereby reduce uncertainty and stress (2004:775).” With psychological well-being both authors mean the level of self-acceptance, positive relations with other people, autonomy, environmental mastery, having purpose in life and personal growth. They state that the adjustment of high skilled migrants depends on the level of psychological adjustment, the acceptance of the customs of the host country and the psychological comfort and emotional status of the expats (Wang & Kanungo, 2004:777). All this has an influence on how the expat lives and works. When states intervene in this social aspect of a migrants life, they can provide social assets that are essential in securing a stable (social and economical) life for these migrants. Thus, by researching social factors a state can provide another “pull” factor. This could mean providing opportunities to keep in contact with their home country, creating informational helpdesks, places where expats can meet or for example offering health care possibilities (Wang & Kanungo, 2004:788).

Lui (2004) also stressed the importance of social capital in the decision to migrate. The focus of most studies is on the way expatriates adjust to a receiving country. Lui stated that social networks are critical to high skilled migration (Lui, 2004:04). The social network of migrants has a huge influence on how effectively they will adjust. It provides possibilities for the expats to gather and exchange information, which can reduce uncertainty and a feeling of non-belonging. Both on work and private level, social networks can enhance the adjustment and can therefore be a pull for new migrants or a motivation to stay (Lui, 2004:07).

Other social factors are also worth mentioning: xenophobic behavior or intolerance of minorities in the receiving country can be a negative influence on the decision of highly educated people to migrate as well (Doomernik et al., 2009:18). Richard Florida is a famous author who wrote
many articles about the highly educated, who he calls the ‘creative class’. He stated that certain forms of lifestyle attracts this special class. Florida claims that the presence of amenities has an enormous influence on the pull for high skilled workers. Entertainment, night life, culture, are all social factors that influence the decision of high skilled people to move to a certain place (Florida et al., 2007:623). As mentioned above, next to consumer amenities, the receiving cultures' intolerance of newcomers is an important factor as well. In the article, especially the importance of tolerance of minorities is stressed strongly (Florida et al., 2007:625). The authors state that tolerance or openness to diversity make the region more productive, because, according to them, diversity is associated with higher rates of innovation and growth. This again, causes an enlargement of economic and social development and makes people more eager to move to a certain place (Florida et al., 2007:625).

Next to economic and social factors, there is a third group of factors that plays a role in the decision making process highly skilled persons go through when to they consider migrating to another country, namely, the push and pull of legislation. What (dis-)advantageous factors for high skilled migration are there within the legal system of a country? Of course, the migration policies are very influential. Migrants who enter welfare states now have access to (some) governmental benefits, such as income support, educational possibilities or subsidized housing (Light, 2004:388). This support is not only economical but also political and legal. As Light puts it: "Obviously, political limitations on transfer and welfare payments will begin well before the economic limit is actually reached. In that sense, the support limit of welfare assistance is political, not economic (2004:388)." The state decides how much support it will give to incoming migrants. The will to support is often smaller than the actual capability of a state. There are different forms of policy that can be distinguished, such as restrictive policies (aimed at limiting the migration flow), or recruitment policies (where they actually promote migration) (Lowell & Findlay, 2001:13).

The situation in the United States is an example of how policies on high skilled migration can become more restricted. According to Funk Kirkegaard (2008) this was due to 'wider congressional
gridlock on immigration and political emphasis on indiscriminate enforcement’. He states that for example, 50% of the 163,000 US businesses that wished to hire an expat were denied this opportunity, because of the annual quota of 85,000 HI-B visas (Funk Kirkegaard, 2008). This is just one national example of a migration policy that influences the flow of highly educated workers. This is particularly influential for migrants coming to a receiving country, but it can also influence the decision to stay if, for example, a migration policy changes over time. Mandatory integration tests are also examples of aspects that can send off a negative signal to expats, who are still doubting where to migrate to (Doomernik et al., 2009:18).

A last factor within the legal system that will be discussed here is taxation. If states want to pull in highly educated workers, adjusting the tax system in a positive way could be a smart option. An example of this can be found in the Dutch tax system. An expat can be eligible for the so called “30%-rule”, which means that a maximum of 30% of their wage can be seen as free compensation for extra territorial costs and will therefore not be taxed (Belastingdienst, 2011). This could be an extra encouragement for high skilled migrants to move to the Netherlands. This tax advantage will, however, no longer be valid after a period of 10 years, which might influence their decision to stay.

So if a state wants to attract and keep expats, they need to take the previously mentioned factors into account. The motivations for high skilled migrants to move to a specific country and to actually stay there, can not be generalized completely. Each migrant has his or her own personal reasons for moving and these change over time. Nevertheless, knowing about the reasons that most of the expats share could be of great value to the economic development of states. First, of course, there need to be job opportunities. There needs to be a stable knowledge economy where enough jobs are available on the level of the highly educated. Once the migrants actually work here, it is important that the economy remains stable and that the economic facilities -such as a securing a constant wage rate or providing opportunities to grow in your field of expertise- are still available. Social services should also be made available by the state. Securing social stability by creating for example childcare services or agencies which provide special information for incoming expats could be part of this. It improves the expats' adjustment and it could therefore influence their decision to stay. The third asset in this
decision making process is the national legal system, which needs to support the migration of high skilled workers. One could think of the regulation of working permits or for example tax advantages. By securing these factors, states can create a stable ‘pull’ climate for high skilled migrants and it might even prevent return migration. Of course, return migration is not only influenced by the receiving country but also by the push and pull factors in their home country (Harvey, 2010:05). Here, it is decided to focus on the opportunities the receiving state has. I would argue that the state cannot regulate the above analyzed factors by itself. When a migrate enters a country, the power not only lays with the state, the receiving city is of influence as well. The push and pull factors on a city level will therefore be analyzed below.

2.4 Push & Pull: City Level

The push and pull factors on state level are discussed above, but there are also local-specific characteristics that motivate high skilled migrants to migrate. The question that will be central in this part of the theoretical framework is: What factors are important in the decision making process of expats to migrate to a specific city? And what makes them wanting to stay? On the macro level, the factors were divided into three parts: economic, social and legal factors. Assuming that these are indeed the most influential factors, we will hold on to these in this section as well.

Part of the economic argument is that: "Arguably individuals will move abroad if they expect their human capital to hold greater value overseas than in their home country (Harvey, 2010:03)." The stability of the national economy is than -of course- very influential in determining the direction of
high skilled migration. However, on the city level the stability of the labor market is also very important. The presence of sufficient job opportunities and the stability of wage rates are essential. Expats will not migrate to a city where the chances of finding a job are low or where the economic climate is instable and where wages are below the norm. In order to attract high skilled migrants, it is important that cities secure the stability of these economic factors (Eich-Krohm, 2009:08).

Cities with a specialization in a specific sector could attract certain migrants because of this unique characteristic. As Lucassen (2002) writes, many (in his article: Jewish) migrants moved to the Dutch city Deventer because of its large agricultural economy, with a professional agricultural education system and special training centers (Lucassen, 2002:510). For a city to attract high skilled workers, the knowledge economy needs to be developed, wherein enough jobs are available for the highly educated. Besides this, cities could try to specialize themselves in a specific field within the knowledge economy to attract a specific type of the high skilled migrants. The skills and qualifications of the migrants need to match with the occupations available in the local economy. Providing for high level jobs and securing a professional business climate is a huge pull for highly skilled workers. Building educational institutions is one way to create a professional climate (Lowell & Findlay 2001:16). As Lowell & Findlay state it: 'Creating a highly educated workforce begins with strengthening domestic educational institutions. A viable system that encourages graduates to stay with the system, that retains people, ensures that the source country keeps its original investment in education (Lowell & Findlay, 2001:16).’ Ensuring economic stability and development is the best way in ensuring a stable income for the highly educated workers. Creating specific training and educational centers is another way to attract expats, as it professionalizes a city's economic climate.

Of course, the economic factors are not the only factors that are important in this migration process: "however good a region’s educational system might be, it is no guarantee it can hold on to its educated and skilled people (Florida et al., 2008:623).” Cities can also work on its social side, to make a stable and attractive livelihood possible. As described before, the distribution of amenities is
important in attracting and holding on to the highly educated migrants. Ensuring amenities in the field of entertainment, nightlife, culture, etcetera are examples of this (Florida, et al., 2008:623). A city can invest in the cultural sector by building theaters and cinemas or by enabling paths for upcoming artists. Factors securing such a lifestyle are, according to Florida, as important as the economic factors are (Florida, 2004:182-184).

Other social institutions could also help stabilize the receiving climate. For the highly skilled, uncertainty in the new local environment can have negative effects on the psychological well-being of the migrant. Social interaction with their family and friends, through telephone and email is not enough for securing a stable feeling of well-being (Wang & Kanungo, 2004:775). "A large, diversified and active personal network will help the expatriate to obtain social resources that will aid him/her in adjusting to the local environment (Wang & Kanungo, 2004:776)." We have already discussed this on macro level but what role can cities play in this? Providing for social places where expats can meet and expand their social network is one way to secure a more stable livelihood. Creating an online site where these migrants can find everything they need: from sport facilities to childcare, is also a way to provide social stability. ² A city cannot completely control the social life of the highly skilled but the authorities can at least provide enough possible places where these migrants can meet and where they can get the needed support and information. Stabilizing the psychological well-being of the expats is an important mechanism in the mental adaption and acceptance of the new environment. It could therefore help create a positive image of the city.

The last category of social factors that will be discussed here, is the social discourse. As Doomernik et al. (2009) state it: "Social factors such as a high degree of xenophobia or intolerance of minorities (or even prospective immigrants' perception of such intolerance) may be crucial to decisions of highly-skilled migrants, especially the best educated and more skilled who have more than one or two countries to choose from (2009:18)." At the national level this is more evident but cities can also contribute to a positive discourse around immigrants. Promoting the image of

² An example of such a website is http://www.expatriates.com/classifieds/amst/, which provides a lot of information for high skilled migrants coming to Amsterdam.
Amsterdam as a city where everyone could be whoever they want to be and where everyone is welcome, are examples of influencing the social discourse. Amsterdam will get known as the city of tolerance. Another way of influencing the discourse can be reached with the help of media. Media can send positive images of incoming migrants and could be less stigmatizing around certain groups of migrants, which makes the receiving climate more migrant friendly.

In the macro part of this theoretical framework, the importance of politics and the legal framework was already discussed. Governments can design the policies, it is however the city which carries it out. This last section will therefore discuss the legal push and pull factors on the local level.

Carrying out national policy is another important field of local power. At national level laws may get implemented but this does not automatically mean that cities execute these national orders. The government can implement for example industrial codes that need to be put into practice locally, but cities can decide whether to act upon it (depending on their interests) (Light, 2005:394). "...city-regions have become key institutional sites in which a major rescaling of national state power has been unfolding (Varsanyi 1997:891)". It is the city (and their police force) that will or will not put the law into practice. Local politics are therefore worth looking into. Are the local authorities promoting migration into their city? Are the housing standards for migrants at a decent level? Are migrants allowed to work? All these factors need to be carried out at city level, although the laws are implemented at state level.

First of all, legislation needs to allow the high skilled migrant to enter the local labor market. Working permits are essential in securing an income and a stable livelihood. Cities should make helpdesks available where these permits are distributed (Lowell & Findlay: 2001:19). Secondly, there should be an open housing market. Expatriates should be allowed to enter the housing market as well (with a housing permit) and they should have the opportunity to buy or rent a place for them and their family. The local government could set up special programs for helping high skilled migrants finding a house. It could also be helpful to design a website where the migrants can find useful information
about getting housing and working permits. Third is the educational system, special schools for international children might be very attractive for high skilled migrants who move with their family. Allowing these children entering the educational system is therefore essential and cities could focus on the development of such schools (Lowell & Findlay, 2001:25).

The discourse within the legal framework is the fourth legal factor that needs to be addressed here. Forcing incoming migrants to take integration courses could send off a negative signal (Doomernik et al., 2005:18). It implies that migrants with a different culture are not welcome and that everyone should assimilate. The authorities should be careful with what they sent out, mandatory integration courses could be perceived as discriminatory. And are there even enough facilities that provide information? Is there a decent access to integration material?

All these legal aspects are worth looking into, as they are part of the local receiving climate and they determine the opportunities of the high skilled migrants, which will in turn determine whether these migrants will stay in the city or not.

2.5 - Personal Factors

The last part of this theoretical framework will discuss a very important part of the push and pull theory: namely the personal factors. There are many unique individual factors that could be important in the decision making process of the highly skilled (such as; prior migration experience, stage of life, the amount of preparation). What will be central in this thesis is one important personal factor, namely the place of origin: the nationality of the expat. This factor is not related to the receiving state or city, it is a completely personal feature. We cannot make generalizations by researching this factor so briefly in this thesis, however, we can at least see if there is an indication of a difference in nationality in the decision making process.
Expats come from many different countries and bring therefore very different norms and values along, which also includes working customs. These norms and values can be like the ones in the receiving climate but it is also possible that they will collide. It is thus arguable that nationality -and the different norms and values a migrant brings along- is an important factor in the decision migration process (Wang, 2004:779). It could influence the way an expat adjusts to the receiving climate and its foreign norms and values. Therefore, it could also influence the decision to stay or leave. The norms and values of English high skilled migrants are more like the Dutch norms and values than the Moroccan ones are. Is there thus a difference in nationality, when it comes to the decision making process to stay or leave in a Western city like Amsterdam?

2.6 - A Last Note

The factors that were discussed in this theoretical framework are considered important for high skilled migrants: in the process of migrating to a country and also in the process of deciding to stay or leave. In the fourth chapter the push and pull factors of the Netherlands for expats will be examined. Are the macro factors mentioned above also evident in the Dutch receiving climate? What should be improved to secure bigger pulls into the Netherlands? With the help of interviews, answers to these questions will be formulated. In the second part of that chapter a look will be given into the push and pulls of Amsterdam. What pulls high skilled migrants to Amsterdam and what pushes them away? What did the expats themselves say about this? Most of them argued that they moved to Amsterdam, not to the
Netherlands. Why is that? Let’s move beyond the theoretical framework that have been set up here and study the behavior of expatriates in Amsterdam.

3. Research Methods

In this chapter the methodological framework of the actual research will be described. What will be researched and what could be expected outcomes? Several hypotheses will be set out to underlie these expectations. After that, the methodological choices of the research will be explained. How will this research be done? How are the respondents gathered? A description will be giving of how the needed data will be collected and how this data will be used. In the end, the methodological restrictions, discovered during the actual research, will be set out. What unexpected things brought the...
research along? Here, restrictions, problems and more experiences gained during the research will be analyzed.

3.1 - The Aim of the Research and the Expectations

As stated in the introductory chapter, the aim of this research is to analyze the behavior of high skilled migrants in Amsterdam, their motivations for staying in the city or moving on to another place is the main theme in this thesis. The central question is therefore: "What are the push and pull factors that motivate Western and non-Western high skilled migrants to stay in, or leave behind Amsterdam and how can policy makers anticipate on these factors?" What motivates highly educated workers to migrate out of Amsterdam? Is it because of economic reasons? Is it determined by the job opportunities available? What influences their decision making process? Besides the contextual factors, individual factors are important in this research as well. The first is nationality: is there a difference in the motivations for staying or leaving dependent on the country of origin? The focus here is on Western and non-Western high skilled migrants. It is expect that there will be no difference in the factors important for non-Western and Western migrants deciding to stay or leave. However, the factors that a migrant considers important could be different due to a different cultural background. Should the authorities of Amsterdam therefore make a distinction in their policies? Should there for example be certain expat centers for non-Western expats and different ones for Western migrants? Is it really important to make this distinction or are general policies enough to make the city attractive for both types of migrants? Migrants from Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin-America and Asia are in this study considered non-Western and the ones out of North-America, West-Europe, Australia and New-Zealand are seen as Western.

The second individual factor is the duration of stay. A distinction will be made between expats who have stayed here for a longer period (three years or more) and the ones who just arrived (up to three years). Experiencing the city (and country) for a longer period could change the image the expat has of Amsterdam. Besides this, migrants who arrived here in the current political climate could
experience the anti-immigrant sphere in a different way than the migrants who have lived here before this political sphere became important.

Having scanned already written literature with these questions above about the motivational factors in the back of my mind, a few hypotheses can be made. First of all, for coming to Amsterdam there are a couple of expectations:

1. Both Western and non-Western high skilled migrants move to Amsterdam because it is an international oriented city with a professional education and labor system.

2. Both Western and non-Western high skilled migrants move to Amsterdam because the Dutch political and economical climate is stable.

3. The location of Amsterdam, as an important economical hub in Europe is what attracts many Western and non-Western high skilled migrants.

4. The motivational factors for migrating to Amsterdam are more or less the same for Western and non-Western migrants.

Secondly, and what is more important in this thesis, are the factors that motivate high skilled migrants to stay in Amsterdam (or migrate away). The following hypotheses can be made surrounding these factors:

5. Most expats who migrate to Amsterdam did make use of the tax advantages, there is no significant distinction herein between Western and non-Western migrants.
6. Western and non-Western expats who move without their family are less likely to stay after a working period of 3 years.

7. It is likely that both Western and non-Western expats will migrate to Amsterdam without their family.

8. The stability of the political and economic climate is important in the decision process to stay in Amsterdam for both Western and non-Western migrants.

9. Mandatory integration courses have a negative influence on the decision to stay in Amsterdam for both Western and non-Western migrants.

10. The international and professional character of Amsterdam is of major influence on the decision to stay for both Western and non-Western migrants.

11. For Western and non-Western expats the current anti-immigrant political sphere is a big push away from Amsterdam.

12. The bureaucracy of the Netherlands is not an obstacle for both Western and non-Western migrants.

### 3.2 - Methodological Choices

The suggested research outcomes stated above will be investigated thoroughly in the next chapter. The question now is how this research is done. To get the most valid and reliable answer on the research question as possible there are several research methods that will be used. First of all, analyzing already written literature is very important in this research, this way a comparison of the situation in Amsterdam can be made with analyses of other cities. Besides this, observing and using available
quantitative data forms also a large part of the methodology. Of course, observations will give limited information, it will not provide the representative data that could actually help answer the research question. It is dependent on the specific view of the researcher, and is thus not very objective. That is why the actual research of expats in Amsterdam will be done by interviewing several respondents. Interviewing will provide more inside (and more objective) information about the motivational choices of these high skilled migrants. In short, it is expected that these methods (observation, interviewing and literature research) are the best options for doing this research in this short period of time.

Studies in the field of sociology can almost never make any generalizations of its outcomes, human beings are unique and every case is therefore different. However, to be able to sketch a valid picture of the high skilled migrants in Amsterdam, there need to be a certain amount of respondents, interviewed in a reliable way. In this research, 18 expats are interviewed, of whom 10 are Western and 8 are non-Western. Beforehand, it was intended to interview an equal amount of Western and non-Western migrants but while searching for respondents it became evident that finding non-Western expats was not that easy. This was of course a setback, however, in the end it will not change the research outcomes much, as no general statements could be made anyway. The respondents were found through my social network at several universities. Many expats working at universities knew other expats working for companies in Amsterdam. Thus by using my own individual contacts, more high skilled migrants in Amsterdam could be contacted. Besides that, by searching the internet more respondents were found (for example, through the website ‘LinkedIn’). Most of the expats can be placed in the age category of 35-55 years old and most of them had prior working experience at their skill level. They all had diplomas at an academic level, comparable with the Dutch standards for higher education. The majority worked for different departments of universities in Amsterdam, as teachers, post-docs or researchers (or a combination of these tasks). A small part -4 respondents- are working for large companies, such as Akzonobel or the ABN-AMRO Banking, filling jobs as management directors or policy advisors. This is of course a very little group of respondents and most of them are working at universities, which creates little variation. In the end, the 18 respondents that
were found gave enough scientific information to answer the research question of this thesis, which is not aimed at making generalizations but at complementing already written literature.

### 3.3 - Restrictions and Problems

As stated above, one problem encountered during the research was the fact that non-Western expats where harder to reach than Western expats. In Amsterdam, there are more non-Western migrants than there are Western ones, in this sense one could expect that more non-Western respondents could be found (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2007:03). However, what became evident during the research was that non-Westerns expats often responded negatively at my request for an interview. This could be a coincidence, I did though experience more rejections from non-Western high skilled migrants than from Western ones. I know nothing more about their characteristics, only that I received 5 negative responses to my request for an interview. 4 of them were non-Western and 3 of the 5 were working for a large multinational. In the end, I do not think this will form a problem as the research is not aimed at making generalizations. With this relatively short research time at hand it was impossible to stretch the period for finding respondents and doing interviews any further, that is why it was decided to leave it this way.

A second problem was encountered while doing the actual interviews. Several respondents did not want to be recorded and sadly, at some times the recorder failed to start recording. I took notes with every interview and the unrecorded interviews I have written out completely. This has of course consequences for the research outcomes, as I could not re hear the interviews that were not recorded (in total, six interviews were written out instead of recorded). The best solution for this was to type out each interview immediately after leaving the room where the interview took place. This way I could remember the answers and personal facts that the respondents gave me. Quotes and one-liners I wrote down during the interview, thus in the end the difficulties encountered with recording was not an enormous problem anymore.
A third setback was the fact that reaching people who wanted to leave the Netherlands was more difficult than reaching the ones that plan to stay. Besides studying attractive sides of Amsterdam, the intention was to study also push factors, out of the city. Expats who plan to leave Amsterdam could help with this part of the research. Only 5 respondents plan to leave, however, the ones who plan to stay had also some negative factors to state about the receiving climate, thus in the end, there were enough push and pull factors that became evident.

Apart from the difficulties that were encountered, the study itself went smoothly. Most respondents reacted very positively and enthusiastic on my request for an interview, almost every expat was more than willing to co-operate and most of them gave me many personal facts to color my study. Although it will not be possible to generalize the outcomes, the study results can give insight in the motivational factors of high skilled migrants and can help authorities aim their policies in a better way. It is not expected that this research will provide groundbreaking outcomes, it can however contribute to already existing literature, as it describes a part of high skilled migration that is not researched yet. The attractive and unappealing characteristics of Amsterdam may have been researched already but the focus on Western and non-Western expats, the inclusion of tax advantages as an important pull and also the factors that keep the migrants here, is what is innovative about this thesis. It is a research about another part of the migration process: not the part when a migrant comes to Amsterdam but the final part, what makes them wanting to stay?

4. Living in Amsterdam as an Expatriate: Pros and Cons

In the theoretical framework the distinction was made between an analysis of migration on national and city level. The focus of this thesis is more on the city level (as it analyzes the receiving climate of
Amsterdam) but in order to investigate this in a proper matter, it is important that the national level is analyzed as well, to give a background for decisions made on local level and to (partly) explain local discourse. The perception of migrants and the policies around migration have deep roots in national traditions of citizenship and notions of national identity (Koopmans, 2004:466). Thus, in order to understand the case of Amsterdam, it is necessary to know more about the general Dutch background. Several questions have been asked the respondents which helps analyze the national situation and just as in the previous chapter, the economical factors will be discussed first, followed by the social factors and lastly the legal factors. What are the main characteristics of the Netherlands, which have proven to be important for high skilled migrants? Having done this analysis on macro level, the case of Amsterdam will be explained. With the help of interviews and literature review an answer on the research question will be tried to find.

4.1 - Introduction: General Characteristics

As told in the previous chapter, 18 respondents were interviewed, of whom 8 were non-Western and 10 were Western. The second distinction was based on duration of stay, in figure 4.1 it is shown that 7 expats have stayed in the Netherlands for less than 3 years (4 Western and 3 non-Western) and 11 have stayed here for a longer period (6 Western and 5 non-Western). Of these 18 respondents, 11 wanted to stay, 5 migrants wanted to leave and the remaining 2 respondents were not sure yet. There was no significant difference between the future plans (staying or leaving) of the Western and non-Western expats. There was however a difference in wanting to stay or leave between migrants who have lived here shortly -4 of them wanted to leave- and the ones who lived here for a longer period –only one of them claimed to leave the Netherlands soon-.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 4.1: Respondents by nationality and duration of stay.</th>
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<tr>
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Of the 18 respondents, 10 migrants -of whom 8 were Western and 2 non-Western- came to the Netherlands with his/her partner and 8 expats migrated alone -2 Western and 6 non-Western-. There seems to be a difference in the family situation between Western and non-Western expats. More Western expats come to the Netherlands with their partner. The hypothesis there is no difference in family situation between Western and non-Western migrants is thus not true, it seems that Western expats are more likely to move with their family. However, there is no significant difference in the future plans of Western and non-Western migrants, we can therefore assume that the family situation makes no important difference for the decision to leave or stay.

The next paragraph will tell more about the motivations for staying or leaving on the macro level. What makes the Netherlands (un)attractive for high skilled migrants?

### 4.2 - The Receiving Dutch Climate
Traditionally, the Netherlands have always had an open economy, relying heavily on export and international trade. Consequently, many multinational companies have settled in the Netherlands. In 2009 it was number fifth in the list of the world’s largest export countries (WTO, 2011). Most experts call the Dutch economy a free one, this is however not completely true. The Dutch government does intervene at times to push the economy in a certain direction. The government is constantly monitoring and improving the business climate, to insure that it stays attractive for new investments. The Dutch economy is generally taken very stable and this comes together with the structural support of the government, companies and unions. According to the international organization MAZARS\(^3\), the Netherlands score high in global competitiveness rankings because it is easy to set up new businesses here and because the new companies are strongly supported by governmental policies (MAZARS, 2011:09).

Another positive economic factor is that unemployment rates are relatively low (4,3% in the first months of 2011) and the GDP per capita growth rate of 2011 is estimated to be 1,7% (Eurostat, 2011). Because of its geographical position, the Netherlands plays a central role in the distribution of goods in the European Union, Schiphol Airport and the Port of Rotterdam are very important in this. All these features make the Netherlands a very attractive place for foreign investments and it causes a stable economic climate. For high skilled workers, the stability of the economy (including job opportunities and wage rates) is expected to be influential in the decision making process of staying in the Netherlands. In short, the relatively low unemployment rates, the stable economic growth and the growing business climate is suggested to be an attractive pull and an influential factor for the influx of expatriates.

The respondents in this study were asked several questions around three economic topics. The first topic was the stability of the national economy, did the stability influence their decision to stay in the Netherlands? Most respondents (16 of the 18) did not consider it to be a determinative factor for staying or leaving. There were expats who claimed that it was an important factor, although they did not consider it determinative. The importance of the low unemployment rate and the professional

\(^3\) MAZARS is an international market leader in the fields of accountancy and management.
business climate were also tested as determinative factors, this can however be very different in different local settings, that is why it was tested on city level and not on national level. The opinions of the expats about local possibilities and constraints concerning these other two economic topics will be discussed in the final part of this chapter.

Most social factors (like, providing for amenities or setting up meeting places for expats) are provided by city authorities, it is on the local level where these factors take place. The state can however intervene in some parts of the social climate, for example in the social discourse of society. The Dutch society has always been internationally known for its tolerant and multicultural character. For centuries long, people from all over the world were welcome and the Dutch example, set up by politicians, was seen as a successful integration model by other countries in Europe (Myers, 2009). The attitude of tolerance seems however to have changed since 2004, when the famous Dutch moviemaker Theo Van Gogh was murdered by a Muslim fundamentalist (Myers, 2009). Protests by anti-immigrant movements became more frequent and their ideas were often displayed by the media. Important Dutch politicians declared the war to terrorism. The murder on Van Gogh seemed to be assigned to the whole Muslim community and among many Dutch habitants the feeling of intolerance against immigrants and even xenophobia was starting to develop (Aydemir, 2009).

This event described above created a different sphere in the Dutch society, tolerance was not the key word anymore. The migrant friendly discourse in society changed gradually, which was noticed by rightwing politicians, who were eager to jump in on it. Different movies and columns in newspapers with anti-Muslim statements reached the societal mass. The multicultural tolerant discourse moved slowly into a direction of a society wherein migrants were forced to assimilate. This form of assimilationist politics has not become completely evident yet, however, different anti-immigrant policies (made by Rita Verdonk and Geert Wilders for example) did cause a change in the Dutch political climate and society (Aydemir, 2009).
The Dutch politicians are profoundly focused on integration issues, instead of immigration issues. This has let to a situation wherein immigrants are not welcome in the Netherlands unless they meet with certain requirements. According to the RMO\(^4\), this development goes against the open character of the Netherlands, which has brought the country materialistic wealth, social stability and an enormous cultural variety (Frissen & van Diepen, 2011:01). Their advice is to create an open migration policy with certain restrictions, which are mainly economic ones. Their standpoint is harsh: Migrants who cannot contribute to the prosperity of the Netherlands, cannot live here and are not allowed to make use of the social welfare system (Frissen & van Diepen, 2011:02). The RMO claims that the Netherlands has been too generous when it comes to providing for social facilities and that this has caused the societal and financial problems (Frissen & van Diepen, 2011:02). Their advice is: “U bent van harte welkom, maar we gaan niet voor u zorgen (Frissen & van Diepen, 2011:02)” (“You are more then welcome here, but we are not going to take care of you.”).

Advices of such advisories are noticed by the media and it creates sometimes even more problems than necessary. Migrants feel offended and claim that the experts are forcing the government to design policies which are too restrictive and too selective. Learning the language in your home country –which has been advocated by many experts- is for example not for everyone possible, especially not in countries where there are no facilities which can provide for the necessities to do this. These debates surrounding immigration policies is followed by people all over the world and one can expect that high skilled migrants in the Netherlands are also aware of this. An increasing feeling of intolerance against migrants can influence their decision to migrate out or to stay in the Netherlands, especially when one keeps in mind that these migrants often receive opportunities to work in another country. The anti-immigrants policies -including for example, mandatory integration courses- can send out a negative signal and can thus create a very influential push factor (Doomernik et al., 2009:18). In this study of 18 expats, just one respondent was forced to take an integration course. This respondent came to the Netherlands 14 years ago and back then, he needed to take mandatory language lessons which were very difficult, expensive and time consuming. He decided to stay in the Netherlands thus it

\(^4\) “Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling” = Advisory for societal development
had not a determinative negative influence. The other respondents were never forced to take language lessons (although most of them took lessons voluntary) or other integration courses.

The current anti-immigrant movement that is gaining popularity in Dutch society is for the majority of the respondents a worrying but not threatening development. One respondent said:

“From my own personal view, I hate the way the political climate is changing because of anti-immigrant movements. It bothers me that this can happen -without much counterweight- in the Netherlands, which was always known for its tolerant character. (Interviewee 2).”

11 expats felt that exact way, they claimed to be very concerned with the anti-immigrant developments in society but did not experience themselves any forms of discrimination. Only 4 of the other expats felt personally discriminated, they were all non-Western migrants. One of them stated:

“The current anti-Morocco vibe makes me unwilling to live here. It annoys me that Moroccan people get criminalized and that we have become the scapegoats of society. If the Dutch would actually interact with us, instead of forming an opinion based on images created by the media, they would see that we are not all extremists (Interviewee 5).”

Although there can be no generalizations made based on the given answers, it looks like the non-Western expats feel more discriminated by the anti-immigrants sphere in society. Most of the other Western migrants consider the societal developments wrong because of their own political view. Many respondents (Western and non-Western) claim that the political developments were the biggest downside of the Netherlands.

Besides this negative social aspect of Dutch society there is also a positive one, namely: the welfare system. The Dutch government intervenes in many aspects of the lives of its citizens. To secure social protection, the main fields wherein the government intervenes are health care, housing, education, work and income (Oorschot, 2006:62). Providing for social security is perceived as very
imported and is the core of the Dutch society. Migrants are entitled to social assistance if they are in possession of a residence permit (from the Netherlands or the European Union). Migrants who are working in the Netherlands are required to be insured for employees insurances (like the WAO, WW and ZW) and civil insurances (like the AOW, Anw and AWBZ) (SER.nl, 2011:123).

It is expected that new types of welfare policies will be set up in the future (which is influenced by the social and political discourse, explained above). In the future mainstream citizens can benefit from social services, however, migrants will probably be offered less. Still, it is also expected that this will be combined with policies aimed at attracting highly educated migrants. Thus for future highly skilled newcomers, this change in welfare policies will not form a direct problem (Oorschot, 2006:74). For high skilled migrants the welfare system and the included safety net can be a positive side of the Netherlands. Most respondents of this study did not consider the social services important enough to determine their stay or leave, there was no distinction in nationality in this. 7 expats considered it determinative for their stay and these expats mainly mentioned the importance of services around child and health care. The Dutch educational system was for 5 expats a determinative decision for staying. They considered the schools and level of education of high quality and a stable factor in the lives of their children.

These two national social characteristics of the Netherlands are of course explained very superficially here. However, we can already tentatively conclude that the social discourse, interweaving with the political changes, has a negative influence on the perception of the Netherlands by high skilled migrants. Especially non-Western migrants consider the current political climate and the mindset of the Dutch people as discriminating and it makes them reluctant to stay here. The Western expats also dislike these movements and for some, although they are not discriminated personally, it is a determinative factor for leaving. The social welfare system is for more than 1/3 of the respondents a determinative factor for staying and is thus less influential than the social discourse.

5 Fiscal welfare is also part of this but this will be explained later in this chapter
6 These are respectively: Disablement benefit, unemployment benefit and statutory sick pay. The civil acts are respectively: old age pension, Widows/ers pension and special medical expenses (British Embassy, 2011).
The weight of both social factors were not different for migrants who have stayed here more than 3 years and for the ones who have stayed here for a shorter period.

Besides the social discourse, there is also a discourse that is part of the legal climate. Policies have shaped the legal framework that is surrounding Dutch society. In the Dutch case, migrants have certain rights -such as the social ones mentioned above- if they comply with certain conditions. Migrants from countries outside the European Union have to apply for a temporary permit to stay if they want to live here for more than 3 months. This permit is not easily gained, there are conditions that need to be met. For example, you have to prove that you can provide for the means to support costs of living, you need to have a passport and you cannot have a criminal record. Migrants who come to the Netherlands for family reunification, also need to test their knowledge of the Dutch society by doing an integration exam (Rijksoverheid, 2011). After 5 years of living in the Netherlands (with once a year a test to see if you still meet all the conditions) the migrant can opt for a permanent permit to stay. In the current political climate and with the new policies implemented, migrating to the Netherlands will get more difficult. Especially for migrants in the lower socio-economic segments of society, the requirements for getting a permit get harsher. The government plans for example to make the integration courses more difficult and in case of family reunification, the partner who already lives in the Netherlands needs to comply with tougher requirements than before (Rijksoverheid, 2011). For high skilled migrants, the welcome of the Dutch government is somewhat warmer. Not only is it for them more easy to get a permit, the government also helps the expats by setting up special expat centers, where they can get the help they need with applying for the required permits (Ministerie van Justitie, 2008:03).

In the future, the expats will receive more assistance, it is however expected that even nowadays the fuss and bother around legislation and getting permits will not form a problem for new migrants. The respondents were asked if the bureaucracy has been an obstacle and if it plays a role in the decision to stay or leave in Amsterdam. The majority (13 of the 18) answered in fact that the bureaucracy was difficult, time consuming and a negative feature of the Netherlands, with no
distinction between Western and non-Western expats. However, only 7 of these respondents considered it a determinative factor in their decision to stay or leave. One of them stated:

“The government should make it more easy for migrants to register and get the needed permits, it makes you feel very unwelcome, you feel more like a burden than a gain for the country -which we actually are- (Interviewee 9).”

The respondents who thought it was an negative feature of Amsterdam felt that the Dutch government made it too hard for them to register, which gave them an unfriendly welcome.

Part of the legal framework that was also enlightened in the interviews was the fiscal part. As already mentioned shortly above, the fiscal welfare benefits are also important in the welfare system. In case of the high skilled migrants there is a specific rule, which could form a major advantage for these migrants. This advantageous policy is called the 30%-ruling, which means that the employee can reimburse the extra territorial costs of the employee, tax free (EXPATAX, 2011). Thus, high skilled migrants can get an allowance for the extra costs they make due to their stay abroad, settled as such: "The 30% allowance will be included in the salary in such way that the costs for the employer will not be higher, while the employee has a higher net salary (EXPATAX, 2011).” Of course, there are some requirements attached to this ruling. The expat must be hired from a company abroad and must have a specific expertise that is scarce or absent in the job market of the Netherlands. The period of this rule has a maximum of 10 years and after 5 years a proof of skills is required. Migrants who become a Dutch citizen cannot opt for the allowance anymore (EXPATAX, 2011). Only 4 respondents out of this study did make use of the 30% ruling and 3 of them considered it important for their stay. The rest and thus the majority of the expats did not make use of the tax advantage. The most important reason for this was the fact that it was not applicable to their situation. Another reason was that some respondents did not knew about this ruling, nobody had informed them about this. The hypothesis that was set up in advance of this research was thus not true: most expats who migrate to Amsterdam did
not make use of the tax advantages and there is no significant distinction herein between Western and non-Western migrants and no difference depending on their duration of stay.

All these characteristics form for the high skilled migrants certain image of the Netherlands as a receiving country. The most influential factor on macro level turned out to be the political climate, which is for many respondents of this study a negative feature of the Netherlands. Most of the respondents who already stated they want to leave the Netherlands in the upcoming years, mention the political climate as a determinative factor for leaving. The social discourse in society is interweaved with this, the politics influence social life but social life also influences politics. The second feature that seemed to be influential is the legislation, many expats claimed that the fuss and bother around getting permits or filling in forms is too complicated for newcomers and too time consuming. Some of them even stated that it made them feel unwelcome in the Netherlands. This was the case for both Western and non-Western expats and for both the newcomers and the ones who have lived here for a longer period of time. The other factors that were studied were less determinative in the decision making process, however it needs to be stated that these factors can still be influential, for example in relation to other factors: it could be that the economic stability would be more important if the unemployment rates were higher. In the next section of this chapter the empirical findings on city level will be analyzed to find out what the high skilled migrants had to say about Amsterdam as a host.
4.3 - Amsterdam

“I feel that I’ve migrated to Amsterdam, not to the Netherlands. I love walking around and see the city awaken in the early morning (Interviewee 2).”

What is it in Amsterdam that attracts high skilled migrants? What makes them stay? In the following part, the push and pull factors of Amsterdam, according to the interviewed expats, will be examined.

Amsterdam plays an enormous role in securing the stable economic development of the Netherlands, especially Schiphol Airport and the business district of the city (Zuidas) are important in this. The multinationals that came to the Netherlands, mainly settled in or around Amsterdam and this caused that the city developed itself as a dynamic financial center with many highly qualified and professional financial experts. It was thus beforehand expected that the business climate of Amsterdam would be very attractive for high skilled migrants.

To study if this economic aspect is indeed as important for staying in Amsterdam as expected, several question were asked. One of the questions was if the role of Amsterdam as an economic hub in Europe was of major importance for the decision to stay or leave. It turned out that it is not necessarily the geographical location of Amsterdam that attracts the high skilled migrants, it is the image of the city what pulls them in and what makes them stay. Of the 18 respondents, 9 of them claimed that the international character of Amsterdam is an influential factor in their decision making process and 5 respondents named the professional character of the city as of major influence. This did not change over time, it was important for coming but also for staying for both Western and non-Western expats.

“Amsterdam is an international city but feels very small and comfortable. It has a professional character but it stays nice to live in, that is one of the biggest advantage of the city (Interviewee 17).”
The next economic topic that was tackled during the interviews was the importance of job opportunities. For more than 15 respondents, the availability of a job is a determinative factor for coming and for staying. For the migrants who plan to leave the Netherlands, job opportunities are also determinative, most of them claim that a better position in another country will motivate them to leave. There is no difference in the importance of job opportunities for Western and non-Western migrants. Many respondents (12) claimed that the level of their job is also important in their decision making process. They wanted a job at their skill level and wherein they could have sufficient opportunities to grow further.

“The fact that I could get a high level job in Amsterdam, with good prospects for my future development, was one of the main determinative factors to migrate to Amsterdam. And the availability of a better job abroad will make me move out of the city again (Interviewee 8).”

Concluding, it can be stated that especially the availability of jobs is the most important for high skilled migrants to stay in Amsterdam. The fact that Amsterdam is seen as an international and professional city does play a role for some migrants but it is less determinative as the job availabilities are.

One of Amsterdam’s major attraction is its diversity of people, that is at least what the authorities claim and what is advertised. “IAmsterdam” is for example a campaign set up to attract new businesses, people and tourists. It stands for the fact that everyone is Amsterdam and everyone could feel welcome here, for every individual there is something worth experiencing in Amsterdam. The expats of this study were asked if they felt attached to the city with the help of several questions surrounding topics as language, social networks and social discourse.
The advisory RMO claims that a decent proficiency in Dutch should not be a requirement to come to the Netherlands but the migrants should see it as his or her own responsibility to learn the language. It is necessary that migrants can take care of themselves, on the work floor, at the doctors office or at school grounds (Frissen & van Diepen, 2011:02). Out of this study came that 7 of the 18 interviewees speak Dutch at a high level and 5 speak the language at a lower level (and can thus only speak a few sentences), however most of them take lessons to improve it. This question was asked because it was expected that learning the local language could indicate a further attachment of the migrant to the country. Thus, it was suggested that migrants who speak Dutch at a high level would be more attached to the Netherlands and would thus be more willing to stay. 3 of the 6 respondents who do not speak Dutch are indeed planning to leave the Netherlands, 2 of the 6 were not sure and only 1 person who does not speak Dutch plans to stay (and takes language lessons). Of course, why would you learn the language if you have already planned to leave after a certain time? 10 interviewees who claimed they speak Dutch or at least a little Dutch did plan to stay, so the expected outcome was true: learning the language indicates a tendency to stay.

The social network of the expats was beforehand expected to be more important in the decision making process of staying or leaving. Having a secure and stable social life in a new environment is claimed by experts to be very important in the physiological well-being of a migrant, which could influence their willingness to stay. The respondents were asked if they intervened solely with other expats and/or with Dutch people and if they considered it important. All the respondents had social reasons for coming, staying or leaving, in all their possible decisions the social aspects play a role. There were for example respondents who wanted to leave because they missed their family and friends, there were also expats who stayed because of their social network here in the Netherlands.

“I don’t think that I will be staying here for long, I miss my family back home and the customs of my own culture. This has nothing to do with Amsterdam itself but more with my own preferences (Interviewee 7).”
Almost every respondent considered their social relations important, independent of if they would stay or not, if they were Western or not and independent of their time of stay in the Netherlands. 6 respondents claimed that their social network consists out of both Dutch and international people, 10 were more interacting with other expats and the social networks of only 2 of the respondents consists solely out of Dutch people. Most of the expats extended their social network through work relationships and some also through family relations in the Netherlands. Beforehand, it was suggested that expats who intervened more with Dutch people would be more willing to stay than the migrants who interacted more with other expats. All the respondents who plan to leave the Netherlands in the future stated to have more contact with international acquaintances than with Dutch people. The 6 respondents who had contact with both Dutch and international people or the 2 who meet solely with Dutch people, all plan to stay in the Netherlands. Aware of the fact that there can be no generalizations made of the study outcomes, it can be stated that it looks like the high skilled migrants who interact more with Dutch people have a greater tendency to stay in comparison with the ones who interact solely with other expats.

Most expats said during the interviews that one of the most positive sides of Amsterdam is the diversity of people and the cosmopolitan and free vibe. The national political developments that are considered as the largest downsides of the Netherlands are according to the majority of the interviewees not evident in Amsterdam.

“Although I miss my own cultural customs, I like the openness and friendliness here. I have never experienced discriminatory behavior in Amsterdam (Interviewee 6).”
It is what 14 of the respondents liked so much: the people of Amsterdam are open minded and very diverse, it makes that everyone feels welcome and that there is little discrimination based on ethnic grounds. Besides the social discourse in Amsterdam, the fact that there is always something fun to do was expected to be a advantage of the city as well. The respondents were asked if they considered it important that they can visit a cinema at every hour of the day or that there are many different theaters to choose from. Only 3 interviewees considered the amenities in Amsterdam important for their stay, the majority claimed that it was nice but not determinative in their decision making process. The wide range of entertainment possibilities is thus not an important factor for high skilled migrants deciding to stay or leave.

Concluding it can be stated that out of this study it became evident that the social network of high skilled migrants and the social discourse in the receiving society are determinative factors in the decision making process of staying or leaving. As Florida already stated in his books and articles, lifestyle is extremely important, just as important as other (economic) factors are. However, the presence of amenities turned out to be less important -for the expats of this study- than Florida always states in his articles.

Migrants coming to the Netherlands have to register themselves within 5 days at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND). At the website of the city Amsterdam migrants can find the needed information and they can send in questions for help. When the site is opened in English, it is evident that the authorities mainly want to attract high skilled migrants. Advertisements for expat events, for the expat center and many help forms for official matters, all are aimed at the highest segments of incoming groups of migrants. There are for example tips for finding a house, how to rent it or how to buy, what your rights are and what pitfalls you can expect. For expats there are enough possibilities for getting information and plenty helpdesks to visit. The registration procedure for high skilled migrants is simplified because of these possibilities to get help (IAMsterdam, 2011). Migrants who came to the Netherlands as a ‘high skilled’ migrant can get their personal public service number at the
expat center, instead of going to the municipality and getting immersed in time consuming procedures. In short, for high skilled migrants, getting registered and collecting the needed permits is made easy by the municipality of Amsterdam.

For the expats who came to the Netherlands several years ago, this was different. There was a different political vibe in the Netherlands but there was also less help available online. As became evident in the macro part of this chapter, almost three-quarter of the respondents complained about the thick bureaucracy (both migrants who have stayed here for a short and long periods). It is not only considered a Dutch problem, but also a problem of Amsterdam despite of the many possibilities of getting help.

“If the Netherlands and Amsterdam want to attract high skilled people, they need to sell themselves better. I was not sure if they really wanted me here: it was hard to get around all the legal aspects and I never felt very wanted (Interviewee 3).”

“The thick bureaucracy was a problem for me at the beginning of my stay. It will not determine my decision to stay or leave but is has influenced my image of the Dutch authorities (Interviewee 12).”

Part of the problem is again the political climate: the legal discourse is also influenced by politicians and policies. Policies can make it more easy or more difficult to enter the Netherlands and get the needed permits. It seems that the biggest downsides of the Netherlands and of Amsterdam could be turned around by changing already existing policies. In the next chapter, cautiously, an advice will be giving for designing better policies surrounding high skilled migration into Amsterdam.
5. Concluding Remarks and a Policy Advice

The previous chapter gave more insight into the process of expats in Amsterdam trying to decide whether to leave or stay. In this chapter the research findings will be evaluated and the main research question will be answered. In the end, a gentle critique on current migration policies will be given, which will lead to a policy advice aimed at improving the receiving climate of Amsterdam.

5.1 – High Skilled Migrants in Amsterdam

As told before, this study was not set up to generalize research results. It was set up to support prior studies of high skilled migration and it would complement these studies by analyzing a part of expat migration that was not studied intensively enough before: the part where expats decide to stay in a city or leave it behind. To study this in a valid matter, the following research questions was set up: “What are the push and pull factors that motivate Western and non-Western high skilled migrants to stay in, or leave behind Amsterdam and how can policy makers anticipate on these factors?”

The distinction was made between Western and non-Western expats, it turned out that there was no difference in their willingness to stay or leave. In both groups there were expats who wanted to stay or leave, with no significant difference. The only factor that played a different role in the lives of Western and non-Western migrants, was the political climate. Although almost all interviewed expats stated that the current political developments were worrying, most found it not to be threatening for themselves. This was however different for non-Western migrants, many of them felt discriminated and they considered the political climate as the main factor for leaving the country behind –and in case of the ones who plan to stay, they consider it to be the most negative feature of the Netherlands-. However, almost all claim that this negative political sphere was not evident in Amsterdam.
The reasons for the ones who claimed to leave Amsterdam in the near future differed. Only 1 expat stated that the political developments determined his decisions to leave, 2 other migrants would leave because of social reasons: they missed their family, friends and cultural customs. The last 2 said that a new and better job opportunity would make them leave the city. It thus seems that it is not the city itself that plays a role in the decision to leave, it is mainly based on personal circumstances.

The factors that turned out to be the most important for both expats who decide to stay and leave are: the social network of the expat, the social and political discourse of the country and city, the availability of job opportunities and the character of the city. This supports outcomes of prior studies, such as the ones of Wang and Kanungo (2004), who already stressed the importance of social networks in the receiving country. Incoming migrants need to be part of the mainstream society, this is interweaved with the own individual social ties but also with the social discourse. As Florida (2004) and Doomernik et al. (2009) stated in their articles, although there may be enough job possibilities and economic opportunities to develop, expats may decide to migrate to another country because of social reasons. An intolerant political sphere or anti-immigrant movements may motivate them to migrate somewhere else. As became evident many times during this study, the social lives of the high skilled migrants are just as important as their economic opportunities are. Besides the mentioned factors, the legal framework and the policies surrounding it shapes the receiving context in enormous ways as well. The politicians decide whether they will support incoming migrants and they are the ones who set up policies, which can be restrictive or open. In the end, the politicians have the most power to shape the receiving climate and influence the perception the expats have of the Netherlands.

What turned out to be less relevant in this study is the importance of amenities. Florida (2004) stated that a lifestyle oriented economy with a high diversity of amenities would attract more high skilled migrants. Almost every expat out of this study claimed that the presence of many amenities is nice but not determinative, it does not influence their decisions to stay here. The other factor that was expected to be of high influence, was the existence of the 30%-ruling. However, it became evident that most expats did not make use of this specific ruling. Reasons for that differed, in some cases the ruling
was not applicable to their situation and for some it was important to be considered Dutch and not an outsider—which this ruling would highlight.

Concluding, it could be stated that there is little difference between the motivations for staying or leaving between Western and non-Western high skilled migrants. There was however a difference in motivations between the migrants who have lived here more than three years and the ones who have lived here for a shorter period. The expats who came to the Netherlands in the last three years had a greater tendency towards leaving the country. It is not clear why this is the case, it could be that the image of Amsterdam changes more positively while living there and experiencing it for a longer period of time. It could also be that for the expats who lived here shortly it feels like the political developments are more directed at them, as they just arrived here as new migrants. The ones who have lived here longer may not consider themselves migrants anymore and feel thus less offended by the political changes.

According to the high skilled migrants of this study, the positive sides of Amsterdam are: the social discourse, its ethnic diversity, the quantity and quality of economic opportunities and the image of the city. The negative sides were more based on national aspects, the political climate turned out to be the most worrying and the bureaucracy also played a negative role. What would be recommendable for the authorities, in order to change their receiving climate positively and make sure that less expats will leave the country in the near future?
5.2 – Changing the Receiving Climate: A Policy Advice

It seems like the receiving climate of Amsterdam is experienced very positively by the high skilled migrants. There were some comments about pick pocketing and other forms of small criminality, however the real complaints where of aspects that are regulated at a national level. Therefore, the following policy advice will not be aimed only at the authorities of Amsterdam but mainly at the national Dutch politicians. Of course, Amsterdam will be influenced by changes in national politics, so recommendations on national level will indirectly also be aimed at local politics.

What has become very clear and what turned out to be the most important for high skilled migrants is the political sphere: the current political developments have an enormous negative impact on the image the expats have of the Netherlands. Although the anti-immigrant political statements are not aimed at high skilled migrants, the expats do feel offended by it. The Dutch politicians have to keep in mind that high skilled migrants often have a privileged situation: they normally have more than one country to choose from and are more likely to migrate to a country where English or another world language is spoken. For that reason, it is advisable that the Dutch politicians act more careful when it comes to the anti-immigrant statements they make and the restrictive policies they try to set up. When you want to attract high skilled people, you need to embellish yourself. Anti-immigrant policies are not contributing to a selling point, moreover, it creates a push away from the Netherlands.

Not only are anti-immigrant movements evident in the political sphere, they also have influence in mainstream society. The tolerant character of the Netherlands and the openness of the Dutch culture is not as clear anymore as it once was, which is a worrying development when one wants to keep in the high skilled migrants. Some politicians state that anti-immigrant policies are needed to recover from the economic downfall that the Netherlands has experienced. It is troubling to state that the migrants are (part of) the reasons for this downfall. Being more restrictive will not create more economic prosperity, on the contrary, it will create more social negativity among the Dutch population (including natives and migrants) and among high skilled migrants deciding where to migrate to. Expats can contribute to the society, they bring scarce expertise along and have a
willingness to work. Therefore, it is advisably to think twice about implementing restrictive policies, as it is not clear if it really would create more economic prosperity.

Excluding high skilled migrants from the anti-immigrant policies has proven to be ineffective, these migrants still consider it wrong and some of them even feel offended by it. Best is thus to step away from this exclusionist and assimilationist mentality and welcome migrants with varying backgrounds. Of course, it is possible to make rules for entering the Netherlands and it may even be necessary. However, politicians have to keep the thin line between inclusionary and exclusionary policies in mind. Having no rules at all may not be the best solution, however, on the other hand, having too many rules offend many of the highly skilled. It would be better to welcome migrants and to make sure that they can contribute to the Dutch economy and society. Part of this can be changed by simplifying legal procedures, all the rules that need to be followed and all the conditions that need to be met make migrants feel unwelcome. Thus, in order to create a place where high skilled migrants eagerly want to migrate to, it would be advisable to simplify bureaucratic processes. This does not mean that there can be no restrictive ruling at all, it just means that politicians have to be careful with migrant unfriendly actions. In the end, it has become clear that the power lays with the politicians: the economic climate is attractive, it is the political discourse that needs to change positively in order to create a migrant friendly sphere in Dutch society, which will positively influence the image that high skilled migrants have of the Netherlands and of Amsterdam.
Acknowledgements

Looking back now on the process I went through while writing this thesis, I can say I have done the very best I could do. It was sometimes a slow and thick process, however, I am very proud of this final version. I have learned a lot and I hope that it is for the readers interesting and fun to read. I have not done it entirely on my own, so in this last part of the thesis, I would like to thanks several people, who have helped me during this process.

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Jeroen Doomernik, from whom I received lots of support and useful tips & tricks. He gave straightforward critique and was able to channel all my thoughts of all the things I thought that could be interesting to study. My second supervisor, Prof. Dr. Ewald Engelen was also helpful and gave some supportive pointers to optimize my thesis proposal. The third person I would like to thank is Jose Koster, head of the Human Resources at the ACTA. She gave me permission to use her contacts at LinkedIn for my research. Through her network I was able to reach many more expats than I would be able to reach on my own, in this limited period of time. Finally, of course, I would like to thank all the high skilled migrants who were so kind to let me interview them and who were willing to tell me personal facts. Without all the persons mentioned above their would be no Master thesis finalized now!
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