JYU DISSERTATIONS 564

Ilona Bontenbal

Migrants as Change Agents

Social Remittances Regarding the Country of Settlement and its Welfare System Shared by Migrants in a Finnish-Russian Transnational Context

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Esitetään Jyväskylän yliopiston humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellisen tiedekunnan suostumuksella
julkisesti tarkastettavaksi yliopiston vanhassa juhlasalissa S212
lokakuun 22. päivänä 2022 kello 12.

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by permission of
the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Jyväskylä,
in building Seminarium, Old Festival Hall S212, on October 22, 2022, at 12 o'clock.

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ 2022

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ISBN 978-951-39-9209-5 (PDF)
URN:ISBN:978-951-39-9209-5
ISSN 2489-9003

Permanent link to this publication: http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-9209-5

ABSTRACT

Bontenbal, Ilona
Migrants as Change Agents – Social remittances regarding the country of settlement and its welfare system shared by migrants in a Finnish-Russian transnational context
Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2022, 263 p.
(JYU Dissertations
ISSN 2489-9003; 564)
ISBN 978-951-39-9209-5 (PDF)

In this research, the aim is to understand migrants´ attempts to influence the information, views, and attitudes that their non-migrant acquaintances have regarding living abroad, Finland/Russia, and differences in welfare systems, by sharing with them information and values that they have encountered during their migration. The research is grounded in literature on transnationalism and the migration and development nexus, i.e., how migrants can keep influencing their society of origin while living in a different country. The topic of focus is welfare, and more specifically, what ideas and information regarding welfare systems and services migrants transmit. The chosen context is the transnational space between Finland and Russia. These neighbouring countries represent two contexts in which the principles behind welfare services and their practical implementation are structured very differently. The transmitting of ideas, values and knowledge is examined from the perspective of the migrant, through the concept of social remittances. The analysis is based on 35 interviews with migrants from Russia living in Finland. The research finds that migrants can act as change agents and have an important role in influencing their acquaintances´ views and attitudes towards migrating, living in Finland/the "west", or Russia/the "east", and how the welfare services are structured and offered in these countries. In the context of Russia, in which the freedom of the media is significantly obstructed, such information can have an important role in providing non-migrants information that they would otherwise not get. Regarding welfare services, migrants are found to remit information about both positive and negative experiences. The welfare services of Russia are significantly less discussed with acquaintances in Finland than the services of Finland with acquaintances in Russia, indicating that although social remittances can be multidirectional, they are not always symmetrical. The research finds that changing how people think is not easy and that there are various factors that are perceived to hinder this, such as strong ideas presented by the media, a east vs. west juxta positioning, and a disapproval of emigration among acquaintances. Sharing ideas and information that are not welcomed, appreciated, or believed can negatively affect the relationship of migrants and their non-migrant acquaintances. Overall, implementing change and changing attitudes, through social remittances, beyond the own personal circle of migrants is found difficult and migrants consider their role in bringing about change in society, regarding welfare services, limited, especially since they are detached from policy makers in Russia.

Keywords: social remittances, transnationalism, transnational relations, migrant networks, welfare, migration, Russia, Finland, migration-related change, development, sharing information, Intercultural communication

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Bontenbal, Ilona
Siirtolaiset muutosagentteina – Hyvinvointivaltiota koskevat sosiaaliset siirtolähetykset suomalais-venäläisessä viitekehyksessä
Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2022, 263 s.
(JYU Dissertations
ISSN 2489-9003; 564)
ISBN 978-951-39-9209-5 (PDF)

Tutkimus selvittää, kuinka Venäjältä muuttaneet maahanmuuttajat välittävät ajatuksia, käytäntöjä ja arvoja maasta toiseen rajat ylittävän yhteydenpidon ja toiminnan kautta. Tutkimus selvittää, miten maahanmuuttajat yrittävät vaikuttaa sellaisten henkilöiden tietämykseen ja ajatuksiin Suomesta/Venäjästä, ulkomailla asumisesta ja hyvinvointivaltiosta, jotka eivät itse ole muuttaneet ulkomaille. Tutkimus käyttää ajatusten, tiedon ja arvojen välittämisestä termiä *sosiaaliset siirtolähetykset*. Tutkimus ammentaa erityisesti transnationalismiin ja maahanmuuton ja kehityksen väliseen yhteyteen keskittyvistä tutkimuskentistä. Tutkimukseen on valittu teemaksi hyvinvointipalvelut, eli tutkimus selvittää erityisesti, millaisia siirtolähetyksiä maahanmuuttajat välittävät hyvinvointivaltioista ja niiden palveluista maasta toiseen. Tutkimukseen valitut naapurimaat, Suomi ja Venäjä, edustavat maita, joissa hyvinvointipalvelut on rakennettu ja ne toteutetaan hyvin eri tavalla toisistaan. Tutkimusta varten on toteutettu 35 haastattelua Suomessa asuvien Venäjältä muuttaneiden maahanmuuttajien keskuudessa. Tutkimus osoittaa, että lähettämällä sosiaalisia siirtolähetyksiä maahanmuuttajat voivat vaikuttaa siihen, millaisia ajatuksia ja tietoa heidän tuttavillaan on Suomesta, joka edustaa laajemmin ”länttä”, ja Venäjästä, joka edustaa laajemmin ”itää”, sekä näiden maiden hyvinvointiperiaatteista ja palveluista. Tutkimus ei anna osviittaa, että maahanmuuttajien välittämä tieto vahvasti motivoisi tuttavia muuttamaan Suomeen, eikä tämä myöskään ole maahanmuuttajien tarkoitus. Maahanmuuttajat määrittävät itselleen sovittelijan roolia ja pyrkivät vastustamaan väärää tietoa ja stereotypioita. Tätä kautta maahanmuuttajat osallistuvat Suomen maakuvan rakentamiseen ja välittämiseen ulkomaille. Tutkimus osoittaa, että maahanmuuttajat välittävät hyvinvointipalveluista sekä kiittäviä että kritisoivia siirtolähetyksiä. Maahanmuuttajat keskustelevat venäläisistä hyvinvointipalveluista huomattavasti vähemmän suomalaisten tuttaviensa kanssa kuin suomalaisista venäläisten tuttaviensa kanssa. Haastateltavat korostavat, että ihmisten ajattelun muuttaminen ei ole helppoa ja että muutoksen esteenä on erilaisia asioita, kuten median luomat vahvat mielikuvat, ”idän” ja ”lännen” vastakkain asettavat ajatusmallit ja negatiiviset näkemykset maastamuutosta. Sellaisten ihmisten ajatusten ja arvojen muuttaminen, jotka eivät ole suoraan maahanmuuttajien henkilökohtaisessa tuttavapiirissä, koetaan erityisen hankalaksi. Venäjältä tulleet maahanmuuttajat kokevat yleisesti oman roolinsa lähtömaansa yhteiskunnan muuttamisessa rajoitetuksi, koska he kokevat olevansa erillään päätöksentekijöistä.

Asiasanat: sosiaaliset siirtolähetykset, transnationalismi, transnationaalit suhteet, maakuvan välitys, hyvinvointivaltio, siirtolaisuus, Venäjä, Suomi, siirtolaisverkostot, yhteiskunnallinen muutos

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my supervisors Nathan Lillie, Päivi Pirkkalainen and Tapio Litmanen who have helped persistently in writing this dissertation and given me many great ideas to think about and to incorporate. I also want to thank Valtteri Ahtamo who had a very significant role in connecting me with several of the interviewees and Larisa Tcekhanovich for helping me by conducting the Russian language interviews.

I also want to thank my personal support person and text editor, my husband Lauri Eirola, for taking the time to read through the text and making improvement suggestions. Also, many thanks to all my other colleagues, co-students, friends and family members who have supported me in the process and taken the time to listen and discuss the topic of social remittances.

Jyväskylä 9.9.2022
Author

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Migrants as change agents

In this research, the aim is to understand whether migrants can induce changes in information and attitudes among their non-migrant acquaintances by sharing with them information, values, and ideas that they have encountered during their migration. This is examined from the perspective of the migrant, through the concept of social remittances. **Social remittances,** as first defined by sociologist Peggy Levitt, are ideas, know-how, cultural practices, information, behaviour, world views, attitudes, values, identities, symbols, and social values that are transmitted through transnational networks from communities of origin to country of settlement communities (Levitt 1998, 926; Suksomboon 2008, 463; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2010). Social remitting is thus the process in which socio-cultural capital acquired abroad is transmitted to the society or origin.

As Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004, 2012) point out, transnational migration is a process, rather than an event. Therefore, the effects of migration do not occur solely at the moment of migration. Instead, through **transnational communication**, migrants can remain part of their community of origin while simultaneously living their lives in the country of settlement. Migrants can influence their social circles through direct personal contact by acting as message carriers, change agents and innovators (as used by Klagge & Klein-Hitpaß 2010). When migrants are in contact with their non-migrant acquaintances, i.e., those that have not migrated themselves, they share information about their life and experiences in the country of settlement (i.e., social-cultural capital acquired abroad), such as for example information about the **welfare system of the country of settlement**, which is the focus of this research. Learning about how things are done elsewhere can help understand the quality and extent of existing welfare services and finding out about similar local struggles elsewhere may

result in the generalization and politicization of individual and local grievances (Lonkila et al. 2020).

The research investigates in what way, and to what extent, migrants attempt to, through social remittances, influence and transform the perception that their non-migrant acquaintances living in the country of origin, Russia, have **regarding life in a welfare state** – Finland, and whether these attempts are according to their understanding successful. Acquaintances are understood here as a category that includes friends, family members, relatives, colleagues, neighbours, and other people that the migrants know personally. According to a national survey commissioned by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and executed by the research institute *Levada Center* in Russia in 2021, 5 % of Russians base their idea about Finland primarily on information obtained from acquaintances who life or have lived in Finland (Finnish Foreign Ministry - country brand report 2021). This means about 7,3 million people in Russia, and the number of those who partly base their idea on information from acquaintances who live or have lived in Finland is likely even higher. This illustrates that migrants can have significant influence and this influence is what this research in interested in looking into more specifically.

The Finnish-Russian context is a fitting context to study this phenomenon since the two neighbouring countries have such different geopolitical roles and they represent such very different welfare systems (more on this in the following subchapter) and thus it is interesting to consider how migrants make sense of the contradictions they experience and how they explain the differences and manage them when relating to acquaintances. By remitting, migrants themselves choose which aspects they see as important or interesting to discuss with their family and friends in their country of origin. The research focuses on the potential of individual, unorganized social remittances, instead of the contribution of organized social and material remittances by NGOs and hometown associations (to read about these see e.g., Levitt 1997; Goldring 2004; Orozco & Lapointe 2004; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011, 13; Burgess 2012; Pirkkalainen 2013; Pirkkalainen 2015).

The research is based on 35 qualitative thematic interviews with individuals who have **migrated from Russia to Finland** and who maintain transnational connections with their acquaintances in Russia. **The main purpose is to find out w**hat kind of influence, through social remittances, do migrants attempt (and struggle) to have on the views and ideas of their acquaintances regarding the country of settlement and its welfare system.

This is divided into six more specific sub questions which all focus on the interviewee´s perception of social remittances:
What is remitted and how:

- What kind of social remittances do the interviewees believe that they create when they transcribe their life in the country of settlement and its welfare system to their non-migrant acquaintances?

- How is the transmission of social remittances perceived to be entwined in sustaining transnational social relations, and what affect does transmitting social remittances have on these relations?

Reception of social remittances:

- What is the perceived reception of social remittances and what factors are considered to influence this reception?
- How is the interpersonal information provided by migrants through social remittances perceived to be situated besides information gained from other sources, such as the media?

Outcome of social remittances:

- How do the interviewees perceive that social remittances change how acquaintances living in the country of origin see the country of settlement, especially in terms of its welfare services, and the life of the migrant in it?
- Are social remittances transmitted from a small and geopolitically less influential country (Finland) to a large country with significant geopolitical power (Russia) perceived to be able have an influence beyond changing how acquaintances think (scaling out)?

At the centre of the research are the migrants from Russia living in Finland. The research **perspective is thus on the remitter**, or conveyor, who is embedded in transnational networks. In the research, the agency of individuals is stressed, and interviewees are seen as potential "change agents". Migrants are thus not merely seen as instruments in the exchange of ideas but rather as active participants. Because of this, the terms *transmit* and *send* are used rather than *flow*, since as noted by Näre (2008, 227) and Mata-Codesal (2011, 32), nothing is in fact flowing on itself without agency. Evaluating whether the things that migrants tell and discuss regarding welfare are true or not, or whether they reflect reality, is not what this research is about: the focus of the research is on what is transmitted, according to the interviewees, to the country of origin regardless of its factual nature.

Although most research has focused on how migrants transmit new ideas from their country of settlement to their country of origin, it should be noted that when migrating, individuals can bring with them ideas and norms from their country of origin to the country of settlement, that they can share with individuals in the country of settlement. Furthermore, migrants can also gain new information and values from their country of origin, while living in the country of settlement, which they can share with non-migrants in the country of settlement. Some researchers thus define social remitting as a **multidirectional phenomenon** in which actors both at the society of origin and the receiving

society play active roles (see e.g., Levitt 1998, 944; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011, 3; Jakobson et al. 2012; Pitkänen et al. 2012; Mata-Codesal 2013, 25; Isaakyan 2015). In terms of this research this would mean that migrants can also, in the country of settlement, share information about e.g., their experiences of living in Russia and Russian welfare services. The research will consider whether the social remitting phenomenon has such multidirectional features, in the selected context. Thus, besides investigating how migrants attempt to share information with their non-migrant acquaintances living in their country of origin, the research will also investigate whether migrants can and do share information with their non-migrant acquaintances living in the country of settlement, and whether these should be considered social remittances

1.2 The case of this study: social remittances transmitted between Finland and Russia

Considering from a wide perspective, this research is **a case of from where and in what way individuals get the information** based on which they form their ideas and attitudes regarding various aspects. In this research the focus is on how individuals form the ideas and attitudes that they have of migration, living abroad, Finland as a country, welfare services and the Finnish welfare state, which represents the Nordic welfare model. The premises is that besides gaining information from e.g., the media, the Internet and education, individuals also gain information from their acquaintances within their social circles. This research looks at how those acquaintances who have migrated and are living abroad provide information, through social remittances, and what affect this can have, and how this information is situated besides information gained from other sources. The more specific case is thus how people share information, values an attitudes on a grass-root level from one society to another across national borders. While looking into this, the research also provides insights into how migrants from Russia in Finland conduct their everyday transnational lives, how they remain part of two societies simultaneously and how they present themselves, their lifestyle and everyday reality to their friends and family living in a different country. As such the research also provides an interesting example of intercultural communication.

Previous research has identified a need to gather empirical evidence about social remittances in specific contexts (Mata-Codesal 2013, 24). This research studies the process of social remitting in a **Finnish-Russian context** and provides insight into a new geographical and geopolitical context, which has previously not been intensively focused on in social remittances studies (see chapter 3.4 for more information on the few previous studies in this context). Finland and Russia are neighbouring countries that share an over 1300 km long land border. Many close ties exist between them. Finland was an autonomous part of Russia from 1809 until 1917, when it became independent. Unlike many other neighbour

countries of Russia, Finland was never part of the Soviet Union, nor was it a communist state. There are also significant differences between the two countries in regard to culture, living standards, income levels, language, societal structures, and the realization of democracy. As noted by Arsalo and Vesikansa (2000, 2), the difference in living standard on the two sides of the border in one of the widest in the world. In this sense, the research has some similarities to research on remittances transmitted by Mexican migrants living in the United States. However, geopolitical context is quite different, and as the interviewees will illustrate in the analysis, the notion that one of the countries is considered to represent "the east" and the other one "the west" has significant implications on especially the reception and influence of social remittances.

Furthermore, the **size and influential position** of the countries involved should be considered when looking at the chosen context. As Anthias (2012, 103) points out, when utilizing a transnational lens, we must pay attention to how different nations are hierarchically positioned and how actors themselves are positioned hierarchically through these global dimensions of power. In the literature, the social remittances transferred from large powerful countries to smaller weaker ones is considered to have a greater impact (Levitt 1998, 940), and thus most research has focused on social remittances that are transmitted from larger or influential countries to smaller or medium sized countries. As such, the Finnish-Russian context provides an interesting case of remittances transmitted from a small and not so influential country, Finland (c. 5.5 million inhabitants), to a large geopolitical giant, Russia (c. 144 million inhabitants). The research will provide empirical evidence whether such a setting can produce social remittances and what kind of impact these remittances might have.

What further makes this case interesting is the fact that the **welfare systems of Russia and Finland are very different from each other** and therefore the research provides a case of how people who migrate from a less comprehensive welfare model to a more comprehensive and encompassing welfare model describe their experiences and the differences that they have noted as part of their social remittances. More information on the Finnish welfare system will be provided in chapter 4.2.

The fact that the two countries chosen for the research r**epresent such very different welfare systems** is interesting, since it means that when migrants from Russia come to Finland, they are faced with a system that is very different from what they are used to. In many ways, the system in Finland offers them more security and support. This can change migrants' expectations and attitudes about the appropriate level of security and support. However, as the analysis will indicate, not all aspects of the Finnish system are openly endorsed by the interviewees. Migrants also have their points of criticism, which they also share with their acquaintances in Russia. The purpose of the research is not to offer a complete comprehensive analysis of the differences of the Finnish and Russian welfare systems. Neither is it considered possible that a Finnish welfare model, representing the Nordic welfare model, could be transferred as such to other countries. Anttonen & Sipilä, for example, note that the Nordic welfare model is

not possible anywhere else than in Northern Europe. They describe that the specific context of Lutheranism, the agrarian background, the austerity experienced before by the majority population, and a certain sense of family has made the Nordic understanding of social policy possible. (Anttonen & Sipilä 2000, 239.) It is interesting to consider what aspects migrants themselves find meaningful to discuss with their acquaintances in Russia/Finland, for what reasons, and what implications this might have.

1.3 Structure of dissertation

This research is grounded in three main stands of literature: 1) the migration and development nexus -discussion, 2) transnationalism and 3) social remittances. Together, they form the framework for the research (**chapters 2 and 3**). After the framework has been discussed, the focus will shift onto the specific case of this research in **chapter 4:** migrants from Russia living in Finland. **Chapter 5** will focus on describing the research method (qualitative interview research) and the assembled research data, which consists of 35 interviews. After this, the analysis of the research material will follow in **Chapter 6**, which will focus on each phase of the process of social remitting (creation/content, transmission, reception, and effect). The concluding **chapter 7** will in summarising manner answer the research questions and consider what kind of changes migrants can induce in the views and habits of their non-migrant acquaintances, and what the perceived effects of this is on the individual and societal level. The following figure 1 presents the structure of the dissertation.

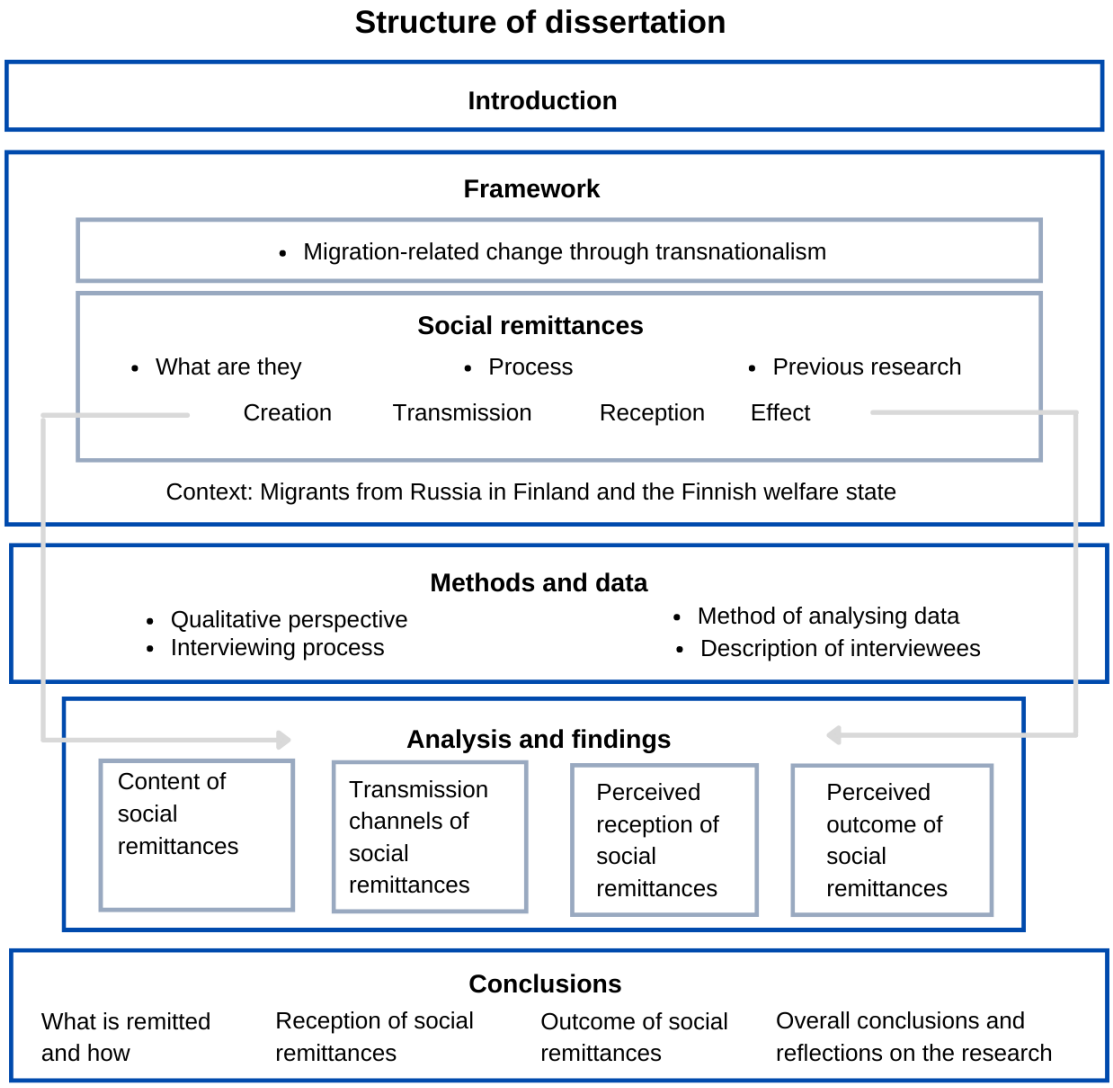

Figure 1 Structure of dissertation

2 MIGRATION-RELATED CHANGE THROUGH TRANSNATIONALISM

It is widely accepted within the research community that migration has various consequences and that it does influence both the societies of origin and the receiving societies. Often within migration research the focus has tended to be on the receiving societies (de Haas 2021). However, through transnational connections and activities migrants can keep influencing their society of origin, while living in their country of settlement[1]. The way that migrants can through transnational connection and activities keep on influencing their society or origin has been studies especially in relation to the *migration and development nexus*, which this research also relates to. However, instead of referring to development, in this research the concept of *societal change* is used (discussed further in the

[1] According to previous research migration can for example impact societies, communities, families and individuals **negatively** through brain drain (e.g., Marchal & Kegels 2003; Beine et al. 2008), brain waste (e.g., Brzozowski 2007; Kolawole 2009), through causing inflatory pressures (Appleyard 1989, 494), through creating a culture of migration (e.g., Delgado Wise & Covarrubias 2009, 89; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2010, 5; Mata-Codesal 2013), through the absence of skilled or able-bodied workers and depopulation in general (Opiniano & Castro 2006; Portes 2009, 8, 18), through creating a shortage in agricultural labour and thus productivity (Taylor 1984), through creating unrealistic expectations for a standard of living (Jónsson 2007, 62; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011, 1), through causing debt for individuals due to the cost of migration itself (Rahman 2000, 119), through "care drain" (White 2016, 4) such as the social costs of disrupting care structures and causing social isolation of older people left behind (King & Vullnetari 2006), through causing dependency (Levitt 1997, 521), through causing deepening socio-economic inequality (Sriskandarajah 2005, 19; Bakewell 2008, 1346; Skeldon 2008a, 8; Suksomboon 2008, 468; de Haas 2012, 17), through the conspicuous and wasteful consumption of remittances (Castles & Kosac 1973; Durand and Massey 1992, 25–26) and through various cumulative effects (Massey 1990).

Migration has also been shown to influence societies, communities, families and individuals in ways which are considered **positive** through peacebuilding (see Horst et al. 2010; Mezzetti et al. 2010), the productive investment of remittances on e.g., education (see Kifle 2007; Adams & Cuecuecha 2010), the multiplier effects of spending remittance monies (Appleyard 1989, 493; Skeldon 2008a, 8), brain circulation (see e.g., Teferra 2005[1]; Daugeliene & Marchinkeviciene 2009; Singh & Krishna 2015), by reducing the exploitation of natural resources (Naylor et al. 2001, 349; Montefrio et al. 2014, 221), and by reducing the pressure of population growth (Keyfitz 1971; Castles & Kosac 1973; Montefrio et al. 2014, 221).

following subchapter). Furthermore, instead of looking at how societies can be changed in their entirety, the research focuses on a particular aspect, i.e., how migrants attempt (and struggle) to influence the views, attitudes, habits, and norms that people within society have. The research will thus look into micro level **migration-related changes** (in line with Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010 who also use this term), some of which may have wider societal impacts.

This chapter will go over previous research on migration-related changes, and certain aspects of the migration and development nexus discussion, which are found important for providing an overall frame for the research and for situating this research within the research field. The chapter will also provide some specific concepts to use in the analysis. First, subchapter 2.1, will consider how changing opinions can lead to societal change, and after this subchapter 2.2 considers how transnational connections enable the change brought on by migrants. In subchapter 2.3, the extent of change induced by migrants is considered, and finally subchapter 2.4, describes the ways in which the agency of migrants and migrant networks shape migration-related changes.

2.1 How can changing opinions lead to societal change

As noted in the preface of this chapter, the idea of this research stems from the understanding that migrants can keep on influencing their country/community of origin even after migration, and that an important part of this is changing how people within society think and know about certain issues. In the research, this is referred to as societal change, instead of development. In most research on social remittances, the concept of development is used, since most research related to remittances has focused on the effect of migration on so-called developing countries, hence the commonly used phrase of "migration and development nexus". Because of this frame, the impact of migration on countries of origin often tends to be considered wholly in terms of development (White 2016, 4). The context of this research, Russia, however, is not generally defined as a developing country but rather as a transition country, which is why the term societal change is mainly employed. Furthermore, development is in itself a highly value-loaded concept. As noted by Geiger and Pécoud (2013), discussing migration and development implies that something called "development" exists, and that it can be the object of policy interventions. In fact, all countries develop as their socio-economic and political structures change over time. (Geiger and Pécoud 2013, 371.) This means that the division between developing countries and developed countries is somewhat arbitrary as well as problematic[2]. For these reasons, the concept of societal change is used, when possible and mainly when not referring to previous research.

[2] The World Bank, for example, has decided that it does no longer distinguish between developing countries and developed countries.

So, how can sharing information and attitudes then lead to changing societies? Perhaps the most obvious way to consider this would be to look at history: an information network between people has existed at least since the invention of human speech (McNeill & NcNeill 2007, 20) and **most elements of our culture are the result of contacts and exchanges** (Adams 2012, 3). Our modern word has been shaped by transfers between different cultures, and especially before the time of television and Internet, the exchange of these intercultural transfers depended largely on the agency of humans. Especially throughout the 19th century travel was significant for the exchange of intercultural transfers. However, even after forms of information exchange were diversified through e.g., the print media, direct encounters have remained essential for the transfer and successful integration of new ideas. (Adams 2012, 3, 5.) In many ways, interpersonal connections have become even more important for the exchange of knowledge, now that communication technology is highly developed, and information is widely available. Because of this, individual contacts have an essential role in the spreading of information, attitudes, and norms. The informal information circulating from peer to peer is also seen to have its own importance beside information gathered through education or media. As noted by Lonkila et al. (2020) it is now cheaper and faster for an individual citizen to seek, debate, and distribute news, facts, and falsehoods worldwide concerning a wide variety of issues.

Interpersonal connections and the sharing of information interpersonally is **especially interesting in the case of migrants**, who experience life in two different societies. When migrating to another country, migrants are exposed to new ideas that shape their knowledge and preference on various aspects (see Sandu 2010 for various examples). As noted by Jiménez (2008, 9), during immigration a transformation occurs in going from one polity to another. When individuals migrate, they change their cultural, social and economic environment (Fargues 2005, 16) and are often faced with political, social, and cultural norms and attitudes that may be very different, or even in conflict, with those prevailing in their country of origin. For example, norms and attitudes concerning gender, religion, secularism, democracy, and market economy in the country of settlement that migrants get exposed to, may be very different from those prevailing in their country of origin. (Fidrmuc & Doyle 2006, 2.) Through experiencing migration, individuals can learn about differences in, for example, political structure and changes in the basic services that the state provides (Jiménez 2008, 9).

Since migrants have gained experience and information from outside their community of origin, they **can bring new information into their otherwise homogeneous networks** (Lindstrom & Muñoz-Franco 2005, 279). Grabowska and Garapich (2016a) refer to such individuals as insider-outsider agents and Wenger (1998) discusses brokering individuals who are familiar with the practices in two different communities. Because migrants are familiar with the contexts of both the country of origin and the country of settlement, they can see the ideas, values and information from both community perspectives and modify

it, if needed, to make fit (Levitt & Merry 2013, 449). Migrants can thus use the strong social ties that they are part of, and simultaneously provide new content into the social network.

It is important to note that, in regard to social remittances, whether the information, norms, values and practices that are remitted, **have a positive or negative effect on how societies are shaped and changed is normatively decided**. In other words, there is no true meaning of a phenomenon, but rather there is only the phenomenon as experienced or interpreted by people (see more on adopted constructivist approach in chapter 5.1). These interpretations are what this research is interested in looking into. Some things may be considered positive in some social circles or societies, while they are seen as negative in others. For example, new ideas remitted by migrants about family values, consumerism and sexual behaviour may be considered as positive values in the country of settlement, whereas they are considered bad habits in the country of origin. In some cases, migrants may for example be seen as setting a poor example for the local youth (see e.g., Levitt 2001, 152). Sometimes social remittances can also be considered to have both negative and positive outcomes on how societies are shaped, as illustrated by the following example by Mata-Codesal (2013). She reports that, in Ecuador, women are becoming more educated due to migrants having remitted new ideas about women's education being something acceptable and meaningful, which is considered a positive outcome. On the other hand, in the same context, stories regarding migration and living abroad, i.e., social remittances about the migration process, have led to a culture of migration in which it is common for young people to consider migrating abroad as a future strategy. This culture has also led to changes in the education scenario. Whereas women are becoming more educated, men are not investing in education due to their plans of migrating, which is considered a negative outcome in terms of development (see also Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011 for further examples). Hearing and learning from migrants about new ways of living may also cause dissatisfaction. This may happen especially if the economic and social opportunities in the country of settlement and the country of origin are not equal. This may then lead to further out-migration. (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011, 19.)

These examples above illustrate that it is not straightforward to determine whether social remittances have negative or positive effects on societies or the thinking of individuals, and this research does not aim to do so. The risk of doing this would be falling into a counterproductive *white man's burden* kind of discussion, which can be considered a weakness of the migration and development research field. According to Levitt (1998, 944; 2005, 6), social remittances can be harnessed for development purpose by stimulating and encouraging information flows on matters that are seen important to development, such as education, health, new business skills, and knowledge of working conditions. And this might be the case, but we should also keep in mind Castles´s (2008, 1) considerations of whether development is in fact seen an issue of **transferring the "right attitudes**" to poorer countries. He critically writes that the idea that the transfer of western attitudes and forms of behaviour from

developed to less-developed countries will bring about positive change goes back to the 19th century and is related to the "civilizing mission" of Europeans in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This is an especially important consideration to take into account in this research, and in all research relating to social remittances, seeing that they mainly focus on the transfer of various ideas and attitudes. A fine line between sharing good ideas and practices and "transferring the right attitudes" or "west is best implications" (as noted by White & Grabowska 2019, 36) should therefore be kept in mind. As noted by Holdaway et al. (2015) and Levitt & Merry (2009) instead of considering what ideas are/should be borrowed or transferred as such, considering the ways that ideas are mutated and vernacularized in the process is central (see discussion in chapter 3.1). For this reason, the research aims to find out which aspects the migrants themselves find important and interesting to attempt to transmit, thus stressing the agency of the migrants.

2.2 Transnational influence

For migrants to be able to attempt to change the views and habits of their non-migrant acquaintances living in the country of origin they need to maintain social contact with them across national borders**. Transnationalism is thus the link that connects** the change potential of migrants, especially in relation to social remittance, to the country of origin: through staying in contact with non-migrant acquaintances and telling them about their experiences and insights regarding the migration process and life in a Nordic welfare state, migrants can attempt to influence what people in the country or origin know and think about these issues. The sending of social remittances is fundamentally a transnational social process, and in order to understand this process, we need to define transnationalism. Breaking down what is meant by transnationalism provides conceptual tools to understand and portray the phenomenon in question.

Research on migration has emphasised that migration can no longer be seen as a one-way street in which the migrants leave their country of origin never to return to it. Migrants construct and reconstitute different continuing and ongoing ways in which they remain embedded in more than one society (Glick Schiller et al. 1995, 48). Due to improvements in communications and travel technology, such as smartphones and social media, the density, multiplicity, and importance of transnational **interconnectedness has increased** (see Kapur 2010, 120 on example of increased intensity in telephone traffic between India and the US) and migrants can easily and relatively cheaply **stay in contact with their family and friends in their country of origin**. (Levitt 1998, 928; Vertovec 2001, 574; Urinboyev 2021). Migrants are thus able to have much more contact with their community and country of origin than previously and more extensively maintain migrant networks. What is further interesting, is that due to developments in travel and communication technology, also the **possible agents of cultural transfers have diversified**. For example, compared to previous centuries, not

only the leisure class but also other individuals can afford to travel (Adams 2012, 7, 30). However, transnationalism is not something that has come into existence resulting from new technologies. According to Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc (1995, 52) and Vertovec (2001, 577), new transportation and communication technologies seem to facilitate rather than produce the transnational linkages.

Migrants and their community members living in the society of origin **share the same social space** even though they are separated by distance. Through maintaining migrant networks, migrants can have a social presence despite their physical absence. Migrant networks connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through the bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin (Massey 1988, 396). Through these networks, migrants may belong to **two or more societies at the same time** (Glick Schiller 1995, 48; Levitt 2005, 1). Due to this, at least some migrants stay oriented towards and influenced by the communities they come from (Levitt 1997, 512; Levitt 1998, 927; Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004, 1002). This is possible since belonging is not exclusivist, and we can belong in multiple ways (Anthias 2009, 10). The analysis (chapter 6.2) will consider in what ways the migrants for this research maintain transnational networks.

In practice, living a transnational life means that migrants can, as Levitt (2005, 1) puts it, "– – earn their living, raise their families, participate in religious communities and express political views across national borders". Simultaneously as migrants become incorporated in the economy, political institutions, localities, and daily patterns of life in the country in which they reside, they are also engaged elsewhere (Glick Schiller et al. 1995, 48). Intensified globalisation is manifesting in the amplifying of world-wide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events that occur many miles away and vice versa (Giddens 1990, 64). Although, to some extent, space, political borders, laws, and other circumstances still hinder the physical movement of migrants and thus direct personal encounter (see chapter 2.3), in general, migrants can more freely than ever before exchange messages, ideas, and remittances daily through multiple transnational networks. Through these various kinds of channels, migrants may share their day-to-day life over distance. This way migrants' life experiences from abroad, concerning e.g., imaginaries, expectations, values, and cognitive schema, can "**spill over"** to those whom they are in contact with in their country of origin. (Boccagni & Decimo 2013, 8.) Migrants maintain connections, conduct transactions, build institutions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they have emigrated (Glick Schiller et al. 1995, 48). Researchers have thus had to develop new ways to understand migration and the connection between migration and development. One aspect of this reconfiguration is the utilizing of new concepts, such as the concept of social remittances, that manages to capture and explain a part of what transnational relations are constituted of. The action of sending and receiving social remittances forms one of the many ways in which individuals can live transnationally.

What this boils down to, is that the life of an increasing number of individuals can no longer be understood by looking merely at what goes on within national boundaries (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004, 1003). However, scholars of transnationalism have not entirely dismissed the significance of the nation state and neither does this research. Transnationalism does not dissolve borders and territories (Lacroix 2009, 1675). However, the transnational perspective takes notice that the links between citizen and state are multiple, rather than disappearing (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007, 134). Because of this, the analysis of border spanning social ties, in the form of social remittances, requires a transnational optic.

Migrants have varied **reasons for staying in contact** with their acquaintances in their country of origin. These reasons include the need to express one's identity, the need to feel belonging, and the maintenance or acquisition of power or other resources. Also, the feeling of marginalization in the country of settlement may manifest in a need to express one's homeland identity. (Brinkerhoff 2006, 14.) A transnational way of living can, in some cases, be a response to migrants not having been able to find full social membership and incorporation within their host countries either possible or desirable (Glick Schiller et al.1995, 52; Levitt 2001, 19). However, sustaining ties to the country of origin is not irreconcilable with incorporation into the country of migration, and migrants "do not trade one membership for another" (Levitt 2005, 2). Orientation towards the country of origin does not automatically stem from the inability or unwillingness of migrants to integrate (de Haas 2005, 1275–1276). Considering this research, the entire premise of social remittances is based on the idea that migrants both integrate into their country of settlement, and thus incorporate new ideas, values, norms, and practices, and simultaneously maintain transnational connections. Both integration (to some extent at least) and transnationalism are thus needed for the phenomenon of social remittances to happen.

However, **not all migrants maintain** transnational linkages and those who do so, can do it in different ways. Transnationalism cannot be conceptualized as a universal mode of existence for migrants (O´Flaherty, Skrbis & Tranter 2007, 840). Research done by O´Flaherty, Skrbis and Tranter (2007) for example illustrates that migrants have very **different motivations and possibilities** to engage in transnational activities, such as visiting their country of origin. According to their research, focusing on Australia, only about 11 % of migrants visit their country of origin on a regular basis. However, although the number of individuals who engage regularly in transnational practices, such as home visits, may be limited, the number of those who engage occasionally in informal transnational activities, such as social, cultural, and religious practices, is much larger (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007, 132). The important factor to note from this, is that the opportunities for migrants to engage in transnational practices are versatile and their occurrence differs according to their nature and context. The sending of social remittances can also occur through many different channels and

in many different volumes and frequencies, which will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 6.2.

2.3 Extent of change induced by migrants

In light of the research setting, besides looking at how migration related changes can be induced (through transnationalism as discussed in the previous subchapter), it is also interesting to consider what the extent of such migrant related changes can be. Migration-related changes occur in different domains of life, and they can impact individuals, families, communities, and entire societies. As Sandu (2010, 271) points out, it is quite difficult to build an all-inclusive theory of the consequences of migration, since the consequences may be intended or unintended, manifest or latent, short, medium or long-term, at individual, household, community, regional or national level, or at the area of origin or that of destination. In this research, the impact is considered expanding from individual social circles (which are focused on) to potential wider societal impacts. The extent of migrant related changes has been widely debated on within the research field and there are several aspects to consider also in term of this research.

In terms of the migration and development nexus, the change potential of migration is often perceived as bottom-up, meaning that change stems from people helping each other without the help of governmental structures. According to this viewpoint, influenced by neoclassical migration economy and developmentalist modernisation theory (de Haas 2012, 12), diasporas, defined in this research as individuals living outside of their country of origin, can through the sending of resources and through their own potential circular migration induce change in their country of origin. Pellerin and Mullings (2013, 89) define the **diaspora option** as an emerging policy orientation aimed at utilizing the human, economic and social capital of migrant populations in order to revitalize levels of investment, skill and development in the places of origin. The diaspora option has been actively promoted by various international institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Pellerin & Mullings 2013, 90). Different countries have also come up with different ways to engage with their expatriates as to for example increase brain gain/circulation and the flow of remittances. To do so, Russian officials have also established several activities and programmes to gain from their expatriates (see chapter 6.2.7 for further information on these).

However, when we focus on the effects that migration can have on societal change, we elevate a relatively small number of people to the status of an instrumental development tool, which might divert attention from more relevant and structural development issues (Skeldon 2008a, 13–14). The mobility of people remains limited, and the overall share of the migration population should not be exaggerated (Sriskandarajah 2009, 3). As de Haas (2005, 1270) puts it, we do not live in an age of unprecedented migration and a century ago the percentage

(2.5 %–3 %) of international migration in the total world population was at almost similar levels as it is nowadays (3.5 %)[3]. Furthermore, even with significant numbers of migration and remittances, the development potential of migration is not automatic (de Haas 2005; Asis 2017, presentation) and emphasising the role of the diaspora on development has also encountered a lot of criticism within the research field (see Pellerin & Mullings 2013), inspired by structuralist state-centred social theory, dependency, and neo-Marxism (de Haas 2012, 12). Migration is from this viewpoint seen as a component in the process of capital accumulation, which is generated and instrumental for developed economics and disbenefits developing economics (Rahman 2000, 111).

De Haas (2010, 2012) is calling the kind of thinking that promotes the responsibility that migrants have in development **"neo-optimism"**[4], which stems from neoliberal state minimizing thinking. Migrants have at times been seen as responsible for the lack of development in their country of origin, instead of underlying economic structures and policies (Skeldon 2008a, 10). This viewpoint thus accentuates the privatization of the development effort (Mata-Codesal 2011, 235; de Haas 2012, 10; Pellerin & Mullings 2013, 90). Also, Glick Schiller (2012, 93) notes rather critically that it is a distorted positive interpretation to portray migrants as the new heroes of international development. Migration alone should thus not be blamed for underdevelopment, nor should it be seen as an easy solution to underdevelopment. Furthermore, development initiatives led by migrants may lead to the results of states getting "off the hook". When migrants take on responsibility of development and individuals get better at solving their own problems, states can continue to pursue politics that are unfavourable to, say, rural development. (Levitt 1997, 518; Levitt 2001, 192.) States sometimes actually further the disparities created by migration and remittances by their actions, since areas that are changing due to remittances may seem more alluring options for the investment of new infrastructure projects. States may thus end up supporting the industries of already well-established economic areas, such as their tourism sector. Less developed areas thus become double disadvantaged. (Glick Schiller 2009, 24.) Therefore, we should consider that although migration can have a significant impact on, for instance, living standards and poverty reduction, its capabilities to solve structural development problems are not as effective (de Haas, 2012).

[3] However, as noted by Castles (2010, 1568), emphasising the fact that only 3% of the global population have migrated obscures the significance of migration as an expression of social change. This is because it glosses over the highly concentrated nature of migration, i.e., that cultures of emigration have become established in certain origin areas, and that the settlement for emigration is concentrated in developed countries and cities.

[4] There is evidence that the emphasising of negative and positive aspects varies according to economic circumstances and general paradigm shifts in social and development theory (e.g., Spaan et al. 2005; Faist 2008; Delgado Wise & Covarrubias 2009; de Haas 2010; de Haas 2012; Gamlen 2014). Furthermore, the viewpoints are influenced by political and economic interests (Gamlen 2014, 587) and they can have a steering effect when discussing the impact of migration on development, in terms of e.g., policy suggestions (Bartram 2010; Vlase 2013, 81), which is why they are not solely a scholarly debate.

Most researchers in the field of migration and development seem to agree that **existing and working structures** are needed for the change potential created by migrants and social remittances to be useful. It has been shown that the general macro-level development context, state involvement, and structural betterments are crucial to bottom-up development triggered by migration to take hold. This also means that the role of states should not be downplayed because of trickle-down or bottom-up development trends. Structural and economic reform enable the utilizing of the development potential of migrants (de Haas 2012, 19). If there are no structures or they are weakly developed, the effect that knowledge and skill transfers and returning highly skilled migrants can have, is limited (Skeldon 2008a, 13; Portes 2009, 17; Nevinskaitė 2016). In practice, this can mean that the new skills that migrants have learned during their migration may not be utilizable in their country of origin (Mata-Codesal 2011, 215).

Previously, **absorptive capacity or receptivity** has primarily been discussed in relations to firms and companies (see Cohen & Levithal 1990) but more and more it has also been discussed in relation to migration. The receptivity or absorptive capacity of a country refers to the willingness and the ability of a country to accept and assimilate knowledge and skills contributions from its diaspora (Nevinskaitė 2016). For example, for technological innovations and investments shared by migrants to be able to have a positive development potential, existing infrastructure needs to be in place to internalize them (Portes 2009, 17). Factors such as the competitiveness of a state, the quality of governance manifested in transparency, predictability, and the consistence of the enforcement of the law, and openness to foreign skills, technology, capital, and business are critical for enabling knowledge transfers and thus to how well a state is able to absorb its diaspora's contributions (Siar 2014, 311–313). Furthermore, the existence of policies, programmes, incentives, and subsidies in favour of the diaspora and the circulation of migrants affect the influence that the diaspora can have. In this research, the absorptive capacity and receptivity of the country of origin will be considered through analysing the viewpoints that migrants have about Finland and Russia being open to new ideas and practices. As part of this, the migrants´ options and plans on re-migration will also be considered (see chapter 6.2.6).

Unfavourable conditions and development constraints such as bad infrastructure, corruption (see Isaakyan 2015, 29–30), lack of security (Abdile & Pirkkalainen 2011), a lack of macroeconomic stability, market failure, absence of appropriate public policies, a lack of legal security and a lack of trust in government institutions are likely to constrain the positive effect that migration might have on development (de Haas 2005, 1275). For example, in the case of overseas Chinese migrants, underdeveloped market systems in the country of origin have caused businesses, set up by migrants in their country of origin, to fail (Biao 2006, 62). Likewise, Hanifi (2006, 111–112) notes, that in the case of migrants from Afghanistan, a lack of law, an inconsistently applied legal framework, and prevailing insecurity of property and capital in Afghanistan are not motivating migrants to remit their skills or their businesses to their country

of origin. This research takes part in this discussion, and it considers how migrants from Russia see the interaction between the conditions in their country of origin and the social remittances that they transmit. Further discussion on this will follow in the analysis part of the dissertation.

Furthermore, when considering the diaspora option and migration induced changes, it should be kept in mind that individuals have very different positions in regard to their ability to exert influence through migration and especially to circulate between countries. As noted by Anthias (2012, 103) the ethno-national project remains central, which appears in the fact that nation states still determine juridical, social, and cultural citizenship.

The contributions by migrants are often found to relate to their ability to visit their places of origin and/or circulate between the country of origin and the country of settlement. However, in general, those migrants that **hold visas and are living legally in their country of settlement have more opportunities in visiting their country of origin** (see e.g., Carrasco 2010, on the effects of this on Peruvians in Chile). This is because legal status affects the possibilities that migrants have for travelling back to their country of origin and their possibility to return to their country of settlement after travelling. (Mata-Codesal 2011, 180–182.) Transnationalism does not dissolve borders and territories (Lacroix 2009, 1675) and, in fact, nation-states' borders continue to structure people's social and geographical mobilities (Krivonos 2015, 353). In practice, for example, migrants from Russia who have both Finnish and Russian citizenship can usually travel between the countries without difficulty. Based on previous research, it also seems that the return to the country of origin is often easier for highly skilled professionals, than what it is for manual labourers (Portes 2009, 16). Similarly, it is more difficult for humanitarian migrants to circulate because of their legal status (as for example asylum seekers) and because of the possible insecure situation in their country of origin. This also relates to more recent developments in migration policy in several European countries that have tightened their emigration policy, especially towards immigrants that are not wanted, while simultaneously trying to attract more highly skilled migrants (see Sen & Pace's 2019 example of Denmark). Highly skilled migrants are more unrestricted and financially able to circulate which is why they have the option to make their journey cyclical (Portes 2009, 16). Those migrants that have no legal status have less opportunities for traveling back and forth and therefore they have less opportunity to transfer social remittances in person during their visits. Due to this, some new ideas and customs that are more complex and more difficult to explain, and which would require meeting in person, might not get remitted. A lot of "unintentional remitting" that would happen through face-to-face visits might also not occur. Furthermore, Boccagni and Decimo (2013, 7) estimate that the more insecure the migrant's socioeconomic and legal status is, the more likely they are to draw on transnational ties as their main source of social protection, and thus the less likely they are to exert an innovative influence on their home societies. From this perspective, the elites and highly skilled migrants thus have more opportunities to influence their country of origin with their social remittances.

2.4 Migration-related changes from the viewpoint of migrant agency and networks

An important aspect in analysing the impact that migrants can have on what knowledge non-migrants have and how they see the migrant´s country of settlement and its welfare structures is looking at the patterns of migration itself – who moves and where. Concerning this, it is especially important to notice that migration is to some extent self-selective. This is also an important factor considering social remittances and their potential change effect, as will be discussed in this subchapter.

Migration itself is a **selective process**: to migrate, people need human, financial, and social resources as well as aspiration (de Haas 2005, 1271; de Haas 2007, 832). The capital needed for migration, means that migrants are generally not drawn from the poorest countries or from the poorest communities within the countries of origin, but instead from those that are slightly better off (Hildebrandt & McKenzie 2005, 2; Schuerkens 2005, 536–537; de Haas 2007, 828, 832; Castles 2010, 1567). Because of this, international migrants tend to come from highly concentrated areas, with large parts of most countries of origin not participating in international movements (Skeldon 2008a, 6). This means that migration is still mostly a prerogative of the better-off groups in origin communities and societies (de Haas 2012, 16). In practical terms, within the framework of this research, it is interesting to consider how this viewpoint reflects among the interviewed migrants. The reasons and resources that the interviewees have had for migrating will be analysed in chapter 5.4.1

When an area develops, the tendency for its people to migrate grows due to better opportunities, education, infrastructure, security, and access to the media and other information sources (de Haas 2007, 833; Bakewell 2008). Economic and human development actually increases people's capabilities and aspirations and hence it leads to increased migration (de Haas 2005, 1271; de Haas 2007). Middle-income countries tend to have the highest emigration rates (de Haas 2005, 1271; de Haas 2012, 17), which also means that **most change potential** related to migration thus **exists between high-income and medium-income countries**, such as Finland and Russia. Medium-income countries are the ones migrants can migrate from, and they are also the ones with at least some kind of opportunity structures for the diaspora contribution to make use of.

Because migrants tend to follow **established migrant networks and migrant systems**, initial migration often leads to more migration (e.g., Jokisch 2002, 546; Ho & Shirono 2015, 12). As noted by Massey (1988, 384), once emigration begins, it fosters changes in social and economic structures that make additional outmigration more likely. Migrant social networks, migration systems or "diaspora knowledge networks" (as termed by Meyer, 2007) can be distinguished as channels through which information, in other words social remittances, regarding the migration process itself and information about the host countries travel. Migrants, for example, send feedback about their progress

and reception at the destination and provide information that can help other migrants decide whether to stay or to return (Isaakyan 2015, 20). This can include information about how to get jobs and find places to live (Vertovec 2007, 2). This information is shared so that the next generation of migrants would not face problems in the country of settlement (Mukherjee & Rayaprol 2019, 67). Positive feedback tends to encourage migration whereas negative feedback discourages further migration (Mabogunje 1970, 12–13; Fussel & Massey 2004; Van Mol et al. 2016). For example, reporting about issues, such as employment misfits, hostile host societies, restrictive immigration policies or the challenges of learning a new language can potentially decrease migration (de Haas 2010).

Because of migrant networks, migrants from a certain society of origin **tend to settle in the same place,** since migrants prefer to migrate to areas where they already have contacts (see e.g., Pedersen et al. 2004 for empirical evidence of this and Bakewell et al. 2012 on information why some movements result in the establishment of migration systems, while others do not). Once migration from a certain area has started, it tends to become a self-sustaining social process (Castles 2004, 860; Dekker & Engbersen 2014, 402; Ho & Shirono 2015, 12). As Levitt (2001, 8) describes, "the risks and costs of movements for subsequent migrants are lower because there is a group of experts already in the receiving country to greet newcomers and serve as their "guides". In other words, migration networks lower the cost of migration for the individual since incoming migrants can e.g., draw upon them for information upon arrival and to gain access to employment (Massey 1988, 397). Due to this, migration is a path-dependent process. At the same time, these migrant channels also carry other information, and when the total number of people that receives information from abroad reaches a critical mass, the information is likely to spill over and reach those that have never migrated or whom are not directly connected to people who have migrated (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009, 124–125). In communities where migration is common, it is likely that ideas and values transmitted through social remittances will eventually reach a wider audience and have a larger change potential.

However, because economic and social remittances generally go to specific areas within countries, and specific groups within the communities, they do often not influence the poorest households, who are not connected to migrant networks (Bakewell 2008, 1346; Skeldon 2008a, 8; de Haas 2010, 249). Only those countries and communities actually participating in the migratory networks can be influenced by the circulation of ideas, innovation and change of thought. Social remittances therefore only tend to influence the somewhat better off countries and communities. Because of this, it is also likely that migrants come from families that already have migrants living abroad, since the (economic and social) remittances sent by previous migrants have helped further boost their economy (Charsley 2005, 90).

Another aspect about migrant selectivity to consider is the concern that those individuals that would most likely **seek change and be capable of influencing the domestic political situation**, are also those most likely to

migrate. The self-selectivity of migrants has led to concerns about growing inequality and areas losing their brightest, most outspoken, and most entrepreneurial individuals. According to the classical analysis by Hirschman (1970), which has been much used since to explain the migration decision of individuals and its effects on society (see e.g., Sippola 2013), individuals who are dissatisfied with the state of matters in their country of origin can either **choose to exit or they can stay and use their voice** to protest and try to change things (Hirschman 1970). This is an essential remark considering that the average human capital of migrants is supposed as greater than that of those remaining behind (Kapur 2008, 3), and emigrants are believed to show more initiative than those individuals that do not migrate. Migration may thus end up contributing to political stability and regime survival through there being less pressure for reforms in the country of origin. (Kapur 2008, 4; Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009, 131; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011, 6; de Haas 2012, 8, 18; Beine & Sekkat 2013; Li et al. 2016, 5.) Previous research has found that due to migration, and especially the migration of highly skilled, there is less pressure in favour of institutional improvements (Beine & Sekkat 2013). Lassila (2019) notes, regarding Russia, that in a political sense the migration of educated, critically thinking and opposition-minded individuals is not a problem for the authoritarian regime. Human capital is also important for institution building and institutions are critical for development, hence the long-term effects of human capital loss can be negative for the country of origin (Kapur 2008, 3). When the idea of voice is put in perspective of welfare, one might speculate whether the outmigration of the most outspoken persons means that there is also less pressure for reforms regarding welfare. Migration might thus have a negative effect on welfare related reforms through the losing of "voice".

Social remittances however change the way that the issue of exiting migrants is framed. According to theories of social remittances, migrants can exercise their "voice" from afar, in other words "**exit with voice"** (as termed by Waddell 2014, 117), use their voice after exit (Fomina 2019) or leave open a door for the diffusion of ideas (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009, 131). Through transnational connections and social remittances, individuals can still voice their concerns and use their knowledge to influence their social circles and potentially their community of origin, even if they have exited their country of origin. The ongoing links that exist between those who exit and those who stay behind should therefore not be ignored (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009, 131.) Moreover, individuals who before their migration had no particular opinion or voice about welfare services, might also build a whole new perspective on the matter after having migrated and having seen different systems in place. Sometimes the voice might therefore only be formed after migration.

3 SOCIAL REMITTANCES

In this chapter, a closer look will be provided on theories and research on social remittances as a form of migration-driven change. In the first subchapter 3.1 what is considered as part of social remittances and what not is defined. Subchapter 3.2 will go over the process of social remittances, from creation, transmission and reception to effects and diffusion. Subchapter 3.3 will consider the different ways in which social remittances can be, and have been, classified, and subchapter 3.4 will provide an overview of previous research, which also helps to situate the research within the scholarly field.

3.1 Defining the concept of social remittances

The word "remittances" has in most instances come to mean economic remittances, even though the word originally, stemming from the Latin word "mettere", means "to send" (Mata-Codesal 2011, 91). According to estimates c. 800 million people receive economic remittances (UN News, 2019). The vast amounts of money sent to the community of origin, which is generally estimated to surmount the amount of official development assistance, has assured that economic remittances have also been the primary focus of migration and development studies (Skeldon 2008a, 7; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011, 2, 4; Markley 2011, 366; Portes & Zhou 2011, 2). Development is however a diverse field that is associated with virtually every aspect of human endeavour (Rao & Woolcock 2007, 479). **Economics should thus not be the sole lens through which development is researched**, and nor should economics be researched on the expense of the socio-cultural (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011, 4; Grečić 2019, 7). Besides economic remittances migrants can also send other non-monetary things to their country of origin and through this influence its development. This is reflected in the term "social remittances".

Social remittances broadly stand for the ideas, know-how, cultural practices, information, behaviour, world views, attitudes, values, identities,

symbols, and social values that are transmitted through transnational networks from country of settlement to societies of origin (Levitt 1998, 926; Suksomboon 2008, 463; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2010). Social remittances are a grassroots form of cultural diffusion (Levitt 1998; Boccagni & Decimo 2013) and through them migrants can serve as an "intangible source of influence" (Kapur 2010, 103) and trigger change in their country of origin. According to Kapur (2010, 122), the ideas embedded in human capital form a subtler mechanism of impact arising from migration. The concept of social remittances provides a framework and a practical tool to analyse the influence that migrants can have, that also accentuates the **agency of the migrants** (Mata-Codesal 2011, 239). Instead of casting migrants the role of passive actors in the process of development primarily controlled by macro-level forces, within the research of social remittances, individuals and families are seen as having an active role in transforming the social and political life of migrant countries of origin. However, it is hard to demonstrate the causal effects of ideas (Kapur 2004, 367) and because of this, social remittances are less observable, quantifiable, and demonstrable than economic remittances (Kapur 2004, 364; Kapur 2010, 102). In other words, it is more difficult to calculate them or their effect. Therefore, as noted by Isaakyan (2015, 14), there is a risk that social remittances may pass unnoticed before the researcher's eyes. To tackle this challenge, the research setting is designed in a way that focuses on shedding light onto the phenomenon by investigating the attempts of migrants to share information, explain their current life situation, change opinions, and broker innovations, through social remittances, rather than trying to illustrate the effects of social remittances.

When defining what social remittances are, it is useful to **contrast them to other forms of cultural circulation**. People are constantly exposed to various kinds of forms of global cultural circulation because of economic and political globalization, which leads to a world-wide diffusion of institutions, culture, and styles (Levitt, 1998). When people, for example, browse the Internet or watch television, they are exposed to circulating cultural values and behaviours. It is not straight forward how much of change in behaviour, attitudes and ideas is due to emigration and social remittances and how much to other global cultural circulation. In fact, social remittances are **reinforced, and they supplement other forms of cultural circulation**. As noted by Levitt and Merry (2013, 452), the less familiar the idea, the less likely it is to be adopted. Although it is quite difficult to disentangle the effects of social remittances from the effects of broader cultural change, some differences can be stated, and social remittances should thus be seen as a distinct separate form of global cultural circulation. (Levitt 2001, 14; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011, 6.)

What **sets social remittances apart**, is that they are based on linkages between social peers. Social remittances generally occur, unlike other forms of global cultural circulation, **personally and directly between individuals who know each other** or who are connected to one another by mutual social ties. Social remittances are embedded in the individuals (Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010, 196). Thus, "the path" of social remittances can be traced, which means that

migrants and non-migrants usually know how they got to know the idea or practice carried by social remittances. (Levitt 1998, 936; Levitt 2005, 3.) However, according to some scholars, not all remittances are sent consciously and intendedly (see Isaakyan 2015), and the receivers are not always aware of all the things that migrants have transmitted to them. According to this perspective, social remittances can be transmitted and accepted **both intentionally and unintentionally**. In general, when we are in contact with other people, we always send out both intentional and unintentional messages. Our communication is direct and indirect. The same goes with social remittances: some values and ideas are purposefully explained or taught to those in the society of origin, and some values and ideas "rub off" unintentionally between the lines of communication. This kind of definition however blurs the boundaries of social remittances and make it a somewhat less defined concept. Because of this some scholars (White 2021) have decided to keep the indirect impacts analytically separate from the concept of social remittances, which is conserved to conscious adopting and direct transmission. In this research also the focus will be on conscious adoption and direct transmission, partly because the method for doing this research is biased towards detecting intentional and conscious remittances, since the data is gathered through asking migrants about their attempts to transmit social remittances.

It is considered that macrolevel **global flows often forego and reinforce social remittances**, which means that the new ideas that migrants take with them or send have usually already reached the non-migrants in some way and some form or another and are thus already available on the ground. This eases the way for new ideas and practices transmitted by migrants, and it makes the recipients more receptive of them. (Levitt 1998, 937; Levitt 2005; Levitt & Rajaram 2013, 356.) However, the messages transmitted and diffused through interpersonal relations, between group members on personal preference or by mutual ties, are potentially more powerful agents of change, than messages conveyed through impersonal channels of information, such as the mass media (Lindstrom & Muñoz-Franco 2005, 277). Lindstrom and Muñoz-Franco for example outline, in their paper about social remittances affecting family planning, based on earlier research from Beckman 1983 and Kohler 1997, that when information about contraception is transmitted by relatives and friends, it is often more influential, than when the information is received through impersonal channels (Lindstrom & Muñoz-Franco 2005, 278).

Although social remittance exposes the non-migrants to global cultural diffusion (Suksomboon 2008, 476), due to the modifying role that both the sender and the receiver play, it should not be assumed that the culture that receives social remittances automatically becomes more similar to the remitting one. Social remittances do not automatically lead to a worldwide homogenization of cultures[5] and cultural colonization (Vianello 2013, 92). This is because social

[5] Although, if we take a very long historic perspective, the intensification of communication networks has led to a decrease in the diversity of cultures resulting in less languages, religions, political organizations, and organised communities (McNeill & McNeill 2007).

remittances are developed and not passively learned by migrants (Vianello 2013, 92). New ideas are not just adapted or mimicked but rather transformed (Adams 2012), translated (Alenius 2016, 272), mutated (Holdaway et al., 2015) **modified and changed in the process by both the sender and the receiver** to make them fit new context. As Stone (2004, 549) notes, selective borrowing leads to hybrids and adaptive innovation to make policy development fit local conditions better. This means that a fusion culture is created that is distinct from the original sending and receiving one. A margining or synthesis of cultures occurs (see e.g., Elrick 2008, 1514) By modifying and editing, the agents of transfer become creators or co-makers of the ideas that are transferred. This also means that remittances **do not just flow** between different countries and communities. The term flow undermines the active roles that migrants have in the process.

3.2 How does social remitting occur?

The process of social remitting can be divided into four different main stages: 1) the creation of social remittances, 2) their transmission, 3) acceptance and 4) diffusion.

The creation of social remittances is the process during which migrants "pick up" and internalize the values, ideas and information that they then can transmit to their society of origin. This process is shaped by the values, ideas, and information that migrants have had before their migration and by the extent of integration into the country of settlement. The ideas and practices that migrants bring with them, when migrating, influence what migrants end up doing in the country of settlement, who they interact with and what they are exposed to (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011). In other words, migrants draw on their pre-migratory experiences when engaging in activities in their country of settlement (Jones-Correa 1998, 342). Migrants are hence not blank canvases which the socio-cultural context of the destination places can be printed on to (Mata-Codesal 2013, 25). Since people have diverse kinds of interest, they do different things in their leisure time and for their work. Migration does not automatically erase people's interests, but instead they go on shaping the life of migrants in their country of settlement. (Mata-Codesal 2011, 174.) The pre-migratory history and predispositions that migrants bring with them should not only be understood in ethnic terms. Instead, other cross cutting dimensions, such as gender, generation, class, political values, and experiences, also play a role that has to be considered to enable a translocal research approach (Anthias 2012, 104). For example, migrants' educational background shapes what migrants are exposed to after migrating, and what they notice, absorb, rework, and transmit (Mata-Codesal 2011, 175–178).

In terms of social remittances, this means that the information, norms, and values that migrants absorb in their destination country is selective (Levitt 1998, 930) and the information is interpreted through **specific frames of meanings** that

migrants have brought with them (Levitt 1998, 930; Mata-Codesal 2013, 26). The "selective eye" (Adams 2012, 6), or the frames of meaning, that migrants have are based on e.g., migrants' places of origin, their personal idiosyncrasy and background, and their places of residence (Mata-Codesal 2013, 26). Because of this, migrants act themselves as **filters** of the things that get sent back to their places of origin (Suksomboon 2008, 475–476; Mata-Codesal 2013, 25).

By staying, working, and taking part in education abroad, migrants augment their human capital (Kapur 2010, 106). This mainly occurs through the process defined as socialization. Through **socialization** migrants incorporate ideas from their new surroundings which then leads to a blending of new and old ideas. Some new ideas and practices are adopted unchallenged, other new elements are grafted onto existing ones (Levitt 1998, 930), and some new ideas are rejected (Grabowska & Garapich 2016b, 2153). In case of rejection, the migrant may become even more convinced about the norms and values that prevail in their country of origin (Fidrmuc & Doyle 2006, 2). The socialization processes continue throughout life and hence also adults must be constantly socialized into new roles, as they must learn to perform these various roles adequately (Brim 1968, 184, 186). Various factors have been found to have an effect on the sociocultural adjustment of migrants. Central factors include the length of residency in the country of settlement, the immigrant status that migrants have, gender, educational background, perceived discrimination, and the expectations that individuals have concerning migration and living in the country of settlement.

After the picking up of ideas and attitudes from the country of settlement, they need to be **transmitted** to the migrants' country of origin for social remitting to occur. Social remitting occurs when boundary spanning individuals gather and disseminate the information, values, and norms they encounter. As noted by Karolak (2016), acquired ideas are only potential social remittances until they are actualised through transfers.

For social remittances to be transmitted, **migrants need to maintain social contacts** with their potential audience, and they need to participate in a space for diffusion (i.e., transnational communication) where they can embed their social remittances (Grabowska & Garapich 2016b, 2156). They must thus be well linked both internally and externally (Tushman & Scanlan 1981, 300). By staying in contact with their friends, family, and community back in their country of origin, migrants can introduce them to the *socio-cultural capital acquired abroad* (concept used by Vlase 2013, 85). The tighter the network is the more efficiently social remittances are transferred. Open and informal systems are less efficient in transmitting remittances. When remittances are transmitted through multiple pathways or together with other remittances, their impact can also be more prominent. (Levitt 1998, 941.)

Based on a synthesis from previous research, it seems that in practice the transferring of interpersonal **social remittances mainly occurs through these three channels**:

1) through different forms of **communication from afar (cross-border communication)** such as letters, phone calls, emails, text-messages, videos etc.
2) when migrants **visit** their community of origin or when they are visited in their country of settlement by people from their community of origin
3) when migrants **return to live** to their community of origin.

Channel one is the so-called absence channel (Kapur 2008) or diaspora option, which does not require physical or permanent return of the diaspora (Siar 2014). Channel three is the so-called return option (Kapur 2008), through which mobile social remittances are remitted. According to Isaakyan and Triandafyllidou (2017, 2799), in mobile social remittances the sender himself must engage directly in transnational mobility. Channel two, on the other hand, is a hybrid of the two others since it requires physical contact but not permanent return. In this research, sharing information through blogs, vlogs, written articles, social media posts or comments in e.g., discussion groups or news articles, which are not targeted at a specific acquaintance, are not considered (see Haynes and Galasińska 2016 for findings on social remittances transmitted via public internet forums). This is because this research will focus on direct interpersonal contacts. Such public comments will be interesting for another research and could also be interpreted using the social remittance framework. In this especially the role of social media influencers and journalists would be interesting to consider. The advantage of interpersonal social remittances that are not published on social media websites is that they are more difficult for governments to monitor. This might enable the sharing of things which individuals would prefer to keep unnoticed and away from attention, which is also why this kind of information has an important role besides information gained from other sources which are more closely under monitoring.

Also, as noted in the introduction, social remittances can also be defined as a **multidirectional phenomenon** in which ideas are transmitted both from the country of origin to the country of settlement and the other way around. Mazzucato (2010, 454) uses the concept of 'revere remittances' and notes that when social remittances are conceptualized as a one-way process, the fact that remittances are part of reciprocal social relations is obstructed.

The next step in the process of social remittances is the **reception and potential acceptance of social remittances** by those who themselves have not migrated. When these individuals receive remittances, they interpret what migrants are telling them and they perceive what returnees and visitors are doing. Based on the remittances that they receive, the non-migrants actively select what to try to make sense of and what not. (Mata-Codesal 2011, 192; Mata-Codesal 2013, 25.) **Migrants and those who do not migrate are thus both part** of the process and they both can act as catalysts and as individuals that encourage progress or change. Being actively part of the social remitting progress means that if norms, values, and behaviour can be passed on, then they can also be

resisted, changed, manipulated, or blocked (Grabowska & Garapich 2016b, 2153). This can happen during the creation, transmission, and acceptance phase of the process. Furthermore, some social remittances may be internalized more consciously than others and some remittances may even be lost in translation (Mata-Codesal 2011, 192).

Imitation, duplication, and innovation play central roles in the acceptance of social remittances. The accepting of social remittances is often based on mimetic behaviour, in a similar way to general mechanisms at play in society: people strive to identify who they should imitate (Vari-Lavoisier 2015, 11, 13). Sometimes this occurs innovatively in such a way that includes creative adaption, adjustment, or vernacularisation (Grabowska & Garapich 2016b, 2153, 2155). In vernacularisation, ideas are appropriated to be locally adopted, i.e., ideas and practices from one group are presented in terms that another group will accept. Although the ideas remain, the way that they are phrased and presented may differ according to particular social and cultural context. (Levitt & Merry 2009, 446.) In relation to social remittances, this means that ideas, knowledge, and values do not need to be accepted as such but can be adjusted, changed, and made fit during the implementation process.

Various aspects have been found to **affect the acceptance** and implementation of social remittances. When the receivers have access to more resources and when they are more in control of their life, they can more freely choose to accept or reject the remittances they receive. On the other hand, those individuals who are dependent on someone, may not be able to choose whether to adopt remittances or not. (Levitt 1998, 939.) Chauvet and Mercier (2014, 631) have found that the impact of returnees on political involvement is stronger in poorly educated localities. In these localities, the presence of return migrants may substitute for the education of non-migrants. According to this perspective, individuals with less education are more receptive to the norms that migrants transmit. This also illustrates that social remittances are somewhat asymmetric, and the receivers cannot control what information they get or do not get. The receivers can also not always know if the information that migrants are telling them is true or whether it is the whole story.

For the information that migrants provide into the social network to have wider effects and even lead to societal change, social remittances however need to be **diffused.** When social remittances are diffused, they reach individuals that are not directly involved with migration. This can mean that a new behaviour, that is adopted by some within the population, influences the subsequent adoption of that behaviour by others (see description of Lindstrom & Muñoz-Franco 2005, 277 based on synthesis from previous research). Diffusion occurs through social interaction by learning from others and by the social influence of others.

In practice, there are various ways for diffusion to occur: it may, for example, occur when social remittances are **scaled out and/or scaled up**. The scaling out of social remittances means that they come to influence other domains of practices, whereas scaling up stands for social remittances starting to influence

other levels of governance. When migrants researched by Levitt & Lamba-Nieves (2011), from the Dominican Republic, sent a fire truck to their community of origin, the project had to be scaled out for it to work efficiently. This means that besides having the actual fire truck there was also a need for trained firefighters, a station to store the vehicle and a committee to oversee the running of the station. This illustrates how a straightforward act of sending a fire truck scaled out into other domains of practice. Montefrio, Ortiga, and Josol (2014, 2014) on the other hand demonstrate the **spilling over** of social remittances. They describe how migrants brought with them from Malaysia to the Palawan province of the Philippines ideas norms, ideas, and knowledge of oil palm production. These social remittances scaled out beyond the migrants' immediate social circle into wider social circles. Migrants did not just discuss their ideas regarding oil palm with their family members but also with individuals outside their own circle, e.g., with community leaders and other non-migrant farmers. This occurred in places such as public transport terminals, public markets, and convenience stores. By discussing the issues with non-migrant individuals holding influential positions within communities or within organizations like private companies, the social remittances related to oil palm also **scaled up**.

3.3 Classifying different kinds of social remittances

What should be further noted when defining social remittances, is that they are in this research understood as a head category, under which various more specific thematic subcategories can be sorted (see following examples A-F). Nichols (2004) for example discusses A) **technological transfers,** which she describes as the transfer of new ideas and technologies, such as agricultural technologies, from one community to another. These kinds of technical transfers or technical remittances have long been considered as a potential source of development and for example the steam engine only had to be invented once in the 18th century for it to spread all around the world (McNeill & McNeill 2007, 25). Alenius (2016) on the other hand discusses B) **occupational remittances** which she defines as work-related conceptions and practices conveyed by migrants from one country to another and Isaakyan (2015, 18, 34) reports on C) **civic or ecological remittances** which she defines as civic participation or community development activities that can include e.g., reducing poverty levels and teaching local people basic hygiene. Also, D) **political remittances** have received special focus (see e.g., Piper 2009; Tabar 2014; Fomina 2019; Krawatzek & Müller-Funk 2020). Tabar (2014, 457) states that political remittances can include both measurable and unmeasurable impacts, such as voting for a certain party or using one's personal influence in persuading people to vote for one's preferred candidate. For example, Jiménez (2008, 118) has looked into political remittances and found, in a Mexican, Colombian and Central American context, that those individuals with contact with migrants abroad are more likely to participate and have stronger democratic views, which signals that political

views have been transmitted. Political remittances do, however, not always have to be related to electoral issues and, as defined by Fomina (2019), political remittances can also include a range of practices that are non-electoral and often steer clear from party politics but have political ends. Furthermore, as stated by Tabar (2014, 446), remitting political remittances does not necessarily require a change in the political identity or behaviour of the migrant (see subchapter 6.4.1 for discussion on the role of change in the process of social remittances). In a Russian context political remittances have been studied for example by Hartnett (2019) and Fomina (2019). Some researchers, on the other hand, use the term E) **cultural-exchange remittances** (Isaakyan & Triandafyllidou 2017) or cultural remittances to refer to transnational influences of artistic and expressive genres (Flores, 2005). According to Flores (2005), the values and lifestyles that are remitted from the diaspora to country of origin become manifested, in the most tangible way, through artistic and expressive genders such as music, literature and paintings. According to his opinion the term social remittances should thus be supplemented and sharpened by the term cultural remittances. (Flores 2005, 22.) Related to this, Siar (2013) proposes a definition of (F) **soft knowledge** to term culture and social knowledge. She notes that while technological, scientific, and economic knowledge can be seen to bring about tangible results, such as a new product, a scientific discovery, or a business venture that provides income and jobs, knowledge of the cultural and social types has outcomes that are less tangible but are still highly important to achieving economic and social development. (Siar 2013, 204; Siar 2014, 304.) These different categories of social remittances manage to capture and represent the phenomenon diversely.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that social remittances can also, similarly as to economic remittances (see e.g., Goldring 2004; Burgess 2012), be transferred both collectively and individually. When remittances are transferred collectively a group of people, such as a hometown association, together attempt to transfer social or economic capital to their country/community of origin. Although, a gap is identified in the social remittances research field regarding this, since most research on collective remittances has been focused on economic remittances, in this research also the focus is on individual personal social remittances. Looking into collective social remittances is thus something left for future research. The following figure illustrates the definition of social remittances.

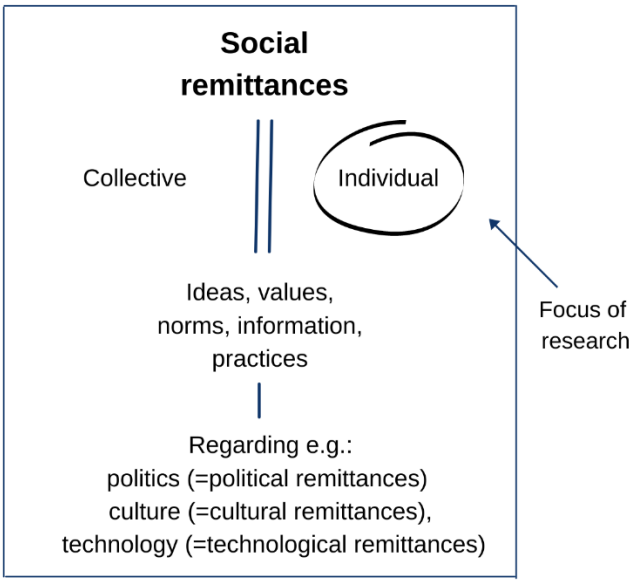

Figure 2 Defining social remittances

Furthermore, it is important to note, however, that already long before the existence of the term 'social remittances', scholars, especially in the field of migration, have observed changes in norms, values and attitudes resulting from migration (Mata-Codesal 2011, 169–170; Mata-Codesal 2013, 24; Grabowska & Garapich 2016b, 2148; Grabowska & Engbersen 2016, 103–104, 106). For example, during the period of globalization that took place from the 1880s to the 1920s, there was a broad interest in the diffusion of ideas and material culture through the migration of people (Glick Schiller 2009, 18, researched more specifically in a Polish context by Grabowska & Engbersen (2016) and Grabowska & Garapich (2016b).

Not all researchers refer to social remittances explicitly, although they are describing similar transfers (see examples in Dzięglewski 2016, 173 and Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010). Some commentators in the field may not be aware of the concept of social remittances, rather than deliberately avoiding it (Haynes & Galasińska 2016, 42). Different terminology is thus used in describing similar processes. For example, Sandu (2010, 271) describes a process similar to social remittances by describing how external migration experiences could cause "changes in origin countries' local mentalities", Glorius (2021) discusses social innovation, Mehrez & Hamdy (2010) discuss human capital contributions as compared to financial capital contributions, and others discuss similar issues under the frame of "knowledge transfers" (Siar 2013; Siar 2014) or "non-economic transfers" (Dzięglewski 2016, 174). Within education sciences, similar phenomena have also been discussed by using the concept of cross-border/transnational learning (See Alenius 2015; 2016; 2018 in Finnish context). Alenius (2018, 48) states that ideas are not transferred across national borders in the same manner as financial and material remittances but, instead, such processes are connected to individuals and social learning. Likewise, within

studies of the discipline of history, similar issues have also been researched under the concept of intercultural transfers (see e.g., Adams 2012). Intercultural transfers is a concept closely linked to the 1985 established research group "Les Transferts culturels franco-allemands" (Uribe & Khalil 2013, 76). This research group looked especially into cultural transferred between Germany and France (see e.g., Espagne 1999). The concept of transnationalism, however, only became important among historians during the 1990s (Patel 2015, 3). Moreover, as noted by Mata-Codesal (2011, 169–170), in demographic studies, after the so-called ideational shift, some researchers, such as Connell et al. 1976, Cleland and Wilson 1987, and Skeldon 1990, were investigating the non-material elements that returning migrants brought with them and the non-material changes triggered by them. These earlier researchers were, however, mainly focusing on returning migrants and their effects, and it was mainly after Levitt's research that the idea of "virtual" remittances, in other words the remitting from afar without the need of returning, became a topic of wider interest. (Mata-Codesal 2011, 169–170; 2013, 24.)

In the end, however, it should be kept in mind that *social remittances* is just a concept used to describe a phenomenon which occurs within the transnational field of communication. The concept manages to capture, verbalize, and simplify a certain kind of phenomenon, which "in reality" does not exist under one label.

3.4 Earlier research on social remittances

This subchapter, focusing on previous research, anchors the topic of this research into the research field. Equally importantly, this subchapter also shows what research areas are still missing from the social remittances research field. Notably it shows that there seems to be very little research on the remitting of ideas and attitudes regarding welfare systems and practices. It also shows that Russia and Northern Europe have largely been missing from the social remittance discussion.

The **term "social remittance**" was originated by sociologist Peggy Levitt in her paper from 1998, and she has thereafter used in several articles and in her book *The Transnational Villager* from 2001. In her research, Levitt observes how different forms of social remittances are transferred between Boca Cana in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica Plain in Boston. The kind of remittances observed in her research include ideas about legal norms, contractual agreements, accountability and the managing public, and community spaces. After its introduction, the concept of social remittances has been widely used in research related to migration and development.

When considering previous research on social remittances specifically, some general trends can be noted: The first general trend is **the increase in the overall amount** of research and the **widening of the scope** of research topics related to remittances. The number of research papers focusing on migration and development has increased greatly since the 2000s (de Haas 2012, 15). Popular research topics have included the nature of the remittance transfers,

macroeconomic data concerning remittances, transfer mechanisms, the impact of financial remittances on banking and financial systems, policy-oriented issues, the social demography of remittances and the use of remittances (Mata-Codesal 2011, 22–28). Compared to economic remittances, social remittances have been somewhat understudied, and there are various fields and contexts that are unresearched, especially considering the potential impact and magnitude that social remittances can have. This research gap has been identified within the scholarly field of migration and development, and the complex links between migration and the broader development process are now more and more being looked at from various angles. Therefore, the migration and development nexus is no longer seen merely in light of cash remittances (Clemens, Özden & Rapoport 2014, 1) and, as for example Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2010) point out, social remittances are understood as just as important.

A second trend to be noted is that current research on remittances mostly focuses on remittances that are **sent from abroad,** and less focus is given on urban to rural remittances. Also in this research, the focus is on transnational remittances instead of intranational migration and remittances. Although the focus is on transnational remittances, it should be noted that fairly similar questions have been dealt with within the literature of e.g., rural-to-urban migration (Pfutze 2012, 160).

Thirdly, a trend to consider is that most research regarding remittances has focused on migration **from developing countries to developed countries**. Grabowska & Garapich (2016b, 2147) note that there is an assumption among scholars that social remittances do not circulate between developed countries in the same way, or that they do not produce the same effects, as when circulating within an economically unequal migration system. Thus, for example, the impact of social remittances from south-to-south migration is understudied (Montefrio et al. 2014, 217). Similarly, little focus has been given to how ideas and innovations circulate, as social remittances, between countries in the "global north" or so-called developed countries. Or, at least, this phenomenon has not been discussed within the migration and development research field by using the concept of social remittances. There are, however, some recent examples of research cases that look at the phenomenon within, for example, a European context. Within the European context the focus has been specially on social remittance transmitted from Western European countries towards post-communist countries (see e.g., Fidrmuc & Doyle 2006; Mahmoud et al. 2014; Gawlewicz 2015; Kubal 2015; Grabowska and Garapich 2016a and b; Karolak 2016; White 2016; Grabowska 2017; Grečić 2019; Cingolani & Vietti 2019; 2020; Drbohlav & Dzúrová 2021; Glorius 2021). For example, Grabowska and Garapich (1016b) and Karolak (2016) write about social remittances between the United Kingdom and Poland. Instead of focusing on development, they are framing their research using the frames of Europeanisation or westernization, within the modernisation process (e.g., Sandu 2010; see Grabowska & Garapich 2016a for a short overview). Similarly, Solari (2019) describes social remittances, from Italy to Ukraine, that mainly consist of "how to be European". These examples

illustrate that the social remittances discussion does not necessarily have to be related to the migration and development discussion, which neither does this research directly.

In a Finnish context, social remittances, or similar phenomena, have previously been looked at by Jakobson et al. (2012, 191–192) and Alenius (2015; 2016; 2018), who have focused on the transnational space between Finland and Estonia. According to their findings, as part of social remittances, labour migrants exchange practical knowledge about migration with their non-migrant colleagues. Furthermore, also norms regarding family and care relations are being discussed. Overall, it should however be noted that very little attention has been given to both Russia and the Nordic countries within (social) remittances studies. In several previous studies, focusing on the Finnish context, financial remittances are mentioned (see e.g., Sirkkilä 2005, 161, 168; Tiilikainen 2007, 270; Pöllänen 2013c; Davydova-Minguet & Pöllänen 2020) but they are rarely the main focus of the research (see article by Crentsil 2012, and theses by Bontenbal 2015; Camara 2016; Grüne, 2017 on economic remittances from Finland). Since migration is already becoming a significant phenomenon in Finland, and it will likely continue to become an even more significant one in the future, also the effects of migration and remittance should be considered more thoroughly in this context. There is, however, a large quantity of previous research done in Finland about migrants from Russia living in Finland, and their transnational practices which can be utilized (see chapter 4).

In a Russian context, on the other hand, Fomina (2019) has looked at political remittances. Besides these, there is very little research to be found in this specific context on social remittances. The closest similar kind of context can be found in research on social remittances sent by Polish migrants living in western European countries (see Elrick 2008; Grabowska & Garapich 2016 b; Haynes & Galasińska 2016; Karolak 2016), Poland also being a large Eastern-European post-communist country. However, Poland and Russia are very different countries, and also the thematic focus has been different since these research projects have focused on sharing norms, ideas and values regarding aesthetics styles, parenting, family life, work, employment and ways of dressing.

A fourth trend within the research field is that special focus has been given to **migrants who return to their country** of origin (see e.g., Liao & Asis 2020; Wijayanti et al, 2020). In this research social remittances are seen as something that migrants take with them when they return to their country of origin. It is recognised that returning and circulatory elites have for a long time had a prominent role in the diffusion of new ideas and paradigms both domestically and internationally (Kapur 2010, 102). For example, cultural, scientific and intelligence elites, as well as students, from the Soviet Union and from China, who have resided in the United States, have been found to have had a significant role on the economies of the country of origin and in paving the way for reforms (also Skeldon 2008a, 12; Spilimbergo 2009, 529). In China, the return of Chinese overseas scholars has re-elevated Chinese science, and in the Soviet Union, during the 1980s, the return of elites who had stayed in the United States played

a significant role in furthering Gorbachev's reforms (Spilimbergo 2009, 529; Kapur 2010, 103). In addition, many individuals who have been trained or who have gained work experience abroad, are now influencing in the parliaments of the Asian Tiger economies as senior members (Skeldon 2008a, 12). Because of these effects, many countries have actively tried to mould and establish strong ties with future ruling classes by financing and hosting foreign students (Beine & Sekkat 2013). Through the influence of migrants, different countries have also tried to spread specific doctrines: western countries have for example hoped to foster democracy, socialist countries have educated future leaders and Muslim countries have financed schools with Islamic values (Spilimbergo 2009, 529, 538). Although in this research returning migrants will not be the sole focus, but instead the research takes a wider perspective also considering e.g., the role of communication from afar without physical travel, the potential of social remittances through return will also be analysed (see chapter 6.2.6).

As noted by Siar (2014, 316) knowledge comes in different types, such as scientific, technological, business, economic, cultural, and social, and they can all contribute to social change in different ways. This also means that migrants can carry and transfer different types of knowledge, which has been reflected in social remittances research. The **following list provides an overview of a wide range of topics that migrants have been found to attempt, and in some cases been able to, influence** in their community or country of origin.

- Economic ideas (Valdes 1995) and ideas about market-based capitalism (Solari 2019)
- Ideas about academics e.g., new courses, ways of teaching, fostering critical thinking (Liao & Asis 2020)
- Maternal behaviour and health outcomes (Frank 2005)
- Ideas and practices about health, health care provision and health education (Levitt & Rajaram 2013a; Holdaway et al. 2015; Main & Gózdziak 2020)
- Hygiene and contamination related ideas (Goldman et al. 2001)
- Norms about parenting and family life and relations (Levitt 2001, 82; Rahman 2009; Vlase 2013; Grabowska and Garapich 2016b; Main & Gózdziak 2020)
- Female parliamentary participation (Lodigiani & Salomone 2015)
- Ideas about the quality of political accountability (Batista & Vicente 2010)
- Expectations and norms of work and employment (Klagge & Klein-Hitpaß 2010; Karolak 2016; Grabowska and Garapich 2016b; Grabowska 2017; 2018; Haynes and Galasińska 2016)
- Occupational knowledge, information, practices, and conceptions (Alenius 2015; 2016)

- Ideas about morale (Simoni & Voirol; 2020) and responses concerning corruption (Vari-Lavoisier 2014; 2015)
- Legal consciousness (Kubal 2015)
- Village status hierarchy (Vari-Lavoisier 2015)
- Ideas regarding democracy (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009; Mahmoud et al. 2014; Fomina 2019),
- Political attitudes and norms (Fidrmuc and Doyle 2006; Jiménez 2008; Rother 2009; Pfutze 2012; Chauvet & Mercier 2014; Mahmoud et al. 2014); also, undemocratic ideas (Rother 2009)
- Quality of institutions (Kapur 2010; Beine and Sekkat 2013; Li et al. 2016)
- Ways of dressing (Levitt 1998, Grabowska & Garapich 2016b; Mukherjee & Rayaprol 2019)
- Gender norms, identities, practices, and dynamics (Levitt 2005; Dannecker 2009; Vianello 2013; Mukherjee & Rayaprol 2019; Main & Gózdziak 2020)
- Social acceptability of education for women (Mata-Codesal 2013)
- Norms of marriage and fertility (Fargues 2005; Beine et al. 2013; Bertoli & Marchetta 2012)
- Use of contraceptives (Lindstrom and Muñoz-Franco 2005; Lindstrom & Saucedo 2007)
- Ideas of migrating and living abroad (Suksomboon 2008; Mukherjee & Rayaprol 2019)
- Use of technologies (Mehrez & Hamdy 2010)
- Ideas regarding agriculture and land use (Nichols 2004; Montefrio et al. 2014)
- Aesthetics styles (in e.g., decorating, gardening, architecture) (Elrick 2008, 1514)
- Criminal activities (Kapur 2008)
- Lessons on radical Islamic education and terrorist training (Hanifi 2006)
- Ideas of prosperity and being successful (Montefrio et al. 2014)

The topic of this research, the transmission of information, values and practices regarding welfare systems, has not been focused on specifically within social remittances research before. This theme has however previously been studied within the **policy transfers research field** (see e.g., Cox 1993 and Dolowitz 1996, and Benson & Jordan 2011 for review of the policy transfers research field). Studies on policy transfers have tended to focus on states as actors in the process

of transfers (see criticism on this by Stone 2000, 2004). Dolowitz and Marsh (2000, 5, 12) define that policy transferring is a process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, ideas, and negative lessons in one political setting is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, and ideas in another political setting. Evans (2009, 244) further defines that policy transfers should be restricted to action-oriented intentional learning only, which happens consciously and results in policy action. Generally, the definitions used in policy transfers studies confine the phenomenon to include a limited kind on transfers only, which then sets it somewhat apart from social remittances. Especially within policy transfers studies, directly observable hard transfers have been emphasised instead of soft forms of transfers, such as the spread of norms and knowledge. However, soft transfers are also necessary complements to the hard transfer of policy tools and practices (Stone 2004, 546, 552). At this point, on the individual level, the concept of social remittances steps in and becomes prominent in understanding and conceptualizing the phenomenon. Figure 3 illustrates the continuum between policy transfers and policy centred social remittances.

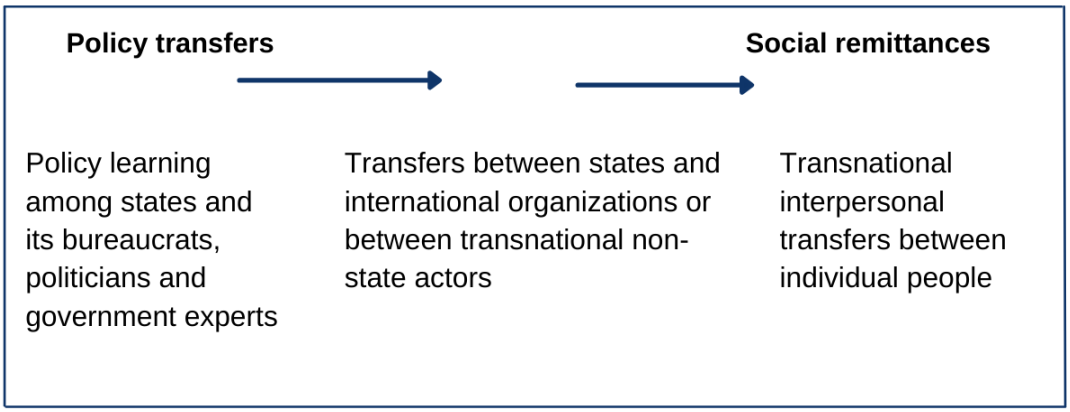

Figure 3 The continuum between policy transfers and social remittances

4 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

4.1 Migrants from Russia in Finland

Russia is one of the **largest emigration countries** of the world. According to estimates by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Russia has the world´s fourth largest emigrant population. The estimated number of Russians living abroad is around 10-11 million (World Migration Report 2020; Statista 2021), but varies greatly according to definition. There are also large variations in Russian and foreign statistics on numbers of emigration from Russia. It seems that a large proportion of people leaving from Russia are not documented in Russian official statistics and that the actual numbers of emigrants are thus much larger than those recorded in Russian official statistics. Because of this, also the number of migrants from Russia in foreign statistics are much higher than those reported in Russian statistics. (Aleshkovski et al., 2018, 143.) Until 1989, free emigration from the USSR was almost impossible. In 1989 exceptions were made for emigration of ethnic Germans, Jews, and Greeks. In 1993 entry and exit rules were however liberalized and more people had the opportunity to migrate (Aleshkovski et al., 2018, 141.) Main immigration countries for Russian emigrants leaving for countries outside the territory of the former Soviet Union are Germany, Israel, and the United States (Heleniak 2004, 103; Aleshkovski et al., 2018). In the 2010s, the world's second largest migration corridor was between Russia and Ukraine (Migration and Remittance Factbook, 2016), however this has radically changed since the onset of the Russian war in Ukraine. Estonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, and Ukraine are countries with the largest shares of ethnic Russians in their population (Zakem, Saunders & Antoun 2015, I, 6), many of whom are however legacy from the Soviet time and are thus not migrants who have moved there from Russia. In 2014, Russia received 7.9 billion dollars of remittances. It is thus in the top-20 remittance receiving countries. Concurrently, 32.6 billion dollars' worth of remittances were sent from Russia in 2014.

(Migration and Remittance Factbook, 2016.) This illustrates the nature of migration to and from Russia.

Finland is one of the EU countries that has a long border with a non-EU membership country: the border with Russia is c. 1340 km long. Together, individuals who have migrated **from Russia or the former Soviet Union form the largest migrant group in Finland**. The number of Russians in Finland has grown rapidly since the 1990s. Migration from Finland to Russia has been significantly lesser. At the end of 2020, there were 16 646 individuals born in Russia and 59 047 born in the Former Soviet Union living in Finland (in a total population of c. 5.5 million) (Statistics Finland – Population by country of origin) and at the same time 28 866 individuals living in Finland had Russian nationality (Statistics Finland – Population according to citizenship). Most Russian speaking individuals living in Finland live in the Eastern and Southern part of the country (Statistics Finland – Population Structure). Figure 4 illustrates the number of migrants from Russia and the former Soviet Union living in Finland.

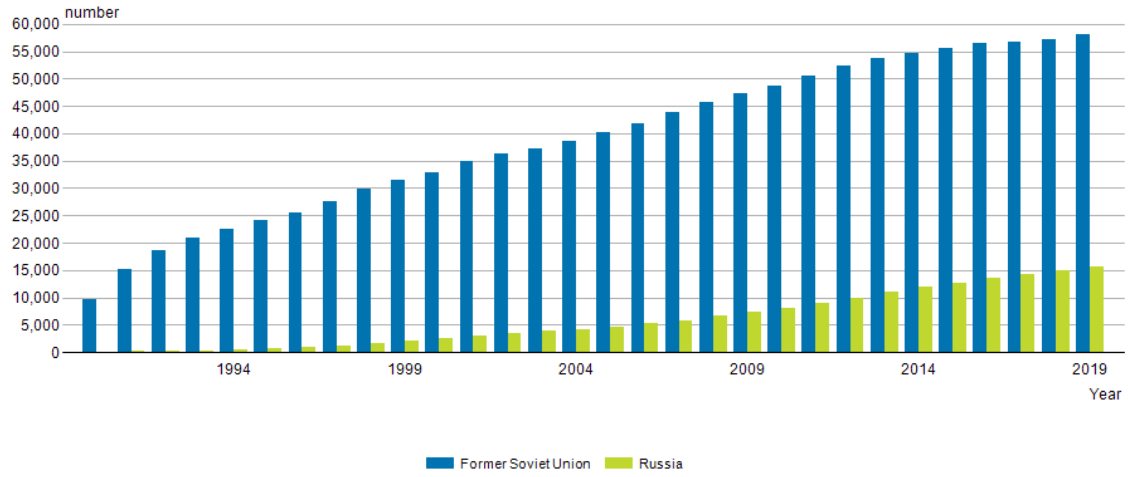

Figure 4 The number of migrants in Finland from former Soviet Union and Russia at the end of 2019. Source: Statistics Finland 2019, Population Structure – graph.

In general, the percentage of **migrants in Finland**, compared to many other European countries, is small and Finland was an emigration country for a long time. In the 1960s and 1970s there were still more people migrating out of Finland than people migrating to Finland. During the Cold War, Finland was not an attractive destination because of its geopolitical location and its lower economic development compared to Nordic neighbouring countries (Saukkonen 2013, 87). During the 1970s, most individuals moving to Finland were still return migrants coming especially from Sweden. In the 1990s, migration to Finland became more common. This was influenced by Finland joining the European Union in 1995 and by the freer foreign policy atmosphere brought about by the collapse of the Soviet Union. (Kyhä 2011, 20–21.) When migration to Finland increased, its

character changed as well: for example, the composition of origin countries shifted to east. Whereas before almost half of the immigrants arrived from western countries, now the bulk of immigrants started coming from the former Soviet Union and Asia. The share of immigrants arriving from the former Soviet Union has been exceptionally high in Finland compared to other European countries. (Hämäläinen & Sarvimäki 2010, 4.) In the end of 2019, individuals who had been born outside of Finland constituted 7.3 % of the total population (Statistics Finland – Population according to citizenship 2019).

Various historical, colonial, linguistic, and cultural connections often have a role in explaining population movements (Williams & Aktoprak 2010, 14). This is also the case of Finland and Russia. The **connection between the two countries** has been tight for centuries. During 1809–1917, Finland was an autonomous part of the Russian empire. During this time, the Russian state did not encourage Russians to move to the area of Finland nor did it encourage the acquisition of Finnish citizenship (Leitzinger 2016, 53). However, as a legacy of the time that Finland was part of Russia, thousands of Russian families remained in Finland, many of which have had a central role in e.g., the Finnish art-scene. Also, the legacy of the Orthodox Church has remained strong. Nowadays, the Orthodox Church of Finland is one of the two national churches in the country, the other being the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. (Leitzinger 2016, 59.) During the Second World War, Finland and Russia fought two wars: The Winter War in 1939–1940 and the Continuation War 1941–1944, and as Mähönen and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2016, 249) point out, these wars still cast a shadow on intergroup relations between the Finnish majority and the Russian-speaking minority in Finland. However, survey results from 2021, indicate that 5 % of Russians find that memories from the war between Russia and Finland negatively influence how they see current day Finland, whereas 81 % say that these memories have no influence on their perception of Finland (Finnish Foreign Ministry - country brand report 2021).

In terms of migration and population movements to Finland, the **wars in the first half of the 20th century also played a significant role**: The First World War and the Russian revolution brought tens of thousands of refugees to Finland (Martikainen, Saari & Korkiasaari 2013, 35). Finland became a natural first destination especially for those fleeing from northwest Russia. In 1922, c. 20 000 refugees from Russia have been estimated to have been living in Finland. (Sarvimäki 2017, 3.) Most Russians that arrived at this time, however, later continued their migration towards Western Europe (Söderling 2016, 11). Those Russians who moved to Finland before the Second World War are called "vanhavenäläinen" which translates to "Old Russians". Furthermore, after the First World War, in the 1920s, and after the Second World War, in the 1940s, altogether c. 400 000 refugees from areas ceded to the Soviet Union (12 % of Finland's population) were relocated into the remainder of Finland. This refugee group consisted mostly of intra language and culture groups, which has differed from subsequent refugee migration to Finland. (Pentikäinen 2005, 19.)

Migration flows to Finland from the Soviet Union were tightly regulated until the end of the 1980s, and only certain ethnic groups had the right to migrate (Lehtonen 2016, 18). Although the **collapse of the Soviet Union** did not lead to a massive influx of Russians in Finland, as was feared at the time, the number of Russians in Finland has grown rapidly. The rapid increase was influenced by the number of ethnic Finns and descendants of etnic Finns who started migrating back to Finland during the 1990s (Yijälä 2014, 6). This happened especially after Ingrian Finns, and their descendants were granted the status of return migrants. Mauno Koivisto, the Finnish president at that time, gave a well-known statement on television that Ingrians can be considered as "returning Finns". (Saukkonen 2013, 88; Flink 2016, 76; Söderling 2016, 11.) During this time, also, descendants of Finns who had migrated to the Soviet Union between 1918 and the 1930s from Finland and North America were granted rights to return to Finland. After the president´s statement, the migration of Ingrians to Finland and those classified as Finnish descendants was made easier. In the follow two decades, c. 30 000 **Ingrian Finns** migrated to Finland (Sarvimäki, 2017). Ingrian Finns are descendants of people who have migrated from Finland to Ingermanland. Ingermanland is a rural area surrounding St. Petersburg. The area became a part of Sweden, of which Finland was also part of at that time, in 1617 during the Treaty of Stolbovo. Ingrians spoke Finnish and their religion was Lutheran. Especially during Soviet times and the 1930s, Ingrians were severely mistreated, their agriculture was violently collectivized, the Lutheran Church was destroyed, and Ingrian Finns were deported, imprisoned, and killed in the Stalinist terror (Reuter 2019). An important reason for giving Ingrian Finns the right to return, eventhough they were never Finnish citizens, has to do with events during the Second World War: during 1943-1944 c. 63 000 Ingrian Finns were moved to Finland by decisions of Finnish authorities and later during the Interim Peace between the Winter War and the Continuation War they were returned to Russia, in accordance with the peace treaty (Salonsaari, 2018, 117–118). During the last population census of the Soviet Union in 1989, there were 67 300 individuals who had registered their nationality as Finnish. 18 400 of them lived in Soviet-Karelia, 17 300 in the Leningrad area and 16 600 in Estonia. It is likely that the numbers do not completely equate to reality, since some people did not want to bring forth their Finnish roots to the public officials. (Finlex – HE 252/2010, 2010.) The family members of Ingrian Finns have also been counted as return migrants, even if they themselves are not ethnic Finns (Lehtonen 2016, 22). The queue for Ingrian return migration was closed in 2011 and the right of Ingrians to migrate to Finland as returning migrants ended in 2016 (Saukkonen 2013, 88; Söderling 2016, 11). Even though Ingrian migrants are considered as ethnic Finns, they are in this research seen as part of individuals moving to Finland from Russia, since they have lived in Russia. Also, in official statistics Ingrian individuals are counted as part of the migration flow from Russia to Finland.

The **migration of individuals from Russia to Finland is highly regulated**, restricted and controlled, since Russia is a third country nation, i.e., non-EU member country (Davydova-Minguet & Pöllänen 2020, 108). To move to Finland,

migrants from Russia need to have a residence permit. Of all migrant groups in Finland, migrants from Russia apply most often for residence permits and citizenship. In 2015–2020, a total of 20 330 **residence applications** were left at the Finnish Immigration Service by Russians, which is c. 13 % of all the applications. Of these, 7 978 (39 %) individuals applied for a first residence permit on the basis of family reasons, 5 951 (29 %) on the basis of work, 5 437 (27 %) on the basis of studies, and 964 (c. 5 %) on the basis of other reasons. (Migri Statistics 2021a.) Of the applications, c. 88 % received a positive decision and a residence permit was thus granted (Migri Statistics, 2021b). This comports with Lehtonen's (2016) findings according to which, in recent years, the most common reasons for Russians to migrate to Finland have been marriage with a Finnish citizen, return migration of Ingrian Finns, work, and studies (Lehtonen 2016, 22). The fact that family reasons is among the most common reasons for applying for a residence permit also illustrates that migration to Finland has a gendered dimension, since individuals from Russia, mainly women, marry Finnish men (Pöllänen 2013c; Davydova-Minguet & Pöllänen 2020, 108). Russian-Finnish marriages became more common especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Pöllänen 2005, 1).

Migrants from Russia are also active in applying for citizenship. During 2015–2020, 13 100 Russians applied for **Finnish citizenship** and 95 % received a positive decision (Migri Statistics 2021 a and b). Since 2004, it has been possible for individuals to retain their previous citizenship as they acquire their Finnish nationality (Lehtonen 2016, 37). According to Söderling (2016, 14), there are c. 20 000 Russian citizens living in Finland with dual citizenship, who also have Finnish nationality. In recent years, the number of Russians who have received Finnish nationality has been around 2 000 annually (Statistics Finland – Citizenships granted, 2017). According to estimates, there will be c. 200 000–250 000 Russian speakers living in Finland by 2050 (Söderling 2016, 14).

During 2015–2020, 1 950 Russians applied for **international protection** in Finland, c. 29 % of who received a positive decision. Although Russian citizens applied the 5th most often for international protection in Finland, the numbers are significantly lower than applications from Iraqis (31 725), Afghans (9 785) and Somalians (4 422). (Migri Statistics 2021b.)

More information on migrants from Russia living in Finland will be provided in chapter 5.4, which will also describe the individuals interviewed for this research more specifically.

4.2 The Finnish welfare regime

The welfare models of different countries differ from each other regarding how they deal with e.g., decommodification, citizens' degree of immunization from market dependency, stratification, and the division of a society into levels based on power or socioeconomic status (Laitinen-Kuikka, 2005, 309). In this chapter, the focus will be especially on introducing the principals of the Finnish welfare

state, which is the focus of the research and central to the experiences that the migrant interviewees share with their acquaintances in Russia.

To start, however, a couple of words about the Russian system: After the collapse of the Soviet Union, **Russia has struggled to transit from a socialist system to a market economy**. First, the demolition of the state-led welfare system, including health and social services, led to a social crisis (Cerami 2009, 109). Since then, there has been a turn back towards so-called statist welfare policies (Kulmala et al. 2014). Enormous welfare reforms have been aimed at introducing a residual, neoliberal-oriented model of welfare arrangement (Cerami 2009, 106). However, the welfare system remains paradoxical and incoherent, and there is a large variation in welfare provision across different regions. Although there has been a lot of talk about prioritizing social policy, especially during the Putin administration, Russia has not yet been able to develop a systematic approach to welfare and has not addressed several major welfare challenges, such as high male mortality. (Kulmala et al. 2014.)

Finland, on the other hand, represents the Nordic welfare state model, with a highly functioning democratic system, extensive welfare services and a high level of universalism. Although the welfare state has recently been influenced by neoliberal pressures, the Finnish welfare state is still comparatively generous and encompassing, in a global and European context (Alho & Sippola 2019). The idea of the welfare state is strongly embedded in the Finnish national identity (Kettunen 2008). According to the institutional definition, a state can be considered a welfare state, if it has a legally binding obligation to provide its citizens with social benefits in case of various risks related e.g., to childhood, old age, unemployment, sickness, and accidents caused by employment (Saari, 2005, 27). More specifically, Finland is part of an economic and social system often referred to as the **Nordic Model or the Nordic welfare state**. The Nordic model consists of countries that have similar features regarding e.g., their labour market institutions (union density, compressed wage distribution) and policies, their provision of welfare state services, and their large amount of spending on investment in human capital (Andersen et al., 2007, 14). In the Nordic welfare states, resources are allocated in such a way that they decrease the impact of social risks to the welfare of households (Saari 2005).

The Finnish welfare state produces welfare in two fundamental ways: (1) social welfare in the form of social services and (2) income security in the form of e.g., unemployment security and pension security (Pöllänen & Davydova-Minguet 2017, 206). Social security is a cornerstone of the Nordic model and there is a high share of publicly provided services and an extensive use of transfer schemes. According to the law on social security, everyone who is not able to obtain security worthy of a human being has the right to essential subsistence and care. The law secures that everyone has the right to a basic livelihood in case of unemployment, sickness, inability to work, old age, childbirth, or the loss of a caretaker. Moreover, the government has to secure that everyone receives sufficient social- and healthcare services and it has to support families or other caretakers in their responsibility of securing children's wellbeing and individual

growth. The government officials also have to advance everyone's right to housing. (Finlex 11.6.1999/731§ 19.)

In Finland, the state and the municipality provide the primary security for individuals against risks (Airio 2013, 8). All citizens are secured for social risks, and basic social rights include the right to free or heavily subsidized education and health care, as well as for some parts living (Anttonen & Sipilä 2000, 153). The concept of social security can in the Finnish context thus be widely understood in a way that it includes both social security and social and health care services (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2011). Health care, schooling and social services are in general provided publicly. Businesses, organizations, and the church do not form significant alternative provisions. (Anttonen & Sipilä 2000, 12–13.) However, the role of private services has been growing rapidly. Private services are however also tightly controlled by law, and mostly based on a structure with a foundation in taxation (Saari, 2005). Public expenses are covered by taxation, insurance payments, investment income and client payments (Hiilamo et al. 2012, 28; Airio 2013, 13). However, although the state has a big role in society, it is not the only operator. Hence, the states are Nordic welfare states and not socialist states. (Anttonen & Sipilä, 2000, 15.)

In the Nordic countries, the tax payments based social insurance and protection systems have a broad coverage and all citizens have a legal right to certain entitlements (Andersen et al., 2007, 38). Services such as schools, day care centres, retirement homes and child health centres are thus collectively meant for everyone (Anttonen & Sipilä, 2000, 13). This is called **universalism.** In Finland, strong universalism is fulfilled in e.g., education and child benefits, whereas a form of weaker universalism is fulfilled in e.g., health care and pension's provision. The tradition of universalism is based on the shared sentiment that uniformity and equal treatment will lead to an equal result (Anttonen & Sipilä, 2000, 155, 164–165). The model also emphasizes the individual nature of social rights for everyone (Laitinen-Kuikka 2005 310). In Finland, social rights are therefore individual for each person and not derived from e.g., family members (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2011). This also means that adult citizens are not legally responsible for each other's care or upkeep and adult children are therefore not obliged to take care of their parents and vice versa (Saari 2005). Outside of the Nordic countries, the universal social security system is uncommon (Kari 2011, 9 -16) and also within the Nordic welfare states many of the welfare services are in practice residual. They are thus only targeted at disadvantaged individuals of small means. (Anttonen & Sipilä 2000, 160.)

To maintain the solidaristic, universalistic and de-commodifying welfare system, the Nordic states must try to minimize social problems and maximize revenue income. This means that most people must be working, and a minimal number of people must be living on social transfers. (Esping-Andersen 1990, 28.) The Nordic states have thus been committed to a high employment rate, high labour force participation and an active labour market policy (Greve 2007, 50). Gender equality is also seen as an objective of the state and individualistic nature of social services lessens the economic dependency of women to men (Anttonen

& Sipilä 2000, 15, 84). In Finland, the traditional male breadwinner model is not very strong compared to many other European countries. Instead, a model of a universal working adults is carried out. This means that, compared to many other European countries, in Finland, women working full time is common. (Julkunen 2005, 374–375.) The welfare state itself has been a major employer in the Nordic states (Laitinen-Kuikka 2005, 312), and by the 1980´s, it had become a predominantly female sector (Julkunen 2005, 366).

The **extent of access that migrants have** had with Finnish welfare services can be expected to significantly influence what they have to say about it, i.e., what constitutes their social remittances. In Finland, migrants are in general not treated differently from natives with respect to welfare assistance, however the availability of services is often dependent on the time spent in the country.

Regarding migrants´ rights to welfare services, the division of The Finnish social security system into two parts is especially central: the first part is based on residence and provided by the Social Insurance Institute of Finland (KELA) and by municipalities (Alho & Sippola 2019). Residence-based social security means that persons who are considered to reside in Finland are entitled to the services and support, regardless of their citizenship status (Finlex 11.1.2019/16). The residence-based benefits are primarily provided by the Social Insurance Institution (Kela) and by municipalities. Municipalities have responsibilities especially in health care and social services. The residence-based benefits are primarily funded by tax revenue. EU citizens acquire some components of the social citizenship, such as the right to use public health care, 'automatically' when moving to Finland (Alho & Sippola 2019). However, this is not the case with third country nationals, including the migrants from Russia interviewed for this research. In practice, third country nationals need to have either a continuous residence permit or a temporary residence permit to receive social citizenship. For example, to be covered by health care and social services arranged by municipalities, a third-country national must have a municipality of residence in Finland (The European Migration Network 2014, 11). Having worked in Finland for over two years is generally regarded as living in Finland permanently (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2011). Helander (2014) notes that especially temporary migrant workers from Russia and from Africa are at risk of being excluded from social security in Finland (Helander 2014, 99).

The second part of the Finnish welfare system is based on employment-based insurances (Alho & Sippola 2019). To be part of these insurances, foreign nationals, even EU citizens, need to be employed for a certain period in Finland, during which they pay for inclusion payments before they become eligible to benefits that are, for example, related to earning (Alho & Sippola 2019). What to take from the information in regard to this research is thus that migrants from Russia in general need to have lived in Finland for some time already to be included in the Finnish social security system. Those migrants that are not included are mainly reliant on private services and private insurances.

Chapter 4.2 has introduced the main principals of the Finnish welfare which also shape migrants´ experiences in Finland, as will be shown in the analysis.

However, what should be kept in mind is that the welfare state or system is not a static thing. Instead, the welfare state is constantly changing, and welfare services have been shaped differently in different times, both in a Russian and a Finnish context. In Finland, the idea of the welfare state being in crisis has been popular for decades and in different times the extent of services has varied. This is also the case during the time that the interviewees have been in Finland, especially those who have been in Finland for a longer time (see page 117). Especially the depression, which was experienced in Finland during the beginning of the 1990´s, had an influential role in shaping the welfare state and its policies. After the depression, social policy has become a mean to achieve different things besides being a goal on its own. Social policy is harnessed to encourage employment, to facilitate integration with the European Union and to support the competitiveness of businesses (Saari 2005, 41). There has also been a stronger focus on the own responsibility of people of their own health and subsistence, instead of emphasising the ideology of joint responsibility (Julkunen 2006 141-143). Information regarding the welfare state transmitted in the 1990s can thus be different than information narrated by someone in 2022. Furthermore, as will be shown in the analysis, not everyone experiences the welfare system in a similar way and there are coverage gaps and weak points that influence people differently, especially migrants.

5 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This chapter describes the methodology and data, in other words, how the research was conducted, what material was gathered and how the research material is analysed. The research is based on a qualitative perspective (subchapter 5.1), of interviewing migrants living in Finland (subchapter 5.2). In subchapter 5.3, the method of analysing the collected data is described and in chapter 5.4 the interviewees´ backgrounds are portrayed in detail.

5.1 A Qualitative research perspective

Qualitative methods enable in-depth sight into the phenomenon of social remittances, which is to begin with a qualitative process, since the sending of ideas, norms and knowledge is difficult to quantify, compared to e.g., the sending of money or goods. The qualitative method is found useful since it enables to gain multi-layered and profound information about things that are not systematic, such as a person's personal history, current life situation, and the effect of these on the sending of social remittances. Interactions among people are difficult to capture with existing measures, and these measures may not be sensitive to individual differences (Creswell 2007, 40). Since qualitative research relies primarily on human perception, understanding and experiences (Stake 2010, 11, 37), it is a suited methodological starting point to researching the way that migrants **perceive the process and effects** of social remittances. Instead of emphasising cause-effect explanations and measures, qualitative research puts value on making visible and making sense of different aspects about how the social world functions through finding interpretative answers.

The nature of the phenomenon that is researched is deeply embedded in social contacts. Social remittances are socially constructed since they only exist within communication between people. Thus, a **constructivist approach** is taken, according to which there is no true meaning for an event, but rather there is only the event as experienced or interpreted by people. People can thus interpret the

event or phenomenon differently and, therefore, often multiple interpretations provide a deeper understanding. (Stake 2010, 66.) The focus is thus on the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to it (Denzin & Lincoln 1998, 3, 8). The primary data source is the people involved in the phenomenon and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings, and understandings, which are, according to the ontological view adapted, understood as meaningful properties of the social reality (Mason 2002, 56, 63). Keeping this in mind, an epistemological position is adapted according to which meaningful information can be generated, to find understanding on the chosen topic, through talking interactively with people in the form of interviewing (adapted from Mason 2002, 64). Moreover, gaining rich descriptions of the social world is seen as valuable (Denzin & Lincoln 1998, 10). In terms of this research, this means that the focus is on gaining an understanding of the phenomenon of social remittances as a part of the social world that people have produced and through their involvement keep reproducing.

As a part of qualitative research, it is important to consider the **reliability** and **validity** of the study, which will be done through the following methodology subchapters, by carefully describing and analysing the practical execution of the research process, the methodological considerations of collecting and analysing the data, and the ethical considerations of doing this type of research. This overview provides an opportunity to see and scrutinize what kinds of decisions have been made in the research and how the chosen methods have been executed and justified. Providing this information to the reader enables the evaluation, and to some extent even the possible replication, of the research setting. Also, the shortcomings of the data collection and the data will be transparently described. The more information about the implementation of the research and the decisions guiding it are provided, which the following subchapters aim to do, the more reliable the research is.

5.2 The collection of empirical data

5.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

To confirm reliability, the process of doing interviews is accounted in detail in these subchapters. The material for this research is gathered through interviewing migrants living in Finland about their transnational communication and the themes regarding welfare that are discussed as part of this communication. Interviewing is the chosen method to gather the research data for various reasons: The first reason has to do with the research setting. Since the research is interested in the perceptions that the individuals involved in the phenomenon have regarding the phenomenon, interviews are the most natural and befitting way to investigate this. As mentioned before, since a transnational way of living is a process rather than an event, **asking about this process** is more suitable than e.g., somehow monitoring it**.** Moreover, since the process is socially

constructed, the main actors in the process, in other words the remitters, are the appropriate focus of interest.

The information produced by interviewing is **reconstructed knowledge**: the process is not observed in its "natural habitat" but instead it is questioned about. The information is thus not first-hand but reliant on what is told about it. This is because it would not be possible to observe social remittances "as a fly on the wall", without impacting the process. It would not be possible to ensure that the remitting that is tapped into is "authentic everyday" remitting or if the things observed would be initiated by the specific context in which the researcher is present. Moreover, social remitting is not a clear-cut event, which starts and ends, and which could thus feasibly be attended. Attending and observing a number of occasions in which remitting occurs would produce a one-time snapshot, the risk of which would be that it might miss the ways in which migrants are periodically engaged with acquaintances in their countries of origin.

The second reason for choosing interviews has to do with availability. Since this is a topic that has not been researched in a Finnish context before, there is little existing data available to be used about social remittances, which is why it has to be created. As is often with information regarding the social world, instead of there being existing data that could be collected/excavated, the data to answer the research questions **has to be generated**, and thus the researcher has to have a central role in this construction (Mason 2002, 52). As Kvale (2007) notes, an interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose determined by one party – the interviewer (Kvale 2007, 9). The interview is thus not a neutral tool because the interviewer creates the reality of the interview situation. The answers to the interview question are given in this specific interactional episode, which creates a situated understanding of them. (Fontana & Frey 1998, 36.)

The type of interviews used in this research are **semi-structured thematic interviews**. Pre-defined themes and specifying questions related to the theme govern the course of the semi-structured interviews (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009). The purpose of interviewing is to obtain unique information and interpretations held by the persons interviewed (Stake 2010, 95), that is not available otherwise. The advantage of doing semi-structured interviews is that the questions can be asked in the order that is seen useful. Furthermore, by using a semi-structured interview method, detrimental rigidity can be avoided, and the easiness of conversation can offer opportunities to gain additional information. Semi-structured thematically focused interviews enable the interviewer to guide the interviewee into discussing topics that they would otherwise not think to discuss, but which are significant for gathering the needed information to answer the research questions.

The purpose of the research is not only to look into different kinds of remittances sent by different kinds of people with different backgrounds. This is because in theory, all social remittances sent by each individual can be expected to be unique and different from each other. Thus, instead of only focusing on the differences and varieties between social remittances, the research instead studies the similarities between social remittances and **aims to identify some common**

general patterns, which can explain the phenomenon. The purpose of doing the interviews is to develop case studies of individuals that represent a composite picture, rather than an individual picture (Creswell 2007, 141). The aim is thus not just to describe the phenomenon and possible effects of social remittances but also to **provide interpretations and understanding** of the phenomenon. Instead of solely providing descriptions of the phenomenon, which are particular only to the limited empirical parameters (Mason 2002, 8), the research also aims to provide generalizable information about the way that people construct realities, i.e., how they understand the role of social remittances. Thus, the extent to which the findings can make wider claims must be considered (Mason 2002, 39).

Through interviews, the stories that individuals tell each other about the experiences that they have had can be researched (Fontana & Frey 1998, 36). In other words, through interviewing, individuals' experiences regarding social remittances can only be constructed or reproduced. The data that is gathered through interviewing **tells us what interviewees themselves think** about their contact with persons living in Russia/Finland and the things that they tell them/discuss with them regarding Finland/Russia. It is thus possible to capture the **perspective of the transmitters.**

More precisely, data collected through interviewing informs us about **how the interviewees formulate their thoughts** on the chosen issue. The generated data does thus not represent an absolute truth about what social remittances are circulating between Finland and Russia, but more specifically a certain perspective on this provided by the interviewees. Several things may influence this perspective: Interviewees may for example want to give answers that are understood as socially acceptable (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001). This means that they may want to present themselves in a more favourable light during the interviewing process and thus may give answers that they think will please the interviewer. For politeness reasons, the interviewees may also not want to criticize Finland too strongly in front of a Finnish interviewer. To make sure that there is an opportunity to discuss negative perspectives remitted about Finland as well, specific questions about this are asked to encourage the interviewees. Besides the interviewees giving answers that may please the interviewee, they may also want to present themselves in a certain way as part of their self-image building process.

The **capacity that the interviewees have to verbalize** their experiences and thoughts affects the answers that they can give and thus the data gathered. As Mason (2002, 64) notes, the reproduction that is gathered relies largely on people's capacities to verbalize, interact, conceptualize, and remember. This may have implications, especially when we consider that in this research the interviewed individuals are Russians living in Finland, whose first language is mostly not Finnish. Although the interviewees elected to participate in the interviews, by using the language that they preferred, in reality, many of the interviews were conducted by using imperfect language skills. This may in different degrees constrain people's ability to express themselves. However, although the language used in the answer may not have been perfect, there is no

reason to suspect that the substance of the answers did not come across. Since this research is not focused on semantics and the way that things are worded, language barriers, although they have to be considered, do not form insurmountable barriers to finding answers to the research questions. Furthermore, to overcome this obstacle the help of a Russian-speaking research assistant was used in conducting part of the interviews. The research assistant, a native Russian speaker, translated the interview questions and conducted six interviews with individuals who preferred to be interviewed in Russian. She then transcribed and translated the interviews to English.

Since the knowledge that is gathered through interviews is constructed knowledge, we must ask what value this information can have. In other words, **what value does it have to know what kind of influence migrants attempt (and struggle) to have on the views and values of their non-migrant acquaintances and how they perceive the effects of this?** The understanding of the research is that information about what migrants think about social remittances and their effects has value, since the way that migrants see the role of communication and the things that they tell about Finland/Russia, likely impacts what they end up telling and thus remitting. By understanding the process of social remittances, we can gain insight into how the sharing of information and innovations occurred also across national borders. It also proved us insights into the ways that migrants can potentially influence development and/or societal change. This then diversifies our understanding of the effects and outcomes of migration and the living of transnational lives. Figure 5 summarises the various stages of the research process.

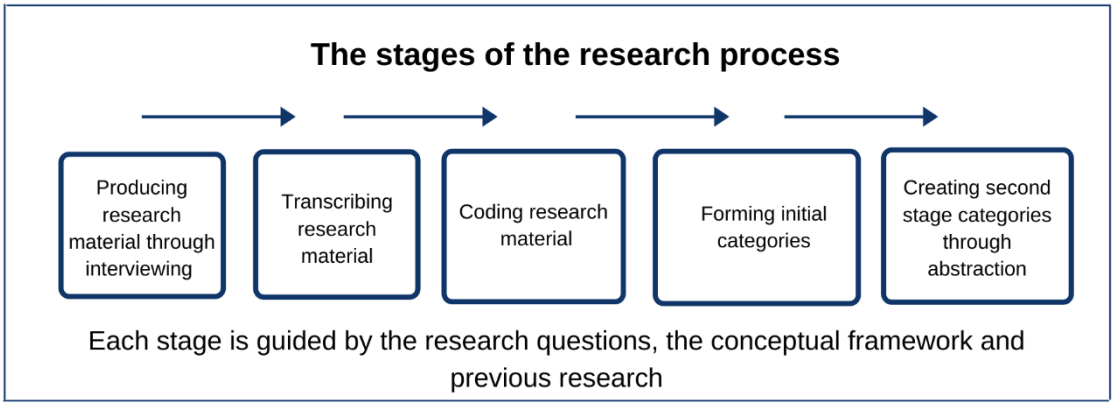

Figure 5 The stages of the research process

5.2.2 Content of interviews

The themes for the interview structure were chosen based on the aims of the research and the research questions, as well as on the overview of earlier research. The basic structure was as following:

In the beginning, migrants were **asked about their background** (e.g., age, education, family members) and their move to Finland. Also, questions about

their life in Finland were asked to determine their current situation. As found in previous research, a person's life history and current position in society or working life can strongly influence the kind of remittances that are sent by them (see chapter 3.2). Someone working in a specific field can be expected to pick up and then remit different things than someone who is unemployed. Therefore, during the interviews many questions were asked about a person's background and current doings. The hypothesis is that this will then help explain the different remittances sent by different individuals. This also adapts to Anthias' translocal research approach (see page 37). As stated by Mason (2002, 62), the perspective of qualitative research is that knowledge is situated and contextual and, because of this, the aim of the interview is to ensure that the relevant contexts are brought into focus, so that the situated knowledge can be produced. Asking about an individual's own background also functioned as an "ice breaker", since these types of questions are generally easy for people to answer.

In the second part, questions were **asked about transnational communication** with friends, acquaintances and family members who live in Russia. Subsequently, the interviewees were asked about what kinds of things they discuss during their transnational communication; what they tell about Finland to their Russian contacts and, on the other hand, what they tell about Russia to their Finnish contacts. The purpose of the questions was to constantly narrow down the topic **towards issues discussed about migrants' experiences and ideas regarding welfare systems**. Although in most of the interviews, all of the pre-planned questions were asked, also specifying questions were added when necessary to secure the needed information. During the interviewing, some questions were also asked to check the veracity of statements made by respondents (Fontana & Frey 1998, 67). Furthermore, the **structure of the interview developed** somewhat during the interviewing process and thus some questions that were found unfruitful were left out whereas others found useful were elaborated. The process of improving and developing the research design after already having entered the field is something that is quite common in qualitative research in which decisions about design and strategy are ongoing (Mason 2002, 24). It is in fact one of the advantages of conducting qualitative interviews, since it gives an opportunity to react to real life situations and to ensure that the needed data gets collected. Figure six illustrates the structure of the conducted interviews and the developed interview structure can be found in its full APPENDIX I.

The interviews also included questions related to democracy, equality and working in Finland and how these are discussed with acquaintances living in Russia. These topics were chosen based on previous research and because they are closely connected to the Nordic welfare state. Therefore, although these topics are not the main focus of the analysis, the discussion that we had with the interviewees related to these topics serve as points of reflection and affirmation to the analysis.

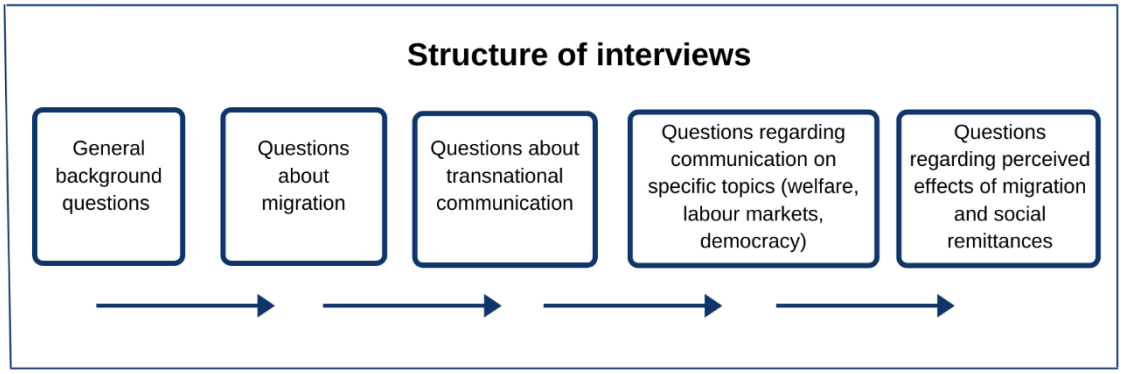

Figure 6 Structure of interviews

Regarding **the terminology used in the interview structure**, it should be noted that although the concept that is used in this text is *social remittances*, around which the whole research is centred, the concept was not used during the interviewing process. Because the term social remittances is not generally known, and it is likely that most interviewees have never heard about it before, there is no advantage in using this terminology when in contact with the interviewees. Interviewees can thus not be asked "*What kind of social remittances regarding welfare do you remit to Russia*". The answer to this question has to be interpreted from the things that interviewees tell regarding what kind of things they e.g., discuss/show/explain about welfare practices when in contact with people living in Russia/Finland. Before asking the interviewees questions regarding their experiences with the Finnish welfare stare, and what they have discussed about this with their acquaintances in Russia, the interviewees were provided a **basic definition of what is meant by welfare services** by listing examples that they might have encountered (e.g., health care services, family benefits, pensions, unemployment benefits, disability services, housing services, student services etc.). These examples were used to give the interviewees a basic idea of what was is meant by welfare services, and not as a list of topics that had to be discussed. The idea was to not too strictly define what topics and themes could be considered as part of the welfare system but instead let the interviewees themselves bring up what topics they considered important. Some of the interviewees had more difficulty in coming up with things that they have discussed with heir Russian acquaintances regarding welfare services, in which case the list of practical examples was used more consistently. All of the interviewees seemed to have an understanding that Finland is a Nordic welfare state and what this means in principle. Their practical experiences however varied greatly, as will be discussed in the analysis chapters.

5.2.3 Criteria for the selection of interviewees

This subchapter presents **how the interviewees were selected**. The most important decision for the sampling was made in order to get the relevant data to answer the interview questions. Thus, certain criteria were set for the interviewees to be included. Secondly, the sampling strategy was impacted by a consideration of realistic availability and feasibility of e.g., time schedule and resources. The most central criteria for the selection of the interviewees were **a)** that the persons have moved to Finland from Russia and currently live in Finland, and **b)** that they are in transnational contact with people currently living in Russia. These requirements were noted in the initial contact with the interviewees.

Migrants often tend to be bundled together and seen as a single homogenous group, which they in reality are not. As Brubaker (2004) notes, we have the tendency to view ethnic groups as internally homogeneous, naturally existing entities and basic constitutions of the social world. What we understand with the concept of "migrants" consists of individuals with many different nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, backgrounds, and lived experiences. The focus of this research is on individuals who have migrated to Finland from the state of Russia and are currently living in Finland. Also, included are some individuals who have migrated from what they consider the Russian part of the former Soviet Union. All the interviewees have before their migration had Russian citizenship, and most still do. Instead of speaking of *Russian migrants* I use the concept of ***migrants from Russia*** because not all migrants from Russia are and/or consider themselves ethnically Russian. The primary commonality of the interviewees is thus their lived experience in what they consider the entity of Russia, instead of their Russian ethnicity. All the interviewees speak Russian as their first language. Russian-speaking individuals from other countries, such as from other former Soviet Republics, are excluded. Transit migrants who move to Europe via Russia are also not included in this research.

In this research, migrants are not considered strictly through the one-year milestone, which is often used in migration studies, since having lived in Finland for one year is not considered a prerequisite to be able to send remittances. This is in line with White & Grabowska (2019, 34) who define that all kinds of migration and mobility including short-term mobility, such as internships and social or business visits abroad, can produce social remittances. Therefore, when selecting the interviewees, there **were no time limits on the duration** of stay in Finland: some of the migrants had only been in Finland for a couple of months whereas others had lived there for over 10 years. The decision not to delimit the time period was made to enable comparison of the volume and the character of social remittances sent by people who have different kinds of experiences as well as different lengths of experiences about living in Finland. Earlier research has found that the way that migrants are in contact with people from their country of origin may change according to the time spent abroad. The premise is thus that the length of the time spent abroad may influence social remittances. Furthermore, as Levitt & Rajaram (2013a, 340; 2013b, 493) note, even short stays

abroad can profoundly change how people think and strongly influence skill and knowledge transfers. Although the one-year mark is not insisted upon in this research, it is useful to notice that in Finland one year of living in the country is needed to be registered into the civil registration system. Therefore, also the statistics of the national statistics authority, Statistics Finland, are shaped by this definition.

In the research, whether a person defines him/herself **as *living* in Finland or just *visiting*** Finland is used as a division. For example, exchange students staying in Finland for one semester are included if they consider themselves living in Finland. Tourists on the other hand are excluded since they are visiting Finland and not living there. During their stay in Finland, tourists are likely to focus on different issues surrounding them than migrants. Travellers tend to stay within their "tourist bubble" and therefore do not experience that much of the "real life in society". The arbitrariness of this is however recognized, and it will be critically considered in the analysis who then is in fact experiencing "real life" in the country of settlement. Travellers have always carried with them new ideas from one culture to another. Tourists also take with them new ideas and viewpoints and hence have an effect on the country image of Finland abroad. Although the ideas that tourists transmit are not focused on in this research, they would however provide an interesting topic for some other research.

Instead of focusing on foreigners, this research will **focus on migrants.** The difference is relevant, and it would be impractical to use citizenship status as a measurement in this research. Many of the individuals, who migrate to Finland, do at some point opt to get a Finnish citizenship. After this, they are no longer considered as foreigners. Change in citizenship status does however not mean a necessary change in the relations that individuals have to their communities of origin. Remittances are thus not tight to being a foreign national. Citizenship is not a lasting attribute unlike country of birth. Furthermore, although remittances are in reality not tied to whether one is a **first-generation migrant** or a second or third generation migrant, this research will mainly focus on first generation migrants. First generation migrants are individuals who have themselves once lived in another country before moving to Finland. This definition is set to make the research more confined. Focusing on so-called second-generation migrants would open an entire new chapter and discussion that would have to be grounded thoroughly. Non-migrants are defined as individuals who have not migrated themselves. Non-migrants may have direct or indirect contacts to individuals who have migrated.

Since **maintaining a transnational contact** is the presupposition to social remitting, only individuals who are in contact with someone living in Russia, such as friends, family members, and colleagues, were interviewed. The term "**acquaintances"** is used in the text to cover the previously mentioned categories of people whom one might be in contact with. In the text, sometimes the concepts of friends and family are also used, when these are in question specifically. The extent of contact can vary greatly, and some interviewees may be in contact with their acquaintances living in Russia every day whereas others only a couple of

times a year over a long period. The term **non-migrant** is used to refer to acquaintances that have not migrated themselves but live in their country of origin, in this case either Finland or Russia. The focus is on **direct interpersonal contact** and thus excludes e.g., social media posts, which are not targeted at a specific acquaintance. The type of personal contact is however not strictly predefined, and the interviewees are allowed to ascribe in their own words what kind of contact they have and how this occurs in practice. However, **three types of contact channels are focused on:** 1) contact from afar in the form of e.g., calls, social media, emails, messages, 2) visits to Russia and 3) visits from acquaintances to Finland. During the gathering of data, it is made sure of that information regarding these channels is secured during the interviews through specific interview questions. By this sampling criteria regarding contact, the research aims to find out how people with different kinds of contact and different intensity of contact ascribe meaning to social remittances.

In qualitative research, the **number of cases**, in this case the number of interviews, does not solely determine the reliability of the study. Instead of the number of informants, more important is the quality of information that they provide that can be used to answer the research questions. It is often stated that when little new information merges, i.e., data stops telling anything new, the data becomes saturated. As noted previously, all individuals may send social remittances that are in some way always different than the social remittances sent by others. Saturation is attained when no significant new themes appear anymore. The **saturation of the data** collected in this research to answer the defined research questions was accomplished when around 30 individuals were interviewed. After this, some further interviews (5) were done to make sure of this.

5.2.4 Conducting interviews – description of fieldwork

The fieldwork for this research was carried out **between January 2018 and May 2019**. Altogether **35 individuals were interviewed**. Each interviewee was interviewed one time for the research. Some of the interviews (12) were collected as part of a research project called "SIRIUS – Skills and Integration of Migrants, asylum applicants and refugees in European Labour Markets[6]" funded by the European Commission (Reference: 770515) in which the author of this dissertation worked as the main project researcher. In this research project, a large variety of people from different nationalities were interviewed and thus only the interviews with Russians living in Finland were also used for this research on social remittances. Since the interview structure used in the SIRIUS research was semi-structured, it was possible to add specific questions related to this study. Moreover, the background questions used in SIRIUS were similar to those designed for this research.

[6] For more information on SIRIUS visit: https://www.sirius-project.eu/

The interviewees for the research were found **through various channels** such as mailing lists, migrant organizations, and universities. Emails were sent to target potential interviewees. The email described the purpose of the research, the requirements for participating and the anonymity of the answers. Many of the interviewees were found through this channel, however because not all individuals have email addresses, also other methods were used. For example, the "snow balling method" was used in which interviewees referred to other possible interviewees. In addition, language classes were found useful, and especially older migrants were reached through this channel, to ensure a variety in age. In this, the help of a language class instructor was used, who provided contact with people who were willing to participate. The interviewees did not get remuneration for participating.

All of the interviews were **conducted face-to-face**, and the interviewees could choose where they wanted the interview to take place. The interviews were thus organized in various settings. Face-to-face interactions enable picking up verbal and non-verbal cues about the social situation, such as the mood of the interviewee. This enables to recognize when people become bored, tired, upset, or embarrassed. (Mason 2002, **know what migrants think about social remittances** 75.) This then can help with understanding the dynamics of the phenomenon under research through for example exemplifying which topics excite the interviewees and which not. Most interviews were done either at the university, in a room booked for this, or at cafés identified by the interviewees. Interviews were also conducted at the library, at people's homes and at the language class premises.

In the beginning of the interviewing process, the migrants were carefully and truthfully told about the research and about what their participation entails. The interviewees were also asked to sign **a consent form** and given opportunity to ask questions and make comments. By doing this, it was ensured that the interviewees were giving informed consent. At this point, many interviewees expressed satisfaction that someone is interested in their experiences and in Russians living in Finland. None of the interviewees refused to sign the consent form or pulled out at this point of the research.

The interviews were **audio-recorded** and, before starting the interviews, it was specifically ensured that interviewees gave permission to do so. The interviews **lasted between 30–120 minutes**. The differences in the length of the interviews resulted mainly from willingness of the interviewees to elaborate their answers and on their style of narrating. Some migrants were more talkative than others and answered questions in more detail. Especially with the older migrants, the interviews were shorter, due to some of the older migrants not having enough energy to go through the entire interview structure and due to some language barriers. In these cases, the focus was held especially on transnational communication and the things told about Finland to acquaintances.

The interviews were **conducted in either Finnish, English or Russian** depending on the interviewees' preferences. In some interviews also a little German was used. Most of the interviews were done in either Finnish or English.

With a couple of the older migrants, there was some difficulty with some words which had to be looked up in the dictionary. In case of the interviews done in Russia the help of a **Russian-speaking research assistant was used**. The interviews done in Russian ensured that also the voices of those individuals who do not speak Finnish or English are heard in the data.

Interviewees were especially interested in discussing the differences between Finnish and Russian welfare practices. At times, the **interviewees had to be guided from describing their personal experiences to discussing what they have told about these to acquaintances living in Russia/Finland.** The interviewees had more examples to give about attitudes and information that they had discussed with their Russian acquaintances than things discussed with their Finnish acquaintances about Russia, which is interesting to consider in terms of social remittances as a multidirectional process. The general atmosphere was friendly and open, and establishing a certain degree of trust between the interviewees and the interviewer was accomplished. However, questions about democracy were found noticeably more difficult to answer than the other questions. Most interviewees from the outset noted that they are not interested in politics and thus made it clear that they would prefer not to discuss it. One of the interviewees noted that she would prefer if certain parts of the interview, in which she was discussing the current state of democracy in Russia, were not recorded. The question asked about monetary remittances was expected to be one of the most difficult to discuss and thus it was left until the end of the interview. However, the interviewees were mostly happy answer this question and there was no awkwardness.

It was from the onset of the data gathering process found especially **important to (over)emphasise complete neutrality** from the part of the interviewee on certain topics such as social rights in Russia. It could be detected that some interviewees felt that even bringing up these topics was criticism towards the way that things are in Russia. Thus, during the interview it was important not to show any presumptions or criticism but rather let the interviewees voice their opinions and criticism on their own terms and in their own words. In some cases, this even meant asking very self-evident questions. At times, during the interviews, it seemed that the interviewees considered that they as migrants from Russia are allowed to criticize Russia, but others should not do so. This also influenced the questions setting, which had to be done in very neutral tones. This also meant that questions had to be asked in such a way that did not put Finland automatically as the one being able to offer lessons in subjects of democracy, welfare and social rights and Russia as the "unsuccessful pupil". This method was found functioning since it opened up migrants to criticize both Finnish and Russian welfare and social right practices. Interestingly, many of the interviewees also expressed gratitude that someone is interested in their story and in the Russian-speaking community in Finland.

When designing the interview questions, the general directive was to design the questions in such a way that they make sense and are meaningful to the interviewees (as described by Mason 2002, 74). Thus, it was carefully ensured that a **"sharedness of meaning**", in which both the interviewer and respondent

understand the contextual nature of the interview (Fontana & Frey 1998, 68), was established. However, despite this, it should be noted that some of the questions were more difficult for the interviewees to understand than others. Moreover, it should also be noted that it is possible that in some of the interviews there were some misunderstandings mainly due to language barriers. Even though the interview structure was designed to use very simple language, it is possible that not all migrants understood all questions as they were intended. In a couple of cases when this was evident, subquestions were asked to guide the discussion into the right direction. However, in some cases when this was found difficult, the topic was dropped, and the interview moved on to the next question. During the interview process, attention was paid to not impose the researcher's vocabulary onto the experience of the interviewees (Fujii 2018, 5–6), and interviewees were thus allowed to use their own language when telling things.

During the interviewing process, the interviewees were given **possibility to answer questions in their own words,** to pass questions that they did not want to answer, and to guide the interview to some extent into the direction that they wanted. By doing this, it was ensured that the gathered data truly reflects the participants' actual experiences. Reliability is ensured since there is reason to expect that similar kinds of findings would be found if another researcher had conducted the interviewing process using the same research and interview questions. In other words, the research procedure responds to the same phenomena in the same way regardless of the circumstances of its implementation (Krippendorff 2004, 211).

After interviewing, the recordings were carefully and anonymously **transcribed.** The transcription enables detailed analysis through coding. It also ensures that no aspects that may at first not seem important, but turn out later to be so, are left out of the analysis. To make the quotations more reader-friendly, while maintaining anonymity, the names of the interviewees have been exchanged with common Russian first names (found by an Internet search engine search by "Top 20 Russian female/male names). Moreover, also the cities and other identifying details that interviewees refer to in their answers are anonymised by using pseudonyms such as "city x". While transcribing, basic pronunciation mistakes were corrected, and repetitive filler words were erased. The comments or additions made by the editor are marked as [ ]. Laughter during the interview is marked as "haha" and "– –" stands for a section of interview being left out, which is done in order to shorten the quotations in such a way that they only bring out the essential.

The quotations that are used in the text are word-for-word recounts and function as examples of analyses and to illustrate the validity of observations. The quotations have been chosen to represent the most common and typical themes in the research material. They also bring the participants' voice into the study (Creswell 2007, 182). In the case of interviews done in Finnish or Russian, the quotations are translated into English. From some interviews, more quotations are used than from others. This is mostly due to the reason that some of the interviews were more information-rich than others. However, the objective

has been to use the data diversely and thus to ensure that the information gathered from all the 35 interviews is utilized in the analysis.

5.2.5 Ethical considerations

When doing research with individuals, it is always important to consider ethical implications during the collection and analyses of data. The **data gathered in the research is carefully protected**, which includes maintaining the anonymity of the interviewees. Personal information, such as age, education background and place of origin have been used in such a way that the anonymity of the interviewees is preserved. Moreover, no private information that is not closely related to the research questions (Stake 2010, 207) has been solicited. No original names are used. All the interviewees granted permission for data collection and audio-recording. All information is stored on password protected university computers and only the researcher has access to the information. Names of interviewees were at no point connected to the collected data. What information is provided of the interviewees is important to consider, since criticizing Russia's policies could potentially be harmful to the participants. The interviewees themselves did in most cases not indicate fear of discussing the topics of the interview, which might have to do with the fact that the criticism remained on a general level. Responses did not include names or specific places, which might be more endangering to the interviewees.

As part of ethical considerations, it is also meaningful to consider which parties, bodies and groups might be **potentially interested or affected by this research** and what the implications are for them (modified from Mason 2002, 41–42). It is acknowledged that this kind of research provides direct information to, for example, intelligent agencies on how migrants spread information, what kind of impacts this information could have, and how this could possibly be influenced. This information can also be used in sinister purposes, which makes the research results a double-edged sword. Furthermore, information on the functioning of migrants' networks and influencing power can also enable state actors to learn how to use expatriates as a tool to spread misinformation more effectively. By means of this, states can learn how to exercise their "soft power", i.e., getting other states to want the outcomes that they want by co-opting rather than coercion (Nye 2004), through migrants. This is especially interesting since, as noted by Zakem, Saunders & Antoun (2015), Russian compatriots have previously often functioned as instruments of broader Russian foreign policy aims (see more information in chapter 6.2.7). However, to be able to combat the spread of misinformation, we also need to understand how the process of spreading information occurs. What should be further noted is that when migrants exercise their influence, this can also put them in a bad light in the eyes of those opposed to change. Those opposed to migration are often afraid of change in society impacted by migration, both in the country of settlement and the country of origin. This is another reason why anonymity is important.

Ethical considerations were also taken into account **during conducting of interviews**. The interviewing process was kept pleasant, friendly, and relaxed.

Interviewees were told in the beginning that they could ask anything about the research or the interview structure, at any point of the interview. It was also made possible for interviewees not to go deeply into any of the topics that they somehow felt uncomfortable for them. In other words, although clarifying questions were asked when interviews did not elaborate self-reliantly, the interviewees were in no way pushed, interrogated, or pressured to answer any of the questions. As stated by Fujii (2018, 25, 28), treating people with respect and dignity may involve observing boundaries that the interviewees draw around certain subjects. During interviewing, there is thus a need to constantly observe what interviewees are willing to discuss. Mostly the need to step back was detected in the questions regarding politics and social rights. When it was clearly noticeable that interviewees were not willing to go deep into such a topic they were not pressured to do so.

Thinking and talking about past events can for some cause **emotional stress**, and this has to be taken into account during the interviewing process. In practice, this means that discretion has to be used during the data collection process, when asking about the interviewee's life events. This proved to be especially important with one of the interviewees, who had lost her son previously and was very sensitive about this topic. Comfort was provided in this case.

As Creswell (2007) notes, as part of ethical validation, the researcher must question her **underlying moral assumptions** and political and ethical implications (Creswell 2007, 205). This is because in qualitative social research it is commonly accepted that the researcher cannot operate without exercising personal values. This can be visible in that we tend to care about the group we work with and we, for example, tend to advocate a democratic society. (Stake 2010, 200–201.) In other words, researchers bring their own paradigms, worldviews and sets of beliefs to the research project (Creswell 2007, 15). Because of this, researcher should exert critical and reflexive self-scrutiny, through constantly taking stock of his/her actions and role in the research process. These aspects should then be subjected to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of the 'data'. Instead of considering the data collection as neutral, the various aspects that may influence it should be analysed. (Mason 2002, 7, 66.) This research is not normative in the sense that it does not take a stance which specific aspects from Finnish/Russian society and welfare practices should be remitted and adapted to Russia/Finland and would improve its societal development. However, the researcher's own worldview has to be considered. In this research, this can mean that a democratic system combined with various social rights and welfare for citizens are seen as positive values to begin with. The starting point is thus that the spreading and generalising of these issues would be something positive. This has an effect on how social remittances regarding these issues is researched, and it may thus impact the research design. If democracy, social rights, and welfare were seen as negative values, the research setting might look different, and these topics being discussed as part of transnational communication could be seen in a different light. Different questions about them might also be asked during the interviews.

Moreover, the basic presumption is that the Finnish, and more generally the Nordic welfare state, is seen by the researcher as having succeeded in certain important aspects, such as gender equality (to some extent), a high standard of living, safety, and political freedom, in comparison with most other places, including Russia. An important presumption to consider is thus that the **Nordic welfare system is by the researcher seen as something mainly positive** and that the adoption of some of its aspects in other countries is desired and could perhaps improve the welfare of people in different places. In this sense, it should be acknowledged that there is likely more of an idea behind the research about what the Russian welfare system could ideally adopt from the Finnish system, than the other way around. However, to contest this assumption, the research also strives to turn around the setting and incorporate a multidirectional viewpoint in which it is also investigated what kind of social remittances are sent from Russia to Finland and how these might influence the way that Finnish acquaintances see Russia. Overall, this partiality should not be seen as an impediment as long as it is openly brought forth and acknowledged.

5.3 Method of analysing data

To analyse the research material, **thematic content analysis** is used as the main analysis strategy. Thematic content analysis focuses on understanding the phenomenon through various themes that can be found from the data to answer the research questions. In content analysis, the research material is first broken down into various smaller entities (codes and subcategories) after which it is rebuilt to answer the research questions. Thematic analysis enables to contain the multitude of details and circumstances into larger entities that make understanding the phenomenon more comprehensible and structured. The purpose is to draw macro interpretations from a large number of micro interpretations. By removal of literal properties and distancing of ideas from objects, information that is more abstract is created. In qualitative research the thing that is studied, in this case the phenomenon and effects of social remittances, is seen as unique as well as common (Stake 2010, 31). First, the phenomenon of social remittances is looked at from the viewpoint of specific particular cases. Based on these, the data is organized into increasingly abstracts units of information, as is common in qualitative research (Creswell 2007, 38). The basic starting point in this kind of analytical induction is the thesis that there are regularities to be found in the physical and social world. The theories and constructs that the researcher derives from the data are meant to express these regularities as precisely as possible. (Huberman & Miles 1998, 186.)

On practical terms, to analyse the collected data, the recorded interviews were first transcribed and then coded. During the process of **coding**, the data was sorted according to topics, themes and issues that were seen as important to the study. This was done to gain an interpretation of the material. (Stake 2010, 151.) Open-ended coding was used, although during the transcription process a

preliminary code structure was already created. In this way, the analysis of data already starts during the transcribing process. The coding of data was thematically guided, in which the interview structure as well as findings from previous research were used. The background information gathered from previous research influenced the way that the research material was read and looked at. It enabled reflection and comparison to previous research. Thus, having decided to focus on the influence that migrants attempt (and struggle) to have on the views and ideas of their non-migrant acquaintances, the research material was read and categorized with keeping this constantly in mind. Besides thematic coding related to the research questions, some information was also coded merely to enable finding the information later in the transcribed texts. During the transcribing and coding, notes were constantly made for ideas about analysis. The coding was done with the help of qualitative data analysis software (QDA miner).

Some of the codes are more significant than others and some also contain more text segments than others. Almost all sentences in the research material were coded under some code. This is because rather than imposing one's own (pre)decided interpretations, the researcher should be sensitive to all the data. The codes in no way reflect absolute truths or "natural" classifications, but instead were used to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the large amount of data. The coding was thus mainly used for categorizing the data to make sense of it and to enable systematic analysis. Different researchers may have ended up coding some things differently or leaving out some codes. However, since the research questions strongly guided the coding, it is likely that the main coding would have been quite similar. In the second stage of the coding process, the transcriptions were re-read, and the coding system was checked and modified. In some cases, codes were changed or merged with other codes. At this stage, 85 codes were ascribed to the text.

To further analyse the codes, and thus the text segments attached to each of the codes, the codes were **categorized under subcategories**. At this stage crucial themes, which enable answering the research questions, were identified. The 85 codes were thematically categorized under 11 subcategories based on their theme: codes with similar topics were categorized under the same category. The following table 1 lists all the codes and categories used in the analysis.

Table 1 Codes and categories

5. Background questions	Politics/democracy
Language skills	Recycling/garbage
Education	Social security (incl. unemployment)
Ingrians	Taxation
Life in Russia before migration	Tourism
Life and family in Finland	Weather
Profession/what doing now	Working/labour market
Where from in Russia	Comparisons
Initial information about Finland	Stable/reliable/safe/calm
6. Migration experience	Why/reasons for telling things
Premigration experience	6. Info about Finland/Russia
Did you know anyone in Finland before moving	What do Russians think/know about Finland
Info about Finland before moving	How reacted to things told
Current legal status in Finland	Can acquaintances understand life in Finland?
Moving back to Russia	What have you told about Russia to Finns
When moved	What do Finns think about Russia?
Reason for moving/migrants´ selectivity	East vs. west dichotomy
7. Transnational connections	Stereotypes/misconceptions
How	Role of media
With whom in contact	Questions asked about Finland
How often in contact	Questions asked about Russia
What is discussed	7. Integration
Info about visits to Russia	Own integration
Info about acquaintances visiting Finland	Integration of other Russians
What is done during visits	Integration of migrants from other countries
Visiting Russia	Experiences with integration services
8. Experiences about welfare state	8. Acquaintances and networks
Experiences with Russian welfare system	Finnish acquaintances in Finland
Experiences about Finnish welfare	Russian acquaintances in Finland
Social security benefits received in Finland	Role of networks
Bringing ideas about Russian welfare to Finland	NGOs/Church
Seeking medical treatment in Russia	Contact with migrants from other countries
Negative experiences in Finland	Russia's engagement with expatriates

continues

TABLE 1 continues

9 What has been told to aquantances	**9. Effects of migration**
Culture	Effect of emigration on Russia
Education	Effect of migration on Finland
Environment/nature	What is thought about emigrating in Russia
Equality/gender identity	Migrants bringing new ideas to Finland
Finland/country image	Migrants sending new ideas to Russia
Health care	Russia´s openness to new ideas
History	Finland´s openness to new ideas
Housing/living	Spill over/development effect
Legislation/obedience	**10. Skills and qualifications**
Migrants/refugees	New skills and qualifications
Moving abroad/living abroad	Would new skills be valued in Russia
Negative/contradictory remittances	**11. Other remittances**
Nordic countries/society	Economic remittances
Prices/products	Collective remittances

After the material was categorized into various subcategories according to a thematic basis, the formed categories were compared, evaluated, and analysed. At this stage, the material was still divided in concrete, literal and specific examples retrieved from the research material. However, to produce more generalizable information, the subcategories were, by recognizing common features, merged into more abstract ones: four more **abstract main categories** were established to answer the research questions. These categories are 1) creation and content of social remittances, 2) transmission of social remittances, 3) reception of social remittances, and 4) effect of social remittances. These four main categories are used as the basis structure of the analysis. Figure 7 illustrates how the collected data is analysed.

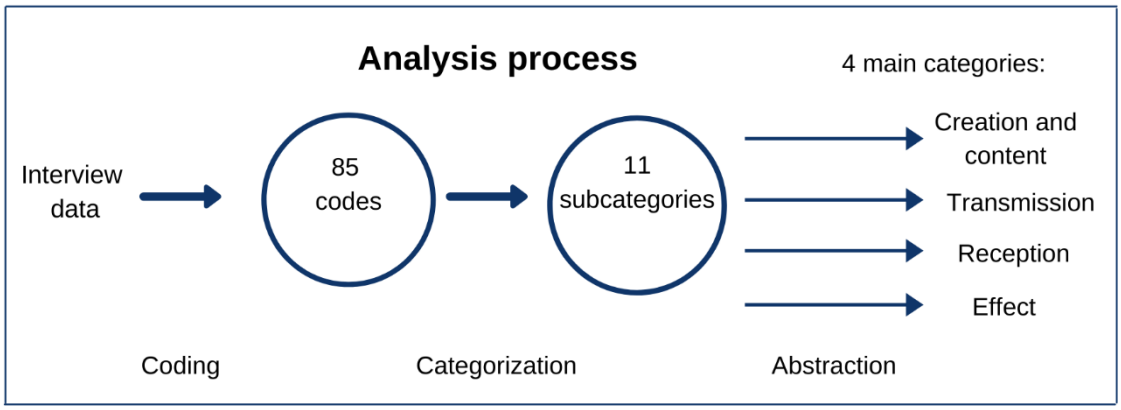

Figure 7 Analysis process

5.4 Description of interviewees

As noted in chapter 3.2, the life trajectories of migrants, in terms of e.g., their pre- and post-migration experiences, determine what their social remittances end up being like. The experiences create the frames of thought or filters which influence the kind of social remittances that are created and transmitted (which will be considered in the analysis). Because of this it is important to describe the individuals that were interviewed comprehensively. Since migrants from Russia in Finland are not a homogenous group of people, the importance of considering various cross-cutting background factors, such as gender, class and generation becomes essential. It is not beneficial to consider the social remittances transmitted by migrants from Russia as a group, without considering the various crosscutting background factors determining their life experiences. The subchapters describe the interviewees´ reasons for moving to Finland (5.4.1), where the migrants are from (5.4.2) their age, gender, and nationality (5.4.3), their education and employment experience (5.4.4) and their social contacts and language skills (5.4.5). Finally (5.4.6), a summary of the interviewees´ individual background information is provided in the form of a table. The chapter also provides information in what way the generated data signify the wider population of which the research is interested in. In this chapter quotations of the interviewees will already be used as illustrative and descriptive examples to enable the migrants´ voice to come through. More quotations will follow in the analysis chapters, in which they will also be analysed more comprehensively.

5.4.1 Reasons for migrating to Finland

The interviewees have migrated to Finland between 1993 and 2018. The interviewees represent individuals who have already lived in Finland for a long time and had time to integrate into society and the labour markets, as well as individuals who have arrived very recently. All the interviewees have migrated to Finland after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Most of the interviewees have experienced life in the Soviet Union but some of the younger ones have not. This exemplifies a frame of meaning that migrants have brought with them from their country of origin. In terms of welfare services, this has interesting effects: many of the interviewees have in their life experienced a social system that is quite different from that of the Finnish or the Russian system today. This is also reflected in the interviews, and several interviewees note that during Soviet times they had some welfare services that they no longer have in Russia. As noted by Henry (2009, 52), even by those Russians who did not support the communist regime, the rights to education, health care, housing, pensions, and other social benefits are seen as a positive aspect of the Soviet legacy. On the other hand, the Soviet time is also described by many as a time of repression and the Iron curtain. The information and values that migrants pick up regarding the welfare system in the country of settlement is thus interpreted through the various frames that the migrants have brought with them when migrating. The frames have been

constructed by their previous life experiences, and which are in this case contrasted with their previous experiences regarding welfare practices in Soviet times.

During the research, the interviewees noted various **reasons for migrating** to Finland. Personal and family motives and poor prospects for the improvement of one´s material status, social status and personal stability and economic security have been found central for emigration from Russia (Aleshkovski et al., 2018, 144). According to Krivonos and Näre (2019, 1183), motivations of Russian-speakers for migrating to Finland are related to Finland being perceived as part of the global 'west', while simultaneously being accessible due to geographical proximity. Such underlying thoughts can also be detected in the narratives regarding migration decisions of the interviewees for this research. Some interviewees, for example, note that they have "escaped" life in Russia, while others explain that they came to Finland to achieve a different way of living, which according to the interviewees would be better, more liberal, and more secure. Besides these reasons, the interviewees also describe specific reasons for coming to Finland, which might be partly related to Finland being part of the west, but likely are not solely related to this. Figure 8 summarises the main reasons for migrating to Finland among the interviewees.

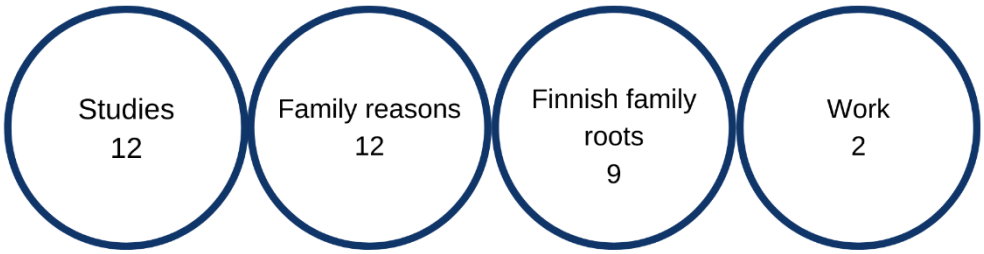

Figure 8 Reasons for migrating to Finland among interviewees

One of the common reasons for coming to Finland given by the interviewees is **education,** and specifically higher education. Interestingly only few of the interviewees had originally come to Finland for work-related reasons. Many of the interviewees note that they decided to come to Finland because it was cost-free to study there at the university or the university of applied sciences. Until 2016, no tuition fees were collected from foreign students at Finnish higher education institutions. This changed however, and nowadays non-EU citizens generally must pay for their studies in Finland. Many of the interviewees note that they came to Finland before this change and that specifically the fact that one could study in Finland for free was a major factor in their decision-making. Many note that they had been very lucky in this. Interviewee Sonya notes: "*I came here in 2013 to study. It was actually my dad's idea, because at that time the education was free and the value of Finnish education was pretty high and I think that it is still, so he decided.*" (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) As noted by Aleshkovski et al. (2018, 149), since the early 2000s, for Russian families, sending children to study abroad

became the most popular way of finding a more prosperous and democratic place for them to live.

Free of charge education having for many been a significant factor, indicates that migrants from Russia coming to Finland to study do mainly not come from among the very wealthy, but instead it seems that they come from more **middle-income backgrounds**. As discussed in chapter 2.4, to migrate, people need human, financial, and social resources, and aspiration to do so (de Haas 2005; de Haas 2007, 832). In general, the emigration from Russia to developed countries is characterized by high quality human capital, in other words individuals with high educational and professional levels and relatively young age. (Aleshkovski et al., 208, 143.) The interviewed migrants for this research can also be characterized similarly: they have had the resources to migrate, indicating that poverty and underdevelopment are not the so-called root causes for their migration. However, although these individuals have the human capital and education background needed to migrate and be accepted at Finnish universities, which are quite competitive in international comparison in their admission (see OECD report from 2019 "Education at a Glance"), they do often not have the economic capital needed to study in other European countries, such as the UK, in which education is costly. Most of the student interviewees are dependent on income from their parents living in Russia, and some also note that there is a pressure to graduate due to their parents spending money on their education. Interviewee Olga, who came to Finland as a student in 2016, notes: "*My mom is usually like 'You should finish as fast as you can and start to earn yourself because Finnish people have this Kela* [= Finnish students receive student allowance] *but you do not have it'. She thinks that I should graduate as fast as possible and start to earn something myself. Ha ha.*" (Olga, 23y., PhD researcher.) Third country nationals who have a temporary residence permit do not receive student allowance from the Finnish social security system during their studies in Finland (Tervola & Verho 2014, 23). This example of Olga, exemplifies how migrants use transnational forms of social protection (see Levitt et al. 2017). In this case, instead of relying on student benefits from the Finnish welfare system, the interviewee Olga, has to rely on social protection from her social ties, i.e., her parents.

Besides being inexpensive, many of the interviewees also note that Finnish **higher education is highly regarded**, and this is why they decided to come to Finland. The majority of all those interviewees who have come to Finland to study have decided after their studies to stay, or in the future want to stay in Finland. Interviewee Galina notes: *"So I came to study, stayed for work and let's see how it goes further."* (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) This fits with the overall tendency of Russians studying abroad hardly ever returning to Russia after finishing their studies (Aleshkovski et al., 2018, 149). These interviewees are highly educated and skilled individuals, which the government sees as an attractive migrant group. Only a few of those who have come to Finland to study, mainly those who at the time of the interview were exchange students, are planning to return to Russia.

Besides education, **Finnish roots** is a commonly given reason, by the interviewees, for migrating to Finland. Many of the interviewees note that either

they themselves or their husband/wife has Finnish family roots and therefore they have decided to migrate to Finland. Interviewee Kiril, who lives in Finland with his wife and son, for example notes: *"I had a right to come here as my grandfather and my grandmother were Ingrian Finns and my mother is a Finn. 15 years we waited for the permission to move to Finland."* (Kiril, 55 y., student.) Some of those interviewees who have Finnish family roots have learned some Finnish language before migrating, either at home or in school. However, many of those who have migrated to Finland due to having Finnish roots, have in fact had no significant experience about Finland or Finnish culture, or spoken the language before migration, as becomes clear from the interviews.

Besides having Finnish family roots, also **other family-related reasons** were behind the decisions to migrate for some of the interviewees. Many noted that they had migrated to Finland because their partner is Finnish. Also, many of those who had originally come for other reasons, had decided to stay in Finland because they had during their stay met a Finnish partner. Interviewee Yulia for example notes: *"There* [= at work] *I met my future husband, who turned out to be a Finn. We registered our marriage and, when I lost my job there* [= in Russia] *due to the crises, I decided to move to my husband's place."* (Yulia, 44 y., unemployed.) Besides marriage, one interviewee had come to Finland as a child with his family and another elderly interviewee migrated because her children came to Finland.

Finland's **country characteristics** have also impacted the decision to migrate for many of the interviewees. According to survey findings from 2021, Russian´s associate a high standard of living, freedom, democracy, modernity, and Finland being a welfare state, with Finland (Finnish Foreign Ministry - country brand report 2021). Some of the interviewees note that Finland being a safe, calm, and secure country (See similar findings Li & Pitkänen 2018, 112) had a significant role in their decision to migrate to Finland. Interviewee Yekaterina notes on this: *"The first thing that is most important is that in Finland it is safe to live and when I came here, during the first year I found it lovely that I could walk outside at night and everything was ok."* (Yekaterina, 79y., pensioner.) Finnish people are also seen as law obedient and trusting. Similar findings have been made by Saksela-Bergholm (2013) and Silfver (2010). Saksela-Bergholm found in her research that Russian and Estonian migrants positively regard the Finnish way of complying with order and upkeeping of societal systems such as traffic rules and health care services (Saksela-Bergholm 2013, 98). Silfver, on the other hand, found that Russian immigrants appreciate the pleasant living and working conditions, stability, safety, and caring composition of Finnish society (Silfver 2010, 139). The interviewees for this research also note that in their experience there is no corruption and that they have been able to trust the police in Finland. These aspects are also discussed with acquaintances living in Russia.

Some interviewees also note that they migrated because they **wanted their children to have better opportunities** than they themselves have had. Interviewee Anastasia, who has two children, notes: *"When I was alone in Russia, I did not want to move, but when my child was born, I decided to migrate to Finland. I want that my child has a better life than I do."* (Anastasia, 36y., student.) According to Anastasia, life in Finland, in other words in the west, would be better than

what it would be in Russia (see similar findings Krivonos 2015, 356; Krivonos & Näre 2019). This is also related to the issues brought up by some interviewees, according to which they did not feel economically or socially secure in Russia, which is why they sought to leave. Interviewee Natalya, who is married to a Russian spouse and has two children, notes: "*Well basically I came, because I did not feel secure about my future in my home country. Although we had a normal financial situation and no difficulties. But I understood that if something happens and if we do not have money, if for example we get sick, I will likely not fare there in the system.*" (Natalya, 42y., employed in museum.)

Some of the interviewees migrated to Finland after **being encouraged by other family members or previous acquaintances to do so**). One of the interviewees for examples notes that a Russian acquaintance of her, who was living in Finland, helped her find an internship opportunity in Finland and this is why she migrated. This research thus verifies previous research according to which migrants' networks are sustained by information about migration and life in the country of settlement (more on this in chapter 6.3.8

In general, the interviewees can be divided into **those who already had information about Finland prior to their migration and those who did not**. Especially those with Finnish family roots tended to have some kind of information about Finland before migrating. According to the survey commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021), 7 % of individuals in Russia base their idea of Finland and Finnish people mainly on information provided by relatives. Many of the interviewees for this research have had grandparents who speak Finnish or had gone to schools were Finnish was taught. Interviewee Marina (62y., unemployed) notes that her husband's grandparents only spoke Finnish, which is why her husband can understand Finnish well even though he does not speak it himself. However, as one of the interviewees notes, having Finnish family roots was not always something that was emphasised, especially during Soviet times. Thus, having Finnish family roots does not automatically mean that the migrant had much knowledge about Finland or language skills in Finnish before migrating. Several of the interviewees had also travelled to Finland for holiday before they moved, and they thus had some idea of where they were going. According to the survey commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021), 5 % of individuals in Russia base their idea of Finland and Finnish people mainly on their travels to Finland. Interviewee Ivan (21y., exchange student) notes that he used to visit Finland several times a year before moving there. Finland is, according to previous research, a somewhat attractive destination to Russians for travelling, and many also use Finland as a gateway to other destinations (Kosonen, Paajanen & Reittu 2005). Those interviewees who had lived close to the Finnish border in Russia, such as in St. Petersburg or Petrozavodsk, had more often visited Finland before their migration. Some of the other interviewees, on the other hand, had never even been abroad before migrating to Finland and several had no previous information about Finland. Most of the interviewees did also not know anyone in Finland before they moved there.

The reasons that people have for migrating are also closely connected to **migrants being a selective group of individuals**, in line with de Haas (2005, 1271; 2007, 832). A case in point, regarding migrant selectivity, is the **international orientation of migrants**: During the interviews, the interviewees were asked about their previous experiences regarding living abroad. This information is interesting since it indicates whether the interviewees have been exposed to different realities, such as different societies and systems of doing things. Having lived abroad before may also have shaped an individual's ability to deal with new places and situations. Many of the interviewees had in fact lived abroad before, mostly for short periods, before migrating to Finland. Mostly, the interviewees had stayed for a couple of months in other European countries. Some of the older interviewees had also worked and lived in other Soviet countries for longer times. The fact that so many of the interviewees had stayed abroad previously indicates that there is likely some migrant selectivity, meaning that people migrating to Finland tend to be more internationally oriented than Russians in general. It seems that they might be more interested in living abroad and staying in different places. It also indicates an openness and interest in Europe and a European lifestyle. In terms of social remittances, it can indicate that those people who are already more open to liberal European values are the ones most likely migrating to Europe, as could be expected. This can mean that those that are migrating are also more likely to accept new ideas about welfare practices and in general to having their "eyes opened" through migration, as some of the interviewees themselves have put it. It is possible that those that are more opposed to change are more likely to stay put and thus also be less accepting of social remittances. The fact that the migrants are often highly educated, and also seem to be more change oriented, than those who stay behind, indicates that migration could deprive the society of origin of their valuable human capital, as feared by critics of the "diaspora option" viewpoint.

To conclude, the main **reasons being the decision** to migrate to Finland thus include the good reputation of education, affordable higher education, and Finland's reputation as a safe country, also in terms of social security. The analysis however does not indicate that there is a large welfare magnetism effect, which means that there is no indication that individuals are moving to Finland primary to gain welfare benefits (in line with findings from Giulietti 2014; Alho & Sippola 2019). None of the interviewees bring up such reasons. Another important driver and enabler for migration to Finland has been the policy that has made return migration of those who have Finnish family roots possible. Reasons for deciding to leave Russia of the interviewees are mainly related to various problems in Russian society. These will be analysed more specifically in chapter 6.2.6, in relation to the reasons that the individuals have for not wanting to return to live in Russia.

5.4.2 Where migrants come from and where they go to

The **geographical representativeness** of the interviewees includes both the location where the interviewees live in Finland and where they come from in Russia. Because Russia is a huge country with a diverse population, it is clear that the voices of all Russians cannot be represented. This is not something that the research aims to do. Instead of using the concept of "home country" or "sending country", this research will refer to the country/society of origin and the country/society of settlement. The country of settlement in this instance is Finland and the country of origin is Russia. In some cases, individuals might also have lived in other countries. These countries are however not referred to as countries of origin. The concept of home country is seen as normative since migrants may feel home in both their country of origin and their country of destination. Predefining the home country as the country of origin also signals an enduring outsiderness from the country of settlement. Some of the interviewees themselves however refer to their home country, in which case this is left so in the quotations. The concept of a "sending country" on the other hand implies that these countries or states actively send or export emigrants, which is often note the case, as noted by Østergaard-Nielsen (2016, 148), which is why the concept is not preferred.

All of the interviews have been conducted with people who are **living in some of the larger and medium sized cities in Finland**, such as Helsinki, Kuopio and Jyväskylä. The data thus reflects individuals who live in cities instead of small places or the countryside (for research on transnational practices of Russian speakers in rural border territories in Eastern Finland see Davydova-Minguet & Pöllänen 2020 and Sireni, Pöllänen & Davydova-Minguet 2021). Although this means that findings cannot be generalized to include migrants living in the whole country, it gives a somewhat comprehensive picture since most (85 %) individuals with a migrant background, in Finland, live in urban areas (Juoperi, 2019). None of the interviewees live in close proximity to the Russian border and for most the distance is c. 200–300 km. In practice this means that unlike the people who live very close to the border, or more specifically close to a border crossing station, since the border can only be crossed at these stations, people who live further away are not able to visit Russia as regularly or on a daily/weekly basis.

There are also some things that have to be noted about the **areas of Russia where the interviewed persons come from.** In general, most emigrants from Russia come from socially and economically better of areas, whereas depressed areas have minimum emigration levels (Aleshkovski et al., 2018, 144). As to this study, almost all of the interviewees come from areas which are close to Finland. Although there are some exceptions, most of the interviewees thus come from the European side of Russia. This likely has influenced their life trajectories and cultural background, in addition to the information and experiences that they have had about Europe, and in some cases about Finland, before their migration. Moreover, especially the Karelian area of Russia is overrepresented as an area of

origin of the interviewees. The emphasis on Karelia actually somewhat represents the total population of migrants from Russia in Finland, since most come from this area, which is geographically, historically and culturally close to Finland. This also has to do with specific circumstances described in chapter 4, regarding the right of those individuals who are considered to have Finnish roots, to have had the chance to move to Finland more easily. Especially many of the interviewees come from Petrozavodsk (Petroskoi in Finnish) or St. Petersburg. This also means that the social remittances circulating between Finland and Russia mostly go to those areas where migrants originate from. Remittances may thus also have stronger effects in these areas resulting from their larger volume. The cultural proximity may also make it easier for social remittances to be accepted in these areas, as further described in subchapter 6.4.4. In terms of this research, the geographical representativeness of the interviewees means that the research can primarily make observations regarding social remittances in a translocal context, i.e., those areas in Russia close to Finland, instead of making statements encompassing whole Russia. Furthermore, as regards to the research setting, since the focus is on the remitters and their attempts to change opinion and introduce idea, and not on showing the effects and outcomes, it is not as central to the interests of the research, per se, where the non-migrant recipients of social remittances are situated in Russia. Figure 9 shows where the interviewed migrants have migrated from.

Figure 9 A map that illustrates where the migrants have moved to Finland from.

Although the research uses the units of "Russia" and "Finland", it also recognizes the problems of a methodologically national perspective. According to **methodological nationalism**, the nation state is the basic unit of analysis in the study of social and historical processes. Therefore, the members of a particular nation state are assumed to share a common history and a set of values, social customs, institutions, and norms. Immigrants, on the other hand, are viewed to embody cultural, physical, and moral characteristics that set them apart from their country of settlement. (Glick Schiller 2009, 17–19.) While nation-states are still very important, social life is not confined by nation-state boundaries (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004, 1007, 1009). Because of this, scholars have been calling for a more nuanced viewpoint. Instead of accepting the nation as the natural body of history, we should acknowledge that nation states did not emerge in a vacuum. Instead, nations have been the result of mutual exchanges and contacts across geographic lines that only later turned into fortified political borders. (Adam 2012, 1.)

In this research, the unit of Finland is seen to represent a somewhat coherent backdrop, in which migrants are perceived to incorporate the ideas, practices, norms, and values that form the basis of their social remittances. This does not mean that Finland is perceived to have a monoculture that is similar in each part of the country and which every migrant can then incorporate in a similar way. However, the backdrop, regarding welfare practices, is still seen as coherent enough to discuss the transmission of ideas regarding the Finnish welfare state. This is also based on the fact that the same laws and practices govern and shape the welfare services in each part of the state. As noted by Schuerkens (2005, 540), migrants are social actors who are members of national systems that define their life-chances. The state is still considered to play an important role in the forming of international spaces, for example through the regulation of transnational migration (Faist 2008, 36).

5.4.3 Gender, age, and nationality

In previous research, male and female migrants have been observed to be differently positioned to potentially adopt new information in their country of settlement (Mata-Codesal 2011, 199). Because of this, their remittances may be different, and they might thus have a different effect on their community of origin. Anthias (2012, 106) notes that women are often central transmitters of ethnic culture in their child-rearing role because they reproduce cultural traditions. Furthermore, in relation to the topic of this research, migrant women are found to be often more aware of welfare services available, since they come more into contact with other parents, with public institutions such as education centres, the health sector, and with the social services, through their children (Jones-Correa 1998, 339–340). This affirms Dannecker´s (2009, 122) statements that gender relations not only facilitate or constrain development processes or activities, but they also structure them.

Regarding **gender**, it should be noted that more females (26) were interviewed than males (9). This was simply because more women were found

who were willing to participate than men. It is possible that Russian women living in Finland were more open to being interviewed. Also, the fact that the interviewer is a woman may affect this. Women also tend to be more active in various associations which makes it easier to contact them. Since the assistance and mailing lists of various organizations were used to reach potential interviewees, it is likely that women more often than men received the invitation to participate in the research. Overall, there are more female (c. 65 %) than male (c. 35 %) individuals from Russia or the former Soviet Union living in Finland (Statistics Finland – Population by country of origin, 2018). Especially the number of Russian-speaking women aged over 20 years is much higher than that of men (Varjonen et al. 2017, 27).

The **age range** of the interviewees is wide, the youngest interviewee being 21 years old and the oldest 85 years old. From the onset of the interviewing, the age limit was set at 18 or over, as to only include adults.

About half of the interviewees have Finnish **nationality**. Having the country of settlement´s citizenship can facilitate integration e.g., by signalling motivation and an intention to stay (OECD 2017, 84). All of those who have Finnish nationality have also maintained their Russian nationality. This is by many seen as a practical thing to do, since it makes travelling back and forth easier. Many of those that do not yet have Finnish nationality informed that they are planning to acquire it in the future when it becomes possible for them. To be able to require Finnish nationality you need to have lived in Finland for a certain time and you also need to pass a language test. Some mentioned that they would have to improve their language skills to be able to pass the compulsory language test. Acquiring Finnish nationality was also by some seen as a first step towards living internationally. Some interviewees note that they would like to live in another European country at some point, but before this, and to be able to do this, they want to get their Finnish passport, i.e., their European passport, first. Those interviewees that no do not have Finnish nationality have either a short term or a permanent residence permit. No undocumented migrants were interviewed for this research.

5.4.4 Education and employment status

Previous research has noted that integration and labour market participation of migrants tend to accumulate over time. The longer migrants live in Finland, the more likely they are employed. This may also influence the social remittances they transmit, since employed migrants encounter different things in their everyday life and get different experiences regarding the welfare state in Finland than those migrants who are not employed.

Individuals representing students, unemployed, employed, and retired were interviewed. The **most common current occupation of the interviewees is being a student**. 12 out of 35 interviewees study either at a university or at a university of applied sciences. This reflects the fact that many Russians come to Finland to study, but also the phenomenon that Finnish integration policy tends to steer migrants towards re-education and low-skilled sectors, rather than

capitalizing on already acquired qualifications from the country of origin (See Krivonos 2015; Pöllänen & Davydova-Minguet 2017; Bontenbal et al. 2019).The overrepresentation of students in the study does not stem from the interviewees being e.g., recruited from education institutions but rather from the fact that many who come to Finland from Russia end studying in Finland because they cannot use their previous qualifications. As will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 6.3.3, many interviewees find it difficult to transfer their previous skills and knowledge to Finland. The following quotation by interviewee Mila illustrates this: "I worked at the police [= in Russia] and I had a university degree. – – But when I moved to Finland, I understood that I am a zero. A complete zero. My degree does not mean anything. If I wanted to be a professional I had to get another education." (Mila, 28y., student.) Interviewee Larisa notes on similar lines that when she came to Finland she had been educated in Russia as a nurse, which takes 3.5 years, after which she did a 5-year university degree as a teacher for visually impaired. She notes however: "But when I came to Finland I only got work as a cleaner and I needed re-educate. From zero to become a nurse again." (Larisa, 31y., nurse.) These examples illustrate "brain drain or waste", i.e., migrant's previous skills and knowledge being wasted and not used productively. For some, however, re-education has not been possible since they have not been able to enter Finnish higher education institutes, the competition for which is considerable. Entering a higher education institution in Finland is difficult especially for those not speaking Finnish at a native level. Interviewee Yulia, who has been in Finland from 2015, notes that she is not employed because employers want to higher individuals with a Finnish degree, but she has not been able to enter Finnish higher education programmes:

> "Well, now, at the moment I am not studying, and I am not working [= coughs uncomfortably], I do not study for the simple reason that I tried to enter [= an educational institution] several times and I passed some interviews, but I did not get enough scores. They did not have enough study places. I cannot work for the reason that employers demand having Finnish education, but I have higher Russian education that I got from the X Russian University." (Yulia, 44 y., unemployed.)

Of the 35 interviewees, 30 either have a **tertiary education** or are currently studying at a higher education institution in Finland. The data thus mostly reflect the opinions of highly educated individuals on social remittances. Having a higher education is defined as either a bachelor level or higher university level education, or a degree from a university of applied sciences. However, since the Russian higher education system is somewhat different than the Finnish one, the definition of education is left up to the interviewees. For example, *specialist programme* Russian degrees are by the interviewees considered as higher education. There is no exact information on the education level of all migrants from Russia living in Finland, especially regarding their previously acquired education in Russia since this kind of information is not gathered in any database in Finland. Based on the UTH -study (by Nieminen et al., from 2014–2015), 49 % of 25–54-year-old individuals from Russia or the former Soviet Union have acquired a higher education, 44 % a secondary level education and 7 % a primary education at most. This information is based on a sample of 38 000 Russian

respondents and might thus not reflect the whole picture. It does however give an indication that many Russians in Finland are in fact highly educated and thus, although this research has a bias, the high number of highly educated respondents is to some extent explained by their high incidence.

Besides highly educated, some individuals who **do not have a higher education** were also interviewed. Three of the interviewees have a vocational education, two of whom have acquired their education in Finland. Furthermore, there are two elderly interviewees from whom there is no information about their education, but based on their life stories and professional background, they likely have primary level education. The answers regarding experiences with welfare structures did not differ significantly between those with higher education and those who do not have higher education.

Most of the interviewees have **acquired their first degree (23 individuals) before migrating**, but in some cases the degree has been acquired in Finland. Several of those who have acquired their degree in Russia have also been re-educated in Finland. Some have re-done their education to get qualified in Finland in their previous profession, but most have changed their profession. Interviewee Anastasia for example describes: *"I was an accountant in Russia but in Finland I have studied the vocational qualification in Business and Administration. I graduated last year."* (Anastasia, 36y., student.) Some of those who have been re-educated have done a lower-level education in Finland, mostly in vocational schools. Others have on the other hand gone for a second master's degree. Some of the interviewees have had to do supplementary courses to be able to work in the profession in Finland that they have studied in Russia. Only few have decided to try to get their previous qualification legalized in Finland by doing supplementary courses, and most have instead opted to do a completely new degree. During the time of the interview, some of the interviewees were also still students in higher education institutions. Figure 10 summarises the educational level of the interviewees.

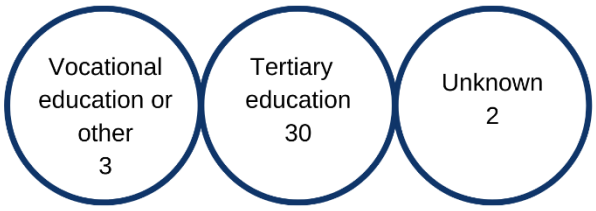

Figure 10 Education level of interviewees

Although many of the interviewees are students, some are also working: **The occupations of the interviewees** include being a teacher, a researcher, a secretary, an NGO worker, a translator, a nurse, a consultant, an accountant, a special needs assistant, an electrician, and working in logistics. There are no significant differences in the employment situation between the interviewed men and women. As noted by Pöllänen (2007, 374), migrant women were in the former Soviet Union and are in Russia used to participating in the labour market and to getting economic and social protection through this for themselves and their children. There is indication that Russian-speakers in Finland take labour market positions that are precarious and of lower social status than their education and qualifications should afford them (Krivonos 2015). For many of the interviewees, their current occupation has been preceded by several more precarious and less skill-demanding ones in Finland. Many have also done unpaid internships before they have found paid employment. Interviewee Igor notes: *"I started as a student and after that I have constantly worked in different positions. First, I worked as a cleaner, then as a person teaching other teachers, then as an interpreter and as a consult."* (Igor, 31y., translator and consult.) Besides this, five of the interviewees are retired, one is on maternity leave and two are unemployed. None of the interviewees are so called target earners, who plan to only live in Finland for a while to earn some money and after that return to Russia. Instead, all of the interviewees, except the international students who only stay in Finland for a semester (interviewees Andrei, Ivan and Maksim), have pursued some kind of integration strategies, such as taken language courses and participated in integration training. Figure 11 summarises the current occupation of the interviewees.

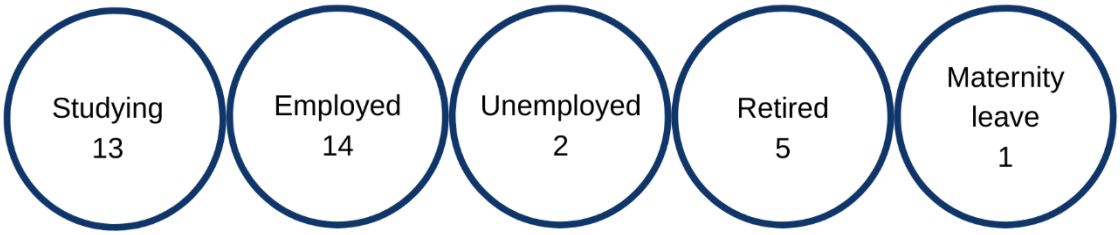

Figure 11 Current occupation of interviewees

Most of the interviewees have **worked in Russia** in various professions, mostly in the professions that they were educated in, before their migration. This enables them to make comparison of working life in Finland and Russia. Of those who had a profession in Russia, only a couple are currently work in the same profession in Finland. Those who have been able to find work in the same field as they have studied or who have been able to use their qualifications acquired in Russia, note that they find themselves very lucky, as exemplified by the following quotation by Natalya: *"I am very happy that I got a work position in my own profession. Because it is very rare and most people, at least foreigners, they have to acquire a new profession and study. Even though they have a higher education qualification from their country of origin. But here they go to vocational school to study to be a cleaner, salesperson or practical nurse."* (Natalya, 42y., employed in museum.)

This illustrates that the interviewees are very much aware that migrants´ foreign skills and experiences are often not valued in Finland. Of the interviewees, 12 have not **worked in Russia** before their migration. This is due to the fact that they have been too young to have worked in Russia before their migration. These persons were either high school students or students at higher education institutions before their migration.

5.4.5 Social contacts and language skills

The **social relations that migrants have in the country of settlement influences both the creation and transmission of social remittances**. As Levitt (1998) notes, migrants interact to a varying degree with the country of settlement. The more the migrants are involved in their country of settlement, the more they are exposed to its distinctive features and the more opportunities they have for picking up new ideas from it (Levitt 1998, 930). Migrants are therefore more likely to become in contact with a wider set of internal variations within the socio-cultural environment (Mata-Codesal 2011, 172). Because of this, it is interesting to see what kind of social networks the interviewees have in Finland. The social relations that migrants have for example influence the extent and type of information that migrants gain of the country of settlement and its welfare system to be shared across national borders. In practice, the process of socialization mainly takes place in migrants' work sites, leisure time and through their family. Through these contact-zones, migrants interact with other people in varying degrees. (Mata-Codesal 2011, 169.) Migrants may, for example, spend considerable portions of their life in the host country and still have minimal exposure to the institutions and culture if they mainly interact with their own ethnic group (Cameron et al. 2015, 39). In such cases, it is also possible that the migrants' point of reference and source of identification may remain in the country of origin (Dzięglewski 2016, 174). Those migrants who have stayed and who plan to stay in the country of settlement for a longer time, have relationships with host country nationals and have not perceived discrimination, have been found to more likely have deeper sociocultural adjustment (Zlobina et al., 2006). However, there is no one specific static culture in the country of settlement that migrants can pick up, nor is there one in the country of origin that would equip migrants with a certain type of framework. Cultures are neither monolithic nor fixed, but rather they are diverse and always in a process. (Mata-Codesal 2011, 172.)

Most of the interviewees have **family members living in Finland**. In practice, it is Finland's migration policy which determines what family members migrants can take with them to Finland. Among migrants from Russia, family is often understood as wider than the nuclear family (Pöllänen 2013, 19c). However, according to Finnish migration policies family generally includes the nuclear family, including children and a spouse. Because of this narrower understanding of family, it is more difficult for migrants to bring their parents or siblings to live in Finland. Often those who remain in Russia are ageing parents (Davydova-Minguet & Pöllänen 2020, 111). Also, among the interviewed migrants, most have

their spouse and/or children living with them in Finland. Of the interviewees 10 have a native Finnish spouse. 23 of the interviewees have children, most of whom are living in Finland. Four of the interviewees have children that are living in Russia. 11 of the interviewees are married to a person of Russian origin. In all these cases, the spouse also lives in Finland. 10 interviewees are married to a Finnish spouse. In a couple of cases, the interviewee has other relatives in Finland, such as grandparents or nieces, whose migration to Finland has been possible due to their Finnish family roots.

Family can have a large effect on the integration of migrants. Having a Finnish spouse can make it easier to integrate into society. This can improve employment opportunities since the Finnish partner can have helpful information and contacts. If Finnish is spoken at home, it can also significantly improve language learning. However, many of those who are married to a Russian spouse note that at home they mostly tend to speak Russia, which has slowed down their language learning. Moreover, those that have a Russian spouse who speaks Finnish better than they do themselves, relate that this has negatively impacted their language learning, since it has enabled them to rely on their spouse's language skills, without having to learn themselves. Interviewee Igor whose wife is also from Russia for example notes: "*If we go around here [= in Finland] and it is just the two of us, she gives up and I have to talk everywhere, since I know the language better.*" (Igor, 31y., translator and consult.) Six of the interviewees are in Finland alone without family. These are mostly individuals who are studying in Finland.

Although communication with locals is seen as an important part of integration, almost all the interviewees note that it has been **difficult for them to get to know Finnish people** and to make Finnish friends. In fact, several of the interviewees note that they are mainly in contact with Finnish people through their work. Various reasons are given for the confined interaction, the most common of which are language difficulties and Finnish people being shy or inward. Interviewee Irina notes: "*I think here* [= in Finland] *people are much more closed and much more in their own family or own small group of friends sort of circles.*" (Irina, 30y., PhD student.) Also, the idea that good friends are mostly made when one is young, and this being more difficult when one is an adult, is seen as a hindrance to making Finnish friends. Some interviewees note that Finnish people already have their friends, which they have met during their childhood and education and that they are not really interested in meeting new people, especially foreigners. Moreover, some note that although Finnish people are generally friendly and polite, it is difficult to become close friends with them. Interviewee Igor notes: "*I can freely communicate with people but still there is the limit, that if you want to be good friends, you are always the foreigner, and they are the local Finns. That always remains. It is understandable but you can probably never get over that constraint.*" (Igor, 31y., translator and consult.) Many of the interviewees consider that it has been easier for them to befriend other migrants in Finland, both from their own country of origin and from other countries. However, all the interviewees see making Finnish friends as important. Having no Finnish friends is regarded as hindering learning the language and integration. The lack of

Finnish friends is thus often viewed as a pity. Similar findings are found in the Immigration Barometer of 2012, according to which 80 % of Russian nationals in Finland hoped that they would have more Finnish acquaintances (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2013, 72). Figure 12 summarises the kind of social networks that the interviewed migrants have in Finland.

Figure 12 Finnish acquaintances of interviewees

Almost all the interviewees are in contact with **other Russians living in Finland**. Several are also active in Russian cultural organization in Finland. For some, these contacts with co-nationals are very important and form the main social interaction, whereas for others these contacts are not significant or regular. Some even note that they try to avoid other Russians in Finland. It is noteworthy, considering social remittances, that the ideas, values, and norms that migrants from Russia pick up in Finland are not only, or even mainly, informed and cultivated by native Finnish acquaintances, but also by other migrants and especially other Russian nationals (see also White 2016). The ideas internalised in Finland are thus not necessary "purely Finnish ideas" but more likely a blend of ideas coming from people with international backgrounds as well as native Finnish people. This also reflects the fact that there is no one static Finnish culture to pick up in the first place. As noted by Järvinen-Alenius at al. (2010, 197), migrants rather represent and transmit fragments of hybrid identities in transnational settings. An example includes the information, values, and knowledge that migrants in Finland have and transmit regarding health care services. As will be further discussed in chapter 6.1.5, much of the information that migrants have is based on, besides own experiences, the tales and experiences that they have heard from other migrants. Thus, a hybrid of information is formed based on different sources.

Furthermore, the social circle that migrants have also has an effect on the possibility for them to **bring new ideas with them to Finland**. If migrants from Russia have limited close contacts with native Finns, as the interviews seem to indicate, this affects their ability to import new ideas, values, practices, and norms to Finland. If contacts with locals are minimal, it can also be expected that the possibility to share new ideas is also limited.

What kind of **language skills**, especially in the language(s) of the country of settlement, immigrants have, can strongly impacts their interaction with the society that they live in. It affects their ability to observe and keep track of matters in society. Immigrants that speak the language of the country of settlement tend

to be more integrated and involved in the society that they live in. Thus, language skills also have a significant effect on social remittances. The language skills of the interviewees shape the experiences that they have in Finland and the norms, values, and experiences that they encounter and internalise regarding welfare practices.

Most of the interviewees note that they have **good knowledge of the Finnish language**, and many speak the language very well. None of the interviewees proclaim having no Finnish language skills at all, although a few note having learned just the very basics. This corresponds with findings from Nieminen and Larja (2015, 46) according to which 53 % people with Russian or Soviet backgrounds considered their verbal command of Finnish or Swedish a least mediocre, whereas only 17 % considered themselves as beginners. Many of the interviewees for this research also note that they already knew some Finnish language before they migrated, due to having studied it in Russia or learned it as a child. This was surprisingly common among the interviewees and reflects the fact that many of them come from areas in Russia that are close to Finland, as well as the fact that many have come to Finland due to Finnish family roots. However, it should be noted that several of the interviewees who had come to Finland due to Finnish family roots recount that they spoke Finnish very poorly when they arrived, or not at all. As noted by Leoukhine et al. (2003, 52–53), Ingrians had been effectively russified or Soviet Unionised by the time that their migration back to Finland started, unlike what was first expected in Finland, during the first years of the 1990s when the policy of Ingrian return migration started to be implemented.

Many of the interviewees note that **using Finnish language at work** has improved their language skills a lot, as exemplified by the following quotation: "*At work everything is in Finnish and that has helped a lot. I probably had poor language skills before I got an internship and then it improved a lot when we there spoke Finnish every day.*" (Igor, 31y., translator and consult.)

Many of those that did not know the language before migration have attended **integration training and acquired language skills there**. This is especially common amongst those who have arrived in Finland as partners to a Finnish spouse. Those migrants that have been in Finland for a shorter time have less knowledge of Finnish, as could be expected. Interestingly, many of **those who have come to Finland as students informed not having good knowledge of Finnish language**. They have mostly completed their studies in English and have not had any or only few compulsory Finnish language courses during their studies. Some of the older interviewees note that they have spoken Finnish language better before, but that they have already started to forget it. Interviewee Alina, who is 85 years old, notes that as a child she used to speak Finnish very well and that Finns did not notice that she was not Finnish, however as she has gotten older, she has started to forget a lot of words.

Although some of the interviewees have difficulty with the language, most do in fact have the **ability to interact with society**, like follow local media in Finnish. This has an effect on the creation of social remittances that they then can transmit. Those that do not have good knowledge of the language or who are just

starting to study it state that this has affected their ability to participate in society and make connections with Finnish citizens. Interviewee Maria states: *"Since I don't speak Finnish, I am now just learning Finnish, it's easy for me to communicate with those who speak either English or Russian. So, this shapes my contacts and communication."* (Maria, 45y., lecturer.) Not speaking Finnish may also influence the migrants' ability to transmit social remittances to Finnish acquaintances as illustrated by the following quotation: *"My vocabulary is pretty limited and that is a problem: in Russian I can speak as long as I am allowed, ha ha, – – and I can say that I have a very nice way of speaking but my Finnish language skills are weak."* (Mila, 28y., student.) On similar lines, interviewee Kiril notes that he does not get asked questions about Russia in Finland because she does not speak Finnish fluently. This thus impacts her ability to transmit information regarding Russia in Finland.

5.4.6 Summary of interviewees´ individual background information

The following table provides an overview of the interviewed individuals.

Table 2 Overview of interviewees

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Occupation	Moved to Finland
1. Maria	Female	45	Education and research	2016
Maria has been in Finland for 1.5 years. She migrated to work in Finland and is currently working in the profession in which she has her university degree from Russia. Before coming to Finland, she had lived in other European countries. She is actively in contact with her parents and friends living in Russia, and visits Russia several times a year. Her husband lives in Finland with her.				
2. Dmitri	Male	50	Education and research	1993
Dmitri has been in Finland for 25 years. He decided to come to Finland because he has Finnish family roots. Before migrating he knew very little about Finland. He has a university degree in Russian language and currently works as a language teacher in Finland. He visits Russia regularly to meet his friends and family. He also visits Russia for work-related purposes.				
3. Sofia	Female	25	Student	2016
Sofia has been in Finland for 2 years. She lives in Finland with her small child. She wanted to go study abroad and decided to come to Finland since she found it a good place to bring her child with her. She is currently studying. Before she arrived, she did not know anyone from Finland and still has not had much contact with native Finns, but mostly with international students.				
4. Anastasia	Female	36	Student	2013
Anastasia has been in Finland for 5 years. She came to Finland because her husband has Finnish family roots. She has two children who live with her in Finland. In Russia she used to work as an accountant but now she is studying business economics. She has Finnish citizenship.				

5. Anna	Female	under 25	Student	2016

Anna has been in Finland for 1.5 years. She came to Finland alone to study and that is what she is currently doing, at a university of applied sciences. She has no family members in Finland. Before migrating, she followed a blog of a Russian student in Finland, which inspired here to come to Finland.

6. Aleksei	Male	71	Retired	1993

Aleksei has been in Finland for 25 years. He used to work with nuclear reactors but is now retired. His wife lives in Finland, but his children live in Russia. He visits Russia several times a year but has no plans to return migrate there, since it is close by anyways.

7. Yekaterina	Female	79	Retired	2012

Yekaterina has been in Finland for 6 years. She migrated to come to Finland after her child decided to move there. Migrating was made possible because of her Finnish family roots. She now has Russian and Finnish citizenship. She is on pension but previously used to work as a translator.

8. Yelena	Female	69	Retired	2004

Yelena has been in Finland for over 14 years. She came to Finland after she married a Finnish man but now is a widower. All her family members and her children live in Russia. Currently she is on pension. Her family cannot afford to visit her often. She actively participates in NGOs.

9. Olga	Female	23	Student and advertisement distributor	2016

Olga has been in Finland for 2 years. She moved to Finland alone to study. She chose Finland because there were no study fees. She is currently studying and working as a part-time ad distributor. She is daily in contact with her mother and less frequently with her father and friends, who live In Russia.

10. Tatyana	Female	53	Secretary of finances	2000

Tatyana has been in Finland for 18 years. She came to Finland because she married a Finnish husband. In Russia she worked as an engineer but in Finland she re-educated herself and now she works as a financial secretary. Her child lives in Finland. She visits Russia often, especially now that her parents are older and have health issues.

11. Galina	Female	21	Logistics	2014

Galina has been in Finland for 4 years. She came to Finland alone to study logistics straight after finishing high school in Russia. Currently she is working in the field that she is studying. She visits Russia regularly, but since her family lives far away she sees them rarely. Returning to live in Russia is "the last thing on her list".

12. Sergei	Male	28	NGO	1991

Sergei has lived in Finland for 26 years. He came to Finland as a small child with his family. Currently he is studying at university. He is in contact with his family and friends who live in Russia. He frequently visits St. Petersburg. These trips are important for him to renew his identity. At some point, he would like to live in Russia again, but not permanently.

13. Irina	Female	30	Research	2011

Irina has been in Finland for almost 7 years. She came to Finland to do a second master's degree and decided to stay. She is married to a Finn and has good Finnish language skills, which she practiced already before migrating. Before migrating, she came to Finland regularly for vacation.

14. Zasha	Female	66	Retired	2014

Zasha has been in Finland for 4 years. She used to work as a seamstress but is now retired. She came to Finland because some of her other family members migrated there and because she has Finnish family roots. She learned Finnish language already as a child.

15. Marina	Female	62	Unemployed	2004

Marina has been in Finland for 14 years. Currently she is unemployed, but she used to work in a magazine. She came to Finland because she married a Finnish man. She has a child in Finland but her children from her previous marriage live in Russia. She speaks Finnish well.

16. Alina	Female	85	Retired	2008

Alina has been in Finland for the last 10 years. She came there with her relatives. However, as a child she also lived in Finland for a while during the Second World War. During this time, she learned to speak Finnish. She also has Finnish family roots, since her father originally came from Finland. She is retired. She used to visit Russia regularly, 3-4 times a year but now that she is older, she visits less.

17. Larisa	Female	31	Nurse	2010

Larisa has been in Finland for 8 years. She is working as a nurse. She already worked in this occupation in Russia and had received qualifications for it at a Russian university. However, when she came to Finland she had to redo her education. She came to Finland because her (Russian) boyfriend lived there. She has both nationalities. She has a young child.

18. Igor	Male	31	Interpreter and consult	2006

Igor has been in Finland for 12 years. He came to Finland alone to study at vocational school but later his girlfriend joined him. Before this, he studied at university in Russia but quit his studies. He has both nationalities. He speaks Finnish well. He has one young child.

19. Sonya	Female	24	Logistics	2013

Sonya has been in Finland for 5 years. She came to study in Finland and decided to stay afterwards when she found employment. She is working in logistics. She has no family in Finland, but her boyfriend is Finnish.

20. Ulyana	Female	34	Translator	2004

Ulyana has been in Finland for 14 years. She works as a translator, but she is also studying at a Finnish university. In Russia she studied Finnish language. She met her husband during an internship in Finland.

21. Andrei	Male	29	Student	2018

Andrei has been in Finland for a few months. He came to Finland as an exchange student and is planning to stay until the end of the semester, after which he returns to Russia. His friends are planning to visit him in Finland. This is the first time that he is abroad.

22. Ivan	Male	21	Student	2018

Ivan has been in Finland for a few months. He came to Finland as an exchange student and will stay until the end of the semester. He has good Finnish language skill since he studied Finnish at university in Russia. His girlfriend is coming to visit him in Finland.

23. Maksim	Male	25	Researcher	2018

Maksim has been in Finland for a few months. He is a PhD student, and he will return to Russia after spending one semester in Finland. His Finnish skills are very basic level. He is daily in contact with his family and friends living in Russia.

24. Svetlana	Female	42	Student	2010

Svetlana came to Finland 8 years ago, when she married a Finn. They have a child together. In Russia she worked as a journalist but currently she is studying in university to re-educate herself. Before this she took actively part in integration training and worked in several places.

25. Vera	Female	37	Classroom assistant	2011

Vera has been in Finland for 7 years. She came to Finland with her husband who has Finnish family roots. She used to work as a math teacher in Russia and now she is working as a special needs assistant. She has a child wo lives in Finland. She actively took part in integration training after arrival.

26. Vladimir	Male	37	Electrician	2011

Vladimir has been in Finland for 7 years. In Russia he used to work as a technical support person. He came to Finland because he has Finnish family roots and family members living there. He re-educated himself in Finland and currently he is working as an electrician. His Russian wife and child live with him.

27. Polina	Female	29	Maternity leave	2013

Polina has been in Finland for 5 years. She came to Finland alone to study. She lives in Finland with her husband who is Russian. They met in Finland. They have a child together and currently she is on maternity leave. She has done several internships in Finland but has not been employed yet.

28. Natalya	Female	42	Museum employee	2011

Natalya has been in Finland for 7 years. She came to Finland because of her Finnish family roots. She works in Finland in the profession that she was educated in, in Russia, related to culture. Her children and husband, who is also Russian, live with her in Finland. She already taught herself to speak some Finnish before migrating.

29. Mila	Female	28	Student	2012

Mila has been in Finland for 3 years. She has several degrees from Russia but currently is re-educating herself. She came to Finland with her husband and child because she did not find Russia to be a suitable place to raise her children. She has Finnish family roots and already knew some Finnish language before migrating.

30. Yulia	Female	44	Unemployed	2015

Yulia has been in Finland for 4 years. She is currently unemployed. Her husband has Finnish family roots, which enabled them to migrate. She came to Finland after she lost her job in Russia. She would like to study in Finland but has not been able to get into higher education institutions. She has done several unpaid internships. She actively participates in NGOs.

31. Karina	Female	55	Student	2014

Karina has been in Finland for 4 years. She is married to a Finnish man and her child lives in Russia. She is currently studying at a university of applied sciences to get her certificate legalized in Finland. Before migrating, she had very little information about Finland.

32. Inga	Female	37	Student	2016

Inga has been in Finland for 2 years. She is currently studying in Finland. She came to Finland because of her Finnish family roots. She is married to a Russian spouse and has two children, who live with her in Finland.

33. Anya	Female	54	Accountant	2010

Anya has been in Finland for 8 years. She moved to Finland because of her Finnish family roots. She works part-time as an accountant. She has Russian and Finnish citizenship. She speaks Finnish well. She actively participates in NGOs.

34. Yeva	Female	35	Student	2014
Yeva has been in Finland for 4 years. She came to Finland when she married a Finnish spouse. She is currently studying at a university of applied sciences. She has done several internships. She speaks Finnish well. She has no Finnish friends but participates actively in NGOs.				
35. Kiril	Male	55	Restaurant industry	2015
Kiril has been in Finland for 3 years. He comes from a small town in central Russia. He came to Finland because of his Finnish family roots. Currently he is studying. In Finland, he has done unpaid internships. He has no Finnish friends. He visits his relatives in Russia once a year.				

In the analysis, the attempts of the interviewed migrants to share information, explain and make understandable their current life situation, change opinions, and broker innovations, through the sending of social remittances is analysed. To do so, various phases of the remitting phenomenon are considered: Subchapter 6.1 focuses on the creation of social remittances, which determines their content. Subchapter 6.2 focuses on the transmission of social remittances through the transnational contact that migrants maintain. Subchapter 6.3 focuses on analysing the reception of social remittances, and subchapter 6.4 on the perceived effect of the transmitted social remittances.

6 ANALYSIS: SOCIAL REMITTANCES TRANSMITTED BY MIGRANTS FROM RUSSIA LIVING IN FINLAND

6.1 Creation determines content of social remittances

The creation of social remittances determines what they end up being like. In this, the experiences that migrants have in the country of settlement play a central role. However, also the pre migration experiences and filters that migrants bring with them (described in chapter 5.4) while migrating have an important role in shaping the remittances that get transmitted. In this chapter, the content of social remittances is analysed more specifically, focusing especially on information, values, and attitudes regarding life in Finland/Russia and the Finnish/Russian welfare system that is shared. During the interviews, the migrants were asked what kind of things they discuss and do not discuss regarding their life in Finland/Russia and their experiences with Finnish/Russian welfare services, when they are in contact with their acquaintances.

First, in subchapter 6.1.1 a general overview is provided on the kind of social remittances regarding life in Finland that the migrants transmit and in subchapter 6.1.2 an overview of welfare related topics discussed as part of social remittances is provided. In 6.1.3 the ways in which migrants´ social remittances act as bridge builders between countries is described, and in subchapter 6.1.4 the ways in which different social remittances are transmitted to different individuals is analysed. After this, in subchapter 6.1.5 it is considered whether social remittances lead to an overly positive ideal of life in Finland. This also relates to critical remarks (6.1.6) on the Finnish welfare state that are transmitted. In subchapter 6.1.7, the difficulty of transmitting complex issues and a wider understanding of life in Finland is analysed, and after this in subchapter 6.1.8, the function of social remittances in breaking stereotypes, especially regarding life in Russia, is considered. Subchapter 6.1.9 will consider how comparisons are

use in social remitting. Finally, in subchapter 6.1.10 the sending of economic remittances is examined.

6.1.1 Social remittances regarding life in Finland and the Finnish welfare system

The analysis indicates that social remitting occurs **through everyday communication** and often it is not something that migrants intentionally set out to do. Most interviewees note during the interviews, that during transnational communication they tend to discuss a wide variety of topics, mainly related to their work, studies, daily activities, health, the weather, television programs, movies, and the wellbeing of their family members. The interviewees emphasise that the discussions that they have are very similar to face-to-face discussions. Interviewee Maksim, who communicates with his family and friends through social media and Skype for example describes: "*Almost every time we discuss what happened today, on this day, what happened to me, some usual chitchat and also some interesting things: if I have been to some museum or visited some nice place or some good bar or something else. And they told me the same: how things are at home – –.*" (Maksim, 25y., PhD student.) Social remittances however are a distinct part of transnational communication. Whereas transnational communication encompasses all contact between migrants and those living in another country, social remittances on the other hand are more specifically defined as sharing information, values and norms picked up from one country context to another interpersonally. All social remittances are thus transnational communication but not all transnational communication are social remittances.

Mostly frequently the transmission of social remittances occurs when **migrants describe what their life is like abroad and tell about their personal experiences** to those who are living in a different country. These conversations bring out the new aspects, norms, and information that the migrants have encountered during their stay and enables them to share them with their acquaintances. The narratives that migrants create thus become central. When migrants are in contact with their acquaintances living in Russia, they discuss what their life, and especially everyday life, is like in Finland, and what they have been doing lately. The personal examples and anecdotes that migrants share with their non-migrant acquaintances become to represent what live is like abroad. Through this, migrants try to influence the understanding that their non-migrant acquaintances have about their life abroad. According to the interviewees, Finland is for most Russians somewhat unknown and unfamiliar. Many of the interviewees note that their acquaintances have previously had very little information about Finland and that the information that they have provided them has thus increased their knowledge significantly, and as interviewee Olga notes: "*- - because I told them quite a lot, they can imagine what it is like to live.*" (Olga, 23y., student.). Interviewee Polina, who has been in Finland for 5 years and mainly uses WhatsApp calls to stay in contact, for example notes "*I tell them about my life in Finland, about the weather, about some tradition, some celebrations, about children's life in Finland.*" (Polina, 29 y., on maternity leave.) On similar lines,

interviewee Ulyana, who uses Skype to stay in contact with her family and one friend living in Russia, describes: "*Well, I have told about my life in Finland, about how I spend my time and about new people that I have met.*" (Ulyana, 34y., translator.)

To explain what their life is like in Finland migrants **often also have to describe how the Finnish welfare system functions**, since this is something that shapes the life of both migrants, as well as natives, significantly in various phases of their life. Also, because the welfare systems of Russia and Finland are so different from each other, to make life in Finland understandable migrants often have to go in detail to describe how certain aspects of it function. Social remittances regarding welfare systems thus often stem from a need to make understandable the live of the migrants in the country of settlement. Thus, social remittances often start out to describe the individual live of the migrants and end up describing how society and the welfare system function.

In regard to **experiences with the welfare services** in Finland, the interviewees can be divided into a) those who have had very little or no contact with welfare services; b) those who have some experience but who are not fully included; and c) those with full access to welfare services. Those interviewees who have had little contact with welfare services in Finland include mostly exchange students who have been in Finland for a short while. This is not to say that they have no information about Finnish welfare services or have not formed attitudes and opinions to share (as will be illustrated in the further analysis). The second group is mostly comprised of individuals who have been in Finland for a while already, and might have experiences with e.g., health care, but for whom welfare services are not fully available. These individuals may, for example, have to pay higher charges for the use of services. Interviewee Galina, who has been in Finland for four years, notes: "*I have been going to the hospitals here a few times and I pay so much, – – So, health care I hate. Maybe for the Finnish people it is better. But so far, as soon as I get my Kela card, which is hard to get as well, I will have my working insurance and according to what they say it sounds healthy and nice. So let´s see how it will be working.*" *(Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.)* This quotation illustrates how the acceptability to welfare services, mainly related to the cost of services, has a significant impact on how services are perceived. (See also previously noted example in subchapter 5.4.1 of Olga's experience of not having access to student benefits, while studying in Finland.) The final category includes migrants from Russia who have mostly been in Finland for a longer time already. Many have Finnish nationality and are thus entitled to the same services as any other Finnish citizens.

Based on the interviews, most commonly migrants from Russia have experiences with the Finnish health care system, schooling, higher education, unemployment benefits, and integration services. The experiences with these services will be further analysed in relation to the content of social remittances (see chapter 6.1).

All of the interviewees bring up that they have noted **differences in how welfare services are structured and provided in Finland and in Russia**. The interviewees also note that this is something that they have wanted to discuss with their family and friends in Russia and Finland. Interviewee Sergei, who has

lived most of his life in Finland, notes: *"Well, I have discussed to a large extent how the society functions, how social structures work. What the state offers, what kind of services for example. Regarding the welfare state, specifically I have discussed the taxation system, employment, and wage levels"* (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) Many of the interviewees also seem to find the differences interesting to discuss during the interviewing process and at times the interviewees had to be steered to remain on topic, i.e., on the issues that they have discussed with their acquaintances in Russia. For many migrants, the way welfare provision is handled in Finland is something interesting and different, which is why, during the interviews, they were topics that were easy for the interviewees to discuss. Many of the countries from which migrants in Finland have migrated do not have publicly produced social services. The idea and practices of publicly produced social services may thus be unfamiliar for many migrants. (Malin & Anis 2013, 156.) Interviewee Ivan, who has only been in Finland for a few months, for example notes*: "Yeah I think I have discussed about it, because you would not have reached such calm and nice place without the government's support and work. That is why we have been discussing it a lot because there is like a big difference with all kinds of services."* (Ivan, 21y., exchange student.) The welfare system of the country of settlement functions as a yardstick against which the country-of-origin's welfare system is measured. Similarly, the framework brought over from the country-of-origin functions as the viewpoint through which the welfare system in the country of settlement is understood and viewed.

There are only a couple of interviewees who firmly state that they **have not discussed any welfare-related** issues with any of their acquaintances in Russia. Based on the tone of the interviews, it can be interpreted that this firmness might have to do somewhat with pride and not wanting to discuss benefits that one has received oneself while in Finland. This might also have to do with what Saksela-Bergholm (2013, 98) has found in her research: she reports that among migrants in Finland there are reservations against the income support system, and many find it difficult or wrong to rely on the state, which is why they endeavour to live on a small income without income support. Some interviewees might thus feel that it is not proper to rely on the state and use welfare services, and thus they do not discuss this with their acquaintances in Russia. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the social remittances of the not so highly educated interviewees were more focused on their own everyday life and less on issues related to the welfare system of their country of settlement. Whether this is due to their education or something else, such as their age, since they are among the older interviewees, is impossible to say based on the data. More research would be needed on this. The interviewed male and female interviewees are found to transmit similar kind of social remittances. For example, both male and female interviewees (some of them) note discussing childcare and childbirth, from the perspective of welfare, with their acquaintances. No significant differences are noted.

Some interviewees also found it **difficult to remember** what things regarding welfare they had discussed with their acquaintances in Finland and in Russia because they had been in Finland for such a long time. Some had the

feeling that they had explained the Finnish system to their acquaintances in Russia but could not remember specifics. Several interviewees noted that particularly in the beginning, right after migration, they explained many things but that nowadays they tend to discuss such issues less often. Interviewee Vera, who has been in Finland for seven years, notes: *"Well in the beginning, they asked me how my life is going and what kind of social services there are and how much money we get and such questions"* (Vera, 37y., special needs assistant in school). This illustrates that the intensity of communication and topics that are discussed change over time (discussed more specifically in chapter 6.2.3.).

Throughout the interviews, it becomes clear that the **Russian welfare system is less discussed** with Finns. When this occurs, it mostly happens in a somewhat critical tone. The interviewees bring up that according to them the Russian system does not function properly since it is unreliable. According to the interviewees, getting proper services, such as health care services, often depends on being able to pay for them. This result is in line with Saksela-Bergholm's (2013, 98) findings, according to which Russians have been found to regard the service systems of their country of origin as slow and poorly functioning.

6.1.2 An overview of welfare related topics discussed as part of social remittances

There are several themes and topics that come up more often during the interview process and that the interviewees seem to have emphasised during their discussion with their acquaintances in Russia. The following paragraphs will provide an overview of the most central topics discussed as part of social remittances about the Finnish welfare system with acquaintances in Russia:

Social security: Social security is a central part of the Finnish welfare state. In practice, it means that habitants receive various sorts of support from the state in case of e.g., unemployment, sickness, and old age. Services are also targeted at e.g., students, disabled, and families. The interviewees bring up that when discussing the Finnish system with their acquaintances, they have emphasised that social security in Finland means that no one is left completely on their own, and that in case of need the state always helps its citizens. According to the interviewees this makes Finland a safe country to live in. Interviewee Natalya, who has been in Finland for seven years, notes on this: *"It is safe, by which I mean that there is little crime but also that it is safe since people have social security. They cannot be thrown out if they are sick or poor. The basic things are always in order: a warm apartment, food and some money."* (Natalya, 42y., employed in museum.)

Unemployment compensations: Unemployment in Finland and unemployment-related benefits are a topic that is often discussed by the interviewees with their Russian acquaintances. Many of the interviewees have explained to their acquaintances in Russia how the unemployment benefits in Finland function and how the state takes care of people who cannot support themselves. When Russians discuss unemployment-related welfare practices from Russia with their Finnish acquaintances, it is often done in a comparative

fashion in which the negative aspects of the Russian unemployment system are emphasised (See chapter 6.3.4 for more on unemployment benefits).

Official institutions: many of the interviewees have discussed and explained how certain official institutions, such as the Employment office (TE office) and the Social Security Institution (Kela) in Finland function, and specifically how one can transact and receive support from these institutions. Based on the interviews, it seems that similar kind of information about institutions and how they work is not shared with Finnish acquaintances about Russian institutions.

Pensions: Many interviewees bring up that they have discussed and explained how the Finnish pension system works to their acquaintances living in Russia. Those older migrants that receive a pension in Finland have talked about their own experiences, but also younger migrants, who have no personal experience, have discussed the system with e.g., their parents or grandparents who might already have experiences from Russia which to compare the Finnish system to. From their Russian acquaintances, the interviewees have also received information about the Russian pension system, which exemplifies the circular nature of social remittances. Interviewee Karina notes: "*Yes, it is very interesting. It was interesting to my mother, as she is a pensioner and my husband's mother is alive* [= living in Finland], *she lives in a house for pensioners. She told in detail about the health system, pensions, how much money she gets for paying for the accommodation, what benefits she gets.*" (Karina, 55y., student.) Overall, the knowledge and ideas that are transmitted regarding the Finnish pension system seem to be quite positive, especially when the system is compared to the Russian pension system. However, some interviewees also express their worries about how they will be able to manage in Finland in old age with the pension that they have accumulated. Interviewee Tatyana notes*: "Well I do not know… My pension in Finland is quite small, the accrual is quite small. So, I will have to see how I can manage with it."* (Tatyana, 53y., finance secretary.) Those interviewees who were already retired during the interview, all describe being satisfied with their current pension situation. These were mostly people who had moved to Finland as pensioners and had not worked in Finland.

Housing: Several interviewees bring up that they have discussed their living arrangements in Finland with their acquaintances in Russia. In general, the interviewees note that in Finland apartments are in good condition, compared to housing in Russia. Especially the students note that there is a big difference in student housing between Russia and Finland. Interviewee Andrei notes that *"I sent a photograph of the apartment, because in Russia we have mostly in one apartment living three or four or more persons. So here, I have my own. It is good and it is quite big."* (Andrei, 29y., exchange student.) For some, discussing housing arrangements means that they have discussed what it is like to buy a house in Finland, whereas others note discussing what it is like to rent a house. Interviewee Maria notes: "*When I was involved in this process of looking for a flat or buying a flat, we discussed it daily with all people of my community: How it was arranged, and what I would have to do next, and what to expect from the system here."* Those interviewees who have bought a house/apartment in Finland note that there were several surprising

things about this in Finland: for example, the fact that one can get a loan from the bank to buy a house, and the way that the purchasing process is organized has positively surprised some of the interviewees. Some note that it would not have been possible for them to buy a house in Russia but in Finland, this has been possible. Overall, the difficulty of finding a place to live in Russia is emphasised by several interviewees. Interviewee Yelena notes that she could not migrate back to Russia because in Finland, she has an apartment and if she went back, she would have to live with her granddaughter, or in a tiny 7 square meter apartment. However, finding an apartment can also be difficult in Finland, especially for foreigners, because as noted by Galina *"landlords are afraid of foreigners"* (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics). However, she also relates the difficulty to being a student and unemployed.

Education: Education and schools are topics that are often discussed with acquaintances in Russia. Regarding this, several interviewees bring forth that they have explained and discussed the entire structure of schooling and education in Finland. This is an interesting topic especially to those who have either gone to school in Finland themselves or those whose children are going to school in Finland. The interviewees who are students in Finland during the interviews bring forth discussing their experiences with their parents and friends in Russia. Several interviewees bring up critical viewpoints regarding their previous experiences in Russian universities, in light of their experiences in Finnish universities. Especially the quality of Russian teaching is criticised by several interviewees, and this is also discussed with friends studying in Russia. Based on the interviews, it seems that most transmit a rather positive image of Finnish education and schooling**.** Several interviewees bring up that there are many things that they have told about the Finnish education system that have come as surprises to their Russian acquaintances. Such include e.g., that students get a free warm meal a day, education is mostly free of charge and teachers have a lot of autonomy in schools. Interviewee Olga notes: "*I even remember when I came to Moscow for the first time after going to Finland, I went to visit my old university and I talked to one of my professors about education and she told me that like in Russia, she was very surprised that in Finland they have that good education system, because mostly when we think about going abroad to get an education we think about the UK or the US or English speaking countries.*" **(**Olga, 23y., student.) Those interviewees working in the field of education note discussing education-related issues also with their colleagues in Russia, in other words sharing occupational remittances. The fact that education systems in Finland and in Russia are so different from each other has according to the interviewees made it more difficult to discuss. As analysed by Rynkänen (2013), it can sometimes be hard for migrants from Russia to understand how the school system in Finland functions because they tend to perceive it from the perspective of Russian schooling principles, which are very different than those underlining the Finnish system. It seems that the Russian schooling system is discussed less with acquaintances in Finland.

Childcare: Several interviewees note that they have good experiences about childcare in Finland and that they have discussed these experiences with their acquaintances in Russia. Interviewee Anya notes: *"I tell much about education,*

bringing up children, attitude to children." (Anya, 54y., accountant.) Many of the interviewees have experiences in Finland about day care services. Also, that men are more involved in childcare in Finland is noted by some of the interviewees. The different roles of grandparents in childcare in Russia and Finland did not come up during the interviews (for more on this see Pöllänen 2013c).

Gender equality: Several interviewees indicate that they have noted differences in gender equality between Finland and Russia and note that they have discussed these differences with their acquaintances in Russia. The interviewees have mainly experienced that in Finland men and women are more equal. Interviewee Sergei notes that during the previous time that he visited Russia, he discussed the gender roles between men and women in Finland and explained how *"they are equal here, also in everyday matters. A woman may carry a shopping bag and there is nothing demeaning about that, and on a date a woman can also pay."* (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) Similarly, interviewee Anastasia notes that in Finland women are expected to carry their own grocery bags, unlike in Russia where it is according to her considered a man's responsibility. She notes that also her Russian husband, who is living in Finland with her, has adopted to this norm and does not even notice it anymore. For some of the interviewees, gender equality in Finland is manifested in the fact that also women can be president and that both men and women retire at the same age, unlike in Russia. The interviewees mention discussing these issues with their Russian acquaintances. However, discussing gender-related issues is not always found easy or useful (see similar findings by Alenius 2018, 52). Interviewee Maria notes that in her opinion it is impossible to introduce the idea of gender equality to some individuals living in Russia, because they are very conservative. Similarly, interviewee Sonya notes that she prefers to avoid discussing the topic with her acquaintances living in Russia because it might offend them. She does however discuss this topic with other migrants from Russia in Finland. For several of the interviewees, the differences in gender equality are manifested principally in the labour market. Several interviewees note that in Finland it is common for women to work in all kinds of employment positions, such as ambulance drivers and police, unlike in Russia. However, interviewee Maria (45y., lecturer) also notes that in Russia the Soviet legacy, according to which women were part of the labour force and supposed to receive equal pay, still influences the labour market. Not all interviewees consider gender equality in Finland as affecting life in a purely positive way. Interviewee Marina, who has been in Finland for 14 years, notes that in her opinion Russian women take better care of their family, compared to Finnish women who want to do things equally with their husband. She also notes that she has heard stories that, in some European countries, small children are *"not allowed to be either boys or girls"* but instead everyone is forced to wear a dress, which she does clearly not approve of.

Working life: Several interviewees note that they have discussed what it is like to work in Finland compared to working in Russia. Many (but not all) of the interviewees have experiences about working or doing internships in Russia (See chapter 5.4.4), to which they can compare their experiences in Finland. Russian working life seems to be found more conservative and hierarchical. A common

topic that is discussed with acquaintances is that in Russia working culture is much harder and more intense, compared to in Finland. In Russia, people are expected to work longer hours and work has a larger role in life. Interviewee Maria notes: "*You probably know that in Russia you can also work for more than 100 % of employment. So, it's a normal situation that you will have 180 % or 200 % employment, which seems a bit absurd here.*" While working hours are long in Russia, the interviewees note that the the pay is still often low and there is little respect for the employees. Interviewee Galina (21y., employed in logistics) notes that she was treated like an "*office plant*". She finds this a large contrast to her experiences in Finland. She tells that at her job in Finland she made a mistake which would have gotten her fired in Russia, but which her boss was very understanding of in Finland: "*They are really chilled about making mistakes, and in Russia, like if you make a mistake, you are getting punished. So of course, you are trying to do your best, like avoid any kind of mistake.*" Some interviewees appreciate the fact that in Finland the minimum salary is such that it is possible to live on, unlike in Russia: "*You do not need to worry that at the end of the month you have nothing to live on, or a week before salary you have nothing to eat. That is good, because in Russia it is not like that.*" (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) Interviewee Larisa (31y., nurse) notes that when she came to Finland and started working as a cleaner, her salary was much higher than what it would have been in Russia. However, several of the interviewees recognize how difficult it is or has been to find work in Finland. Many relate this to Finnish being the required language everywhere. Interviewee Sergei (28y., employed at NGO) notes that it is much easier to find work in Russia and that the employment percentages are much higher. Interviewee Irina (30y., PhD student) describes that for her it was very surprising at first when she noticed that people in Finland make *"happy Facebook posts with crying emojis"* when they find employment. She could not understand it since she did not know how difficult it would be to find work in Finland. This also means that sometimes it can be difficult for Russian acquaintances to understand why their acquaintances in Finland are not working (see example on of Yeva on page 118), which may cause tensions. Interviewee Anastasia (36y., student) notes that finding work has been very difficult for her and her husband in Finland, but none of their Russian acquaintances are interested in this. On the other hand, some interviewees (Igor, Larisa and Anastasia), bring up that their acquaintances and friends of acquaintances have asked them if there would be working opportunities for them In Finland, for example in seasonal employment, and what kind of salaries they could get in Finland, which exemplify social remittances regarding migration and the role of migrant networks (see chapters 2.4. and 6.3.8 for more information about migrant networks). Interviewee Ulyana (34y., translator) notes that acquaintances, when visiting Finland, get a less clear picture of working in Finland than they get of living arrangements, since they do not visit the working places. Interviewee Maksim (25y., PhD researcher), on the other hand, notes that because he has not worked in Finland, he has mainly discussed Finnish working life with his Russian acquaintances based on the information that he has received from his Finnish acquaintances.

Other topics that are frequently discussed include **health care** and **taxatio**n. These topics will be separately analysed in chapters 6.1.6 and 6.1.7.

6.1.3 Practicing agency through social remittances: bridge builders and ambassadors

Besides these topics and themes described above, the interviews reveal that there are various factors to consider, which shape who is told and what about life in Finland and the Finnish welfare system.

A central finding is that the things that are discussed regarding welfare are often **related to personal experiences and first-hand observations** that migrants have had in Finland. Several interviewees have discussed in detail with their acquaintances which services and support forms are in their experience working and which are not: *"Regarding Finland, we discuss services and products and whether we have good or bad experiences"* (Larisa, 31y., nurse). The information and attitudes that are shared are thus often related to things that have influenced the immigrant's life directly: Those who have received unemployment benefits have discussed these, and those who have received student benefits have discussed them. Based on the interviews, having had personal experience about something seems to be an important aspect for the migrants. This finding exemplifies, in line with previous findings by Levitt (1998) and Mata-Codesal (2011), the role that sociocultural adjustment and integration has in shaping the social remittances that are circulating. The interviewees often mention that **they cannot discuss things that they have not experienced**. Interviewee Sergei, who is married to a Finn but has no children, notes: *"I have not discussed family benefits because they have not been a part of my life yet"* (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO). Similarly, interviewee Maria notes: *"I cannot evaluate them right now, these services* [= welfare services] *because I haven't used them myself here. So, I have only basic ideas of how the things are arranged and I have heard people who praise the system and those who criticise the system. So, it is hard for me to evaluate it because I do not know much about it myself."* (Maria, 45y., lecturer.) This signals that some of the interviewees try to avoid remitting uninformed ideas (as termed by Dolowitz & Marsh 2000, 17 in relation to policy transfers) about the policy/institution and how they operate in the country from which it is transferred.

Due to this, also the **reason for migration** influences the type of social remittances that get transmitted. For example, those who come to Finland for studies transmit more information about studying in Finland and welfare services related to studies, compared to e.g., migrants who come to Finland because of family ties, who transmit more social remittances regarding family issues, such as for example childcare. Migrants are found to share social remittances especially related to their own occupation. For example, teachers share experiences about teaching and nurses about health care. Students on the other hand focus on experiences regarding their studies. Several interviewees emphasise that only by working and earning are migrants fully taking part in society and thus able to see what it is "really like in Finland". (Compared to e.g., students who are found to live in their student bubble).

Through emphasising the **role of their own experience**, the interviewees try to convey that what they transmit to their acquaintances actually has weight and is to some extent impartial, since it is based on experiences and not suppositions. The following quotation from interviewee Yeva, a student who has been in Finland for four years and who has two children, demonstrates this: "*Yes, I explained such things based on our own example. There was a time when we my husband and I didn't work, but our child went to a free of charge kindergarten, and we got money from the government to pay for the accommodation.*" (Yeva, 35y., student.) The quotation also illustrates the appreciation that many of the interviewees have for the social security that they have experienced in Finland.

What becomes clear from the interviews is that most interviewees see themselves as sort **of bridge builders, ambassadors, or reputational intermediates between the countries** and emphasise the important role that they have in representing Russia and Finland to their acquaintances. One interviewee Igor, who has both Finnish and Russian nationality, explains that "*My task here is to represent Russian culture because it remains in me and to improve the image of Russia, or at least its citizens'´ image*" (Igor, 31y., translator and consult). Similar findings have been made by Fomina (2019, 11) who has interviewed political migrants from Russia living in the EU, among whom a recurrent idea is that their community plays a role of an alternative 'embassy', which is the embassy of 'another' Russia and of 'the normal Russia'. The representative role or migrants is also described by Kapur (2001, 273), who details, through the case of the Indian diaspora in Silicon Valley, how diasporas can have an impact on country images. According to him, the success of the Indian diaspora in Silicon Valley has spilled over and led to the branding of India as a country with quality software programming. Furthermore, Mehrez & Hamdy (2010, 255) find that 1/3 of the individuals in their research would act as reputational intermediaries end recommend Egypt as a place to do business. In a similar way, the interviewees for this research believe that what they tell about Russia and Finland to their acquaintances has an important role. One interviewee, Dmitri, who has been in Finland for over 23 years, describes this role as being an "*advertiser for Finland and Finnish culture*" (Dmitri, 50y., language teacher). On similar lines, interviewee Igor notes: *"What I tell people in Finland has an effect on how people see Russia because I represent whole Russia to them. I find it an important task."* (Igor, 31y., translator and consult.) Migrants may, for example, want to counter assumptions that the migrant and his/her country of origin are culturally inferior (as also found by White & Grabowska 2019, 44). The role of representing both their country of settlement and their country of origin is something that the interviewees do not seem to take lightly. It is also something that is **not always easy**, as several interviewees express that even though they try to transmit a fair understanding of Russia and Finland, they are not completely sure that they are successful in this. Interviewee Svetlana, who worked as a journalist in Russia, notes: "*But does it change their opinion about Russia and being Russian? I do not know but at least I try to bring them some new information.*" (Svetlana, 42 y., student.) Social remittances are thus transferred even though their effect is not always clear or visible: more important is the potential that they can have. This also relates to the role that

migrants have taken in breaking stereotypes, which will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 6.1.8.

The representative role that the interviewees assign themselves also relates to the Russian compatriot policies described in chapter 6.2.7. It can be questioned how much of representing Russia in fact stems from the migrants themselves and how much is defined from above, as expectations from "Mother Russia". As noted by Davydova-Minguet (2014, 57–58), different Russian diaspora members have been "assigned" different roles depending on e.g., their geographical location: Some are expected to move back to Russia, whereas others are expected to act as Russian representatives abroad. The fact that several interviewees define their representative role as important does however not, as such, signal that Russia's aim at using their compatriots as a tool in Russian foreign policy aims is working. The interviewees emphasise that they mainly cheer Russian culture while simultaneously criticizing the state of Russian welfare, the state of democracy, and government. According to the interviewees, a separation can be noted between Russian "ordinary lay people" and Russian leaders and policy makers: the first one the interviewees find worth championing abroad, whereas the second category is mainly criticized, which likely is not precisely what Russian leaders and policy makers had in mind when designing their compatriot policies and defining tasks to members of the diaspora. It seems that diaspora members representing Russia abroad are thus a double-edged sword that does not seem to "serve" its master (those governing in Russia and defining the role that the diaspora should take) well, at least in this specific context.

6.1.4 What is discussed is tailor-made for each recipient

A central finding of the analysis is that in their attempt to change their acquaintances´ views and information, **migrants tailor-make the social remittances** that they transmit (or "cherry-pick as Levitt & Rajaram 2013b refer to) to make them "fit" the recipients and the contexts. The transmitted social remittances are based on e.g., the interest and receptivity that the recipients show. This illustrates the agency of migrants in the remitting process, in line with earlier research of Mata-Codesal (2011), and underlines that social remittances can me modified and adjusted to fit the recipient and the receiving society. There are several ways in which social remittances are tailor-made:

The interviewees bring up that they in general tend to discuss issues and topics **that are interesting** to themselves. Interviewee Sergei, who is interested in political and societal issues and who is studying political science, notes: *"About cultural habits I have told less. Perhaps I have told something, but it is not the most interesting topic for me, or I do not see it as such an essential topic."* (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) The migrants thus select certain topics which they find more interesting or essential.

Furthermore, **different persons living in Russia are told different things,** depending on for example their background. The interviewees focus on topics which they find might be **understandable to the recipient**. This underlines that people engage not only in ethnic ways but also in terms of other social categories

and social relation such as class, gender, age, stage in life cycle, and political beliefs and values (Anthias 2009, 7). Interviewee Yulia notes on this: *"I try to talk with my parents on such themes which are close to them and understandable for them."* (Yulia, 44 y., unemployed.) For example, acquaintances who work in the same sector as the migrant, or who have knowledge of a specific sector, such as education, are told more about things related to this sector. Interviewee Dmitri, who himself is a teacher, notes that he is in contact with other teachers who live in Russia, and with them he discusses the Finnish education system. Another interviewee Dmitri brings up that he has even visited education facilities in Russia, to inform teachers about the education system in Finland and to discuss what things are done differently. He notes that "*Five years ago I got the idea that since I had been here for twenty years I had to go back, and I agreed with an acquaintance in Petrozavodsk that I could come and tell teachers in Petrozavodsk how the Finnish school system is arranged and also about my experiences as a teacher."* (Dmitri, 50y., language teacher.) In terms of Isaakyan and Triandafyllidou (2017, 2801), he is a translocal celebrity, i.e., a visible link between two different localities. On a similar note, interviewee Galina notes that her acquaintances working in the field of education have taken advice from her regarding how education is organized in Finland, and they are trying to implement it in their professional field in Russia. In this way social remittances can have practical outcomes.

Some interviewees also note that **more educated people are told different things than those who are less educated**. Interviewee Dmitri further notes on this: *"It depends on with who you are talking to: on what level the people are. There are people that are only interested in practical things, such as shops and what to buy for what prices and whether things are cheaper in Russia. – – But then there are of course educated people who want to know more about Finnish society and culture, and then we of course discuss it."* (Dmitri, 50y., language teacher.) Similarly, more liberal, or open-minded people are told different things than more conservative acquaintances.

Furthermore, social remitting is also shaped by a **desire to appear interesting** and not e.g., bore the recipients, as the following quotation by interviewee Dmitri illustrates: *"In that sense it depends on whether the person is interested in the discussion, and it shows immediately if they are not, and then the discussion ends there."* (Dmitri, 50y., language teacher.) The interviewees thus tend to discuss things that they have found to interest their acquaintances: some are more interested in Finland and in how the Finnish welfare system functions than others, and those who are more interested are told more. Those that do not indicate interest are discussed other things with. The indication of interests thus already impacts who is told and what. Those people who are already more interested in what life is like in other countries and what kind of welfare systems there are abroad are told more about these issues. Those that are not interested to begin with are unlikely to become interested or to pick up new ideas, knowledge, or norms regarding these issues since they are not discussed with them. This would indicate that the role of social remittances is somewhat limited. Especially ideas that are found to amplify already existing opinions and views are more likely shared than contradictory or difficult ideas, norms, and information.

Several interviewees find that there is **no point in trying to remit new ideas to those who are not interested or receptive**. Interviewee Sofia notes on this: *"I would say that everyone has his own image, and I cannot change anything. And I do not want to. It does not make sense*." (Sofia, 25y., student.) Several interviewees also note that it is some specific people particularly who they consider that they cannot influence. The following quotation illustrates this: *"I think you could count only my sister* [= as a person whose ideas regarding welfare-related topics could be influenced] *because my parents they are quite special people. So, their opinion is their opinion forever."* (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) According to this view, some people will never change their mind about certain things, which is why it is not worth trying to convince them. Some interviewees note that there is no point in discussing welfare-related issues with those who they know might get offended, and who are not receptive because they will never change their mind about these issues, so there is no point in discussing them. Some of the interviewees note that when they know that they cannot convince people to change their opinion, it is better not to try but instead to avoid contact altogether. "*One cannot convince them. They will anyway keep to their opinion. So, it is better I believe to limit the circle of communication, because some friends have become toxic."* (Yulia, 44, unemployed.) If migrants avoid discussing things that they think will lead to conflict because their acquaintances have contrary ideas, the overall possible effect of social remittances is reduced.

However, not all the interviewees feel that it is not worth trying to convince people who are of different opinion. Interviewee Irina (30y., PhD student) describes that she believes that if you really **try talking sense to people** who are of different opinion, about e.g., corruption, they will eventually *"have some sense in this*", once things are explained extensively. She herself has however according to her own words never tried this. The emphasis on explaining things extensively also highlights the difficulty of explaining complex issues in a comprehensive way. Another interviewee, Maksim, notes on similar lines: *"If you like calmly discuss it and ask 'why do you think that? Do you know about this?' and people start like thinking. Maybe like there is something changing in their mind, and they say, 'Well I do not know actually'. You see that something is happening. At least they raise these issues and maybe they see certain contradictions in their own reasoning*." (Maksim, 25y., PhD researcher.) He believes that if it is possible to get people thinking and through this, they might perhaps change their presumptions. The interviewee provides an example of discussing gay marriage with his acquaintance in Russia.

Moreover, the interviewees also note that they **avoid certain topics**, and some want to keep certain parts of information about their life in Finland to themselves. For example, topics that the interviewees feel uncomfortable discussing, or that they feel might make their acquaintances **uncomfortable or worried, are avoided**. The following quotations by interviewees Yulia and Polina exemplify this: *"I try to avoid acute themes. So that the communication is peaceful and joyful. I try not to speak about the problems. Of course, these are such things that make them feel tense."* (Yulia, 44y., unemployed.) And: "*Usually I tell a lot of positive things and my friend with whom I talk quite often, she is always 'Oooh that is so great, Finland is a perfect country' ha ha."* (Polina, 29y., on maternity leave.) When migrants avoid

talking about certain things to e.g., avoid their acquaintances getting worried, there is the possibility that the acquaintances receive an overly positive picture regarding migration and living abroad. This relates to information found in several previous research studies, according to which hardships of adjusting to a new society and the experiences of discrimination are hardly shared at all with potential migrants (see e.g., Suksomboon 2008, 475). This will be discussed further in chapter 6.1.5. However, migrants may also not end up sharing positive aspects from their country of settlement in **fear of envy** experienced by the acquaintances. Interviewee Sonya provides an example of this: *"With Russian friends you cannot discuss it* [= the welfare system in Finland] *because it is kind of humiliating."* (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) The interviewee finds it humiliating to her friends to tell how things are done in Finland because it in comparison shows Russia in such a bad light. Thus, she tries to avoid such topics, which illustrate how poorly things are in Russia, to save her friends from losing face. The interviewee further notes that her friends have been envious about how clean everything is in Finland and how well the taxation and social security systems function.

Moreover, things that are found **too provocative** or that might offend people are avoided. Many relate that in particular politics are such a topic that they prefer to avoid. Interviewee Sonya notes: "*With my father I do not discuss politics; I do not discuss anything because it always comes to an argument."* (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) Interestingly, some interviewees note that they might discuss certain issues with their acquaintances in Finland but prefer not to discuss these issues with their acquaintances in Russia because of different opinions. Sometimes, the opinions of migrants on certain topics have changed during the migration process so that non-migrants cannot relate. Kopnina (2005, 167) found that Russian migrants' attitudes towards gender roles changed during their migration. If the migrants already know that their opinion differs from their acquaintances', they might avoid talking about it altogether. Interviewee Sonya states: "*No, I think that Russian they do not understand it* [= gender equality]. *I prefer just not to discuss these topics because I might offend someone. And with local Russians* [= those living in Finland], *of course we discuss this. But yeah, with locals we discuss it, but with Russian Russians* [= those living in Russia] *we do not."* (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) Keeping things pleasant is most clearly found more important than conveying new ideas or information.

Avoiding topics may also relate to the migrant **not feeling confident enough to discuss** them. One interviewee notes that she does not discuss the differences in economic systems between Russia and Finland because she feels that she does not know and understand it well enough. She also notes that her acquaintances in Russia are not experts in this matter, and thus economy is not discussed. Similarly, some interviewees note that they do not know enough about the Finnish political system to discuss it with their acquaintances. Also, issues that are found too difficult to explain regarding welfare, such as taxation, which is discussed more in subchapter 6.1.7, are avoided in conversation by some interviewees.

6.1.5 Transmitting reality – breaking a too rosy ideal?

Although migrants can to some extent, through social remittances, make their acquaintances understand life and the functioning of the welfare state in Finland/Russia, there are also several difficulties to this. When acquaintances do not understand and/or are not willing to change their views based on the social remittances provided by the migrants, this may cause tensions, which then might further hamper the possibility of transmitting social remittances.

The interviewees have overall quite a **positive attitude towards life in Finland and the Finnish welfare system**. This is reflected in their social remittances: The Finnish welfare system is mainly described as functioning and fair, especially when compared to the Russian system. It seems that, consistent with what Suksomboon (2008) observes, because migrants do not want to lose face, they tend to depict their life in the country of settlement positively and **avoid talking about negative sides**. Thus, a distorted image may get reflected. For example, the financial advantages of living abroad are overemphasised, while physical hardships and emotional costs are disregarded (Suksomboon 2008, 475). The interviews illustrate, however, that it is not always as simple as this. In fact, some of the interviewees take pride that they themselves try to **provide a critical and multisided picture** of life in Finland to their acquaintances. The interviewees note that they do not just convey any image but instead they try to convey an accurate and analytical image of life in Finland. Interviewee Marina for example notes in this regard that she believes that she is critical about the information she has gained regarding Finland and that she then transfers the information to her acquaintances in Russia. Based on this, the interviewee supposes that her acquaintances in Russia have *"not the picture they would have If they had been here, but a most possibly accurate picture that they can have."* (Marina, 62y., unemployed.)

Some of the interviewees note that ney must also share their critical reflrections toward Finland, this because their acquaintances have **a too rose-coloured image** about life in Finland. Interviewee Marina notes: *"Everyone thinks that everything abroad is golden; that everyone has a lot of money, and that life is starry, and I am trying to tell them that it is not like this."* (Marina, 62y., unemployed.) The fact that life is more difficult and, for example, finding work and learning the language is more difficult than what it might appear to outsiders is a common issue brought up by the interviewees. Experiences by interviewee Anastasia, who had completed a degree in accounting in Russia, but who ended up re-educating herself in Finland in business administration, relate this well: according to her, her acquaintances just see the positive outcomes of her endeavours in Finland, such as gaining Finnish citizenship, employment, and a house, without seeing all the hard work that goes into this. The interviewee describes that she and her husband have faced many challenges in Finland and that especially finding employment has been very difficult for them and required a lot of effort and work. She notes that her acquaintances cannot properly understand her life in Finland, and they tend to have an overly positive picture. Anastasia also explains that although she has tried to explain the situation and the work that has gone into

gaining a good life in Finland to her acquaintances, they are not interested. This finding illustrates that although being considered successful can further the acceptance of social remittances, as found by Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow (2009), it can also in some cases make acquaintances less accepting of social remittances regarding the hardships that have gone into prospering in the country of settlement. This is if the recipients only want to stick to the success aspects, without considering the hard work that has gone into making a life abroad.

Besides the example recounted above, by interviewee Anastasia, also several other interviewees bring forth that their **acquaintances consider life in Finland very easy**. Interviewee Yulia notes that her friends "*They seem to have such an impression, that here in Finland we are prospering* [the interviewee used the Russian slang word "fattening"] *doing nothing, that it is a paradise here: you come here and there is no need to do anything. And it is difficult to explain that we also have our problems, and they simply cannot know about them or do not want to know about them.*" (Yulia, 44y., unemployed.) On similar lines, interviewee Anastasia notes: "*It is very difficult* [= life in Finland], *but nobody knows it. They* [= acquaintances in Russia] *all think that I just came here and sit around. – – And everyone thinks that it is easy. That I live in Finland and everything is easy and that everyone helps you*." (Anastasia, 36y., student.) Although the interviewees have tried to explain to their acquaintances that people have problems in Finland as well and life is not always easy, they do, according to the interviewees, not understand this.

One reason for this rosy picture seems to be the **social remittances remitted by other migrants** and especially older generations. One interviewee, Yulia, who has been in Finland for three years, notes that according to her information: "Many old men and women, who have lived here for 30–40 year tell that they have lived on the benefit money for all that period of time, without doing anything. This forms such an image of Finland as a country where you don't need to work, but only receive money." (Yulia 44y., unemployed.) Thus, besides having to correct misinformation produced by the media, which will be discussed in chapter 6.3.6, migrants also feel that they have to attempt to correct the information transmitted in previous social remittances by other migrants. This exemplifies that social remittances can also be contradictory and conflicting: not all migrants from Russia living in Finland remit similar ideas, since individuals also have different experiences, and they may attempt to achieve different outcomes. Furthermore, the role of e.g., misunderstandings and mistranslations should also be taken into account, since they have always been part of intercultural transfers (Adams 2012, 32).

The fact that the interviewees **acknowledge the social remittances sent by other migrants** is interesting, considering especially that previous research has shown an association between an individual's remitting behaviour and that of those in her/his social group. Migrants have been noticed to be more likely to remit, as the number of remitters in the household or the share of remitters in the village increases (Garip et al. 2015). This concerns economic remittances in particular, but there might be something in this concerning social remittances as well: It seems that the social remittances that are transmitted by migrants are influenced by the idea of those remitted by others, especially in the sense that

migrants feel that others are not remitting a truthful picture of life in Finland, which they then feel that they have to attempt to correct.

To do so, the interviewees note that they also share their **negative experiences and difficulties** in Finland, with their acquaintances living in Russia. Interviewee Galina notes: "*There are some moments still in my life when I complain a lot about Finland*." (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) Especially the fact that the Finnish welfare system can be difficult for migrants to access is criticised, as well as the system being quite overwhelming and difficult to comprehend for a newcomer. Several interviewees also bring up that according to their view, the social system in Finland has been changing in recent years, towards a less comprehensive system. This is seen as a negative development. Interviewee Sergei notes: "*I have explained the change that has been going on: How the welfare state is being dismantled. In what direction it is going, and these kinds of large processes, which have also been visible in Russia*." (Sergei, 28y., employed in NGO.) The idea that the welfare system is changing all the time also influence what is remitted regarding it. One interviewee, Irina, notes that she is "*kind of of afraid to give a very detailed advertising because maybe next year things are different*" (Irina, 30y., PhD student). According to her view, services are constantly being cut and payments for services have been getting higher. She further states that when she first came to Finland, seven years ago, everything seemed great but that recently there have been cuts to the welfare system, which have made it worse. Although this may reflect actual observations about changes to the welfare state, it might also relate to migrants often having a more positive idea of their country of settlement in the "honeymoon period" at the beginning of their stay. It also underlines that social remittances regarding the welfare state are not static in time but change when the system changes. There is thus no one picture that has been remitted through transnational social fields, but instead a picture that is constantly changing and evolving.

However, the interviewees also describe that **criticizing Finland, and the Finnish welfare system is not unproblematic**. Interviewee Irina brings up that when she has tried to discuss the Finnish welfare and social system in a critical way, her Russian friends have not understood her. She notes that especially liberal Russians with pro-western ideas do not want their ideal of the west challenged. According to her, these individuals "*have a very emotional view of how good things are in the west, and everything that is about the west is good and right and correct and everything that is Russian is wrong*". Because of this "you have to be satisfied with everything and sing the same song". If you criticize the Finnish system, you are seen as ungrateful and also your migration is questioned: "*If you are criticizing it then why did you move away?!*" (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) This exemplifies that there is a tendency of people to use idealized concepts and narratives about foreign locations as ways to understand, talk about and justify their domestic political stances.

The perception that acquaintances cannot understand life in Finland and/or are not willing to change their views based on the information provided by the migrants can cause **tension between migrant and non-migrant** acquaintances, as illustrated by the following quotation by interviewee Vera: "*I*

think that those who understand it [= our life in Finland] are still in contact with us, and those who do not have gone away ha ha." (Vera, 37y., special needs assistance in school.) It seems that especially the fact that some of the interviewees have not been able to find work in Finland is something that the acquaintances cannot understand, and which may thus cause tensions. Interviewee Yeva, who has been in Finland for four years, notes on this: "*As for my parents, at first they exerted pressure on me. They could not understand why I, knowing foreign languages and having a good education, cannot find a job in Finland. They thought that I was to blame, that I did not intensively look for a job. There was a serious misunderstanding why I do not work*." The pressure that the interviewee has experienced from her parents can perhaps partly be explained by the fact that in Russia work is valued even more so than in Finland, which also related to an individual's status and subsistence often being more tied to work than in Finland (Saari et al. 2017, 29). The quotation also exemplifies that sometimes friends no longer being able to understand the migrant's life becomes a barrier for communication. The problem seems to be related in particular to the fact that even though the migrants, through social remittances, try to illustrate and explain their life abroad, their acquaintances are not always receptive to this information. The problem is thus caused by mistrust or unwillingness to believe in the things that the migrants share. This finding exemplifies that social remittances can lead to falling out with friends and family members, a finding that has previously be noted in the context of economic remittances (see Vari-Lavoisier 2014, 18).

6.1.6 Health care as an example of criticism

Health care is a topic which came up often in the interviews and it seems to be something that many migrants from Russia living in Finland are keen to discuss. Social remittances regarding health care provision have also been the focus of several other previous studies (see Levitt & Rajaram 2013a, Holdaway et al. 2015). However, the focus of these studies have often been on the role of health care professionals on spreading ideas on health care practices and systems. In this study the viewpoint is particularly on non-professionals, since only few of the interviewees worked or had trained in health care. The analysis illustrates that also nonhealthcare professionals can transmit ideas to their acquaintances about health care related issues.

Health care is by many migrants from Russia seen as a central part of the Finnish welfare system. It seems that with respect to health care, singular individual experiences have an especially large role in determining what the remitted attitudes are like: Many migrants from Russia have their own experience with Finnish health care and also strong opinions about it. The health care system in Finland seems to be viewed and appreciated differently by different migrants: some have been satisfied with their experience, whereas others bring forth critical perspectives and negative experiences. These experiences, both positive and negative, are also shared with acquaintances living in Russia.

Many of the interviewees regard **health care in Finland as high quality**. Interviewee Mila, a student who has been in Finland for six years, notes: "*Yes, I have experience about the content of health care* [= in Finland] *and I am always defending it because I have never had any problems.*" (Mila, 28y., student.) Especially that the (mostly) state funded services are of high quality and can be trusted is seen as different from the Russian system. Russian health care is often described as polarized: those who have money can buy good services, whereas those who cannot afford private services have to rely on state funded services, which are often described as poor. Interviewee Igor, who lives in Finland with his Russian wife, notes that he and his brother living in Russia have been comparing their experiences with health care. The interviewee notes that he has for example discussed how the health care system in Finland functions in time of child delivery: "*For example, when I discussed it with my brother, because he had paid a notable sum of money for a similar or lesser room* [= hospital room during delivery] *in St. Petersburg, and here it was free and better quality. So, it is like this, and the difference is substantial.*" (Igor, 31y., translator and consult.) Childbirth is something that is also brought up by several other interviewees, in relation to health care. Those migrants who have had children in Finland recount that they have had very positive experiences. These experiences have also been shared with acquaintances in Russia. Interviewee Polina notes: "*I have told about nurses, about vaccination, how polite and friendly nurses are and how great the central hospital was when I gave birth.*" (Polina, 29y., on maternity leave.)

Although many interviewees have positive experiences, many also have critical remarks on the health care system in Finland. In general, it can be noted that of all the different aspects regarding the welfare state, the Finnish **health care system is described as the most problematic** and the various problems are also recounted to acquaintances living in Russia. As noted by Cingolani and Vietti (2019, 638), migrants themselves do not always find that there are positive values in their country of settlement, that they can be simply exported to their countries of origin. Issues that are frequently brought up mainly seem to have to do with the differences in the systems compared to the Russian system. For example, that doctors do generally not do home visits in Finland is found peculiar and recounted to Russian acquaintances. Also, that queues to get a doctor's appointment seem to be long is criticized by many (see similar findings by Davydova-Minguet & Pöllänen 2020, 113). Many of the interviewees also bring up that they feel that they have not been able to get the help that they have needed and that their health complaints have been dismissed and not been taken seriously. This issue is brought up by several interviewees, who feel that they have just been offered pain killers at health care centers and not been given proper care. The following quote by interviewee Ulyana provides an example: "*We have probably been joking that in Russia you are overtreated and in Finland you are undertreated. In Finland you are just told to eat a pain killer and see how the situation evolves and in Russia on the contrary you are given so many medicines that you have to consider whether it is wise eating them all.*" (Ulyana, 34y., translator.) On similar lines, interviewee Sonya notes: "*What I tell everyone about Finland is that all the doctors, whatever problem you have you get the Burana* [= pain killer] *as a treatment ha*

ha. So, if I have a broken leg: 'Ah here Burana'. And if you have like a tumor 'Burana Burana' ha ha." (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) What might explain the mistrust in Finnish health care is that, unlike in Finland, in Russia it is usual to go directly to a specialist doctor, before visiting a general doctor (Weiste-Paakkanen et al. 2014, 75; Kemppainen et al. 2018).

The **price of health care** is also a frequent topic of conversation: Some interviewees note that they find Finnish health care expensive, whereas others find it cheap. This may have to do with the fact that the expenses are different for different individuals: those who live in Finland permanently are part of the welfare services and thus can get inexpensive municipal health care, whereas those who have been in Finland for a short time, such as internationals students, have to pay for health care services. This is something that the interviewees seem to be well aware of. Interviewee Galina notes that although she herself as a migrant has to pay for the health care services in Finland, she knows that the Finns pay very little for the services which are high quality. According to her, the Finnish health care system, the doctors, and equipment are as good as in a Russian private clinic, or even better. Correspondingly, interviewee Igor also notes: "*All of these services that we had during childbirth were almost for free, because she had the Kela card* [= a personal health insurance card provided by the officials], *and thus it only cost about a 100 euro."* (Igor, 31y., translator and consult.) In Finland, all individuals who are covered under the National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme are issued a personal health insurance card – the Kela card. The Kela card is the most concrete form of social insurance and social citizenship in Finland. The Kela card is practically a ticket to hospital care and by using it you can receive subsidized medicines. (Helander, 2014, 98–99.) Those who are not covered by municipal health care services need to rely on health insurances. Interviewee Irina notes: "*If I had not had any insurance, hypothetically, then I would have to pay quite big money for that, but of course for the citizens here it would not cost as much or be free of charge."* (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.)

Several interviewees bring up that they have been satisfied with the health care that they received in Russia. Furthermore, some interviewees note that they know that their Russian acquaintances living in Finland **prefer to go for health care to Russia, mainly St. Petersburg**, instead of relying on the Finnish health care system, and are thus involved in transnational health care (to read about transnational health care see e.g., Tiilikainen 2008; Kemppainen et al. 2018). According to Weiste-Paakkanen et al. (2014, 79) it is most common among women with a Russian background to visit a doctor outside of Finland, and that in the last 12 months since their research, 22 % had done so. Interviewee Maria notes: "*From my random contacts here with members of the Russian diaspora, I know that quite a lot of them think about going to Russia to get some services, like dental surgery or something to do with let's say not very risky operations."* (Maria, 45y., lecturer.) Based on information provided by the interviewees, this seems to be quite common, although none of the interviewees notify going to Russia for health services themselves. According to the interviewees, reasons for migrants from Russia, to go get treatment in Russia include not being able to get an appointment with a doctor in Finland soon enough and high expense.

Interviewee Natalya notes: *"It is so difficult to get a doctor's appointment and the service is often not such good quality. That is why many Russians go to Russia. They get the medical treatment and services there. And also, because it is expensive here. In Russia, you can get treatments for less costs. Especially women try to go there for beauty service and older people go to hospital."* (Natalya, 42y., employed in museum.) One of the interviewees notes that especially older migrants go to Russia to get health care due to language barriers in Finland. Also Mölsä & Tiilikainen (2008, 67) have found a lack of language skills a barrier for migrants in Finnish health care.

On the other hand, some of the interviewees bring up that they feel that their Russian acquaintances would prefer to get medical treatment in Finland but that this is not an option for them, which is why they have to be content with the Russian system. Interviewee Galina notes: "*And if they would have a choice, like an option, they would go to Finland to treatments but otherwise yeah it is better here, but you can do nothing if you live in Russia you should do it in Russia."* (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.)

The Finnish health care system also seems to be frequently **discussed with other Russians living in Finland,** which is illustrated by many being aware of Russians going to get treatment in Russia, albeit having never done this themselves (except Tatyana who has visited a dentist in Russia). This also reflects the occurrence that social remittances are not just formed based on information attained by Finnish acquaintances, but also other migrants can have a central role in their creation. Co-migrants can have an important role in providing migrants information about the country of settlement, which then also influence the content of social remittances. Several interviewees note that health care is one of the first things that is discussed with other Russians living in Finland. Interviewee Mila, a student who has been in Finland for six years, relates: *"We criticize how illnesses are treated in Finland a lot. How the system works, how difficult it is to get to a doctor and so on. Also, between ourselves with other Russians in Finland we discuss this a lot. It is the first thing we discuss ha ha."* (Mila, 28y., student.) Some note that their Russian acquaintances living in Finland have been very critical about the system whereas others note that there is a general sense that things are done well in health care. Medical tourism to Finland is not seen by the interviewees as a large-scale phenomenon. It seems that if some aspect is generally recognized as being poorly in the country of settlement, and discussed with other migrants within the migrant community, this may impact the extent of social remitting regarding that specific particular topic.

Besides discussing the health care system with Russian acquaintances living both in Russia and in Finland, the interviewees bring up that they have **discussed health care with their Finnish acquaintances**. The discussions with Finns seem to function as a source of information: migrants get information about the system and its pros and cons from their Finnish acquaintances. Based on the interviews, the information provided by Finnish acquaintances seems to be accepted and appreciated. Interviewee Irina, who is married to a Finn, notes: *"Yes, for example my experience with the operation was very good, it was like acute health care, which I have heard from my Finnish friends is very different from the ordinary regular health care, which is, as far as I understood, a bit in crisis."* (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.)

6.1.7 Transmitting complex social remittances – taxation as an example

Although informal networks between individuals enable the exchange of knowledge that is strongly embedded in a particular setting and that is difficult to transfer through formal channels (Biao 2006, 52, 54), some remittances are still **easier to transmit than others**. In general, codified information is more easily transferred since it can be written down. Tacit knowledge on the other hand is more difficult to transfer since it relates to specific experiences, interpretation schemes or regional contexts, which is why in order to transfer it, one generally needs to have meaningful interaction with others. (Klagge & Klein-Hitpaß 2010, 1635, 1643.)

In their attempts to share/change ideas, norms and values the interviewees have noted that some social remittances may be **too complex, difficult, or large** to communicate and transmit. In these cases, remittances may have to be broken down into smaller movable units (Levitt 1998, 938; Levitt 2005). It seems that understanding social remittances regarding welfare often requires a wider understanding of societal structures and way of life in Finland/Russia. Because of this, the interviewees emphasise that they often need to explain how the welfare state at large functions to make specific policies in Finland understandable, which can be difficult. There is thus a risk that the social remittances remain incomplete and some essential elements of what has made the policy or institutional structure a success in the originating country may not be transferred. It seems that especially taxation, as the basis of the Finnish welfare system, provides an example of a topic that migrants find difficult to transmit because of its complexity.

During the interviews, the participants were asked about **taxation** and whether they discuss taxation with their acquaintances in Russia/Finland. Taxation is a central part of the Finnish welfare state since by means of it the welfare services, such as unemployment benefits, a part of pensions, health care, and schooling are funded. Taxation in Finland is progressive and thus the more you earn the more taxes you pay. Usually, you have to pay taxes on your salary in Finland if you reside in Finland for more than six months (InfoFinland, 2019). Based on the interviews, it seems that taxation is a topic that is discussed among Russians living in Finland and with their acquaintances living in Russia. The interviewees describe that they have discussed what progressive taxation means and what their own their experience is with taxes, mainly income taxes, in Finland. Especially those migrants that have been in Finland for a longer time have discussed this topic with their acquaintances living in Russia. International students on the other hand have discussed the topic less, which is understandable, since as students, income taxation does often not concern them. None of the interviewees bring up discussing Russian taxation with their Finnish acquaintances and only few mention discussing Finnish taxation with Finns.

Discussing taxation is often associated with providing a **wider understanding** of how the welfare state functions. Instead of describing various singular social services and experiences related to them, discussing taxation seems to stipulate transmitting a wider perspective on the entire system. The

interviewees recount that to make their acquaintances understand the welfare system, they have to explain about taxes as well. Interviewee Sergei notes: "*I have told everyone why we have progressive taxation and why we have free education and, in a way, why they tax you 30 %, and in a way how this is legitimized. And I have tried to justify it to them, because the societal structures are so different that they might not comprehend the logic behind it.*" (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) Moreover, instead of simply discussing taxation as a burden and describing taxes as high, the interviewees report that they try to provide a many-sided perspective. Only one interviewee, Tatyana who works as a financial secretary, notes that the only thing that she has told her acquaintances about taxes is that she has to pay a lot of them in Finland, and nothing else.

Explaining about the Finnish taxation system is also a part of making acquaintances **understand realities in Finland**. Several interviewees note that people in Russia tend to think that in Finland salaries are really high and everyone is wealthy. This relates to the overly positive image discussed in chapter 6.1.5. Some of the interviewees find it important to rectify this impression, since it also gives a wrong impression about their life in Finland. Explaining about the taxation system is important in regard to this, since it explicates that although salaries are high, in comparison with Russian salaries, also taxes are high.

Although the interviewees generally seem to accept that to fund welfare services taxation is necessary, the migrants **also share critical remarks on taxation** as part of social remittances. Especially the fact that migrants also have to pay high taxes even though they are not, in the same way as long-term residents, able to receive welfare services funded by taxation, is found unfair by some. The following quotation by interviewee Galina demonstrates the dichotomy in the migrants' attitude towards taxation in Finland: "*Like at least 1/3* [= of salary] *goes to taxation and all these benefits and securities and everything. That is a lot. That is something you need to accept. That is sad. That is like the worst thing I discovered when I started to work, – – you first think like 'Wow Finnish people they are like getting so much money, the salaries are so high, we will be rich'. And then you get your first salary after all the reductions and you are like 'Okay, now I understand what they were talking about'. That it is not really as bright as it seems. Especially if you do not get the services, like the health care, that is where the money goes to.*" (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.)

The interviewees describe that their **acquaintances have reacted differently** to the social remittances regarding taxation: Some have first been surprised but then understood how the system works, at least to some extent, whereas others have not grasped, or wanted to grasp, the role of taxation in a welfare state. One interviewee, Anastasia, notes that the fact that you can get tax refunds if you pay too m uch taxes during the year has been very surprising to her Russian acquaintances, who first could not believe it. She describes: "*I told them that if I have a bigger salary, I pay more taxes. They do not understand it. But the real shock comes when I tell them that I get tax refunds: What?? they pay you back money? – – It cannot be true, it cannot.*'" (Anastasia, 36y., student.) The interviewee has thus had to convince her acquaintances that this really is the case. Some

interviewees feel that even though they have explained how taxation works in Finland, their Russian acquaintances have not really understood the system. Some even note that they have given up trying to explain taxation since it is too difficult to explain. Interviewee Sonya notes: "*I tried* [= to explain taxation] *but then I gave up – – It's really difficult to explain to people that if you want the good life, such a good social security support and everything, you have to pay taxes. – – I tried to explain to people, and some understand but some are like 'Yeah but why would I do this if others do not do this' and so on. So, it is quite difficult and that is why I never say my salary and I do not say the amount of taxes which I pay in Russia just to avoid all the difficulty*." (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) It thus seems that besides not discussing things that are sensitive and might cause conflict or worry (discussed in chapter 6.1.4), also issues that are found too difficult to explain are not always part of social remittances.

Some of the interviewees relate that according to their understanding the fact that the Russian welfare and taxation system is **so very different is also making it difficult for their acquaintances to understand** the Finnish taxation system. Interviewee Irina describes that it is the Russian mentality of not sharing your income that makes understanding the Finnish taxation system difficult: "*I don't mind high taxes, especially if they go for right purposes, but just in Russia people's mentality is not on that level. They think that if I earn the money the money is mine. Really. It is not the money of some kind of poor people in Russia. It is not the money of Russian retired people and all the kids in kindergarten. They do not like make this connection*." (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) On the other hand, interviewee Maria, who has besides Finland and Russia also lived in the UK, notes that her Russian acquaintances can understand the Finnish taxation system better than her acquaintances in the UK, because of their experience with the socialist system: "*I have tried to describe how it works. So that unemployed, people who are in need, they can get more protection from the state because of the higher taxation system. And since in Russia we had this experience of socialist system it does not seem that strange as it seems to my British friends, who have never had access to this at all. So, for them it's more interesting and more strange than for my Russian friends*." (Maria, 45y., lecturer.)

6.1.8 Social remittances regarding life in Russia and the role of breaking stereotypes

The extent of social networks in the country of settlement is found to have an effect especially on the ability to make social remittances multidirectional. Not having that many Finnish friends/acquaintances, which most interviewees report, makes transmitting social remittances to Finland more difficult. Besides having own experiences, the interviewees have also received information about Finland and Finnish welfare services from their Finnish acquaintances and from other migrants. The extent of network thus influences the creation of social remittances and the ability to disseminate them. Those who have better language skills are found to be able to interact with Finns more easily and to create more social networks. Those with better language skills can also attain information

about Finland more easily from e.g., the media, to share with Russian acquaintances.

The analysis indicates that it is not just friends and family in Russia that have a better understanding of Finland through social remittances, but also **Finnish acquaintances in Finland have a better understanding of Russia**. The interviewees bring up that the things that they have told about Russia have had an effect on how their Finnish acquaintances see Russia and Russians. However, the focus of social remittances regarding Russia is clearly less on welfare related topics than what social remittances regarding Finland are. The migrants from Russia are not too eager to discuss Russian welfare services with their Finnish acquaintances and are not attempting to change the views and ideas of their Finnish acquaintances regarding it. Moreover, Finns may have preconceptions according to which the Russian welfare system is inferior to the Finnish one, which might make them less keen on learning about it. The discussion regarding Russia is thus focused on different topics, such as culture and politics. The interviewees also note that they have told their Finnish acquaintances about their previous life in Russia: their family, work, and studies. This has provided Finnish acquaintances with a lot of information about everyday life in Russia. Some of the interviewees mention that they feel that they have been able to make a change in how Finns see Russia whereas others seem to have the idea that Finnish people already know a lot about Russia and that they cannot provide them with interesting new information. Interviewee Sonya, who has a Finnish boyfriend, notes that based on her experiences, her Finnish friends can understand Russia better than her friends from other European countries, such as Germany. This is according to her exemplified by her German friend who *"wants to make a revolution in Russia, ha ha, but Finns they, at least my close friends, they understand it yes."* (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) The interviewee finds it perhaps naïve and amusing that her German friend wants to drastically change things in Russia, which she does not find realistic.

Although Russia is discussed with Finnish acquaintances, overall, it seems that Russian family and friends are in general told more about Finland than Finnish acquaintances about Russia: *"It happens that we almost always talked about Finland not about Russia"* (Maksim, 25y., PhD student). Several interviewees note that, according to their understanding, their Finnish acquaintances have **not been very interested in discussing life in Russia**. One interviewee, Natalya, for example describes that she does not know why her Finnish acquaintances do not ask her more about Russia. She would like to discuss it more and answer questions about it, especially because people in Finland tend, according to her, to have a lot of wrong information about Russia. Some of the interviewees bring up that Finns are generally only **interested in a few specific topics** regarding Russia, which they then ask questions about. Such topics include for example the political situation in Russia, Putin, or the Russian conflict with Ukraine. One interviewee, Marina, who has been in Finland for 14 years and is married to a Finn, describes that her Finnish acquaintances have asked her about why Russia goes to war and causes conflicts. The interviewee says that she has tried to explain that she does not know about these things or want to talk about them.

These kinds of questions however reflect the kind of thinking according to which regular Russian citizens are seen as somehow being responsible or at least understanding matters of Russian foreign policy. The interviewee notes that in cases like these, she has just tried to calm people. On a similar note, one interviewee, Irina, who works as a PhD student, notes that her Finnish acquaintances have been mostly interested in "*the sinister Russia*", which she herself is not interested in. The interviewee notes that according to her Finnish acquaintances "*Russia is like this very bad and big sinister other. Which is threateningly close and at the same time people have very little touch with it. They have very little real experience with Russia*." (Irina, 30y., PhD student.) Since the interviewee believes that the opinion regarding Russia, of her Finnish acquaintances, will differ from her own, she does not bring up these issues and when she does the conversation does not always end well. On similar lines, another interviewee, Sonya, notes that she does not prefer to discuss Russia with her Finnish acquaintances because this makes her sad about how bad things are in Russia in comparison: *"Well sometimes I discuss with Finnish people how bad it is in Russia and so on. But yeah, I prefer to avoid this topic because it makes me sad."* (Sonya, 24., employed in logistics.)

Interestingly, the interviewees emphasise the role of **breaking stereotypes** especially when discussing social remittances that regard life in Russia. They note that Finnish people in general have a lot of negative stereotypes about Russia which often have to do with crime, mafia, corruption, and the political situation. Some of the interviewees bring up that these negative stereotypes can affect their life in Finland, for example make it more difficult for them to get employed (see similar findings by Pöllänen 2007, 366; Pöllänen 2013b, 24). It seems that migrants from Russia have the idea that there is more work to be done in breaking the stereotypes that Finns have regarding Russia, than the other way around. According to some interviewees, certain parts of Russian culture such as ballet and literature are among the only aspects about Russia that are not looked down on or seen as negative by Finnish people. Many feel that negative stereotypes have been caused by e.g., the Finnish media and the negative shared history that Russia and Finland have had especially during the Second World War. One interviewee, Natalya, also brings up that according to her knowledge some Russians in Finland spread negative ideas about Russia to their Finnish acquaintances: "*There are many stereotypes about Russia, and I believe that Russians themselves spread these despicable stories about their own country.*" (Natalya, 42y., employed in museum.) The interviewee does not go deep into this, but a disapproving tone can be detected. Migrants do thus not always approve of the social remittances sent by other migrants, which relates to the topic discussed in chapter 6.1.5, regarding migrants having to rectify the information transmitted by previous migrants.

It seems that it is quite common for the interviewees to feel that they have a responsibility **to combat the existing stereotypes,** and many consider that the information that they have provided has in fact softened negative stereotypes and opened up everyday Russia to their Finnish acquaintances. As one interviewee, Galina, notes, her Finnish acquaintances now have a better imagination about Russia, due to the social remittances that she has provided:

"The good thing is that I know a few people who were really careful with Russia before they met me or my friends, and then after we started to talk 'Okay Russian people are not so bad'." (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) Similar remarks are made by other interviewees, which illustrates that migrants can have an important role in breaking stereotypes that Finnish people have regarding Russia and Russians. Interviewee Sonya notes that she has tried to explain that Russia is more developed than what her acquaintances in Finland tend to consider, but that there are also large differences in lifestyle between big cities and villages that are far away from urban areas. She further notes that *"I was also always trying to tell them, trying to make a good impression of Russians for Finnish people and friends. I hope I have changed the opinion of some Finnish people about how they actually see Russians."* (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.)

Some of the interviewees have also **travelled with their Finnish acquaintances to Russia**, which has according to them opened their acquaintances' eyes to the fact that Russia is not all bad. As interviewee Polina, who is among the interviewees who travel most often to Russia, notes: *"I think for those Finns who travel to Russia, they have some idea or some image of Russia but for those who did not travel there they maybe have some stereotypes."* (Polina, 29y., on maternity leave.) There is thus a strong emphasis on trying to have an impact on existing stereotypes. Yet, another interviewee, Karina, who is married to a Finn, on the other hand notes that it is exactly because of strong stereotypes that she does not want to discuss certain things: *"My husband is very curious about Russia. He is interested in politics and life in the Soviet Union. He has a lot of questions how I had lived before. I think he has too many prejudices and clichés, so I do not like to discuss politics – –."* (Karina, 55y., student.) This case indicates that existing stereotypes may make it more difficult or less appealing to discuss e.g., life in Russia and thus transmit social remittances regarding it.

Nonetheless, the interviewees in general find that their acquaintances have accepted and incorporated some of the things that they have told them about e.g., life in Russia. Based on the interviews it thus seems that migrants´ attempts to change views and values is to some extent successful and that social remittances can have a role in breaking stereotypes. The **acquaintances seem to be willing to change their opinions based on the information provided by their Russian acquaintances**. There is however no proof that they have actually changed their mind, but at least the interviewees have gotten this impression from them, as the following quotation illustrates: *"It is really good and useful when you have Russian friends, which can tell you not about stereotypical Russia but what things we do have in real life, in everyday life. I think yes, it affects a lot, and they will know and learn about Russia."* (Ivan, 21y., exchange student.) According to this view, interpersonal information can have a role in breaking stereotypes and sharing information. Likewise, interviewee Irina, who is married to a Finn, notes that *"– – of course like if I have some questions or misconceptions then I can always ask my husband. That is one source, at least I have one source ha ha."* (Irina, 30y., PhD student.) She feels that she has someone whose experience and information she can trust. Having someone, a husband, a friend, or an acquaintance who has first-hand information is important in breaking misconceptions. This should however be considered in

light of a finding noted earlier in the research (in chapter 5.4.5) according to which Russians in Finland do generally not have that many Finnish friends. The limited social networks can thus curtail the role that social remittances can have in e.g., breaking stereotypes.

Furthermore, some of the interviewees bring up that although they can try to **break stereotypes,** it **is very difficult** and some feel that they have not been able to do so: "*I would have hoped that the things I have told would have had the effect that they would make them understand that people are similar wherever they live. But I am not sure that it has always had this effect. I feel that people have certain stereotypes and that they want to hold on to them.*" (Ulyana, 34y., translator.) Moreover, besides breaking stereotypes migrants can also re-boost them by the remittances that they send. Interviewee Ulyana further notes that even though it is not her purpose, sometimes she notices that she is repeating the existing stereotypes and generalizing her own experiences about Finland to her acquaintances in Russia. Thus, social remittances are no automatic cure to misinformation and stereotypes but instead it all depends on their content, and they can just as well strengthen misconceptions and spread one-sided or untruthful information.

6.1.9 Comparisons as part of social remittances

However, in practice, often when social remitting occurs it is not just about migrants telling their acquaintance how things are done differently abroad. Instead, the differences are **conversed and debated over.** Both the sender of social remittances and the recipient thus play central roles. As noted in chapter 3.2, the things that are told are rarely recounted and accepted as such, but instead they become modified and cultivated during the process. In this, comparisons have a central role.

Especially when trying to explain how the welfare system in the country of settlement functions, to acquaintances that have no experience of it, the **role of comparing** becomes especially important: Most interviewees bring up that when they discuss welfare and social security related issues with their acquaintances in Russia and Finland, and attempt to change views and ideas, they often tend to do so in a comparative manner: Russian services are compared to Finnish ones. Interviewee Maria for example notes: "*I think that the most interesting things to discuss is the difference in social system and some cultural differences*" (Maria, 45y., lecturer.) Similar findings have been made by Jakobson et al. (2012) and Alenius (2018, 51) who have found that it is common, among friends and relatives living in Estonia and Finland to discuss and compare the societies. An example is provided by interviewee Mila (28y., student) who notes: "*We talk about how the unemployment office functions and we compare all the time, all the time we compare. All the time we discuss how things are and then someone always asks how things are done in Finland.*"

Often comparison is related to **bringing up and underlining the differences in the systems**. Comparing what is same and what is different is a way of explaining to people who are not living in Finland/Russia what it is like. It is a way of making the welfare system understandable by measuring it against

something else. The interviewees note that they have compared health services, childcare services, pension systems, higher education, and taxation. Interviewee Maksim for example notes: "*Yes, we discussed and compared, as unemployment benefits and childcare payments are higher here than in my native country.*" (Maksim, 25y., PhD researcher.) Although the comparisons often seem to be favorable to the Finnish system, this is not always the case, as the previous subchapters have illustrated. The role of comparisons also illustrates that ideas are rarely directly transferred across borders, but their transmission is rather a gradual process in which comparisons and debates have a central role (as in line with Alenius 2018, 51).

Although most interviewees note that comparing welfare related issues is a central part of their communication with acquaintances, others emphasise that **they do not like to compare and that comparisons should not be made**. Disapproval of comparing is quite common among the interviewees. Interviewee Yulia notes: "*I cannot compare these two countries, as they are absolutely different, it is difficult for me. When I am asked, I say that there is much in common and many differences. Also, if I were to speak about it, it could take up to 4 hours to find out all the similarities and differences. Well, I just can't.*" (Yulia, 44, unemployed.) This quotation illustrates that most of those who are against comparing find that since the systems are so different from each other, there is no point in comparing them. Interviewees Sonya and Mila for example note: "*You cannot discuss it. It is two totally different things ha ha. And usually, I do not like this argument.*" (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) And: "*We discuss everything, but everything is so different. Everything is different. We should not compare because they are two different countries.*" (Mila, 28y., student.)

Not comparing is by many seen as the right and proper thing to do, although many admit doing it, nonetheless. The following quote by interviewee Sofia demonstrates this: "*It is really a bad habit I guess, but it always happened when you do not want to compare, you start to compare things. It does not make sense because they are totally different countries and there are just different standards. But we did compare, and unfortunately quite many things are better* [= in Finland]." (Sofia, 25y., student.) Perhaps comparing is also in some way seen as unloyal to Russia, especially in cases where comparisons would not be favourable to the Russian system. Moreover, some note that they do not discuss certain topics in a comparative manner if they have no personal experience regarding the topic. One interviewee, Sergei (28y., employed at NGO), notes that he has not compared childcare in Russia and Finland when discussing the topic with his acquaintances because he has no personal experience about this from Russia. Hence, the lack of personal experience is not always related to life in Finland but can also be related to life in Russia.

Those migrants that have lived in other countries than Russia and Finland also compare their experiences from these third countries. Having experience of different countries and welfare systems is seen as an eye-opening experience and some note that having lived in different countries has provided them with more insight and knowledge about how things can be done differently. Interviewee Sonya, who during her studies in Finland stayed a semester abroad, notes: "*I lived*

also in Germany, so it is the third side, so like Finnish, German and in general. And I can see how people are limited when they have just the Russian point of view. So, it really opens big horizons when you think from these three different points. And that is really useful, and that is why I am telling people to travel. Leave if you can, live in the country for at least a month and then you can understand and start thinking and looking differently." (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics). Those who have lived in several countries have more reference points to compare their experiences with, as noted by interviewee Maria who has lived in the UK, Russia and Finland: "*The Finnish system is somewhere in the middle because it has features of both and it has some similarities with both. So, this is something also to discuss and to compare."* (Maria, 45y., lecturer.) Those interviewees who have experienced e.g., welfare practices and education systems in other European countries are also more critical of how the welfare system functions in Finland. They do not just accept that things are great as they are, but neither do they take the services for granted. Not taking things for granted also makes them more appreciative in some ways. Having lived in different countries is overwhelmingly seen by the interviewees as something positive and eye-opening. Similarly, Oddou et al. (2013, 259) found in their research that many of the individuals that they interviewed had gained a greater sensitivity to other worldviews during their migration experience. This relates to what interviewee Dmitri notes: "*I also tell Finns that they have to go abroad and then they can compare and learn to value their own country and systems."* (Dmitri, 50y., language teacher.) Based on his own experiences and gained knowledge, he is encouraging Finns to go abroad to be able to put into perspective their own system.

The following figure summarises what social remittances circulating through transnational social ties between Finland and Russia are like, i.e., their content, focusing on welfare-related themes. Referring to Boccagni & Decimo (2013), the social remittances are illustrated as a suitcase of immaterial goods brought back by migrants that can have very diverse contents

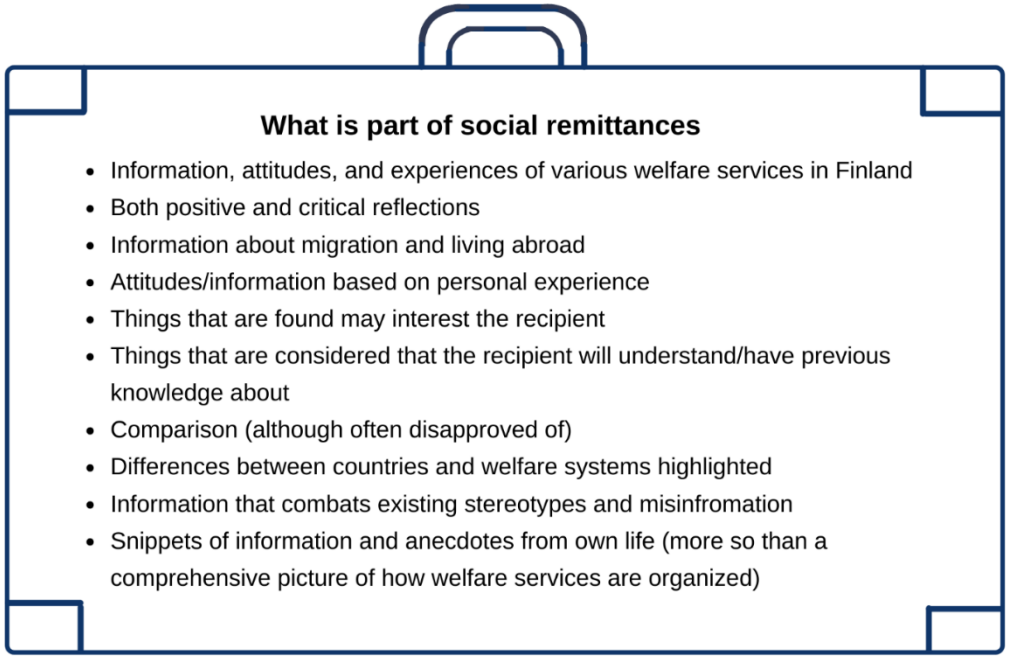

Figure 13 Suitcase with social remittances

6.1.10 Sending of Economic Remittances

During the interviews, the migrants were asked about the **economic remittances** that they transmit to their country of origin, i.e., the money and goods that they send to family and friends. Although social remittances are the main focus of the research, the sending of economic remittances also reveals important information about the migrants' background, and especially their socioeconomic position.

Previous research has found that migrants from Russia living in Finland sometimes support their family members in Russia financially (see e.g., Davydova-Minguet 2020). Most of the interviewees for this research note, however, that they **have not sent money** to their family or friends in Russia. Similar results have been found by Williams & Aktoprak (2010) who report that the sending of economic remittances is not very common among Russian migrants living in EU countries nor is it found important (Williams & Aktoprak 2010, 46.) Only a few interviewees for this research note that they have at times irregularly sent their parents some money as economic support. Interviewee Marina, whose children from her previous marriage are living in Russia, for example notes: *"Well sometimes I help my daughter. She lives alone and sometimes she does not have an income and she has two children, and sometimes rarely I help her."* (Marina, 62y., unemployed.) Besides sending money, sometimes providing financial support can however also occur in the form of paying medical bills or other payments on behalf of family members. Interviewee Tatyana notes: *"Well, I do sometimes help my parents: I pay for their medical bills or medicine."* (Tatyana, 53y., finance secretary.)

The **reason that most of the interviewees are not sending economic remittances** mainly seems to have to do with their family members in Russia not needing money. Interviewee Irina describes: *"No, luckily they have income at the moment. So, I do not have to support them. But for example, with my father's operation we are trying to insist that we also participate in this money, we just have to find a way to push this money ha ha*." (Irina, 30y., PhD student.) This again reflects that most migrants from Russia coming to Finland seem to come from middle-income backgrounds. Another factor that is affecting Russians not sending money to their family has to do with the migrants not feeling that they earn enough money to send away (see similar findings by Pöllänen 2013c, 16). Interviewee Olga notes: *"No, unfortunately I couldn't earn that much ha ha. So, I have never sent. It is usually my mom who sent me or my dad who sends me money ha ha."* (Olga, 23y., PhD researcher.) This often has to do with their labour market position in Finland, which is often not good or stable. One interviewee recounts that she does not prefer to send money to her family in Russia because this would give them the idea that she has a lot of money which would lead to them asking for more. Some of those who have send money note that they have found it somewhat difficult due to bureaucratic regulations.

Previous scholars have noted that sending money can enhance the relative social position of the sender and it tends to grant them some authority. This means that through the sending of economic remittances migrants can also enhance the reception of social remittances, and that economic and social remittances are in some contexts linked together. (Vari-Lavoisier 2014, 21.) In light of this, the fact that the interviewees for this research do generally not engage in sending economic remittances is interesting. Based on the data, the acceptance of social remittances sent by the interviewees is thus generally not boosted by economic remittances, in this context. This could however be different with a different sample of migrants from Russia. The interviewees do however recognize that being wealthy can or could have an effect on the reception of social remittances (discussed in chapter 6.4.2).

Several interviewees for this research bring forth that **their parents have sent them money to Finland to support them**. This illustrates that remittances can sometimes be reverse (see similar findings by Cingolani & Vietti 2020) and also that the social protection of migrants is built not only in a national context according to national welfare provision but also transnationally (see Levitt et al., 2017). This is most common among those interviewees that have come to Finland as students. The fact that economic and material remittances are sent both ways illustrates the circular nature of remittances. This finding is also in line with that of Jakobson et al. (2012, 183) who find, among Estonian migrants in Finland, that financial and material remittances move equally in both directions. In both the Russian and the Estonian case, remittances are thus not only transmitted from the more affluent country to the less affluent one.

Instead of money, many of the interviewees however note that they have **sent or brought with them goods,** mostly food, to Russia. Especially dairy goods and candy seem to be popular. Generally, the goods are in the form of various souvenirs or presents and should perhaps not be seen as remitting. Interviewee

Kiril, who usually goes to Russia once a year, describes: "*No, I have not sent or received money, but when I go to Russia, I buy a lot of presents: fish, tea, sweets from Panda* [= Finnish candy brand]*, small things.*" (Kiril, 55 y., student.) This also occurs the other way around, so that when the interviewees visit Russia, they bring with them, to their Finnish acquaintances, Russian sweets, and food. However, some interviewees also note that when visiting Russia, they bring with them medicines, electronic goods, and household products. Some interviewees note that in Russia their acquaintances have the idea that goods in Finland are better quality, which is why they want them. One interviewee, Sonya, notes that this is still reminiscent of the USSR time, when products that were brought to the Soviet Union were often of second-class quality: "*It is from the USSR times, that European stuff is better, and for example my third cousin believes, I seriously do not understand but I have to help, that medicines from Russia are bad. So, she asks me to bring medicine from Finland. According to her the dishwashing liquid is bad, so she asks me to bring Fairy* [= dishwashing brand]*, because the Fairy which is in Russia and the Fairy, which is in Finland, they are totally different.*" (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.)

Although most goods are brought as gifts, **some are also considered necessary in Russia** which is why they are provided. Interviewee Larisa for example brings up that since the maternity package that she received in Finland included such good quality items she has after using them send these to her friends and family to Russia. She describes: "*The products last and many families can still use them. We try to help in such a way because we know that they are good and in Russia they are bad.*" (Larisa, 31y., nurse.) Another interviewee, Anya, notes that when she visits Russia, she usually takes with her bags of clothes, which she together with her family has gathered from Finnish second-hand shops, to donate to homeless people who are in need in Russia. The migrants do not always deliver the goods personally. Since there is so much sojourning between Russia and Finland, goods are sometimes given to friends or couriers who deliver them to Russia.

6.2 Transmission of social remittances: the transnational connections through which social remittances are transmitted

After social remittances are created, they need to be transferred for social remitting to occur. As noted in chapter 3.2, the transferring of social remittances can occur through various channels, namely through different forms of communication from afar, visits and return migration. This chapter will focus on the role that each of these channels have in transmitting the previously described social remittances from the perspective of migrants from Russia living in Finland. This requires a thorough look at the transnational communication that the interviewees maintain. Transnational contacts are looked at from the perspective of with who (chapter 6.2.1), how (chapter 6.2.2), and how often migrants (6.2.3) are in contact with transnationally. Also, the migrants´ visits to Russia (chapter

6.2.4) and their acquaintances´ visits to Finland (6.2.5) are consider as part of this. The analysis will consider how using different communication channels impacts the content of social remittances. Furthermore, also the possibility of moving back to Russia is considered as a source of potential "brain gain/circulation" (chapter 6.2.6), which also relates to the extent of efforts by Russian officials that exist to bringing emigrants back to Russia (chapter 6.2.7). In the final subchapter of this part (6.2.8), a closer look is provided into how the transmission of social remittances in practice occurs during the transnational communication through describing, discussing, showing, and comparing.

6.2.1 The recipients of social remittances

Who migrants maintain transnational contact with determines who the potential recipients of the direct interpersonal social remittances are. The more contact there is between the country of settlement and the country of origin, the more potential there is for exchange of ideas and practices (Levitt 1998, 930). All the interviewees recount being regularly **in contact with several individuals living in Russia**. Having contact to at least one individual living in Russia was also a pre-requisite during the selection of interviewees. Most of the interviewees are in contact with their family members and relatives living in Russia. Maintaining communication with **parents** is especially common. Communication with parents is also comparatively frequent, often daily. Interviewee Maria, who moved to Finland for work 1,5 years ago, notes: "*We have common interest and they* [= her parents] *are my closest friends. We communicate a lot – –. I regularly call them: both my father and my mother speak with me, and I speak with them. I make usually two calls: in the morning and in the evening*" (Maria, 45y., lecturer.) Such frequent communication indicates that there are many opportunities to transmit social remittances. Especially the importance and frequency in communication with one's **mother** is emphasised by many of the interviewees, indicating that mothers may have a special role in the process of social remittances. Interviewee Anna, a young migrant who moved to Finland alone to study right after finishing high school in Russia, notes: *"With mom we typically connect more frequently, so we write some small things to each other every day like 'Good morning darling' and we talk quite a lot like 2–3 hours maybe 2 or 3 times a week."* (Anna, 19y., student.) Frequent communications can thus take the form of both small-talk and short messages as well as lengthy conversations. Those interviewees who have children in Russia report being very actively engaged with them.

The interviews indicate that contacts with **siblings** and **friends** are also frequent but often not as frequent as with parents. Interviewee Olga, who came to Finland to study 2 years ago, notes: *"I am mostly in contact with my mom, like every single day, and with acquaintances and friends it is more seldom, like it is usually texting, maybe once in two weeks."* (Olga, 23y., PhD researcher.) Communication with siblings and friends often takes also other forms than communication with parents: while communication with parents is often in the form of calls (with e.g., Skype or Messenger) contact with siblings and friends is more often in the form

of messages on social media such as VKontake [7] and Facebook, Viber, or WhatsApp. This is interesting, since the platform of communication has a role in determining the content of social remittances. The role of messages and calls in transmitting social remittances can be seen as somewhat different from each other: talking enables discussing and describing things more comprehensively, whereas messages are often shorter and thus more limited.

While some of the interviewees also at times call their friends, this happens less often than with their family members. Interviewee Irina, who has been in Finland for 7 years, notes that she usually calls her friends only if something has happened and there is something specific to discuss: *"Well I have quite a few good close friends in Russia, but we do not keep in touch all the time. It is not that we call on Skype every week, rather occasionally actually. We chat, especially when something happens."* (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) This last sentence of the quotation especially illustrates that in the case of some migrants, social remittances may be related to special events especially, instead of things that are considered normal or everyday. The out of ordinary aspects of live in Finland, which are often considered either more positive or negative, may thus get over-emphasized among some interviewees and their acquaintances.

Besides family members and friends, some of the interviewees are also in contact with previous or current **colleagues** living in Russia. As noted by Järvinen-Alenius et al. (2010, 201), migrants may also transfer ideas, knowledge, and practices through their work, which may also be about work, i.e., occupational remittances (Alenius 2016, 279). The analysis indicates that this also happens among the interviewed migrants for this research. Interviewee Karina, who worked as a language teacher in Russia, for example notes: *"I tell my former colleagues from Russia about the differences, as the educational systems differ. Yes, I have told much about work and study."* (Karina, 55y., student.) Interviewee Dmitri, who is a Russian teacher, notes that besides visiting family and friends he goes to Russia to *"– – conferences or work-related trips. Mostly to St. Petersburg, Moscow, and less often to Petrozavodsk, and there I am in contact with colleagues."* (Dmitri, 50y., language teacher.) This illustrates that social remittances can emerge from professional activities and that migrants can organize their social remittances across professional lines, as part of their job routine for example through international travelling and networking (Isaakyan 2015, 28).

6.2.2 Communication from afar as a channels for remitting

Communication from afar stands for communication that does not happen face to face, but occurs instead through e.g., calls and messages. Communication from afar is one of the most central aspects through which social remittances can be transmitted. Therefore, it is important to consider how often, and with what method migrants maintain contact. This sets the basic parameters of the influence of social remittances, i.e., the direct sphere of influence.

[7] VKontakte is a Russian counterpart of Facebook, and Russia is one of the few countries worldwide, where Facebook is not the leading social network site (Lonkila et al. 2020).

Overall, the interviewees find that it is relatively **easy to stay in contact** with their acquaintances living in Russia. This strongly relates to the commonness of **internet-based communication**. All the interviewees use the internet and various platforms that the internet enables in their communication. Using internet in communication is thus not something that only the younger migrants do. Interviewee Alina, an 85-year-old woman who is the oldest interviewee, and has been in Finland for 10 years, notes: *"They bought me a computer for my birthday and said: 'Now Grandmother has to go and learn how to use a computer'."* (Alina, 85y., pensioner.) (See Tiaynen-Qadir 2016 to read more on transnational grandparenting in Finnish-Russian context). Several of the younger interviewees also make a point that they use "modern communication technology" when they are in contact with their grandparents, whom they have taught how to use these communication methods. As Dekker and Engbersen (2014, 406–407) note, social media nowadays has a crucial role in maintaining ties and contacts with geographically disperse networks of family and friends. Especially popular among the interviewees are Skype calls, social media messages, and phone applications such as WhatsApp or Viber. These communication forms are seen as handy and inexpensive compared to text messages or regular phone calls. One interviewee describes how, in their family, they tend to put on Skype for a long time and just keep doing their everyday activities, and this way they share their everyday life and are present with family in Russia (see similar findings by Davydova-Minguet & Pöllänen 2020, 112).

It seems that older forms of communication, such as **mailed letters or regular phone calls, have been almost completely replaced by internet-based communication**. None of the interviewees describe sending handwritten letters any longer. In this sense, transnational communication has changed a lot from what it used to be. In fact, also sending emails is quite uncommon among the interviewees. Some of the older migrants, who have lived in Finland for a long time, describe that before they used to send emails more, but nowadays they have been replaced by shorter messages sent by phone. Interviewee Tatyana, who has been in Finland for 18 years, notes: *"In the beginning I used them* [= emails], *but not now. Now it is much easier to stay in contact through Viber, WhatsApp or Skype."* (Tatyana, 53y., finance secretary) On a similar note, interviewee Marina, who has been in Finland for 14 years, makes the point that she uses emails only rarely when she has to write something longer: "*Nowadays, I use WhatsApp. It is free of charge to call with it. Sometimes I write but these are more like short notices on WhatsApp. If I have to send something longer, I use emails."* (Marina, 62y., unemployed.)

The fact that **longer letters have been replaced with more frequent but shorter messages** is also interesting from the viewpoint of social remittances: Although shorter messages might not enable the transmission of deep insights and complicated ideas or information, the fact that they occur regularly enables transmitting influences more frequently. Some of the interviewees note that they send their parents several short messages each day, including **pictures**. One interviewee notes that if she wants to explain something in more detail, she usually sends internet links or pictures. As the saying goes: a picture says more than a thousand words. By sending pictures, migrants can share events from their

life with their acquaintances living in Russia. Some also note that they send pictures to show family members in Russia how their kids are doing and growing in Finland. Sharing pictures likely contributes to the understanding that non-migrants can have of Finland and the life that migrants are living. However, welfare-related topics, such as social security and pensions, are issues which are unlikely as such to be themes of pictures. Moreover, we should also keep in mind that although the internet has developed into a social medium that enables users to actively produce media content as well as consume it, communication on social media also has its limitations and can provide users with false or unrealistic information (Dekker & Engbersen 2014, 401–402, 404). The unrealistic picture formed through social remittances is discussed more thoroughly in chapter 6.1.5. Based on the analysis, in future research the role of pictures could be studied more specifically, for example by gathering pictures as research data.

Due to the opportunities provided by social media applications, individuals can now also belong to **discussion groups**, such as WhatsApp groups, that include several friends or family members. Several of the interviewees discuss being part of such groups and using them regularly in their communication. This enables the migrants to stay as part of their social groups. Interviewee Andrei, who has only been in Finland for a few months, notes: *"With friends in St. Petersburg every day we are like writing something in the common chat."* (Andrei, 29y., exchange student.) It seems that "regular" text messages sent via the phone operator are saved more for special occasions such as birthdays, at least according to some of the interviewees: *"Text messages I only use with my friends: 'Happy Birthday', 'Happy New Year' and 'How are you'. These kinds of small messages."* (Anastasia, 36y., student.) In general, birthdays, festivities and traditions are brought up as special times of communication. For these occasions even post cards may be sent, which otherwise are not brought up by the interviewees in relation to communication with acquaintances. Interviewee Olga notes: *"Well actually I love sending post cards to my friends and to family, but it is like for Christmas for example or for Easter. It is not every week or something."* (Olga, 23y., PhD researcher.)

Some of the interviewees have relatives and acquaintances, with whom they maintain contact, **living in other countries than Russia and Finland**. This suggests that social remittances do not just circulate between country of origin and country of settlement. Instead of considering social remittances in binary terms, a more transnational approach might be useful, as noted by Järvinen-Alenius et al. (2010, 196). For example, one of the interviewees has family living in Spain, whereas another interviewee has acquaintances in the UK and another in Canada, with whom they maintain contact and discuss Finnish society.

6.2.3 Does transnational communication last?

Based on the interviews, it can be noted that communication is **most frequent immediately after migration**. Especially the younger interviewees note that when they first arrived in Finland they were in contact very frequently, often at least daily, with their parents living in Russia. After spending more time in

Finland, the frequency of contact has decreased. Interviewee Sonya, who originally came to Finland to study 5 years ago, describes that when she went to university, contact with their parents was more frequent but now it has become less, which she prefers: *"With parents, when I was in university it was daily, but it was actually bothering me, and it was difficult. So now I am trying to talk with them like once or twice per week with my parents and with my sister it is about the same, but because we are always busy, I am working and she is with kids, so I think twice per week we talk."* (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) This trend can also be noted among the other interviewees and some remark that once their life started being more established in Finland, and once they started having more everyday activities, there was less time for contact with family members in Russia.

For some, the **time zone difference** between Finland and the area where their acquaintances live in Russia also poses a challenge. Interviewee Galina, whose family lives in central Russia, far away from Finland, notes*: "When I just came here it was everyday calls. With Skype and everything. But with time, it is like getting less and less because we do not have time or in my situation there is a 5-hour time difference."* (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) This exemplifies that geographical distance can impair the transmission of social remittances.

The **decrease in frequency of communication** does not just occur with family members but also with friends and other acquaintances. The interviewees see having less contact as something natural which tends to happen after time passes. Some of them underline that nothing dramatic has been related to this. Interviewee Vera, who moved to Finland seven years ago with her husband, notes: *"I could say that I am not in contact with everyone. We have not had a conflict or anything, but people just disappear from your life"* (Vera, 37y., special needs assistant at school.)

Concerning social remittances, the decrease in frequency of communication is interesting: if communication is at its height in the beginning of living in Finland, this means that also the opportunities to transmit new ideas and information is highest. However, it is not as simple as this: the analysis reveals that in the beginning, communication is often formed around everyday issues and discussing one's new surroundings. Migrants are still attuned to everything new that stands out, and the first impressions on things are also discussed with contacts in Russia. At this time however, migrants might not have as much deeper insight into the Finnish society and its welfare system yet. This knowledge increases after time. Those migrants who stay longer in the country of settlement often have a deeper socialization process (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009). When migrants have stayed in the country for a longer time, the welfare system of the country of settlement may become self-evident to them, and also the differences between the country of settlement and the country of origin may not seem as blatantly visible anymore. Thus, the information and ideas transmitted also change after more time is spent in Finland.

However, besides the decrease in frequency of communication some of the interviewees also point out that they are **no longer in any contact** with some of their friends living in Russia. Communication with some acquaintances is lost due to changing life situations. As interviewee Galina, who was a high school

student in Russia before moving to Finland 4 years ago, puts it: "*With my friends from high school I have lost already many people, and it is not only because I have moved, but because of like growing up and everything. But yeah of course when you are in another country, and they are all there it is still different.*" (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) Communication with others on the other hand is discontinued because migrants **find it hard to share their life** in Finland with them. One of the interviewees, Anastasia who lives in Finland with her family and is currently studying, states that when she talks about her life in Finland, her friends tend to get jealous of how well everything is: "*Now that I have lived for a longer time in Finland some of my friends have gone. I cannot just write to them because everyone has their own life and for example when I tell them that my husband got a permanent job they are like: 'Well then they live in Finland, and they have everything good'* [= imitates a jealous tone used by friends]." (Anastasia, 36y., student.) This confirms what Teferra (2005, 241) notes about feelings of envy and jealousy sometimes negatively effecting the influence that the diaspora can have. Another interviewee, Yulia, who has been in Finland for three years, brought forward during the interview that she has not stayed in contact with friends living in Russia because they cannot understand her new life in Finland: "*Now, I do not practically communicate with any friends in Russia, because they simply do not understand me.*" (Yulia, 44y., unemployed.) It thus seems that migration and living in a new different environment might also form barriers between friends. When contact with friends is lost completely, also the opportunity to transmit ideas and knowledge is severed. However, based on the interviews it seems that in these cases the acquaintances might also not be willing to accept any new ideas, norms or knowledge coming from the migrant, even if there was communication. The finding is thus that although the influence of migration on the society of origin can remain continues, it is dependent on the transnational linkage, which may in some cases stop from existing. This finding exemplifies that remittances are not cost-free solutions to potential change: Besides being separated from near and dear ones, the cost of transmitting social remittances can also manifest in severed relationships. The acquaintances' reactions and receptivity to social remittances will be further discussed in chapter 6.3.4.

Although communication tends to become less frequent and, in some cases, stop completely, it should still be noted that many of the migrants who have been in Finland for longer times are still very actively involved with their family members and acquaintances in Russia. Like with all communication, this matter is also largely dependent on personal preference. Most of the interviewees described staying actively in contact with their friends living in Russia and only some note having difficulty with this. Moreover, several of the interviewees note that they have during their stay in Finland even made new connections to individuals living in Russia. Interviewee Sergei, who moved to Finland as a small child with his family, notes: "*I go to Russia maybe 4–5 times a year and every time I am in contact with acquaintances and my network there has grown all the time and through these people, I have met new acquaintances – –.*" (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) Leaving Russia does not mean that one could not form new relations with people living in Russia. Through visits individuals can expand their network of

social remittance recipients. Some interviewees have for example gotten acquainted with new friends or colleagues living in Russia, while visiting Russia, as the quote above demonstrates.

6.2.4 Visits to Russia as a channel for social remittances

Besides communication from afar, also **visits are important** for the transmission of social remittances. They are, for example, important for language and cultural learning and maintaining ties to the country of origin and the acquaintances living there. Visits can also have a role in enabling migrants and their acquaintances to observe and learn everyday practices of the local communities. (Alenius 2018, 48, 50.) Moreover, as Isaakyan and Triandafyllidou (2017, 2800) note, transnational travels allow migrants to have a better control over the distribution of their social remittances in the community of origin. Communication through visits is regular and common among most interviewees. The interviewees visit Russia, and they are visited in Finland by friends and family members. This means that in addition to communication from afar, **visits form a steady and viable pathway for the exchange of social remittances**: they are an important channel for the spread of information, attitudes, and norms. One interviewee, Olga, who visits Russia several times a year, in fact notes that usually she only discusses Finland when she visits Russia during holidays, and not when she is in contact with acquaintances with messages: *"Well, when I am here and I use text messages, we do not usually discuss Finland. It is usually when I come home like for holidays or for summer then we discuss Finland. When we talk on Viber or on WhatsApp it is usually about day-to-day life: How it is going with the thesis, how is the weather or this kind of things."* (Olga, 23y., PhD researcher.) This illustrates the role of social reciprocity in social remittance.

Almost all the interviewees recount **visiting Russia** regularly, in many cases once or several times a year. Interestingly, some describe once a year as being often, whereas others note that they *only* visit Russia once a year, which they do not find often. For most, visits occur around holiday seasons, such as during winter holiday or summer holiday. Because most of the interviewees come from areas in Russia which are close to Finland, they are able to visit their family and friends regularly. When they visit, most go to Russia by car or train. Figure 14 summarises the frequency of visits to Russia by the interviewees.

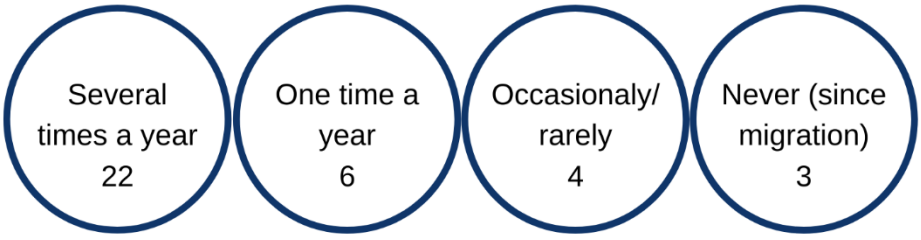

Figure 14 Frequency of visits to Russia

The interviewees report that when they visit Russia, they mainly **go to where their families live**. Some regularly visit St. Petersburg, which is relatively close to Finland and easy to reach, even though they do not have family there. If family members live too far away many find it impossible to visit them at their home regularly. As a solution, some relate meeting family members and friends in St. Petersburg. Interviewee Galina, whose family lives far away in Central Northern Russia, for example describes: "*I try to go to Russia maybe once in two-three months. To St. Petersburg and not in my home place. And all my friends are there. So pretty often. – – And my family, I might see them personally like once a year in the best case and normally all of them separately.*" (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) She does not visit her family where they live but instead, they come and meet her in St. Petersburg.

Only a few of the interviewees note that they **do not visit Russia** or at least have not visited for several years. The reasons for this mainly have to do with family living too far away and/or not having enough money to travel. This exemplifies the aspect noted by Portes (2009) and Mata-Codesal (2011) that some migrants have more opportunities to visit than others. Especially those migrants with more financial resources are able to circulate more freely between countries and thus have more opportunity to transmit social remittances, at least through the channels of visits. None of the interviewees let know being restricted by their legal status to visit Russia and none disclose being afraid that they would not be able to return to Finland if they visited Russia. This mainly highlights the fact that no irregular migrants were interviewed for this research.

Some of the migrants inform that it is **hard for them not being able to visit their family**, and they note that it is especially difficult for their parents living in Russia when they do not visit. Interviewee Yulia, who is unemployed, for example describes that she cannot afford to go to Russia regularly, which is why she finds it better not to go at all. Yulia's family lives on the opposite side of Russia from Finland, which would make visiting expensive and difficult. In her case, visiting Russia would depend on her finding a job in Finland which would then financially make it possible for her to visit her parents in Russia: "*Of course, I would like someday to go there, to my motherland, as my parents are there. Oh well, on the one hand I want to, on the other I don't want to, as I know it will be a one-time visit and nobody knows when next time, I will be able to come. It can roughly speaking kill my parents: they are old and for me it is also morally hard, so it is very difficult. – – Until I find a job, I can't afford to go anywhere, I cannot afford to support my family. So, all my thoughts are concentrated on getting a job. Unfortunately, it is very difficult.*" (Yulia, 44y., unemployed.) Her example illustrates that although Finland and Russia are neighbouring countries, the distances between acquaintances can still be vast, especially because Russia is such a huge country, but also due to financial restrictions. Because of this, social and care relations are in some cases disrupted and it also makes the transmission of social remittances through visits more difficult. Interestingly, in relation to social and care relations, financial restrictions are emphasised more often by the interviewees, whereas bureaucratic restrictions are not brought up by the interviewees as much. This is in contrast to findings made by for example Näre (2020) who has identified in her research

among asylum seekers in Finland, that especially bureaucratic bordering related to e.g., family reunification, visas and residence permits are obstructing transnational care relations. This difference in findings likely is related to the fact that the interviewees for this research are not asylum seekers and furthermore all have undisputed residence permits to stay in Finland, which puts them bureaucratic-wise in a less precarious position.

The **reasons for visiting Russia** mainly have to do with **meeting friends and family members**: "*I go to Russia 4 times a year. My mother and my son live there. I try to visit them regularly. My mother is older than 80 and she lives alone. Of course, I worry about her, and I want to see my son*." (Karina, 55y., student.) Karina is from St. Petersburg, where most of her family members live, which means that the distance from Finland is in comparison not huge. Other reasons for visiting Russia include work-related reasons, taking care of official papers and documents, teaching children Russian and making sure that they get experience in speaking the language. None of the interviewees describe going to Russia specially to attempt and change how their friends and family think about certain issues, such as the migrants, their migration, their life abroad or the country of settlement. This seems to be rather a "side product" of the visits, but not their intended purpose. Interviewee Maria, who works as a language teacher, for example notes that she goes: "*Mainly to Moscow to see my parents. It is mainly visiting. Also, we have an annual trip with our students to St. Petersburg, so it is also a different direction*." (Maria, 45y., lecturer.) Her reasons for visiting Russia are thus also related to her employment. One of the interviewees, Sergei, who moved to Finland when he was very young and who has already lived in Finland for 26 years, describes that visiting Russia has an important role for him to renew his identity and he uses the visits to soak up information about Russia and to keep up his Russian language skills: "*I go to Russia of course to meet acquaintances and to meet my grandfather and other relatives. Then I of course go just to have a holiday. – – Big places like St. Petersburg always offer something new to see and to do and thus I go there to refresh, and then there are nostalgic reasons, because I feel that it is my home in some ways. I also feel in some ways that I have to go there to dig up my own identity again. – – I feel that it is important for my identity that I go there to listen to Russian, to look at places, and to have a look at society.*" (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) This example makes evident that during visits, migrants may pick up up-to-date information about life and welfare in Russia that can then be retold in Finland, which illustrates the multidirectional nature of information shared by migrants. This is also an indication that migrants may remain influenced by their country of origin to various degrees after migration. According to some interviewees this enables them to remain "Russian".

Some of the interviewees note that they used to visit Russia more often previously but that this has decreased due to e.g., illness, old age, or wanting to visit other places as well. Interviewee Galina, who goes to Russia c. every 3 months, for example notes: *"It was much more often earlier, but then I got the idea that actually it costs me the same to go to some other country. So why should I go to Russia every time. So, I prefer to travel. But anyhow, I had some things to do in Russia,*

with bureaucracy, to make some papers, do some documents and to see my friends, so I needed to go to Russia." (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.)

As well as the migrants' own economic or health situation, also the **situation in Russia among family members** influences the frequency of visits a lot. Some of the interviewees bring forth that when their parents have been ill or undergone surgery, they have been in contact and visited them more often. Interviewee Tatyana, whose parent live in Russia close to Finland, describes: "*For half a year now, my father has been ill and I have had to go, especially in the autumn, almost every month to Russia. – – Before that, they* [= parents] *could manage on their own and I had to visit only a couple of times a year."* (Tatyana, 53y., finance secretary.) On a similar note, interviewee Irina, who is a PhD student in Finland, describes: *"Like right now my father is in hospital. He had an operation yesterday, we called before that, and we also chatted more before that than normal."* (Irina, 30y., PhD student.) This indicates the responsibility that the interviewees feel for taking care of their parents and the challenges that transnational care relations may pose (Also see quotation from interviewee Yulia on page 141 on this topic). This also relates to intergenerational dependency being common in Russia and adult children being obliged to assist their ageing parents (Davydova-Minguet & Pöllänen 2020). (To read more about transnational care relations in a Russian-Finnish context see Pöllänen 2013a and 2013c; Pöllänen & Davydova-Minguet 2017; Davydova-Minguet & Pöllänen 2020).

Some of the interviewees stated that they have **brought Finnish acquaintances with them** when they have visited Russia. This has provided practical opportunities for Finns to learn about Russia and to pick up new ideas (See similar finding by Alenius 2016, 279 in a Finnish-Estonian context.) Interviewee Sergei, who visits Russia 4–5 times a year, describes: "*And one reason for visiting is that I bring my friends and acquaintances there. I am kind of a tour guide. I offer them a different picture of Russia, especially St. Petersburg."* (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) Similar experiences are also discussed by other interviewees, especially among the younger interviewees. It seems that the interviewees want to influence the image that Finns get about Russia during their visits. Similar findings have been made by White & Grabowska (2019, 43), in a Polish context, according to which migrants emphasise that visits to Poland persuade foreigners to adopt favourable impressions of the country.

6.2.5 The effect of acquaintances visiting Finland on social remittances

Besides the interviewees visiting Russia, they also let know that their family members and friends have **visited them in Finland.** Especially when friends and family visit Finland, they are confronted with cultural differences and new practices. Although they do often not experience welfare-related practices, such as the social security system, directly during their visit, they do receive a lot of practical information and experiences of Finland and what it is like to live in Finland. This information is then reinforced by the stories, anecdotes, and information provided by their acquaintances living in Finland about their life and experiences in Finland, both during the visits as well as during communication

from afar. Through visits subsequent social remittances become rooted differently since they build upon already existing ideas and information.

Of the interviewees, 28 note that they have had visitors in Finland from Russia, whereas 7 interviewees note that they have not had visitors. Generally, family members and especially parents of the interviewees visit Finland more regularly, whereas friends and siblings visit unregularly and less often. When acquaintances do visit, they generally tend to stay for 1–2 weeks. Some interviewees note, however, that at times their family members have stayed with them for longer periods of time.

Especially the **things that are done during visits** in Finland have an effect on the way that social remittances can be transmitted. Interesting, in regard to this, is that several interviewees emphasise that when family members and friends visit, they usually stay at the interviewee's place and **do regular everyday things**. This offers the visitors an opportunity to observe the everyday life of their acquaintance in Finland. Especially if visits are regular or the guests stay for longer times, they become part of everyday life. This then forms the general setting from which visitors can pick up influences. Time to catch up and discuss things is especially valued during the visits. Interviewee Maria notes that her parents have visited Finland and when they come *"We just hmm stay at home in the evening sometimes and just talk, ordinary way of life."* (Maria, 45y., lecturer.) Similarly, interviewee Tatyana describes that when her parents visit: "– – *we do regular stuff. Nothing special. They are at home and go for walks. Just relaxing. Sometimes we go to the stores but nothing special."* (Tatyana, 53y., finance secretary.) The fact that nothing special happens during the visits is also underlined by interviewee Sofia, whose parents and friends have visited her in Finland: "*I cannot say that we do something special. Unfortunately. It is like the normal usual everyday life: we can go for a walk together, but it is not like we are travelling or something."* (Sofia, 25y., student.) The interviewee explains that when her parents visit, they have to travel a long way to get to her in Finland, after which they are usually tired and want to rest before having to travel back. The visits made by family and friends thus mostly stem from a wish to meet the person who has migrated and centre around spending time with them, instead of from a want to visit Finland specifically or see new places.

Besides social reasons, some of the interviewees note that their family members have visited them because of practical issues. One interviewee notes that her father came to Finland to change her car's winter tires. Another interviewee notes that her parents have visited her in Finland to help her take care of her son, while she had to study. These examples yet again illustrate the proximity of Russia and Finland. The examples also illustrate that at times migrants feel that they have to rely on their family members in Russia to get needed support, instead of e.g., friends in Finland or the Finnish welfare state.

Although visits usually centre around everyday life, some of the interviewees also report organizing **special activities**: usually the first time when visitors come, they are introduced to the surrounding areas and sights. Interviewee Galina notes that when her parents visited: *"I was showing them the city. Like look at this and that and this, – – We have been just walking around. Enjoying*

the nature. Going to the places, eating Finnish food and doing all this touristic stuff." (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) Sometimes visitors are shown different cities in Finland. It seems that the interviewees find it important to **show their country of settlement in a favourable light** and are satisfied when guests like what they see and experience. When friends visit, more activities are organized and trips arranged, compared to when parents visit. Some of the younger interviewees note, however, that Finnish cities are small compared to Russian big cities and they do thus not seem interesting to their friends. The preference to do things in nature with guests is emphasised by the interviewees, compared to for example doing cultural things. Several interviewees note that their guests have especially enjoyed Finnish nature, and this has also sparked social remittances regarding e.g., nature preservation. Interviewee Dmitri for example notes*: "For example, nature is something that we discuss a lot. – – I always try to tell them that in Finland they do not just talk about preserving nature, but it is a part of life and taken seriously."* (Dmitri, 50y., language teacher.) Similar findings have been made by Silfver (2010), who found in her research that Russian migrants appreciated the clean nature and the closeness to nature in Finland (Silfver 2010, 139). Some however also recount doing cultural things, such as visiting museums and concerts. Shopping also seems to be a central part of the guests' visits (See Ratilainen & Gurova 2014 for information on Russians as consumers in Finland). Interviewee Anastasia describes that her acquaintances are especially interested in visiting sales: "*And always to Prisma and K-Market* [= large local supermarkets]– –. *And guests always come when there are sales, sales, sales. And they are always asking me to be a translator for them ha ha. And I translate and help them because they need the tax-free paperwork done. And also second-hand stores!"* (Anastasia, 36y., student.) According to the interviewees, many Finnish products, such as out-door clothing and electronics, are valued for their quality and preferred over similar Russian products, which relates to previous findings according to which 58 % of Russians considering high quality a typical feature of Finnish products (Finnish Foreign Ministry - country brand report 2021).

Several of the interviewees note that especially the visits that their acquaintances have made to Finland, **have impacted how acquaintances see Finland** and what they know about it. Interviewee Ivan, an exchange student who is expecting guests from Russia for example notes. "*I think it will expand their like circle of knowing Finland because they have seen it by themselves as well and they have the idea what it looks like."* (Ivan, 21y., exchange student.) Visiting Finland personally is seen as having a stronger effect than hearing about it from acquaintances living in Finland or from the Russian media. Interviewee Igor, whose spouse lives in Finland but parents, relatives, and other acquaintances live in Russia, notes on this: "*Well those who have visited kind of get it in my opinion* [= what life is like in Finland], *but those who have not visited are influenced by the impression they get through television and they do not necessarily believe what we tell them because the television provides them with a kind of overall picture."* (Igor, 31y., translator and consult.) When friends and family have visited Finland, it also becomes easier for migrants to explain what life is like in Finland, since their acquaintances already have some idea and thus the migrants do not have to

describe something completely unknown. Interviewee Maria, who has during her 1,5 year stay in Finland already had frequent visitors, further notes that: "*First of all, I must say that they came to see it* [= Finland]*, so I am not describing it from like scratches, from nothing. So, they understand quite well how it looks like and they visit me, and I also come to see them.*" (Maria, 45y., lecturer.) Visits thus have an effect on what is discussed with acquaintances and to what extent e.g., things regarding life in Finland have to be described, which illustrates that social remittances are rooted differently when a person has visited the country in question and has personal experience of it.

Although most of the interviewees have had family or friends visiting Finland, there are also some interviewees who have **not had visitors** from Russia or who have had visitors very rarely. The reasons for this mainly have to do with **family and friends living too far away and/or travelling to Finland being too expensive**. Interviewee Marina, who is married to a Finn but whose children from her previous marriage live in Russia, notes that her son has only been able to visit Finland once, because of it being expensive: "*Unfortunately, only my older son has been here and with his whole family. But that was about 8 years ago. Now it is too expensive to come here.*" (Marina, 62y., unemployed.) On a similar note, interviewee Yelena who is a widower and whose family and relatives live in Russia, states that it is especially the visa that is expensive: "*My oldest daughter has not been to Finland in three years because the visa is expensive. If you want to come to Finland, you need money.*" (Yelena, 69y., pensioner.) Money is however not the only issue, and some interviewees feel that their friends prefer to travel elsewhere, because they feel that there is not so much to see in Finland. Interviewee Olga, who has lived in Finland for 2 years and not had visitors from Russia yet, describes that her mother does not find Finland worth travelling to: "*No, like even yesterday I discussed it with my mom but she told me that it is too expensive and it is not like Italy where you can go around many museums and many historical stuff so she told me 'No I better stay* [= in Russia*]' ha ha.*" (Olga, 23y., PhD researcher.) Although the interviewees do not directly say that it bothers them when friends and family do not visit, these kinds of feelings can be detected during the interviews. Interviewee Aleksei notes: "*She* [= daughter of interviewee] *was in Finland only once. But she has visited many many countries: Norway, Israel, Denmark, and many many others. Taiwan. So, traveling yes, she likes to travel. Finland one time, only one time.*" (Aleksei, 71y., pensioner.) Finding a suitable time to receive visitors can also be difficult since on holidays many of the interviewees prefer to travel to Russia. One of the interviewees for notes that her friends would like to visit but they do not have enough vacation and when they have vacation in the summer, the interviewee herself is in Russia.

6.2.6 Moving back to Russia as an opportunity to transmit social remittances

Besides communication from afar and visits, **moving back to Russia forms a significant possibility for social remittances**. Instead of countries just losing their skilled and educated people through brain drain, transnationalism is thought to bring a new dimension to the discussion. "**Brain gain"** occurs, when

migrants move to another country e.g., to work or live or to study, enhance their knowledge and skills and, after a while, they return to their country of origin where they can put their new know-how to use (discussed in e.g., Olesen 2002; Opiniano & Castro 2006; Vertovec 2007; Skeldon 2008a, 11–13; Skeldon 2008b; Daugeliene & Marcinkeviciene 2009; Portes 2009, 14–15; Singh & Krishna 2015). In other words, when migrants return to their country of origin, they take with them the human capital which has been augmented in their country of settlement through education and work experience (Kapur 2010, 106). **Brain circulation** occurs in similar ways, except that it entails that migrants either move between various countries, or back and forth between their country of origin and a country of settlement. Knowledge is not static, and sometimes the receiving country may provide the experience necessary to enhance the migrant's skills (Brinkerhoff 2006, 15). The skills and technological knowledge acquired abroad can thus benefit the country of origin (Opiniano & Castro 2006, 79). The role that social remittances, in the form of brain gain or circulation, can have largely depends on the willingness of individuals to return (Kapur 2004, 372), on their ability to circulate (see chapter 2.3) and the ability of migrants to enhance their skills and gain new knowledge during migration. As noted by Pitkänen & Vartiainen (2020, 38–40), sometimes migrants are not able to enhance their professional skills in their country of settlement due to having to work in positions that do not match their education or previous work experience. In such situations, migrants' skills may even deteriorate during their stay in the country of settlement. Interviewee Tatyana (53y, finance secretary) for example notes that in Russia she used to work as an engineer, but since her migration to Finland she has not worked in this profession for 17 years, and because technology has changed so quickly, she could no longer work in this field in Russia. In this subchapter, the intentions of the interviewees moving back to Russia and in that way transmitting social remittances is analysed.

Most of the interviewees note that they do **not want to move back to Russia** or that they at least have no plans or intention to do so. Similar findings have been made by Williams and Aktoprak (2010) who have found that most of the Russian migrants in the EU interviewed in their research did not want to return to Russia (Williams & Aktoprak 2010, 27, 37). Only a few of the interviewees interviewed for this research describe that they have made plans to return to Russia and these were mostly among the students who are staying in Finland for a fixed time. Several of the student interviewees stated that they do not have an option and that they must return to Russia due to e.g., visa regulations. None of the interviewees have been or indicate that they in the future will be involved in circular migration between Russia and Finland (except for interviewee Sergei, see quotation on page 151). This finding is very different from that of Jakobson et al. (2012), regarding migrants from Finland's other neighbouring country, Estonia. The researchers found that circulation among Estonian migrants between Estonia and Finland is very common and that this circulation is an important part of forming a transnational social space. However, although Russia and Estonia are both neighbouring countries to Finland, unlike Russia, Estonia is an EU country,

which makes leaving and coming back a lot easier in bureaucratic terms. This illustrates the fact that circular migration is not possible for all migrants in a same way (see chapter 2.3), which then can obstruct the forming of transnational social spaces and through this hinder the effect that migration and migrants can have in sharing information, changing opinions, and brokering innovations. Figure 15 summarises the return intensions of the interviewees.

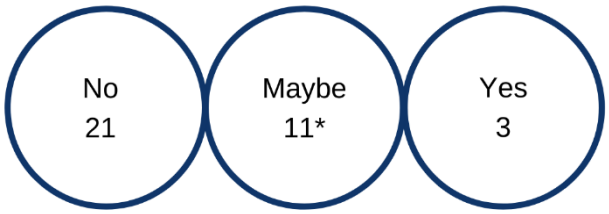

Figure 15 Intensions to return migrate to Russia

*All interviewees, except the exchange students noted that they would prefer not to migrate back to Russia but might have to do so if they cannot find work in Finland

For most interviewees, returning is **not their first option**: several interviewees describe that they will prefer to stay in Finland if they have the option to do so (see similar findings by Habti 2019). The option to stay in Finland is often related to the interviewees being able to **find work in Finland**. Many of the students note that if they find work or an internship, they will stay in Finland but otherwise they will have to go back to Russia. Interviewee Anna, who is a student at a university of applied studies in Finland, notes: *"If I migrate back, it would not be my choice, probably I would go because I could not find a job here and my resident permit is finished, and I have to go back because of the law."* (Anna, 19y., student.) Some of the younger interviewees who have come to Finland as students note that they would prefer to find work in their own field and that if they could not do so in Finland, they would consider moving back to Russia. Interviewee Irina, who is married to a Finn, describes that she would consider moving back if she did not find preferable employment: *"I don't want to do some useless job for the sake of being able to live here. So, if I could do something more sensible back home, I could consider moving back to Moscow or to St. Petersburg."* (Irina, 30y., PhD student.) Interviewee Olga, who is studying educational science, describes on similar lines: "*In Finland, in the fields of education, there is almost nothing* [= no employment opportunities]. *So, I am applying to abroad to other European countries. I do not know if I can find something but yeah, but maybe yes if there is something I can go to other countries or I can go back home. It really depends on the opportunities."* (Olga, 23y., PhD researcher.)

There are several **reasons** related by the interviewees **for them not wanting to return to Russia**. One central aspect is that the interviewees' lives are now in Finland, and they thus have no reason to go back. For many, this means that their close family members live in Finland, and that they are employed in Finland, which is why they would not leave. Interviewee Ulyana, who has been in Finland for 14 years and who is married to a Finn and has a child, notes: *"Well, because I*

started my independent adult life in Finland, I would not even know how to function in Russia, because right after my studies I moved here. Then I created my networks here, and spouse, and my child has started to grow here. I know how everything works here." (Ulyana, 34y., translator.) Also, children being accustomed to life in Finland and going to school in Finland, is seen as a reason for staying (see research by Laura Assmuth on the life of children in transnational families in a Finnish context), as well as being married to a Finnish husband. Interviewee Inga, who has been in Finland for 2 years and whose two small children are living in Finland, imparts: "*No, I am not planning. I like it here. My son was born here. And my daughter goes to school."* (Inga, 37y., student.) On similar lines, interviewee Sofia, who moved to Finland alone with her young son, notes: "*This might happen if I do not find job here. Like it might happen. But I would like to stay here, because of my son. Because I see that he is happy here and he has the experience of going to Russian day-care centre and it was not that good."* (Sofia, 25y., student.) Some interviewees note that their Finnish husbands would not cope in Russia because they do not speak the language and would not find work there.

Several interviewees also note that **Russia is close to Finland** and thus it is easy to visit and therefore they do not feel a need to migrate back to Russia: "*I don't need to move back to Russia because Russia is very close ha ha ha"* (Aleksei, 71y., pensioner). This of course is not the case for all Russians in Finland, since Russia is a huge country, but it reflects the situation of many. One of the interviewees, Dmitri, notes that he was not that Russian to begin with, because he came from Karelia and that he does thus not feel a need to return to Russia: "*I am from the Karelian part of Russia and I could say that I am therefore not a full Russian, because it is kind of different."* (Dmitri, 50y., language teacher.) In his experience, Karelia is something different from other parts of Russia and he, like many other interviewees, emphasises the closeness of Karelian parts of Russia and Finland. Several interviewees emphasise that in both the Karelian parts of Russia and in Finland nature is an important part of life. The similarities are seen as a reason for not returning to Russia.

Many of the interviewees emphasise the **problems in Russian society**, when asked about the possibility to return to live there. Problems with poverty, corruption and lack of management are brought up. Interviewee Anastasia notes: "*I do not want to, I don't. I have my father and mother in Russia, but I do not want to return, because when I drive to Russia the roads are bad, everything is sad and dirty, and I really only think that I want to go back home to Finland."* (Anastasia, 36y., student.) Similarly, interviewee Sonya, who is planning to apply for Finnish citizenship in 3–4 years, notes: "*I don't like the people there, I do not like the system there and for now it looks quite pathetic, and it is turning back to USSR times with this iron curtain and so and so. I do not want to go there."* (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) Because of her young age, she has however no experience of having lived in the Soviet Union. The fact that the interviewees do not want to move back can also be seen an indicator of them not seeing themselves as being able to change these things about Russian society through social remittances. The negative aspects of Russia are perceived as problems that cannot be solved (see further discussion in chapter 6.4). In addition, the values of some Russian individuals and the Russian lifestyle

in general are seen as reasons not to return to Russia by some of the interviewees. Some interviewees note that they have more liberal values than most living in Russia, which is why they would no longer fit in. Interviewee Galina, who did her tertiary education in Finland in logistics engineering, for example states: "*One of the reasons why I do not want to go back to Russia, is because I am a very liberal person myself and I am very different from typical Russians and thank god in Russia I am surrounded by people who are very liberal too. So, they never judge me. But I know that if I would go to Russia and tell about my lifestyle, at some points, I would be judged, because it is like they are very really old school.*" (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) The sentiment presented in this quotation relates to the idea of migrants being a **selective group and** could be seen as an indicator that those who migrate tend to be more liberal than those who stay. Staying/not migrating in the first place is the more conservative act. The results also confirm earlier findings according to which migration is for some a way to show their dissatisfaction by their feet (Hirschman, 1970; Triandafyllidou & Gropas 2014). Opting out is a way to deal with the problems in society. As discussed in chapter 2.4, this can have impact on the extent of migration-related change, since when more liberal voices exit, pressure to reform may decrease. This finding does support the critical perspective on migration induced development, in that migration leads to loss in human capital resources.

However, it seems that staying in Finland may also cause issues among family relations. Some of the interviewees note that their families would not like it if they would not return to Russia. One interviewee, Sonya, who has been in Finland for five years and who originally came to study in Finland on her father's recommendation, notes that her father does not approve of her staying in Finland: "*He is really jealous that I stayed here and that I have a non-Russian boyfriend and that I am not going to go back to Russia.*" (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) None of the interviewees note that they feel that they have a societal obligation to return to Russia and through tis try to instal change or "development" (cf. Conway et al., 2012).

Besides telling about the problems in Russia, some of the interviewees also emphasise that according to them **life is better in Finland,** which is why they would not like to return. Interviewee Galina, who moved from Russia after finishing high school, describes: "*Like when you experience the life in a better society, of course you do not want to go back. You want better for yourself and for your future family and everything and for your current family you want to continue this kind of… bring them away from this Russia.*" She recounts that her migration was an escape: "*It is much better than in Russia. I never wanted to stay in Russia. I always wanted to escape, and I never want to go back there.*" (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) When considering this, we should note that many of the interviewees are still in their so-called honeymoon period with Finland. This means that when individuals migrate, in the beginning they tend to take note of the positive qualities of their country of settlement. The challenges tend to become visible over a longer period of time.

Some of the interviewees note that they have considered returning to Russia if **the socio-political situation in Finland** amongst Russian and attitudes

towards migrants and Russians deteriorate. This is something that also according to Tiido (2019, 6) threatens Russian migrants in Finland. Interviewee Tatyana describes: *"Well, if they in Finland would tighten policies against migrants, if this would happen* [= then she would consider returning]. *But otherwise, if things go on as they have this far, I would prefer to stay in Finland."* (Tatyana, 53y., finance secretary.) This reflects the way that attitudes and political speech in Finland towards migrants has become harder in the last decade. For example, as noted by Davydova-Minguet (2021), Russian citizenship and transnational connections with Russia have recently become framed as a potential security threat in Finland. This relates especially to the war in eastern Ukraine and Russian interference of different mediated processes in "the west". Interviewee Igor, who has been in Finland for 12 years, has noted some of these changes, and states that due to this he has considered migrating back to Russia with his family: "*Now for example that they have this thing going on against dual citizenship, this opposing movement: The rights of those with dual citizenship are being restricted in employment relations, and such things are making us think about returning to Russia and not closing our doors completely. We do not want to burn our bridges, so that in case there is some emergency it could be an option. But let's hope we do not have to, and we can ourselves decide where to live."* (Igor, 31y., translator and consult.) This opinion also reflects the way in which migrants can be affected and worried about public discourse and political rhetoric. When the political atmosphere changes towards more nationalistic tones, it can have real life consequences.

The political atmosphere is however not the only reason why some people are considering returning to Russia. Some reasons are more practical: One of the younger interviewees, Sergei, relates that he would like to get some **work experience in Russia**, where he has never worked before. He would prefer to work there for a while and experience working life in Russia, but not to stay permanently: "*Yes, I have a dream that I would work in Russia for a while. I would get a good experience. – – but only shortly, not for a long time. Only temporarily. Not permanently."* (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) Another interviewee, Anya, who has dual citizenship and has been in Finland for eight years, notes that she might consider returning because she **misses the Russian mentality** in communication with friends and neighbours: she feels that in Finland people are more individual loners compared to people in Russia. She tells: "*Well, we have such thoughts. We are drawn to Russia as we miss communication, not for financial reasons. The mentality of our nation is different, it includes community. Here it is individualism, everyone is in his mökki* [= country house] *or his piha* [= own garden]. *Finnish people are open and kind, but they are loners, but our people are not used to it, we are always together."* (Anya, 54y., accountant.) This is also related to the issue that most of the interviewees recount not having that many Finnish friends in Finland and that getting to know Finns is somewhat difficult (discussed in chapter 5.4.5). It seems that many of the interviewees have not found full social membership in Finland, which may, as noted by Glick Schiller, Basch & Blanc (1995) and Levitt (2001), also be a reason for them to stay in contact with their Russian acquaintances living in Russia.

Only one of the interviewees, Svetlana, notes that she would like to return to Russia but finds this impossible due to her family situation: She is divorced

from her Finnish spouse, but they have a young child together. She describes feeling somewhat trapped in Finland due to this. She notes *"I would like to go back to Russia, but I cannot. I don't want to stay that I am imprisoned here, but I would go back if I did not have a child. – – The father and his family would never accept if I took the child to Russia."* (Svetlana, 42 y., student.) This example illustrates that migration rarely is an individual decision and instead it often involves family members.

Some of the interviewees **neither want to return to Russia nor stay in Finland**. Instead, they want to experience life in different countries. These kinds of notions were related especially by the younger interviewees and students. None of the more middle-aged interviewees had wishes or plans to move to other countries, which probably relates to their life and the life of their family being more settled in Finland. Finland is for many of the younger migrants seen as a steppingstone towards other European countries: *"I don't plan to stay here for all of my life: I hope that... I am still young; I want to experience more countries. – – I have thought maybe I want to stay in Finland for 2 or 3 more years and then I want to move forward."* (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) According to previous findings, Russian migrants in Finland consider free movement within the European Union very positively (Pitkänen et al., 2019, 35). The desire to move from Finland to another European country is related to the interviewees not being sure that Finland can offer them interesting employment opportunities. Many of the young migrants, who have come to Finland as students, do not speak Finnish and are aware that finding employment can be difficult. In light of the Finnish immigration policies' target to attract highly skilled migrants to the Finnish labour market, the desire of especially the young and highly educated Russians to move away is problematic and signals some sort of failure in integration and especially in providing language learning opportunities.

There is no strong indication that the interviewees would in the future like to bring their Russian family members to Finland. None of the interviewees have any specific plans for this in motion. Several interviewees also note that it is unlikely that their family members would ever move away from Russia. Interviewee Galina, who has been in Finland for 4 years, fore example notes about her parents: *"I don't think that they will migrate because they don't speak languages, any language other than Russian. It would be really tough for them. But at least they could move close to Finland. Closer to Europe. But never migrate*." (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) The interviewees do not indicate that the things that they have told their acquaintances living in Russia about Finland or the Finnish welfare state are in practice attracting them to migrate to Finland. Although some interviewees bring up that according to their understanding many Russians would like to move abroad, only few of the interviewees bring up that Finland has been noted as a country of interest to their acquaintances. Thus, social remittances do in this case and context, not seem to form a strong pull factor towards Finland and none of the interviewees describe that the things that they have told have this far resulted in anyone from Russia migrating to Finland. This effect has previously been studied in relation to the welfare magnetism hypothesis according to which the magnitude of welfare benefits has an effect on

the quantity and composition of migration flows (for discussion on this see e.g., Giulietti 2014; Martinsen & Werner 2018; Reeskens 2020). More about acquaintances attitudes towards migration will be considered in chapter 6.3.8.

6.2.7 The influence of Russia's contact with expatriates on social remittances

The option to move back to Russia in the future is also related to diaspora policies and the **contacts that Russian officials** maintain with expatriates. More and more countries are trying to strengthen the relations with their emigrant populations by facilitating emigrant return, providing overseas consular assistance, and inviting emigrant economic and political engagement from afar (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2016, 147). Different countries have taken different approaches to utilizing the "diaspora option", i.e., to find ways to utilize the fact that many people have migrated abroad (see e.g., Daugeliene & Marcinkeviciene 2009, 53). For example, India has been active in attracting remittances and portfolio investments, Mexico in attracting remittances and political support, whereas Taiwan and South Korea have focused more effort on the return of their diaspora and China on encouraging investments through migrant connections. (Kapur 2001, 279–280). Portes and Zhou (2011, 26) note that China and Mexico have also been active in encouraging their expatriate professionals to become involved in transnational organizations and through these participate in e.g., public work projects.

In the Russian context, the term "**compatriots"** is used to describe the diaspora. The Russian government defines this term to incorporate ethnic Russians and Russian speakers as well as others with ties, such as family ties, language ties, legal ties, spiritual ties, historical ties, or cultural ties to the Russian Federation (Zakem, Saunders & Antoun 2015, i, 4). The federal law on compatriots, passed by Yel´tsin in 1999, defines that Russia has a commitment to protecting the rights of compatriots e.g., to use their Russian language, to exercise cultural autonomy, to participate in non-governmental organizations, to maintain connections among themselves and to Russia, and to choose freely whether to remain in the country of settlement or return to Russia (Byford 2012, 718; Zakem, Saunders & Antoun 2015, 16). Expatriates who are Russian passport-holders are included in the compatriot category, but the compatriot status has never been tantamount to the status of expatriate Russian passport-holders residing outside of Russia (Byford 2012, 719).

Especially in the first decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the policy towards compatriots focused on promoting the integration of compatriots into their new political communities, instead of promoting mass immigration of the Russian speaking population to the territory of Russia (Nozhenko 2006, 9). In the beginning of the 21st century however, the discourse on compatriots started to change and compatriots became **perceived as resource**. This was not unrelated to the fact that Russia needed to attract migrants due to depopulation and labour shortages. Thus, the former USSR became to be seen, in discourse, as a possible source of new human resources that could be easily integrated and used to tackle the demographic crises. (Nozhenko 2006, 11–12; Byford 2012, 718.) During the

last decade, Russia has also put more focus on developing a global network of state-backed diaspora associations aiming at tightening the connection between compatriots and the Russian state (Byford 2012, 715). Besides the governmental institutions, foundations, and various media channels, also the Russian Orthodox Church functions as a tool for influencing compatriots in the former Soviet region (Zakem, Saunders & Antoun 2015, ii). The purpose of the compatriot project is particularly to foster national solidarity, especially among Russian compatriots outside of Russia (Byford 2012, 722; Söderling 2016, 14) and to create and image of Russian-speaking population living outside of Russia as being tightly connected to their historical motherland (Davydova-Minguet et al. 2019, 266).

During the interviewees, the participants were asked **whether they have been contacted, and in what kind of way, by any Russian officials.** Most interviewees report that they have not had any significant contact with Russian officials, nor have there been attempts to e.g., persuade the expatriates to move back to Russia, as the following quotations illustrate: "*No I have not, there has definitely not been contact between me and the Russian government.*" (Anna, 19y., student.) And "*No, no. I do not know why they have no contact with the Russian expatriates.*" (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) It is difficult to say whether some interviewees did not want to share information regarding this and thus answered that they had not been contacted. Some of the interviewees even found the questions a bit funny and had to laugh when being asked whether they had been contacted by officials from Russia. This finding supports Heleniak's (2004, 111), claim that the policy of Russia towards its diaspora has altogether been somewhat modest. Furthermore, Byrford states, there has in fact been a discrepancy between rhetoric and action regarding compatriot policies (Byford 2012, 718), which could explain why the interviewees have not experienced many attempts to "stay in contact" by the Russian state.

Although most interviewees did not relay any contact by Russian officials, some noted that there are some **bureaucratic ways in which Russian officials try to keep tag** or control expatriates living abroad: Some interviewees note that there is a law is Russia according to which expatriates have to inform Russian officials were they currently live, and they have to provide a reason why they have moved away from Russia. Some also note that they had to provide this information on the spot in Russia during migration procedures or at the border when visiting, whereas others note that they just had to fill in some papers that were sent to them by post. All those who mention this bureaucratic control seem to be very critical about it, and none seem to have been enthusiastic about providing this information, which is also why not everyone had done so. Some of the interviewees are unsure and worried what is done with this information and how it might impact them in the future. This reflects a distrust in Russian officials among the interviewees. Interviewee Sonya for example notes:

> "They made some shitty system to track if you have double citizenship or if you have a residence permit somewhere else. – – So, I filled up some paper, no one even knew how to fill up these papers. She took a copy [= to the Russian policy officer] and it is just totally useless. It was the law because of the sanctions. As I told, we are coming closer to this iron curtain. So, I think that it is one of those things. – – I knew that I had

to do this because if I enter the country, I might have problems." (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.)

This reluctance to participate in Russia's attempts to keep in touch/hold of their expatriate citizens reflects a phenomenon noted by Østergaard-Nielsen (2016, 163) according to which, emigrants and diasporas may not immediately respond to the outreach of the country of origin, because they are wary of motives and credibility of these efforts and the extent to which they are sensitive to emigrant needs.

In 2006, a diaspora programme was launched in Russia, the purpose of which **has been to assist the voluntary resettlement** of compatriots. Potentially this kind of programme could enable the knowledge and skills transfers of migrants through brain gain/circulation. This is acknowledged in the programme through an emphasis on the potential of the professional and educational attainment of migrants. By the end of 2015, c. 530 000 people have participated in the programme. This large number is also due to the fact that other naturalization channels have mostly been shut down since 2009. (Chudinovskikh & Denisenko 2017.) Those included in the programme get paid for moving to Russia, except to St. Petersburg and Moscow (Davydova-Minguet 2014, 55). None of the interviewees, however, bring the programme up in relation to their possible return to Russia, which indicates that it is not an important factor in their decision making. It seems that especially the deep mistrust in Russian officials, among the interviewees, is hindering the effect of diaspora programmes and their effect on enabling e.g., brain circulation. This is in line with previous research, in a Lithuanian context, according to which mistrust of government by diaspora members negatively affects the possibility that knowledge and skills transfers can have in the country of origin, since it for example hinders participation in government programmes for the diaspora (Nevinskaitė, 2016). Only two interviewees (Larisa and Igor), a couple, note that there have been attempts to "lure" them back to Russia, at least to visit, by offering free trips. The interviewees were not sure who is behind these offers but somehow, they got the idea that it was related to some government programme, implicated through embassies and Russian organizations abroad. Interviewee Igor notes that when he looked at the itinerary for the free trip, it only contained programme focusing on "*how great Russia is and why Russia is so great*" (Igor, 31y., translator and consult). The interviewee did not participate himself and noted that in his opinion, by offering such activities, Russian officials were just trying to get his contact details. This opinion again signals a mistrust towards Russian officials, especially towards their attempts to stay in contact with expatriates.

Zakem, Saunders and Antoun (2015) state that Russia's compatriot policy should be analysed within the wider framework of Russian **government's overall foreign policy goals** since compatriots have often functioned as instruments of broader Russian foreign policy. According to them, there are various ways in which Russian compatriots can be useful to the Russian government: for example, they can strengthen Russia's argument that there is a "Russian world" larger than Russia itself, they can amplify Russia's political

influence in the former USSR, they can serve to justify assertive Russian actions, they can provide political, economic, and military intelligence, and protecting them allows Russia to position itself favourably in international media. In practice, compatriots thus function as a tool to implement broader policies that may affect compatriots but are not primarily for their benefit. (Zakem, Saunders & Antoun 2015, ii, 18–20.) Furthermore, Nozhenko (2006, 15) states that Russia treats is compatriots abroad as an internal political resource which can be used to help solve problems, but not necessarily the problems of the compatriots themselves. Leitizinger (2016, 69) states that the Russian state has tried to advocate for its own advantage through the Russian speaking population in Finland. However, he also states that migrants from Russia in Finland have not initiatively, or at least unanimously, tried to influence Finnish internal or foreign policy. The topic came up with one of the interviewees, Sergei, who has considered this aspect of being of Russian origin himself. He however notes that according to his knowledge Russia's influence on their expatriates is not significant and that it could be much more so: *"It could be utilized much more, much more. – – It is an interesting thing to see whether it will be utilized more in the future. Especially since modern technology makes it easy to target manipulation towards certain people. In that sense, it is not utilized yet. At least in Europe. Maybe in Eastern Europe, in Baltic countries, it is much more efficient. Let alone in Ukraine – –."* (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.)

What to gather from this information presented above is that it seems that Russian officials' contact with expatriates living in Finland are not extensive, nor do they seem to have a significant effect on e.g., the decisions of migrants to move back to Russia, or the sending of social remittances. None of the interviewees note that they have been scared because of things they have said regarding Russia, as part of social remittances, in their discussions with fellow migrants from Russia in Finland or in discussion with their acquaintances living in Russia. However, not all the interviewees wanted to describe everything that they had discussed on record, which also indicates a level of mistrust. A practical example of Russia exercising its compatriot policy towards Russian citizens living abroad, in relation to social remittances, is provided in chapter 6.3.5.

6.3 Perceived reception of social remittances

After social remittances are transferred their influence largely depend on how they are received and accepted. In this chapter, the reception of social remittances is considered from both a **macro and micro perspective.** The macro perspective is comprised of the perceived openness of Russian and Finnish society to social remittances (subchapters 6.3.1, 6.3.2 & 6.3.3), and the micro perspective is comprised of the perceived reception of the acquaintances of migrants to social remittances (subchapters 6.3.4 & 6.3.5). Acceptance and reactions are further tied to whether social remittances contradict or amplify concepts trumpeted by the media (subchapter 6.3.6), and to the overall perception that acquaintances have

of the "west" and Finland as part of Europe (subchapter 6.3.7) and migration and living abroad (subchapter 6.3.8).

Due to the chosen focus of the research, the **reception of remittances is analysed from the viewpoint of the remitter**: In other words, how the remitters see their own attempts to influence the views and ideas of their non-migrant acquaintances and how successful these attempts are perceived. During the interviews, questions were asked about how acquaintances have reacted to the things that have been discussed regrading welfare, and what kind of interest this has evoked.

6.3.1 Russia's openness to social remittances

From a macro perspective, the effect that social remittances can have on societal change is dependent on how open society is to new influences, in other word what its **receptivity or absorptive capacity** is. This reflects the way that the countries capitalize on the social remittances or brain gain from migrants. According to Siar (2014), the global competitiveness index can be used as a measure of a country's absorptive capacity. The index consists of variables such as the strength and reliability of institutions, overall quality of infrastructure, macroeconomic soundness, health and education, efficiency of markets, business sophistication, and level of innovation. (Siar 2014, 311.) According to this index, Russia is in the 43rd place and measures a score of 66.6, while Finland is in the 11th place and measures a score of 80.2 (Global Competitiveness Index 4.0, 2019). According to Siar's idea, because Finland scores more highly on the index it would also have a better absorptive capacity to social remittances. In this subchapter and the following subchapters, the absorptive capacities of Russia and Finland will be considered. The receptivity has a profound effect on how remittances are accepted and what their influence can be.

Based on the interviews, it seems that most migrants find that Russian society and people have a **closed mentality,** which has an inhibiting effect on the role that social remittances can have. However, Russia is not found completely closed and some people are found more open, and some ideas are found more welcomed than others. The interviewees bring up that it is a lot easier to remit cultural practices to Russia than for example political remittances, like ideas regarding democracy, as the following quotation by Maria illustrates: "*If you are talking about the openness of the majority of Russians to new political principles, the answer would be no. If about the openness of certain categories to new cultural experiences, then yes. Because cultural curiosity, as I tried to say, is one of the basic principles* [= of Russian culture]." (Maria, 45y., lecturer.) Russians are, according to many of the interviewees, generally interested in other cultures and ready to accept new cultural influences, as indicated by the following quotation by interviewee Natalya: "*People from our country are very interested in other cultures and we absorb new cultures very quickly – –. So that if for example in city X in Russia another country organizes an event there is immediately a queue and people are running to see what is happening.*" (Natalya, 42y., employed in museum.) This curiosity to other cultures indicates that Russia is not a completely closed. Those interviewees

who want to believe that Russia is open to social remittances note that there have always been new ideas coming to Russia, especially from other parts of Europe, as noted by interviewee Dmitri: *"I do not believe that Russia is altogether closed. There have always been those channels through which ideas can flow, but with what volume, that is a different thing."* (Dmitri, 50y., language teacher.) According to this viewpoint, Russia is open to new influences, but the openness has changed in different times.

Besides cultural influences, Russia is according to some of the interviewees also open to **business and technological ideas.** One interviewee, Marina, who has children living in Russia, reports that her oldest son has started to implement some of the changes she has suggested, based on her experiences in Finland, in his business. This also provides an over-generational perspective to social remittances (see Solari 2015 for further examples of social remittances from parents to children). The interviewee notes that her perspective has changed in Finland, and this enables her to advice others to look at things in a different way. Another interviewee, Sergei, describes business ideas as surface level aspects, which makes remitting them easier: *" It depends on the ideas, if we are talking about business ideas, trade and technology then it is surely open because they are surface level things, but if we are talking about large ideologies then it is closed. The conservatism and a thousand-year-old tradition in this kind of communitarianism system, which emphasises community and traditions, makes it closed*." (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) The interviewee compares surface level aspects to things that sit more deeply in society and the mentality of people, which are more difficult to influence and change, especially from abroad. As Portes (2010, 1340) notes, the various elements that compose culture and social structure can be hierarchically arranged into 'deeper' factors that are fundamental but often concealed below everyday social life, and 'surface' phenomena which are more easily adapted and readily evident. Value systems and norm systems for example are part of 'deep' culture and as such changes in them do not occur quickly (Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010, 2000; Dzięglewski 2016, 183). Changing such structurally embedded factors is found difficult (see Karolak 2016, 32), which also relates to it being easier to transmit and change smaller things than larger issues (discussed more in chapter 6.4.3). Somewhat similarly, White and Grabowska (2019, 40–41) divide social remittances into **wide-ranging and selective** ones. According to them, wide-ranging remittances are whole mind-sets and world views, related to e.g., religion, political views, gender roles and a way of life, which people adjust or change as a result of international migration. Such remittances often travel as bundles because they relate to a wider set of practices. Selective remittances on the other hand often travel singly and they are situational and relate to life situations. These can include remittances related to e.g., life-cycle events such as celebrations, pregnancy, retirement, divorce, or purchasing or renting a property, cars and equipment for the home and house and garden makeovers. Compared to wide-ranging social remittances, the implementation of which might require persuading others of their merits, it is easier to copy and paste selective social remittances.

Several interviewees also relate remitting **business ideas to return migration**. They consider that when migrants arrive with their ideas, they can set up new enterprises and thus contribute to the economy. Interviewee Polina, who herself is not planning on moving back to Russia, notes: "*Yeah, I know some of my friends, students from Finnish universities, who returned to their home countries. They got this education and they brought new ideas to their home country and some of them started businesses there and I think they were inspired by Finnish culture.*" (Polina, 29y., on maternity leave.) The openness to social remittances from returning migrants will be further considered later on in the analysis.

According to the interviewees, because Finland is in Russia generally seen in a positive light, new ideas and information **from Finland are generally accepted**: "*In general people have a more positive feeling of Finland as a country where people live and how this life is structured. So, I think these ideas would be welcomed if they are branded under Finland.*" (Irina, 30y., PhD student.) The interviewee uses the term *branding* to indicate that something is advertised or sold as being particularly Finnish, which then expedites its acceptance. This is supported by survey findings from 2021, according to which 68 % of Russians have a positive attitude towards Finland, whereas only 6 % have a negative stance. In Moscow 79 % have a positive stance, and in North-West Russia, St. Petersburg and the Leningrad are surrounding it, the Republic of Karelia and Murmansk 89 % of individuals have a positive stance towards Finland. (Finnish Foreign Ministry - country brand report 2021.) It seems that based on the interviewees' experiences, their acquaintances have been enthusiastic about certain things from Finland especially. Interviewee Ulyana notes: "*There are many things that are being praised, such as for example the maternity package, the school system and other things related to e.g., private childcare. Some people might get excited about these, whereas other ideas do not suit.*" (Ulyana, 34y., translator.) This viewpoint further illustrates that, although Russia might be open to some ideas, it can remain closed to others.

Moreover, the openness towards Finland has according to one interviewee, Svetlana, who has been in Finland for eight years, being changing lately in Russia. She notes that the economic sanctions towards Russia by European countries, including Finland, has weakened the relationship between the countries, which then in turn has influenced the acceptance of social remittances. The interviewee in question is not happy that Finland has also joined these sanctions and believes that now people in Russia tend to think that they are being harassed, which has evoked the idea that "*We do not care, we are doing just fine without outsider influence in Russia, on our own.*" (Svetlana, 42y., student.) This indicates that the **relationships between countries and the international political situation** influences the acceptance of social remittances. A similar finding has been made by Isaakyan (2015, 31) who notes that the sharpening socio-cultural gap and conflict between Ukrainians and Russians hinders the dissemination of social remittances within this context. The findings exemplify that social remittances cannot be separate from other influences, which is why social remittances are also not unattached from the international relations of states.

Although several interviewees note that Russia is to some extent open, also to ideas from Finland, many interviewees emphasise that it depends very much

on the people involved. The interviewees suggest that there is no one Russian society that can be open to ideas from abroad. This relates to the idea of methodological nationalism discussed in chapter 5.4.2. Instead, the acceptance always depends on the **opinions of different people**: some are more liberal and open to new ideas, and others are more conservative and/or sceptical about ideas or information from abroad. Several interviewees note that there is a certain small portion of the population which is generally open to new ideas and change, whereas the majority is not open or interested, as the following quotation by Ivan illustrates: "*So, there is always an enthusiastic group of people who are really interested, and I am really proud of them because they are helping the country to develop, but most part of Russia, I think 90 %, they just want to stay in their like houses and just enjoy the everyday life.*" (Ivan, 21y., exchange student.) According to this view, most Russians are not open to social remittances from abroad. This is also illustrated by interviewee Galina who notes: "*If there is something strange, something weird and something from abroad, then they do not need to accept it. Like: 'We are good on our self, why do we need some advice from abroad'*. (Galina 21y., employed in logistics.) This opinion exemplifies the "Not invented here syndrome" (NIH), that is used especially in company research and development, but which can also be made use of in remittance studies. The not invented here syndrome stands for the tendency to not consider seriously that outsiders might produce important and relevant new ideas or information (Katz & Allen 1982, 7).

However, some interviewees believe that Russia is at least to some extent open and emphasise that the society is **open because people are dissatisfied with its current situation**. Interviewee Irina notes: "*The society I think is open to new ideas and practices, in fact very much, because most people are dissatisfied with how things are. Of course, there are many people, especially if you go outside of Moscow, people that can sound very patriotic, but in fact if you look at their life and the problems that they complain about, then of course they know that they are being fooled and robbed*." (Irina, 30y., PhD student.) According to the interviewee, the problems faced by citizens in Russia are so big that even patriotic Russians have to admit that something is wrong and needs to change. Furthermore, many of the interviewees note that it would benefit Russia to become more open to new ideas and influences. This illustrates that, to some extent, diaspora groups can constitute a threat to the interest of the state or at least to those who are benefitted by the current state of affairs. The threat constituted by diaspora groups can manifest in for example the remitting of ideas regarding the improvement of human rights, the liberalization of the political regime, or through the promoting of democratic ideas that can undermine the current established authority. (Faist 2008, 31, 35.)

Some of the interviewees note that Russians are **afraid of change**. One interviewee, Galina, says: "*But they are so closed and so afraid of changes there, unfortunately. That it keeps the country at like the same stage all over the ages, and if they would just start to be more open – – it would change a lot. But still people are so afraid. They are just afraid*." (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) Another interviewee, Andrei, notes that Russians are closed and scared because of previous experiences: according to him, when the Soviet Union collapsed and Russia was opened to the outside world, Russians experienced shock therapy

with new influences, ideas, and values. This shock therapy, that was according to the interviewee propelled by "American experts, really high-top ranked economists", has scared many Russians and raised fears towards imported ideas from abroad, which is why "*We prefer probably something that is born in Russia, instead of something that is brought from abroad*." (Andrei, 29y., exchange student.)

6.3.2 Reception of social remittances by return migrants

Another viewpoint, from which receptivity of the country of origin can be looked at, are the social remittances that **returning migrants take with them** from their country of settlement when they move back to their country of origin, which is also termed *brain circulation* or *brain gain* in the research literature. This occurs when migrants take the skills, qualifications, knowledge, norms, and values that they have acquired during their migration to their country of origin (see for example Holdaway et al., 2015 on health care professionals returing to their country of origin). The influence that the social remittances brought back by returning migrants can have largely depends on how well countries capitalize on skills and knowledge of returning migrants.

The analysis demonstrates that social remitting through return migration, i.e., brain gain/circulation is not something that should be considered self-evident. As noted by previous research, the gains of return migration are lost if the society is not willing to or able to capitalize on the practices, skills and knowledge gained abroad. In the Finnish and Russian context, there seem to be many challenges that are making it more difficult for returning migrants to transmit social remittances. Such difficulties mainly have to do with an unwillingness to change the way things have previously been done. The research findings are in line with those of Portes (2009), de Haas (2012) and Skeldon (2008) according to which the potential to change, stemming from migrants, remains limited if the structures in the society of origin are weakly developed and therefore unable to internalize or unreceptive to new inputs.

The interviewees state that they have **gained new knowledge and values during their stay in Finland**. This manifests in various ways: some have studied a new profession and gained qualifications, some have learned a new language (Finnish) or strengthened their other language skills (English and French), whereas others have changed their entire way of thinking about life. Several interviewees describe that they have changed a lot during their stay in Finland, experienced personal growth and gained a more comprehensive look on the world (see similar findings by Liao & Asis 2020, 412). Interviewee Sonya notes: "*– – I changed a lot since I moved, I became more secure, and I could stand for myself. I know that I have rights. And I know more how the world works, because it is easier now that I can look on the things from both sides. Let's say from Russian side and from European side. – – And I can see how people are limited when they have just the Russian point of view.*" (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) Another interviewee notes that she has started to think and speak more openly, without fearing that someone will judge her. Some interviewees express, however, that they are not sure how the Finnish context particularly has contributed to their changing way of thinking

about life, and how much is due to starting a new life and getting into new things. Although most of the interviewees are not planning to move back to Russia, some are considering it. Thus, it is interesting to consider whether Russia would be receptive to the information and values that the returning migrants could "take" with them.

Several interviewees have the idea that when migrants go back to Russia they can "***make Russia become better***" (Andrei, 29, exchange student). Interviewee Maksim, who himself is planning to return to Russia after spending a semester in Finland, argues that if expatriates were to return and bring with them their experiences and ideas gained abroad this could be beneficial for Russia: "*If a person moved to another country, studied here, worked here, got some experience, even probably adopted some values from Europe, not every values but some, yeah it could be even better if this person – – decided to move out back to Russia and improve the Russian way of doing something.*" (Maksim, 25y., PhD student.) However, the interviewee is sceptical that this would work in practice and when asked why, he notes that **nobody would accept** the experiences from abroad. According to the interviewee, Russians would feel that "*You have been there, but it is your deal not our deal"* (Maksim, 25y., PhD student). As noted previously, people are for various reasons not always willing to accept ideas from abroad. Furthermore, practical hindrances to brain gain through return migration include policy restrictions, a lack of infrastructure to return to, missing national strategies to involve return migrants, unfair competition, lack of accurate and timely information, inability to use knowledge gained back in the country of origin also known as the mismatch of knowledge, and unwillingness of some governing elites and employers/managers to value and reach out for assistance of skilled migrants. (Rahman 2000, 119; Mohamoud & Fréchaut 2006, 24; Mehrez & Hamdy 2010, 257; Skeldon 2008a, 13; Oddou et al. 2013, 260–261; Siar 201, Holdaway et al., 2015.)

The receptivity to new information and value in the context of return migration is further analysed **from the viewpoint of employment and employability,** i.e., whether migrants feel that they would have new employment related skills, information, and experiences gained abroad, i.e. occupational remittances, to use in Russia, and whether this is something that employers in Russia would be interested in (see Alenius 2015; 2016; 2018 on sharing professional conceptions and practices across borders in a Finnish-Estonian context). The employment angle provides a practical perspective to the otherwise ambiguous topic of receptivity. During the interviews, the interviewees were asked whether they consider that the social remittances they take with them would improve their opportunities for employment in Russia. When answering, several interviewees consider that their **international experience would be valued**, as well as their foreign degree. Interviewee Galina, who herself does not have any work experience from Russia, relates: "*Yeah, in Russia when you have like a European education and experience of work it is like: 'Wow we take you no matter what you can do, we just take you'. – – Yeah, I know that it would be really valuable* [= a Finnish degree]. *You can even get immediately the highest salary in like high position.*" (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) Also improved

language skills were by many noted as something that would be valued in Russia. However, Finnish language skills were not seen as having a large positive effect, since Finnish is not seen as such a useful language in Russia. Some interviewees however brought up that in the service or tourist sector even Finnish language skills might be useful. Overall, having lived abroad is by the interviewees generally understood as being a positive perk in the Russian labour market. Several interviewees note that they believe that this experience would be valued by Russian employers. Some note that they would have a competitive advantage for knowing about the "European lifestyle" and that they would be considered more interesting due to their international experience. Interviewee Andre, who will return to Russia after spending one semester in Finland, notes: "*I am more interesting now with such experience. I could like share, share my knowledge, my impressions and be more sociable. Yeah, yeah, that is true. I have stories to talk. Ha ha*" (Andrei, 29y., exchange student.) This finding is somewhat contrary to that of Williams & Aktoprak (2010), who found in their research that most of the interviewed migrants who had returned to Russia felt that they had not acquired any specific or technical skills to help them find a job after their return. This, although the migrants in their research also brought up various skills that they had acquired. These included e.g., computer skills, advertising skills, foreign language skills, and skills relevant in the construction industry. (Williams & Aktoprak 2010, 32.) Furthermore, having gained a European perspective is not always appreciated: Interviewee Galina (21y., employed in logistics) describes that when she was doing an internship in Russia her boss did not appreciate her understanding of the duration of a working day. She says that her boss was surprised when she wanted to leave work after eight hours and noted in a demeaning way: "*Oh this is the European style*".

Some of the interviewees for this research were also **more sceptical** about whether the experiences, skills and knowledge gained in Finland, such as their Finnish degree, would be useful in finding employment in Russia. Regarding Finnish degrees and qualifications, some of the interviewees noted that employers in Russia do not really have that much information about Finland and the Finnish education system. Russian employers are, according to some interviewees, unlikely to know what kind of studies a Finnish degree would include. As a reference point, Jakobson et al. (2012) have, in a somewhat similar context, found that while Finland as a receiving country does not always value the competences of Estonian migrants, in Estonia Finns have been able to transfer and exploit their knowledge. Related to the relevance of skills gained during migration, Castles (2004, 877) has proposed that schemes should be set up to provide migrants, while they stay in receiving countries, with education and training that is relevant to development in the country of origin. There is no indication of having participated in such schemes among the interviewed migrants.

Other interviewees note that although their experiences from living abroad might be valued, they might not be able to use all the professional or educational skills and experiences that they have learned in Finland in their profession in Russia, and that they would have to **adjust to a Russian way of doing things**

(see also Levitt & Rajaram 2013a and 2013b, 496; Alenius 2016, 280; Holdaway et al., 2015, 274; Karolak 2016, 31–32; Liao & Asis 2020). Interviewee Irina, who herself is not planning to return to Russia if she can find work in Finland, notes: *"Yeah, I think that there is a certain prestige about having lived abroad in Russia, and about having studied abroad and worked abroad. But I would be actually afraid to return with my baggage of skills and knowledge, because in Russia it is still different. It can be like many things are different."* (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) The issue of not being able to use one's professional skills was brought up during the interviews in regard to a medical context, a university context and a psychology context. Ergo, if a person with a Finnish medical degree would go back to Russia, she/he might have to change her way of doing things to conform to the norms of that field in Russia and to the workplace rules. Interviewee Ulyana describes: *"If I went back to Russia, I would have to get used to it again and be prepared to learn the rules of the workplace"* (Ulyana, 20y., translator). This aspect of return migration is also noted by Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow (2009), who ponder whether the new ideas and values that migrants adapt are merely conditioned by environment or whether they are actually internalized and later kept upon return to the country of origin. They come to the conclusion, which is also supported by findings from this research, that migrants may after returning to their country of origin have to adapt their behaviour according to the situation and limitations at the country of origin. Therefore, the new habits of returning migrants may in some cases become less prominent upon return.

There are two examples provided by interviewee Sonya (24y., employed in logistics), who has been in Finland for five years, which indicate that this might happen also in the Russian-Finnish context: The interviewee describes that she has noticed **how Russians drive differently in Russia and in Finland**. When Russians are in Finland, they drive consciously according to the traffic rules since everyone else is doing this as well. However, when they go to Russia they drive as the local do and keep less strictly to traffic rules: *"Russian behave one way in Russian and another way in Finland. You can see totally same car, when you drive behind them, they throw garbage on Russian side and speeding and like being rude and everything. When they cross the border, they are immediately following all the rules. They do not throw garbage and so on."* (See Kubal 2015, 83, for example in which driving habits adopted abroad are maintained upon return). The interviewee provides another more personal example: She states that she enjoys it that **in Finland people respect rules**. She herself has also adapted this while in Finland. However, when she visits Russia, she does not maintain her respect for rules but instead she starts acting like the others do, according to "the Russian mentality". She gives an example of when she was visiting Russia and encountered a door that had a note: 'Do not enter'. She recounts that she noticed how much she had changed in Finland when she first did not want to enter. Then she saw that all other people were entering and thought that she had changed too much in Finland and decided not to follow the instruction, but to enter anyhow. These examples illustrate that some of the adapted new ideas and norms are context-dependent, and thus they cannot be transmitted as such to another context that functions according to different rules. The examples also illustrate that even if

the newly adapted norms are considered normatively superior, as is the case in both of the examples according to the interviewee, they are not necessarily adapted upon return. (Cf. Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009, 123.)

What may further impact the acceptance of social remittances brought by returning migrants is their **status as returnees**. Previous research has found that **returning migrants can be "negatively selected**". According to Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow (2009, 125, 140–141), those migrants that return to their country of origin are on average less educated, less likely to find employment, less likely to interact with country of settlement citizens and thus less likely to have been capable of integrating into their country of settlement. Due to these factors, those migrants who return are less likely to learn, adopt, and import new political attitudes and beliefs. Furthermore, Kapur (2008, 12) notes that return migrants are often viewed as those "who did not make it". Sarvimäki (2011) has observed return migration from Finland, and he has found that the income of those migrants that leave Finland within 5 years does not grow during their stay. The income of other migrants on the other hand does tend to grow over time, which would suggest that outmigration is not random. (Sarvimäki 2011, 3, 13.) The return of migrants may thus in some cases be the result of having failed abroad, or at least be seen as such. Due to this, it could be speculated that return migrants are less likely to be listened to in their country of origin. (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009, 140–141.) None of the interviewees bring up that their return might be seen as failure abroad, although several note that they will not consider returning if they manage to find employment in Finland. The interviewees do not bring up that if they were to migrate to Russia, their status as a returning migrant might hinder finding employment in Russia or being able to share information and values gained in Finland. However, considering that some of the interviewees do mention that while living in Finland, they are not considered fully Russian anymore (see chapter 6.3.8), and not considered to be up to date with information regarding welfare in Russia, this idea might be something that could also have an effect upon return.

6.3.3 Finland's openness to social remittances

Besides transmitting new ideas, norms and values to their country of origin, migrants have also been found able to bring new influences to their country of settlement. Because of this, it is worth to analyse to what extent **Finnish society is open to new ideas brought by migrants** from migrants from Russia**.**

The analysis indicates that many of the interviewees believe that migrants in general can bring new ideas and diversity, and as one interviewee, Karina, puts it: "*Migration enriches the society as an inflow of professionals is always profitable*." (Karina, 55y., student.) However, the interviewees also note several issues hampering the bringing of new ideas to Finland. Especially the dynamics between the neighbouring countries and the existing stereotypes are seen to impact the bringing of ideas from Russia to Finland, more so than the other way around. In some way this could be expected, Finland being a small country next

to large Russia, whereas Russia is a large country next to Finland: the power balance is not even.

Some of the interviewees note that because **Russia is a large country,** with lots of people, there is more competition between highly skilled, more division of labour, and therefore also more experts in narrow fields. According to the interviewees, this is something that could benefit Finland. For example, when some of these experts migrate to Finland, they can contribute to Finland's economy by sharing their skills, knowledge, and ideas. Finland as a smaller country could thus benefit from Russia's larger pool of highly skilled experts. One of the interviewees, Sergei, considers this to be related to a centre vs. periphery setting: "*Of course you can* [= bring new ideas] *and I think that quite a lot of them are brought. Have not all ideas come to Finland from somewhere else? There are always things brought from the centre to the periphery.*" (Sergei, 28y., employed in NGO.) However, previous research has shown that migrants have difficulty in transferring their knowledge, ideas and skills obtained in their country or origin to Finland, which is why they are often employed in underpaid and less prestigious jobs (Forsander, 2013; Näre, 2013; Kärkkäinen 2017; Bontenbal et al. 2019). Among the interviewees, this is reflected in the fact that most have found it difficult to find employment that would match their previous skills or qualifications. This would indicate that bringing skills and information from Russia to Finland via migrant experiences is not easy, and that the Finnish labour market is not open to such social remittances.

According to the interviewees, besides specialist knowledge, also the fact that Russia has been a **multicultural country** for a longer time than Finland is seen as something that Finns could learn from. According to one interviewee, Anya, Russian citizens have had to, to some extent, get used to different cultures, unlike Finns. According to the interviewee, Finns could thus learn from Russians' openness to other cultures: "*The positive effect is observed when we take into consideration that Finland was a closed country: Finns lived separated from others. And now that they are open, a new world opens for them and a variety of cultures. We come from Russia, where we were/are used to live in peace and friendship with no racism, suppression, and high tolerance. Russian culture was constantly enriching on the account of other cultures. So, here Finnish culture can borrow openness from Russians*." (Anya, 54y., accountant.) Mutual acceptance of different cultures is something that migrants from Russia could bring to Finland. The quotation also illustrates the view according to which Finland was more closed before but is now opened to influences from other societies.

However, several interviewees are critical that Russians especially could bring new ideas or information to Finland. There are various reasons for this. Some of the interviewees believe that Russians simply have **nothing to bring** that would benefit Finland. They tend to see Finland as on top of its game and Russia lagging behind, especially in issues related to welfare services. They do not believe that there are fields in which Russia could lead the way, as the following quotations illustrate: "*I think it is useless* [= bringing ideas from Russia to Finland] *because the Russian system is totally not dead but bad and ruined.*" (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) And: "*Well, if there would be new ideas from Russian then*

probably yeah [= Finland would be open to them], *but I doubt if there would be some new ideas ha ha made in Russia.*" (Maksim, 25y., PhD student.) Although the Russian situation is seen as sad, according to these interviewees, it also seems to amuse them in an ironic black humour kind of way. Some interviewees even laughed at the idea of Russia having something to bring to other countries, such as Finland. The following quotation by Ivan illustrates this: "*The only thing which we migrants can bring to Finland is only just the working power ha ha. – – I think no, we can't bring anything, because everything is already invented in Finland and developed as well*." (Ivan, 21y., exchange student.) This interviewee seems to believe that Russians can only add to Finland as labour power.

More common among the interviewees is, however, the thought that new ideas, values, and information **are neither needed nor welcome** in Finland. Interviewee Ivan, who himself is only planning to stay in Finland for a short time, notes: "*Of course, we can bring new ideas, but I do not think they will work in a proper way in Finland, because I think Finland is really proud of their own culture and they love it a lot. So, in my opinion Finland doesn't need like other cultures' characteristics and appearances. So, we can bring but it is not really necessary*." (Ivan, 21y., exchange student.) In this quotation, especially cultural aspects are emphasised. The interviewee believes that, although it would be possible to transmit new influences, there is no need for this since Finns have their own culture. It seems that the interviewees consider the bringing of cultural aspects and values to Finland more difficult and problematic than the bringing of business ideas or highly skilled expertise knowledge. This is interesting since the interviewees considered Russia to be especially open to cultural influences. Another interviewee Andrei, whose field of study is sociology, believes that Russian ideas in general could be accepted but lists several things which Finland would not take influences from: "*Yes, I think you could easily accept Russian ideas, like probably everything except orthodoxy and authoritarianism ha ha and ha ha except that… and ok sexism, yeah ha ha and conservatism…*" (Andrei, 29y., exchange student.) Yet again, an amused tone can be detected from the quotation, which seems to underline that there are in fact many things in Russia that are not good or worth transmitting to other countries.

Some interviewees specify that it is **especially Russian ideas that are not welcome** to Finland. Interviewee Galina notes: "*Well, I think that it is definitely more open than Russia, but still, I think that Finnish people are too, as well, at least towards Russia they may still have this, especially the older generation, not the best attitude towards Russia*." (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.) The interviewee considers that Finns have strong stereotypes and prejudice against Russians, which makes accepting social remittances from there difficult. This can perhaps be explained by Finland's own construction of Europeanness being largely based on opposition and distancing from Russia (Puuronen 2011, cited in Krivonos 2018, 1147), which has also contributed to the creation of an east vs. west dichotomy discussed more in detail in chapter 6.3.7. According to another interviewee, Irina, media coverage in Finland has led to the country brand of Russia losing its reputation, which is why new ideas should not be brought to Finland as Russian specifically, if they want to be successfully diffused: "*As long as they are not*

packaged as ideas and practices from Russia ha ha, because of course Russia has received such as strong treatment in the media over the recent years. – – So of course, if you give this sort of like emotional colouring to this brand of Russia, then I do not think that anything could and should be marketed under a bad brand." (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) This is supported by survey findings, according to which only 34 % of Finns have a positive perception of Russia, whereas 45 % have a negative perception (Haavisto, 2021). According to this viewpoint, if things are seen as Russian, they will not be accepted. This is the same interviewee who noted that Finnish ideas should be branded as Finnish, which would make them more appealing to Russians in Russia. The idea seems to be that in Finland remittances from other countries might be more welcome than those coming from Russia specifically might. This relates to what Isaakyan and Trandafyllidou (2017b) have noted regarding some ideas and values being rejected and thus migrants failing to exercise the soft power on behalf of its country of origin.

Some note that in general **influences from the west are more accepted in Finland than influences from the east**. The following quotation by Natalya illustrates this viewpoint: "*The society has also become more American: it has taken many influences from there, and these influences are accepted, but if something comes from Russia it is not accepted.*" (Natalya, 42y., employed in museum.) In this quotation, an east vs. west setting can again be detected, which will be further discussed in chapter 6.3.7. The interviewee provides a personal example of Russian ideas not being welcomed: she tried to, together with the NGO she is active in, to introduce a Russian new year's winter festivity to the city that she lives in. However, the interviewee and others involved felt discouraged when they received negative feedback of the event on Facebook. The interviewee notes that she got the impression that ideas from Russia are not welcome. Another interviewee, Sergei, notes: "*Perhaps because we are so western and in the sphere of influence of Europe and the United States, it is not possible to transmit anything fundamental* [= from Russia]." (Sergei, 28y., employed in NGO.)

Some interviewees emphasise that they are in **no way prohibited** from bringing their ideas to Finland. These ideas, however, are just not accepted or welcomed openly, as noted by interviewee Irina: "*Yes, they could* [= bring ideas] *but I do not know if these ideas are very welcome ha ha*." (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) Thus, although Russians are not silenced and everyone can speak their mind, it is still difficult to introduce new perspective or change. Furthermore, the remitting of ideas from Russia is according to some of the interviewees hindered by that there are **not that many Russians living in Finland**. This is even though Russians are one of the largest migrant groups in Finland. According to these views, the transferring of new ideas would need a large stream of transfers, instead of small trickles. One interviewee, Sergei, notes that if more people were to migrate from Russia or the Russians in Finland would have a better position in society, be employed, be active, have more influential positions and be less segregated, then they would have more opportunity to bring their ideas, values, and norms. As noted by Kapur (2004, 368), the diaspora's ideational effects depend on, for example, its size, socioeconomic characteristics, and its access points in the structure of the country of origin.

Some of the interviewees feel that the question is not whether migrants can bring new ideas and values to Finland, but instead **whether they should**. Some note strongly that it is not appropriate for migrants to bring their own influences with them when they migrate. Instead, they should adhere to Finnish ways of doing things, since they are the ones who are newcomers. Some of the interviewees seem to consider that remaining part of the society in the country of origin, while simultaneously living in the country of settlement, can be an issue to integration (cf. Lacroix 2009). The following quotation by Olga illustrates this idea "*I feel like maybe when migrants come to other countries, they have to adopt the values of the country to which they came to rather than bring their own.*" (Olga, 23y., student.) Bringing your own ideas with you is considered an opposite to integration and trying to transfer aspects from your own culture to Finland is paired with not wanting to adapt or learn the Finnish language. Interviewee Maksim notes: "*– – there are so many people from different cultures. Some of them want to be adopted to the Finnish culture and some of them want to adopt some elements of their culture into Finnish culture, which is not appropriate in my way, and they also do not always like to study the Finnish language*." (Maksim, 25y., PhD researcher.) Migrants that try to bring their own culture are seen as difficult and disrespectful of their hosts. Furthermore, the influence of some migrants is seen as less welcomed to the country of settlement than the influence of others*: "But these migrants which are bad migrants, let's say I will use this word. I think that they are useless and actually harmful for Finland, and they are harmful for Russians."* (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) This seems to refer especially to migrants that do not integrate well or who do not adapt to the country of settlement. However, maintaining one's cultural identity is related to living a transnational life. Several interviewees in fact note that although they have integrated well, they have still maintained their Russian identity and that this is not something that they will or should give up. Interviewee Irina notes: "*I have definitely integrated in the way that I can function well: I speak quite fluently, and I can take part in all of the life things in Finnish. – – I have integrated but perhaps not assimilated in a way. I still feel of course that I am also Russian.*" (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) Although some interviewees describe that it is not appropriate for migrants to bring their own ideas, values and norms to their country of settlement, similar arguments are not presented the other way around, in relation to transmitting ideas to the country of origin. None of the interviewees disapprove of this or consider it inappropriate, although some note that their acquaintances disapprove of it (see chapter 6.3.8 for further discussion on this).

The sum up, the role that social remittances brought by migrants from Russia to Finland can have is thus limited. Although some interviewees report that migrants from Russia could contribute through e.g., their expertise skills, the overall impact remains restricted by Finns not being receptive to Russian influences, by some migrants from Russia not finding that they have anything to bring from Russia, and by some migrants from Russia not finding it appropriate to try to bring their own influences.

6.3.4 Acquaintances' receptivity to social remittances

The potential change effect of social remittances is not just tied to the remitter and their message: it is as much about those who stay behind, the non-migrants. **The reception of acquaintances to social remittances constitutes the micro perspective** to receptivity, and it has a significant impact on the overall influence that social remittances can have. When acquaintances show interest and accept the information and values that migrants transmit, the role that these social remittances can have is larger compared to if migrants reject the information and values shared by migrants.

When migrants from Russia living in Finland have discussed their life in Finland and welfare-related topics with their acquaintances living in Finland and Russia, the **reception has varied greatly**. Some topics have been met with interest and curiosity whereas other with disbelief. As noted by Järvinen-Alenius et al. (2010, 197), the different ways of living that migrants display through their behaviour, clothing, and consumption can attract some but put off others. What should be considered, in relation to the following analysis, is that likely those social remittances which have evoked strong reactions in the recipients are easier to remember and to recount during the interview by the interviewees. On the other hand, things which have been bypassed without any reaction or indication of interest are more likely easier to be forgotten.

Among Russian acquaintances, according to the interviewees, the general reaction to things told regarding living in Finland and the Finnish welfare system has been **positive.** This supports findings from Saksela-Berhgholm (2014, 93) and Alho & Sippola (2019) according to whom migrants often tend to emphasise the functionality and superiority of the Finnish system compared to that in their country of origin. However, the interviewees also outline that they have encountered some critical reception. It seems that certain acquaintances and family members tend to **react less acceptingly to the social remittances than others**. For several interviewees, it seems to be especially their **father** who has been critical about life in Finland and the Finnish welfare system. One interviewee, Sonya, whose parents live in Russia, notes that when she tries to discuss welfare-related issues, some of which are according to her organized better abroad than in Russia, her father tends to get upset and to defend Russia strongly. On a similar note, interviewee Anna, who is regularly in contact with her parents and grandparents, notes: "*My father is a little bit more critical about it, of Europe, because he is an old fashion Russian guy. I cannot really change him in this case because like my parents are quite old*." (Anna, 19y., student.) The interviewee finds it difficult to change his father's perspective because of his patriotism and his old age.

It seems **age** is also by several other interviewees considered a factor in the remitting and accepting of remittances. Some of the interviewees note that it is especially younger people in Russia who are more open to new ideas from abroad, and that instead the opinions of older people are more difficult to change. Correspondingly, some interviewees note that it is mostly young migrants who can bring new ideas with them to Finland. Interviewee Yekaterina, who is one of

the older interviewees, notes: *"Well, surely those migrants who are young and bright can do this* [= bring ideas to Finland]" (Yekaterina, 79y., pensioner). Some of the interviewees, such as 53-year-old Tatyana, seem to think that young people are more active in bringing forth their ideas and knowledge and thus can have a larger effect. According to 19-year-old interviewee Anna, due to globalization, young people in Russia, Finland, and e.g., the US, think more similarly nowadays. However, as 23-year-old interviewee Olga brings up, there are also many young people who are very patriotic and unwilling to accept anything from abroad.

Based on the interviews, it seems that there is a connection between **strong patriotic views and not being receptive** to social remittances from Finland, which is understood as part of "the west". Habits and norms that are considered too western are not always welcomed (see also Abdile & Pirkkalainen 2011). For example, some individuals in former Soviet states have been found to fear cultural and economic neo-colonialism from European countries (Cingolani & Vietti 2019, 638). Some of the interviewees note that especially the so called more liberal lifestyle of western societies, including Finland, has been a controversial topic. This relates to the idea fostered by Russian leaders according to which Russia is a mainstay of the conservative world against the values of the west (Davydova-Minguet 2014; Krivonos 2018, 1149). As noted by Kulmala and Tšernova (2015, 17), in Putin's Russia, a strong family-centred ideology has dominated which has put emphasis on protecting so-called traditional conservative family values. This can be seen reflected in the way that some of the interviewees describe how their acquaintances think about **family norms**. Several interviewees note that some of their acquaintances, and especially their fathers, have been **critical about liberal views** regarding e.g., gay marriage. It seems that LGTB rights have come up in the conversations of several interviewees with their acquaintances in Russia and evoked strong emotions. One interviewee, Sonya, notes that her father, who according to her is quite radical, has wanted to discuss gay rights in Finland with her. However, according to the interviewee, her father is not really interested in topic and only wants to discuss it because he wants to make a point and annoy her. The interviewee further notes that in fact her father does not really ask what kind of experience and knowledge she has gained regarding this topic while living in Finland, but instead he tells her how it is and emphasises how people are weird in Finland because they accept things like gay rights. Another interviewee, Irina, notes on similar lines that according to her, when you talk about Finland to people who are conservative, patriotic, and/or orthodox, they are mostly interested in social factors. The interviewee notes that her conservative acquaintances say things like: *"'Yeah, in Europe they constantly have these gay parades."* (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) It seems that, based on the tone and ironic laughter after answering the question, the interviewee finds this kind of amusing in a pathetic way. These examples illustrate that whether social remittances can have a positive or negative influence on society is normatively decided. Whereas some new ideas, norms, and values, such as ideas related to LGBT rights, are seen as having a positive effect by some, by others they may be deemed as having a negative effect.

Furthermore, it seems that patriotism can also manifest in a way of **having to defend Russia**. Some of the interviewees tell that when they have told their acquaintances living in Russia what Finnish welfare services are like, some have needed to, in a defensive way, explain that such services also exist in Russia. It thus seems that some acquaintances may interpret social remittances regarding welfare as criticism or an offence to Russia.

Besides being critical to certain aspect of Finnish society considered too liberal, two other topics can be highlighted from the interviews, which have evoked strong, mostly critical, reactions: unemployment benefits and basic income. What is important to note, when considering social remittances generated about these topics, is that in the Finnish context the use of welfare state services and provisions cuts through all social classes and does not, in most cases, bear the stigma of handing out alms that it does for example in the Anglo-Saxon context (Alho & Sippola 2019). The concept and need for "welfare" can be understood very differently with different connotations, in different countries and languages (See Julkunen 2017 chapter 2.1 on this). Partly for this reason, the attitudes and norms the migrants share regarding these services may not always be shared with their acquaintances abroad living in different contexts, in which use of welfare services might be seen as more stigmatizing. Often social support is understood only as poverty alleviation, although in the Finnish context, citizens use various welfare services in their everyday life all the time (Hiilamo et al. 2012, 43).

The interviewees note that when they have discussed unemployment benefits and basic income with acquaintances in Russia, the reactions have mostly been sceptical. Several interviewees bring up that **unemployment benefits** in Finland are by many of their acquaintances seen as too high, passivating, and insensible. The interviewees describe that since unemployment benefits are not seen to be working in Russia, it is also hard for the recipients of social remittances to see how they could fairly work in Finland. The European Social Survey (2018) has found that Russians generally favour welfare systems that benefit the entire population and instead are less supportive of programmes that are aimed at specific groups, such as the unemployed. Even though the remitter may describe e.g., unemployment benefits as a positive aspect, the recipient makes his/her own interpretation based on their own experiences, previous information, and in this case, Russian thought frame. The following quotation by Sonya illustrates this viewpoint: *"When people hear it, they do not necessarily always accept it as: 'Wow that is so cool and that would be so good if we had it´, because it is also a kind of an ideological thing. Here* [= in Finland] *people have this understanding that you have to take care of all people, – – and people also want to pay the taxes because this comes at a price. But in Russia people would be a bit cautious about it. They would think how many people will try to misuse this system."* (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) Similar critical reactions to income support are also noted in previous research among migrants in Finland: Saksela-Bergholm (2014, 88–91, 110) has found that although most of the interviewed migrants in her research were satisfied about it being possible to get assistance from the state in Finland in case of unemployment or sickness, many however also regard the income

support system with some reserve, and some found it difficult or wrong to rely on the state. It seems that in general among migrants in Finland there is endeavour to live on a small income without income support (Saksela-Bergholm 2013, 98).

Similarly, also reactions to social remittances regarding the idea of **basic income,** which has been experimented in Finland, have been mixed. The basic income trials have also received much attention from international media, also from the Russian media. Several interviewees note that their acquaintances have been shocked that individuals could get a basic income each month from the state "without doing anything". Interviewee Sonya notes that reactions to basic income by her acquaintance have been rather critical: "*Because it was such a heart attack for the Russians when... you remember this 600e to every citizen in Finland programme* [= referring to a basic income experiment carried out in 2017–2018 with 2000 unemployed citizens]*? It was such a bomb for Russians: 'What?! They are not doing anything, and they get 600e.' So, people now know that Finns are rich, and they can just spread their money so much.*" (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) According to the interviewee, the information that Russians have about the basic income programme, which they have gotten from the media and from migrants living in Finland, has led to Russians now believing that Finns have a lot of money to spend. This then relates to the previous point made in chapter 6.1.5, regarding acquaintances having the idea that everything is perfect in Finland, and this idea being difficult to change.

These examples illustrate that some migrants and some social remittance recipients may also **resist social remittances**. They may, for example, do this by ways of ridiculing the very notion of change, or by emphasising the unchangeable nature of their area of origin. They may do this because they do not believe in change or because they do not want change. People may not want their area of origin to change because they want to keep being able to justify their migration decision or they may want to retain an image of their place of origin, as a place they would like to return to one day, for its positive features. Grabowska & Garapich (2016b, 2153) illustrate these aspects in their research on migrants from Poland living in the UK (See also White & Grabowska 2019, 41). Also, new ideas that are contradicting a group enjoying benefits from an existing economic or political privilege are less likely to be adopted (Levitt 1998, 940).

Besides reacting critically to social remittances regarding Finland, the interviewees also note that **surprise** is a common reaction to the things that they tell regarding life in Finland and the welfare state. Especially the overall level of support that individuals can get from official welfare services seems to be surprising to acquaintances in Russia, as the following quotation by Zasha who has been in Finland for four years illustrates: "*It came as a surprise to them, that when I came here, they* [= the welfare system in Finland] *pay me money. In Russia there is no such thing.*" (Zasha, 66y., pensioner.) Other things that have been found surprising include the taxation system, the amount of unemployment benefits, the fact that primary schools are free of charge, that a free warm lunch is served to school children, and the maternity package provided to expecting families.

Interviewee Anastasia notes that when she moved to Finland, she was advised to go to the TE office, which is the employment office, and to KELA, which is the social insurance institution. When she went to these places, an interpreter was provided to her, who helped her a lot and told her what was going on. The interviewee notes that when she told about this experience to her acquaintances in Russia, they were terribly surprised and could not understand why they would help her so much in Finland. The surprise reactions demonstrate that there are large differences in how welfare practices and services are organized in Finland and in Russia.

It seems that especially issues which are complex to begin with (see chapter 6.1.7) and require a lot of background information to make sense, such as the social support system and the taxation system, are often found surprising by acquaintances. These are complex issues, which to properly understand, the acquaintances would need a lot of background information. Thus, if these topics are only mentioned as a side note or as anecdotes from the migrant's own life, and not comprehensively explained, they can sound surprising or unbelievable. The migrants themselves may however not have the needed background information to put the facts in context, which is why a partial story is remitted. Also, the background information may not be as interesting a story to tell as the anecdotes from the person's own life.

Besides surprises, several interviewees bring up that their acquaintances have **not always seemed to believe** the things that they have told them about living in Finland and/or Russia, as the following quotation by Anastasia illustrates: *"Yes, I told them what happens, and what the difference is, and always they are like: 'It is not true, it is not true'. But it is true, and I tell them, but they are like 'pah'* [= makes a sound of dismissing]. *They do not believe. No, Ha Ha."* (Anastasia, 36y., student.) To some extent, this seems to amuse the interviewee, although on the other hand disbelief may cause strains to the transnational relationship, and it may also lead to not sharing things again. Some interviewees note that their acquaintances have directly stated their disbelief, whereas others note that disbelief is visible through more subtle tones. One interviewee relays that her acquaintances in Russia would not believe that she was paid by the state to take part in an activating labour market course, and another interviewee notes that her acquaintances have found it hard to believe when she has told them how the childcare services and health care services function in Finland. When discussing things that acquaintances have found difficult to believe, **the role of media** often comes up in the interviewees' responses. The role of media will be discussed more specifically in chapter 6.3.6.

Acquaintances' receptivity to social remittances regarding Finland is also influenced by where they are from. In other words, **where in Russia the acquaintances live has an effect** on how well acquaintances know Finland, which then has an effect on how well they can understand life in Finland, and thus social remittances related to it. One interviewee, Marina, notes: "*Because I come from the other side of Russia, my acquaintances there do not know much of Finland. They know more about China and Japan. I have told them and showed them pictures about my hobbies, the environment, my friends, what I have learned, and what the culture is*

like. And they all talk about it and are interested." (Marina, 62y., unemployed.) According to some interviewees, it may be that people living further away from Finland tend to have less information about it. The interviewees also note a general tendency according to which the further away from Finland people live in Russia, the less interest they have in this small country in the northern corner of Russia. Those acquaintances who live closer to the Finnish border know more about it and also show more interest in it. However, the previous quotation by Marina illustrates that also those acquaintances that live far away and have no previous knowledge can show interest in Finland. On the other hand, living close to Finland can also mean that acquaintances already know a lot about Finland and therefore do not e.g., ask questions or want to hear about it from the migrants. One interviewee, Natalya, who originally came to Finland because of her Finnish family roots, discusses: "*Because we are from Karelia, we are not asked anything about life in Finland because everyone already knows about it*". (Natalya, 42y., employed in museum.)

6.3.5 Example of receptivity: social remittances regarding children supposedly being taken away from parents

A specific case, that offers an interesting example regarding social remittances transmitted by migrants from Russia, and the way that they are accepted by their acquaintances, are remittances related to the supposed phenomenon **of children being taken away** from their Russian parents in Finland by social workers. This case also offers an example about Russian compatriot policy being exercised (see chapter 6.2.7). In 2010, a dispute erupted between Finland and Russia, mainly dwelled on in the media. This dispute was fuelled by claims in the Russian media, that Russian children are mistreated in Finland by Finnish authorities. Disinformation about this has been widely spread in Russia media. The message was that Russian citizens living in Finland are treated wrongly, and especially the way that Finnish officials take Russian children into custody on supposedly wrong grounds was disapproved of. Russia called out for actions from its compatriots to correct the situation. These events were part of a systematic denigration campaign that Russia has practised towards Finland since 2006. According to Luukkanen (2016), the purpose of this campaign has been to activate Russian citizens abroad (Luukkanen, 2016, 202–204).

Even after 10 years of the start of this campaign, according to survey results fom 2021, 7 % of Russians remember reading or seeing lots of news in Russian media about families with Russian origin having faced problems in Finland and 22 % report reading or hearing something but not having any specific recollection about this (Finnish Foreign Ministry - country brand report 2021). This illustrates that the influences of such campaigns and media coverage can thus impact people´s perception for a long time. However, the survey results indicate that the number of those who have heard or seen a lot about this in the media has been steadily decreasing (from 10 % in 2017 to 7 % in 2021) (Finnish Foreign Ministry - country brand report 2021).

Although, Luukkanen (2016) notes that the overall efforts to stir Russians in Finland have not been very successful due to people remaining calm, the welfare institution enduring, and successful integration, the analysis illustrates that this specific campaign has managed to **evoke a general fear among many Russians.** According to the interviewees, especially those of their acquaintances living in Russia believe and fear that Russian children are in Finland taken away from their parents without sufficient reasons. Many of the interviewees bring up this topic during the interviews and tell that it is something that they have discussed with their acquaintances living in Russia. Many note that their Russian acquaintances have asked them a lot of questions about this topic and shown a lot of interest in it. Interviewee Polina, who herself has a baby, notes: "*– – they ask me about it all the time, and they usually believe those media, those news. They think that social workers in Finland they take Russian children. It is a popular question.*" (Polina, 29y., on maternity leave.) And on similar lines, interviewee Maria describes: "*– – I still got asked questions about how social workers work in Finland… about this case – – this case that children are taken away* [= performing an overly shocked tone]. *– – And somehow this is quite a sore point and I am not sure why. Perhaps it comes from the Russian newspapers and then I have to explain what the situation is like.*" (Maria, 45y., lecturer.)

Those interviewees that have discussed this topic with Russian acquaintances describe that they feel as though they have had to "**set the story straight**" and inform their acquaintances about how things are actually done in Finland. The interviewees are thus taking a stand against the stories told in Russia. None of the interviewees that bring up this topic believe that Russian children could be taken away from their parents without good reason in Finland. Interviewee Svetlana, who herself has one child who is living with her in Finland, notes: "*Questions such as: 'Is this really happening?' were asked. I also watched those Russian news, and almost believed them, but then I was like no, no. Because I know for myself, and I told them that in Finland children are not taken away without checking several times that the family does not take care of the children.*" (Svetlana, 42y., student.) Many migrants feel a responsibility to take part in the conversation to stop misinformation and rumours. Some of the interviewees have also gained knowledge on the topic through their employment in Finland. Interviewee Mila notes that because she knows about child protection through her work in Finland, she has explained her acquaintances in Russia about it: "*This child protection case interests them terribly, because it annoys them. But because I have some work experience regarding this field* [= in Finland] *I can explain how things are actually done and so on.*" (Mila, 28y., student.) This also relates to a need to defend the country of settlement, for which the migrants have various reasons. Some interviewees let know that their parents or grandparents living in Russia have been worried that the interviewees' children might be taken away from them. By telling their acquaintances that the stories are false, the migrants are reassuring their acquaintances that the children of the interviewees in Finland are safe.

Some interviewees feel that they have also had to reassure their acquaintances **that it is safe to travel** to Finland with their children. One interviewee, Irina, notes that her friend once wanted to visit Finland with her

daughter, but they ended up cancelling the trip because they were afraid of social security taking her kid away from her in Finland. They ended up travelling to other countries. The interviewee notes that her friend never in fact gave her any reason for not coming, but she later noticed a discussion regarding children being taken away from parents on her friend's social media account: "*They went to other countries and they spend a lot of time with friends in the Czech Republic, but they never made it to Finland, and then I noticed one discussion on the account* [= social media account] *of the mother of the family. It was about these cases when children are taken away from families. And she said that they had the chance to go to Finland, but that they actually had to cancel the trip because of that. Because they were afraid that someone would take their kids away. Ha ha*" (Irina, 30y., PhD student.) The misinformation regarding this topic thus has real life implications. If this kind of misinformation campaign negatively affects decision to travel, it can also hinder the transmission of social remittances that would occur at the time of visits.

Interestingly, some of the interviewees inform that even though they have tried to explain that in Finland children are not just taken away by social services without reason, their **acquaintances have not wanted to believe them**. Interviewee Natalya notes: "*Well my mother and grandmother were quite worried and they watch everything and believe everything that they see on the news in Russia. – – Even though we told them totally contrary information, but they just think that we are trying to calm them and are not telling them the truth, and that the TV and news are actually telling them the truth ha ha.*" (Natalya, 42y., employed in museum.) This demonstrates that the role of media is strong in distributing information and that it is difficult to bring forth opinions and information through social remittances that is against the general viewpoint. The relation between media and social remittances will be further analysed in chapter 6.3.6.

Some of the interviewees have also **discussed the topic with Finnish acquaintances in Finland** and been able to find out their Finnish acquaintances' opinion on the topic. One interviewee, Anastasia, who has been in Finland for five years, describes how she was first a bit afraid after having heard about this topic on the Russian media, which exemplifies that migrants from Russia living in Finland are to some extent affected by discourses in Russian media. However, when she discussed it with their Finnish neighbour, she found out that there is no such problem in Finland and that she does not need to be afraid. She then discussed it with her Russian acquaintances: "*Everyone* [= Russian acquaintances] *kept asking me whether my children are with me, and I told them that: 'Yes and it is not true* [= what they are telling in the Russian media]'." (Anastasia, 36y., student.) This fear instantiates the fact that many Russians lack trust in the state. When people move to Finland, they take this mistrust with them and may not know if they can rely on the institutions and officials of their country of settlement. However, especially the fact that the interviewees are assured that children are not taken away in Finland without sufficient reason indicates that many have gained trust in the Finnish state, in ways that they could previously not trust the Russian state. This is in line with previous findings, according to which Russian female migrants appreciate the Finnish social security model and feel that they can trust the state (Saarinen 2007, 132 –133). Furthermore, according to the UTH

survey from 2014, migrants from Russia and the former Soviet Union have higher trust than natives Finns in the Finnish public health care, public social care, judiciary, and police (Castaneda et al., 2015).

6.3.6 Reception of social remittances in relation to the role of media

A crosscutting aspect, which comes up regularly during the interviews, and which is already mentioned briefly in several of the previous analysis chapters, is the connection between interpersonal social remittances and the information obtained from other sources and especially by the media in Finland and in Russia. As interviewee Ulyana notes, **migrants are not the only source of information**, nor even the main source of information, that their acquaintances have regarding Finland/Russia. Instead, they are only one source among many others, and in particularly media also has a strong influence. According to the survey commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the role of tv-programmes that are about Finland, the internet and information provide in schools are the most central channels for individuals in Russia to obtain information about Finland (UM- country brand report 2021). According to the interviewees for this research, especially people who have not been to Finland/Russia themselves are seen as being strongly influenced by the image provided by media in their own country. The interviewees note that the information provided by the media has a strong influence on how their acquaintances see Finland/Russia and how open they are to receiving ideas regarding it transmitted by migrants. This will be analysed more closely in this chapter. Media is widely understood here as television, newspapers, radio, and social media. Interestingly, the role of social media is not emphasised by the interviewees above any of the other media channels, not even by any of the younger interviewees. In fact, it seems that especially television news are often noted as the most central channel for information about Finland. Most of the interviewees report following both Russian and Finnish media, but the emphasis differs somewhat: those who have been in the country for a longer time and speak the Finnish language point out following Finnish media more than those who have been in Finland for a short time and do not speak the language, such as the exchange students. As noted by Davydova-Minguet et al. (2019, 268), Russian media in Finland are easily accessible because of the digitalization of media and developments in information and communication technology.

Overall, it seems that media is mostly seen as having a negative effect on the transmission of social remittances, in the sense that people tend to form strong opinions based on information provided by media, and these opinions are difficult to change through social remittances. However, it is particularly because the **information provided by the media is seen as one-sided** and often erroneous that migrants feel a need to transmit "rightful" information based on their own experiences, regarding life in Finland/Russia and the welfare systems. The interviewees bring up that it is mainly through media that their acquaintances have gotten stereotypical and misleading information about Finland/Russia which they have to dismantle and combat. Interviewee Irina notes: "*Somehow it*

[= Russia] *is a strange topic here* [= in Finland]. *Because people get a lot of stuff from the media and which mostly does not feed facts. It is mostly like from the media that they get the picture. They* [= media] *just paint it in colours and the colours are not very nice or truthful of life and it gives a very kind of emotional understanding – –.*" (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) Not once during the interviews is the information provided by media about Finland/Russia mentioned as something positive or constructive.

Some of the interviewees state that they have even stopped following the media because *"it gives you false opinion about everything"* (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics). This exemplifies one of the strategies identified by Davydova-Minguet et al. (2019) according to which, to cope with the conflict between ideas presented in Russian and western media, some individuals may minimize their media use. In this way, they do not need to choose which "camp" they belong to. Other strategies include becoming massive media users who choose between mainstream Russian or Finnish perspectives, or aiming for a more critical and nuanced worldview, by broadening the use of media. Based on the analysis, it seems however that among the interviewees, the first strategy is employed most and only few have chosen to pick either the Finnish or Russian "media's side". That being said, on specific issues, such as the case of children supposedly being taken away from parents, all the interviewees with whom this was discussed (mainly those who have been in Finland for a longer time), seem to have adopted the perspective of the Finnish media, as analysed in the previous chapter.

The notion of **being *subjected* to either Russian or Finnish media** is used by some of the interviewees. The interviewees also relate this to either being subjected to one-sided western or to Russian influences, which is seen as a negative thing (more on east vs. west dichotomy in the following chapter). Both the Finnish media about Russia and the Russian media about Finland are seen as providing one-sided information. As one interviewee, Svetlana, who worked as a journalist in Russia, notes "*– – I noticed that in Finland there are quite strong opinions about Russia. When I try to explain them that these are not truthful, they just tell me that what I am telling is not true and dismiss me. – – If it has sometimes been mentioned in the Finnish media the information sticks and everyone knows it.*" (Svetlana, 42y., student.) The media is also seen to create emotion based and dramatic views which appeal to people. Especially the Russian media is seen to use tactics like these. Overall, the Russian media is problematized more by the interviewees than the Finnish media. This likely partly relates to it being is easier for many migrants to follow the Russian media compared to the Finnish media, due to language barriers and familiarity.

Because of a lack of truthful information to be gained from the media, the role of providing rational and impartial information regarding Finland/Russia is **according to some of the interviewees left to them**, which is illustrated well by this following quotation by Sergei: "*I do it very actively* [= correct misinformation], *because it* [= media coverage] *is very politicized and tendentious, and they bring very concise viewpoints and because of this, I have shared more objective information and brought forth the other side of the coin.*" (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) On a similar note, several of the interviewees emphasise that they "*simply must*" (Dmitri, 50y., language teacher) take part in the conversation and deconstruct

images created by the media by trying to bring a more balanced view. Furthermore, as stated by Maria, not all information can be obtained from newspapers and other sources, which is why migrants can have an important role. The fact that migrants have their own experience about Finland/Russia is seen as giving them a more comprehensive understanding to share: "*If there are attempts to defame, in either of the medias* [= in Finnish and Russia media], *then I try to contest those and show the real composition of how things are.*" (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) However, one interviewee, Irina, notes in a more critical tone that, when considering the information that migrants share about living in Finland and the Finnish welfare state, we also have to keep in mind that this information might be manipulated by the media, and thus it is difficult to know whether the information they share is accurate and unbiased. Thus, migrants may not always be a reliable source of information.

Some of the interviewees note that the way Russia/Finland is described in the media, also **projects on how those that have left the country are seen by those who stay behind.** Since the west, and Finland as part of it, is according to the interviewees often described in negative terms (more on this in the following chapter), this also reflects negatively on how emigrants and their life abroad are seen. This is demonstrated by the following quotation by Igor: "*Often on TV, when we watch the main channel news, they emphasise how there are homos in Europe and all kinds of bad people who do bad things together and think on how they could do bad things to Russia as well. Some people who are not very smart think that this is true, and they think that we* [= migrant and his family] *are the same.*" (Igor, 31y., translator and consult.) This finding is also supported by previous research, according to which, in the Russian media, a narrative is present in which western media systematically provide false information about how bad Russia is. Furthermore, to combat criticism towards Russia in western media, Russian media tends to portray western journalists as having low professional ethics and competence. (Oivo 2017.) If a western lifestyle is seen as morally corrupt, migrants living this lifestyle can also be disapproved of. This is another reason for migrants to try and change, through social remittances, how their acquaintances in Russia see Finland.

Yet, even though the interviewees point out that they try to change the understanding that their acquaintances have regarding Finland/Russia from the media, this is **found very difficult by many** (see similar findings by Davydova-Minguet et al. 2019). Interviewee Maksim notes that he is not sure that he has managed to do so: "*So, even if I told them something about Russia it is not. I am not sure it is changing their picture. It is kind of: 'Okay…' So maybe they have their picture, and it stays ha ha.*" (Maksim, 25y., PhD researcher.) According to him, people might say they agree or at least not say that they disagree, even if they do. On a similar note, interviewee Ulyana tells that when she tries to explain to her Finnish acquaintances that something about their information regarding Russian politics is not true, she feels completely overlooked and ignored. The interviewee notes in a somewhat annoyed tone that her acquaintances rather believe in the information from the media than the information provided by her: "*Even if I am*

trying to explain that it is not true, they say: 'No it is not like that'. But when something is said in Finnish media then everyone believes it is true." (Ulyana, 34y., translator.)

The **difficulty in changing people's opinions is due to various reasons**. Some interviewees recount that it is mostly due to the strong status that the information provided especially by the news has in Russia/Finland, and others note that their word is not believed because they are seen as biased. Moreover, interviewee Irina notes that people are not always open to listen to a different opinion because they are keen on their previous opinion: "*If they have this misconception and they like this misconception they keep it because they believe in it. They want to believe in it.*" (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) She further describes that when she has tried to provide her Russian friends with a more balanced viewpoint about Finland, which also brings up critical views, her friends have not wanted to understand her and have put her "*in the category of people who watch the state dominated media. So, you have to be careful what you say.*" (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) By "the people who watch the state dominated media", the interviewee refers to people who according to her consider life in the west in negative terms because of the negative picture portrayed of it in the Russian media. By criticizing Finland, and thus life in the west, the interviewee is thus seen by her acquaintances as accepting this negative image from the Russian media. This, instead of considering that she herself might have come to her critical viewpoints during her stay abroad. In this case, the social remittances are not accepted because the interviewee is considered biased, and because the acquaintances are unwilling to change the opinion that they have previously formed. This example indicates that it is not only positive aspects of living in another country that are not believed because media paints a more negative picture, but also that sometimes critical points are ignored or overlooked if they do not fit in with the positive ideal of the west.

6.3.7 The effects of the east vs. west dichotomy on the reception of social remittances

An **east vs. west setting comes up frequently** during the interviews. Through this categorization, Finland is seen as a "*window to Europe*" (Andrei, 29y., exchange student)[8]. This kind of dichotomy has an effect on the role the social remittances can have. During the interviews, it becomes clear that the interviewees categorize Finland as being part of Europe and the "west"[9]. Furthermore, some of the interviewees perceive that they have to explain and teach what living in the "west" looks like. Similar findings have been made by Solari (2019), who has found that some Ukrainians, who have lived in Italy, try

[8] An interesting example is that during the cold war Russian spies practiced how to live a western life in Finland (Leitzinger 2016, 62).

[9] This is interesting, considering that Finns are a latecomer to 'the west' and became identified with Europe after the collapse of the 'Eastern bloc' (Krivonos & Näre 2019, 1179). Before this, Finland was seen as a grey zone, mainly based on historical categorization from the 18th to 20th century, Finns were non-white and non-European and thus assigned a lower status in the racialized hierarchies produced by scientific racism (Rastas 2004). Finland has thus historically had a precarious belonging to the 'west' (Keskinen 2014).

to teach their children living in Ukraine what "life is like in Europe" and Mahmoud et al. (2014), who find that Moldovan migrants living in Western Europe perceive that they are teaching their family and friends on how life in Western Europe works. What is interesting considering social remittances is that Finland, as part of the west, especially in regard to welfare, is described by most of the interviewees as superior to the east. This strongly influences the kind of remittances that are transmitted. The findings illustrate that the interviewees' ideas of the west are to some extent anchored in self-orientalisation, according to which the west is seen as exemplifying European values of modernity and progress, which enable to achieve a more modern lifestyle, while Russia as part of the east is seen as backward and traditional (see similar findings by Andreouli & Howarth 2018; Krivonos & Näre 2019). As Levitt & Merry (2013, 444) note, there is a tendency in cultural transfers studies to unconditionally consider modern western innovations as good and immediately acceptable and ´a step in the right direction´. In the Eastern European/Russian contexts, this stems from thinking according to which, since the fall of the Socialist system in the 1990s, and the end of the Cold war, Eastern and Central Europe have been portrayed as being the Other in relation to the developed and wealthy Western European nations (Mulinari et al. 2009, 2–3). As the "other", Eastern and Central Europe is being seen as underdeveloped, non-civilized and backward from a political, social, ideological, and scientific point of view (Cingolani & Vietti 2019). As noted by Cingolani & Vietti (2019)[10], and confirmed to some extent by this research, the othering of Eastern Europe is also performed by migrants from former Soviet countries.

As such, the interviewees' views represent an existing Euro-centered worldview, built around global coloniality, according to which the west is seen as representing the future and progress and as such superior to the east, which is seen in terms of post-socialism, the past and a lack of value (see Krivonos & Näre 2019). For example, the young Russian-speaking migrants interviewed by Krivonos and Näre (2019, 1187) define Russianness as opposed to Europeanness, and as savage compared to civilized Finland.

Notwithstanding what is behind the juxtapositioning, the fact that such a division of east vs. west exists **has consequences on the transmission and reception of social remittances**. Because of the division, social remittances from Finland often times comes to represent social remittances from the "west", instead of being ideas and information transmitted from Finland. Similar findings have been made by Mahmoud et al. (2014, 35) who report that the migrants in their research, living in Western Europe, communicate a broad vision of Europe and of modern societies to their acquaintances in Moldova. Finland representing the "west" however also means that a dichotomy between Finland as part of the "West" and Russia as part of the "east" is formed. This dichotomy has an effect on the acceptance of remittances since the things that are told about

[10] According to their research, focusing on Moldova, migrants tend to consider their own country, as well as Russia, as the opposite of Europe and associate them with backwardness and lack of morality, while the European Union is envisioned as modern and progressive.

Finland to Russian acquaintances do not only pertain to Finland but become a larger reflection of Europe as a whole, as the following quote by Sergei illustrates: "*I have told about how things are done in Europe. And I use this notion of Europe because Finland is not understood as separate, but in a way as part of Europe and the west.*" (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) Whereas Finland is understood as part of the west, Russia on the other hand is strongly categorized as the east. This is done by the interviewees and, according to them, also by their Finnish acquaintances.

This dichotomy between the east and the west is surprisingly common in the interviewees' narratives, and it seems to play an important role in the reception of remittances: according to the interviewees, whether one's acquaintances are pro-west or pro-east does have a strong effect on how likely the things that migrants tell their Russian acquaintances are believed, valued, and accepted. Some interviewees note that their Russian acquaintances are **liberal and pro-west** and are thus interested in how things are done abroad and especially in Europe. The idea of being a "*fan of the west*" is noted several times by several interviewees. Being pro-western makes the acquaintances, according to the interviewees, also more receptive to the social remittances send from Finland, especially to ideas regarding welfare and democracy. According to some of the interviewees, being pro-west can however also mean that one is not willing to accept any criticism regarding the European lifestyle and thus life in Finland (as demonstrated by the example provided in subchapter 6.1.5), which then hinders the effect that social remittances can have in providing a multisided viewpoint. Also, many Finnish acquaintances are according to the interviewees pro-western in the sense that they are generally much more oriented towards the west, to Europe and the US. This orientation explains, according to the interviewees, why they are not that interested in Russia nor travel there often. Interviewee Natalya notes: "*People in Finland find the English language much more useful than the weird Russian and Cyrillic letters.*" (Natalya, 42y., employed in museum.)

Correspondingly, those Russian acquaintances who are by the interviewees categorized as being **patriotic and conservative** are often seen as leading an **anti-European lifestyle** and thus less willing to accept social remittances from Finland. The following quotation by Olga illustrates a juxtapositioning of Russian values and European values: "*– – some of them* [= acquaintances in Russia] *are very very much that Mother Russia should be like the only homeland, and that the western countries are like being rotten. Something like that. It is fortunately not that widespread, but many people believe in those things.*" (Olga, 23y., student.) The interviewee does not seem to agree and is unhappy that many people have this kind of a worldview. Especially older people are seen as belonging to the group that has a negative perspective of Europe. This has to do with the European lifestyle being associated with liberal values. LGBT rights are brought up by several interviewees as an example of the so-called liberal European lifestyle. Some interviewees note that the media coverage of Europe in Russia often focuses on issues such as gay marriages in a negative way. This then according to the interviewees leads to some of their acquaintances stigmatizing everything related to Europe and thus also Finland. Because of this, no ideas, information, or values

are welcomed. This also pertains to social remittances regarding welfare and democracy, which are difficult to separate from a broader vision of western living.

A critical, or even downright negative, conception of Europe also seems to be related to the idea of **Russians not being welcomed in Europe**. Interviewee Olga notes that her "*– – parents' friends have a strong stereotype that Russians in the west can only work as cleaners or workers in these low skilled jobs, and the western people look down on the Russian people. And that everyone hates Russians because of politics*." (Olga, 23y., student.) There thus seems to be an idea among some of the interviewees and their acquaintances that people in the west are against people in the east. Some interviewees note that the media especially has an important role in the forming of this kind of **us vs them** setting. One interviewee, Sergei, notes: "*There is a juxtaposition in the media* [= Russian media]*: the United States are criticized, and through this the EU, liberalism, and western norms as well. – – there is a political understanding that western countries are subordinating Russia and trying to restrict it.*" (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) This setting may then lead to the west being seen as an enemy with bad intentions towards Russia. Interviewee Olga notes: "*Our media very much like increases this stereotype that the west are enemies and things like that.*" (Olga, 23y., student.) Although this kind of media coverage forms stereotypes that the acquaintances can try to break, as analyzed in the previous chapter, they can also boost a general feeling of disapproval of Europe and social remittances sent from Europe. Accepting ideas, values and information from "enemies" is something that might not seem appealing. This is further related to some acquaintances not wanting to hear any critique about Russia, which is based on experiences gained in Europe. One interviewee, Galina, states that her parents hate it when she says that she "*now sees how bad things are in Russia*" (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics).

6.3.8 How attitudes towards migration affect the reception of social remittances

The migrants' and their acquaintances' attitudes towards emigration and living abroad influence the sending and acceptance of social remittances. This aspect also relates to whether social remittances regarding welfare services could function as a pull factor for further migration towards Finland, i.e., whether there is welfare magnetism realized through social remittances. During the interviews, the interviewees were asked what is in their opinion **thought about emigration** in Russia and how their acquaintances have reacted to their moving to Finland. The interviews demonstrate that if emigration is approved of, then it is likely that also social remittances are more keenly accepted. On the other hand, if emigration is criticized and seen as a disservice to the motherland, then also the social remittances sent by migrants are less likely accepted.

The knowledge, social consciousness, and expectations concerning migration that people have are formed through their own experiences, interactions with other people who may be migrants or non-migrants, and through the stories which come from the media and political debate (Dzięglewski 2016, 179). The interviews illustrate that there are strong differences among the

interviewees and their acquaintances in **how emigration is seen**: Some note that their acquaintances have reacted very positively towards their migration, whereas others note that they have received negative feedback on their decision to move to Finland. The interviewees in general have a perception that people in Russia understand why others want to move away and that this is related to the poor state of Russian democracy and overall living standard in Russia. Thus, emigration is understood and viewed emphatically. Some interviewees note that emigration is in fact a common dream among Russians. As one interviewee, Mila, states: "*If it were possible almost everyone would move here* [= Finland]" (Mila, 28y., student). This should however be viewed somewhat critically since it can likely reflect the attitudes of those who have actually migrated more strongly than those who have not migrated.

Emigration is by many of the interviewees seen as a **symptom that everything is not OK** in the country of origin and *"it shows to the government that they do something wrong"* (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics). As noted by Olesen (2002, 137), especially highly skilled individuals are sensitive to the migration option when they find the human rights/governance situation in their country of origin unacceptable. As such, migration on itself becomes a critique of Russia, which might then agitate those who are very patriotic and do not want to hear criticism of Russia. Also, the impact of emigration on the economy of Russia is regarded as a negative aspect by several of the interviewees and their acquaintances. Especially the emigration of highly skilled seems to be criticized by the acquaintances of the interviewees. Even so, several of the interviewees also seem to consider that since there are so many people in Russia anyways, it does not matter if some of them move abroad. From this perspective, emigration is not seen to have negative consequences. Thus, among the interviewees the perception of the consequences of migration is predominantly not only negative (cf. Dzięglewski 2016, 179 in Polish context). One interviewee, Igor, who moved to Finland when he was 19, even notes that when he lived in Russia, he was a burden to the state because he did not have any job. If expatriates can financially support their family members living in Russia through economic remittances, this is also seen as a positive effect of emigration.

As Teferra (2005, 241) notes, those who have left the country are not always seen in a positive light and sometimes stigma hangs over them. The analysis indicates that this stigma can hamper the sending of social remittances. Attitudes on emigration seem to be an issue especially related to the east vs. west setting, introduced in the previous chapter, and especially **migration to the west, to Finland, is seen a problematic**, unpatriotic, and even selfish. One interviewee, Olga, who came to Finland to study, recounts that her tutor told her: "*Okay, you can go to China or the countries which are more closer to us economically, but Finns they are more closer to the US and US is our enemy. It is like you are going to our enemy.*" The interviewee noted this laughingly and she commented that it is "*ridiculous but unfortunately it is true*" (Olga, 23y., student). It thus seems to matter where you move to, and some places are more acceptable than others. Interviewee Olga further notes that many of her acquaintances "*were very unhappy that I went away to a western country because they think that Russian people should stay in Russian, and*

invest in Russia, and not go away and work for someone else" (Olga, 23y., student). This quote again illustrates the strong east vs. west worldview that seems to be common among the interviewees' acquaintances.

These opinions of acquaintances, on emigration, influence the acceptance of ideas, thoughts, and information that the migrants transmit from abroad. Several interviewees perceive that the things that they tell their acquaintances regarding Finland and welfare practices in Finland are **not accepted and valued because their initial migration to Finland is criticized**. Especially in these cases also the potential welfare magnetic aspects of social remittances are very limited. Similar findings have been made by Nevinskaitė (2016) who reports that negative opinions and an unwelcoming attitude in society towards Lithuanians abroad is hindering knowledge and skill transfers. As Brinkerhoff (2006, 19) notes, for diaspora contributions to be effective, the homeland society needs to be welcoming, and not for example criticise the diaspora for not returning. In this research, this manifests so that **when emigration is not valued then also the opinions of emigrants on Russia and its current state are not appreciated**. One interviewee, Galina, tells that every time she tries to tell her opinion about things that are not well in Russia, her dad gets really mad. According to her dad, Russia has given everything to her and thus she should be appreciative. The interviewee describes her father as being very patriotic. The example epitomizes that sometimes a migrant's changed outlook on things might lead to **conflict:** migrants may want to remit back ideas about change that are not always possible or desired by people in the country of origin (Levitt 1997, 520; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011, 15; Vari-Lavoisier 2014). This is because the norms brought about by social remitting are likely to **be imposed on the expense of other existing norms,** and on those who might have been benefitting from the prevailing rule before. (Vari-Lavoisier 2014, 27–29; Vari-Lavoisier 2015, 5–8.) Migrants remit norms that fit with their own knowledge and support their own normative vision of how the community should evolve (Vari-Lavoisier 2015, 8–9), and this vision is not always shared by those who have not migrated. A case in point is the example provided by Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011), on migrants from the Dominican Republic living in the United States, remitting economic and social remittances to their communities of origin, about building new infrastructure in their community of origin. The migrants came up with building projects that in their view aimed at improving the area of origin. However, the opinions of migrants differed significantly from the opinions of the non-migrants. Those non-migrants who did not share the new outlook of migrants found the building project, which the migrants had put forward, unnecessary, costly, and unfeasible. The non-migrants had different priorities than the migrants, and they found that the basic needs of people should be met first and foremost. (Levitt &Lamba-Nieves 2011, 15.) Similar findings have been made by Waddell (2014, 122) related to building projects in El Timbinal, Mexico. Some of the non-migrants were opposed to the building projects funded through remittances and noted that, instead, basic needs related to for example the availability of clean water should be met first.

What further affects how acquaintances see migration is related to **whether migrants are still seen as part of the group or not**: Interviewee Larisa, for example, notes that her acquaintances have told her that she is "*– – a different person now that she has moved away*" and that she is no longer Russian (Larisa, 31y., nurse). As noted by Abdile & Pirkkalainen (2011), migrants and their involvement as part of society need to be recognized as "us" and not as an outsider to be able to positively engage, which is clearly not happening in the case above. Furthermore, interviewee Natalya relates that some of her acquaintances have told her that she "*should not give any advice on how things should be organized in Russia now that you have changed your home country and are basically a traitor*" (Natalya, 42y., employed in museum). Interestingly, the word "traitor" or the idea that migration is a betrayal is used by several of the interviewees when describing how acquaintances in Russia view their emigration abroad, as also the following quotation illustrates: "*I would say that the majority would have a negative attitude because they are jealous and/or too patriotic… That you are a betrayer of your country. For example, my father thinks so.*" (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.)

Besides being seen as a "traitor", several interviewees also note that their acquaintances seem to think that since they have moved away, **they no longer know and have up-to-date information** on how things are in Russia and thus they should no longer have opinions or a right to discuss those things. Some of the interviewees also feel this way about themselves. One interviewee, Irina, who has been in Finland for 7 years, notes that she is no longer fully Russian and "*even if I move back, I am already like a half foreigner. I do not keep up with the things, I do not know the same way as Russian people know it and I do not relate to them in the same way, because nevertheless here my life is quite nice and peaceful, so certain issues might not bother me that much frankly.*" (Irina, 30y., PhD researcher.) Migrants thus also consider their own limits in keeping up to how things are in Russia. Interviewee Anastasia notes on this: "*Because for a long time I have not lived in Russia, it is difficult to know what I can recommend or find out for my friends, I do not know.*" (Anastasia, 36 y., student.) Also, interviewee Tatyana (53y., finance secretary) notes that since she has left, work life in Russia has changed completely and thus she no longer has up-to-date experience and information about it to share in Finland. In relation to what Tushman and Scanlan (1981) write, migrants may lose their role as effective influencers if they no longer understand the sociocultural environment of their country of origin and are thus no longer attuned to contextual information on both sides of the boundary. Effective influencers are individuals that understand the coding schemes, or in this case the sociocultural environment of both their country of origin and their country of settlement, and are thus attuned to contextual information on both sides of the boundary. This enables them to search out relevant information on one side and disseminate it on the other. (Tushman & Scanlan 1981, 291–292.) The length of migration can thus have an effect on the ability to remit. Furthermore, it can also affect the willingness of acquaintances to accept the transmitted social remittances. In other words, although the migrant may still be able to remit and stay attuned, the acquaintances may have a different opinion of this, which can affect the reception

of remittances. As noted by Abdile & Pirkkalainen (2011), for the diaspora to engage constructively with the country of origin, there ought to be a level of mutual recognition.

However, also contrary experiences emerge from the interviewees: some mention that although some of their acquaintances are no longer interested in their opinion, others appreciate their opinion more now that they live abroad. Those acquaintances that have **a positive perspective on moving and living abroad** are also more appreciative of information and news shared from abroad. The interviewees' status as people who have moved abroad makes them appear worth listening to. As one interviewee, Galina, who originally moved to Finland to study, states: *"I am a star there, you know, that I escaped. Ha ha."* (Galina, 21y., employed in logistics.)

Some interviewees describe that with those acquaintances who are more open to emigration, they have also **discussed the migration process**. Although several interviewees note that their family members or friends could never migrate abroad, due to e.g., not wanting to leave Russia or not having enough language skills, others note that some of their friends and family members have expressed interest in moving abroad. One interviewee, Olga, notes that many people in Russia *"are very interested in what it is like to be totally alone in a foreign country, without knowing, and going there without knowing anyone*." (Olga, 23y., student.) Social remittances transmitted by the interviewees regarding the migration process include information on what it was like to move away from Russia and what it is like to live in Finland. What is more, some of the interviewees have also shared **practical information on how to emigrate**, thus contributing to diaspora knowledge networks. Interviewee Anastasia notes: *"I have a friend who wants to move to Finland, and she asked me where she can find a job and what she needs to do. I told her: 'Great, now that it is summer you can apply to pick strawberries for example.' – – I wrote to her and gave her all the information, where, how, how the salary is, what place etc."* (Anastasia, 36y., student.) In this case, however nothing came of it and the acquaintance did not end up moving to Finland, since as the interviewee described she was not willing to put in the needed effort. However, social remittances about the migration process, create the opportunity for non-migrants to experiment with migration (White 2016, 10). Olga further notes: "*My mom is very aware of what you need to do to migrate, and how you need to live here, and what you need to renew every time, and all this paperwork and everything"* (Olga, 23y., student). Another interviewee notes that he has shared information on *"how to get citizenship through marriage and how migration happens in a bureaucratic sense"* (Sergei, 28y., employed in NGO). Also, interviewee Tatyana (53y., finance secretary) has discussed practical arrangements regarding life in Finland with her acquaintance, whose child is moving to Finland to study. By sharing this information, migrants boost existing migrant networks and perhaps make the process of others moving abroad a bit easier. However, although previous research has found that migrants tend to share rather positive images of their new country of residence (see e.g., Suksomboon, 2008), it seems that migrants from Russia in Finland are also willing to share a more complex picture and even criticise Finland to those living in Russia. In this way, social remittances

regarding migration are also related to migrants trying to explain to their friends and family that not everything is rose-coloured and perfect abroad and in Finland. By doing so, migrants try to manage the expectations of those planning to go abroad, and the expectations that their acquaintances have about the life that the migrants themselves are living abroad (discussed more in chapter 6.1.5).

According to survey results from 2021, 18 % of Russians, if they had the opportunity, would be interested to moving to Finland permanently, whereas 80 % have no interest in this (Finnish Foreign Ministry - country brand report 2021). In relation to findings from this research it seems that, according to the interviewees, the social remittances that they transmit regarding Finland do not have a significant influence as a pull factor towards Finland, i.e., there does not seem to be a strong welfare magnetism created by migrant networks. As noted previously, the interviewed migrants do not only discuss the positive aspects of living in Finland and the Finnish welfare state. Instead, also criticism and hardships are shared, which might make acquaintances understand that not everything is perfect and easy abroad, and this might make the welfare pull less appealing. This also means that the aspiring migrants´ ideas of going abroad and living in the "west" are likely not based on an overly positive image. Several interviewees bring forth that even though their acquaintances have a positive image of Finland, most of them are not interested in moving there, mainly because it is not found possible or practical (see chapter 6.3.8).

The following figure 16 concludes the findings of this chapter. In it, the various factors that have been found, as perceived by the remitter, to influence the reception and acceptance of social remittances are summarised.

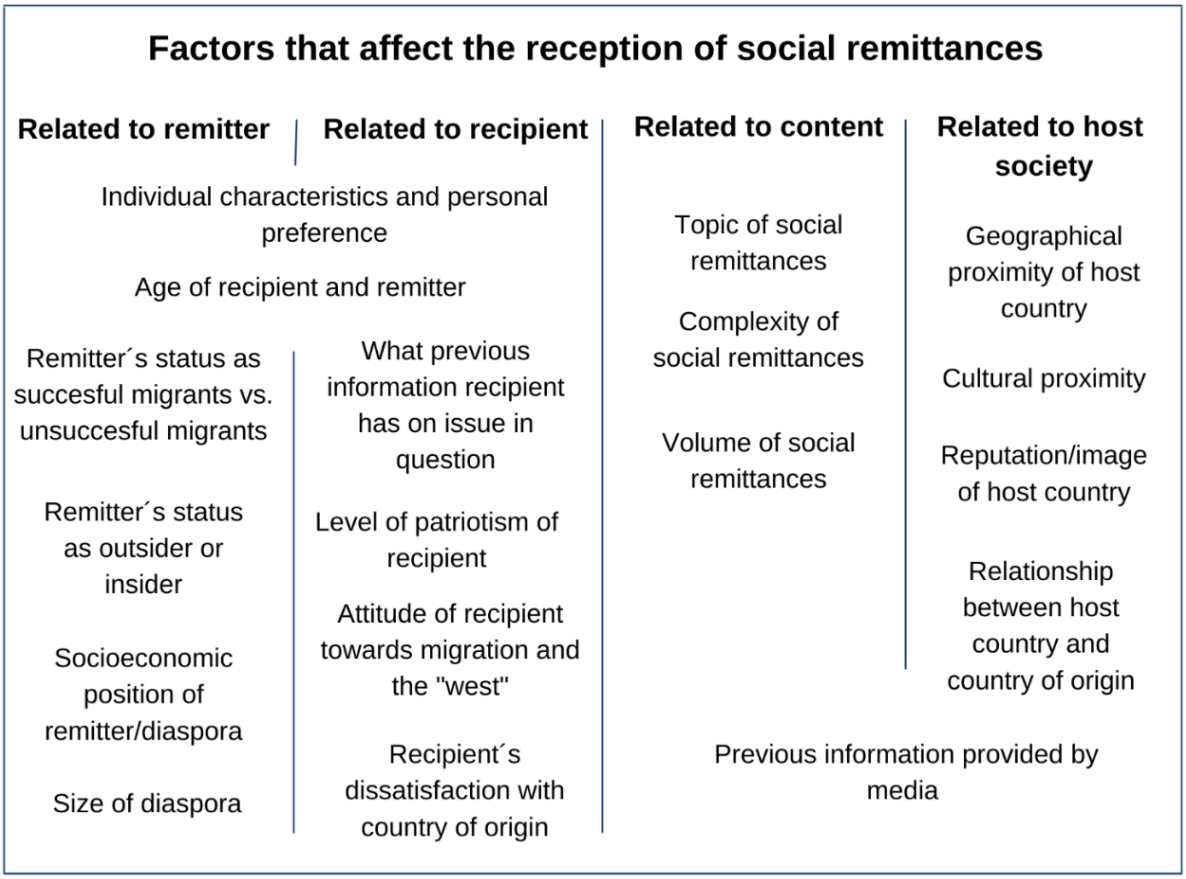

Figure 16 Factors that are perceived to influence the reception of social remittance

6.4 Perceived success of attempts: effect and diffusion of social remittances

After social remittances are transmitted and accepted there are various factors that influence the effect that they can have among the recipients and if diffused, the country of settlement. In this chapter, the attempts of migrants to induce change in the views and habits of their acquaintances is considered from the perspective of the effects that their attempts may have. In other words, what the influence of social remittances can be, on changing the views and habits of acquaintances and whether this could potentially have wider societal implications. In subchapter 6.4.1 the sphere of influence of social remittances is analysed, in subchapter 6.4.2 the status of the remitter on the effect of social remittances is examined, in subchapter 6.4.3 the level of influence is considered and in subchapter 6.4.4 whether there is a preference to change things to begin with is analysed. A practical example of the effect of social remittances is given in subchapter 6.4.5 and finally, in subchapter 6.4.6, the ways that social remittances can influence the mentality of people is considered.

6.4.1 Who are influenced: Spill over of social remittances

Whether social remittances can lead to change largely depends on whether migrants are able to get their message across in the first place (role of migrant remitter), whether acquaintances are willing to accept the message (role of non-migrant) and whether the message is diffused among social circles. The interviews demonstrate that different migrants think very differently about their potential for sending social remittances to Russia or bringing them to Finland. Some interviewees believe strongly that they themselves, and migrants in general, can bring new ideas to their country of settlement as well as send back ideas to their country of origin: "*Every person can share his experiences, his knowledge.*" (Inga, 37 y., student.) Others consider that influencing things through social remittances is difficult or impossible.

During the interviews, the participants were asked to consider whether they think that the social remittances they transmit can lead to something, e.g., to change in practices or values. The influence that social remittances can have is analysed from the perspective of the migrant, who is the remitter. However, it must be kept in mind that even though the migrants themselves may assume that the influence of their social remittances is large/small, their assumption does not tell us directly whether this is the case or not. It does not tell us whether change actually takes place, but rather whether the migrants think that it does.

Two different categories of influence from social remittance can be detected: the first is the influence that social remittances can have on the **direct recipients of remittances**, on their ideas, values, and knowledge. The second category is the influence that social remittances can have on those who themselves are **not direct recipients of remittances**. This influence is based on spill over and diffusion of remittances. The interviewees do believe that although it is possible to have

influence on their own acquaintances, accomplishing influence on others through social remittances is found more difficult.

The first thing to note is that migrants from Russia in general do consider that social remittances **can lead to a change in opinion of the receiver of remittances**. The interviewees feel that they can have impact on what the people that they are in contact with know and think about Russia, Finland, and the Finnish welfare system. Most interviewees feel that they have been able to make their acquaintances see Finland in a more positive light through sharing information about what it is like to live there. This is also what most interviewees have attempted to do, even though they also share their criticism as not to make Finland seem overly great and as not to give their acquaintances the understanding that they are having it very easy in Finland. The interviewees also note that they have succeeded in changing some of the negative stereotypes regarding Russia among their Finnish acquaintances. The findings support Lindstrom & Muñoz-Francos' (2005) idea that migrants can bring new information into the homogeneous networks because they have gained experience and information from outside their community of origin. Consequently, the interviewees find it worthwhile to try and have an effect through social remittances, as the following quotation by Dmitri illustrates: "*Yes, yes, I try all the time to make change by telling and sharing positive experiences and I believe that it is possible*." (Dmitri, 50 y., language teacher.)

What is central to note from the analysis is that most interviewees consider that they have through remitting been able to **influence their own personal surroundings**, i.e., among their own personal circle of acquaintances on an individual level. Most of the interviewees seem to agree that this is possible. Interviewee Galina (21y., employed in logistics), for example notes that her mother and grandmother, who both work in education, have started to implement her ideas from Finland in their teaching in Russia. This demonstrates that it is possible to implement change and to learn by example from abroad, at least according to the experiences of the remitters.

Moreover, the transferring of ideas and information is in general seen as a huge, albeit somewhat ambiguous **potential**: the **exchange of different ideas is fundamentally seen as a positive thing** which leads to innovation and positive changes in society: "*It is always good when there is an international team, because for example, I can bring something and then another person can bring something: like Finnish person can add this and French person this. This way the work is really good, and you see from different points. It brings more results*" (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics.) Interviewee Irina notes on similar lines that creative change happens when people from different backgrounds get to share ideas. Likewise, interviewee Ulyana notes that although she herself has not transmitted any ideas regarding childcare to Russia, she believes that the experiences she is sharing with her acquaintances "– – *might get someone excited and try to integrate some of it into the Russian society, if for example that person is working as a kindergarten teacher* – –" (Ulyana, 34y., translator).

However, it is particularly influence beyond the first recipient that interviewees are skeptical about. Many of the interviewees **doubt that social**

remittances can lead to spill over or diffusion, thus also influencing those who are not themselves direct recipients of the social remittances or otherwise not among close acquaintances. This finding is in line with that of Drbohlav and Dzúrová (2021, 3) who state that social remittances have a limited impact since they primary influence a micro-family milieu and attract people living in the same neighborhood or small town. The following quotation by interviewee Maksim exemplifies this: "*They can transfer their ideas to those who are friends or acquaintance or relatives who are in Russia, but only to them. Not in a general way like: 'wow it is a good value the whole country should adopt it'. No, no, no, not this way.* (Maksim, 25y., PhD researcher.) According to this viewpoint, social remittances can only be transferred to friends, acquaintances, and relatives. Or as one interviewee Anna (19y., student) notes, only within households, i.e., among the immediate family members living in Russia. According to the interviewees, the inability of diffusion has to do with the fact that the social remittances that they transmit **do not reach people who are not in their own social circle**. Some relate this to how Russian culture and society are set up, making this an especially Russian thing. One interviewee for example notes that: "*– – Russians are used to remain in their own close circle. Many do not have wide social networks. That sets the limits to how ideas can spread – –.*" (Sergei, 28 y., employed at NGO.)

People from within certain social circles **tend to already be same-minded**: in some cases, it means that they already think similarly about migrating, Europe, welfare, and democracy. Therefore, as interviewee Maria states, although migrants can send remittances their role remains limited: "*Yes, they* [= migrants] *can explain something, convince, invite to share experiences but mostly those who communicate, they already share some common principles. So, it's not about convincing a person from zero. Mostly people who exchange information they belong to already existing networks of people who share something, perhaps some solidarity about something*" (Maria, 45 y., lecturer.) The interviewee, Maria, further notes that the similarity of opinion within social circles relates to individuals within this circle having received **similar previous information**, from the same sources, such as the same newspapers and webpages that they base their discussions on. She states that because of this "*we both understand that we know what is going on and we share similar ideas and similar attitudes. So, we don't have to speak about certain facts from the very beginning to the very end. Mostly we exchange some emotional reactions.*" (Maria, 45 y., lecturer.) The things that are thus discussed are based on a mutually shared understanding of how things are. This also means in practice that things do not have to be explained from the very beginning, but instead the conversation focuses on reactions to e.g., new developments. The interviewee thus questions the idea that migrants could feed new ideas into homogenous networks, at least in a Russian context.

Because people are connected mostly with other people, who are similar minded, social remittances can according to some of the interviewees **not impact individuals who have different opinions.** This then hinders the overall revolutionary effect of social remittances. Interviewee Anna notes: "*My friends and acquaintances are mainly the people who are more or less like me: who see the world like I do. So, I am not going to meet some like really Soviet guy who really loves the Soviet*

regime and this kind of stuff and say: 'Hey you're wrong, I just want to tell you how the truth looks like'." (Anna, 19y., student). When the different social circles do not come in touch, it is also impossible for social remittances to "spill over" between them. The interviewee further continues: *"I am definitely not going to move to somewhere to Siberia. I am not going to kind promote this kind of living there."* (Anna, 19., student.)

These findings bring forth the questions **whether change is in fact an essential part of social remittances,** as it is often emphasised. Analysis of social remittances often focuses on how migrants "pick up" new ideas from their country of settlement to transmit to their country of origin. However, it could also be possible that migrants move to another country and keep influencing people in their society of origin, on e.g., political or policy opinions, without picking up new ideas from the country of settlement. For example, in some cases, migrants can share ideas that have already arisen in their country of origin, and it can be emigration that enables them to do so. For example, exiles who have fled authoritarian regimes can have new opportunities to promote their political ideas after migration, and these ideas need not be picked up in the country of settlement. (Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010, 206.) In a Russian context, such findings have been made for example by Fomina (2009), who finds that the relative safety and freedom arising from living abroad, away from the repression apparatus of the Russian state, has been an important enabling and motivating factor for the transmission of political remittances. Furthermore, the ideas that are transmitted also do not necessarily need to be new to the recipient, but instead the ideas can keep on fortifying already existing ideas and values, as exemplified by the previous quotations of Anna.

6.4.2 Whose social remittances have effect

Much earlier research on policy diffusion has generally taken a **top-down perspective,** in which a limited number of individuals in key position are seen to have the principal responsibility for importing innovations from other countries (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009, 121). This kind of perspective is adopted by e.g., Kapur (2010) in his book *Diaspora, Development, and Democracy: The Domestic Impact of International Migration from India,* in which he traces the role that the Indian elite has had on democracy in India (also noted in Kapur 2004, 366). Kapur (2010, 103) notes that especially in developing countries, which have weak institutions, the individuals, leaders, and elites can have a larger impact. Besides elites, also the role of highly educated and skilled persons is often emphasised. For example, Holdaway et al. (2015) write about the impact of skilled migration on particular policy areas (health sector). Also, Spilimbergo (2009, 538–539), has described how a small minority of foreign educated individuals can bring about change, and Portes (2009, 16) has stated, that a community of *professional* expatriates can make a significant contribution to the scientific and technological development of their country of origin. Portes (2010, 1546) emphasises that especially highly skilled individuals have greater flexibility and capacity to adapt to the receiving culture. In terms of social remittances, this means that highly

skilled individuals can pick up new influences more actively to form social remittances to transmit to the country of origin. However, in terms of multidirectional remittances or reverse remittances, this can mean that the durable impact of highly skilled on the country of settlement is more limited in terms of bringing new influences to it, since, instead of adhering tightly to their culture, customs, and language, highly skilled adapt the ways of the country of settlement. According to this logic, it is especially the less educated migrants who do not pick up the local language and culture, whose impact on the society of settlement is larger. (Portes 2010, 1546). Portes is however critical about the role that the manual labour migrants' contribution can have on development of the society of origin. He states that the contributions of manual labour migrants can at best lead to public works and services in their hometown through transnational philanthropy (Portes 2009, 16).

A top-down perspective can also be noted in the interviewees' ideas regarding the impact of social remittances: it seems that many of the interviewees believe that some people have more opportunities for transmitting remittances than others. Those individuals who have an **influential societal position and/or a larger audience** can, according to the interviewees, also have a larger impact with the social remittances that they transmit. This supports Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow's (2009), Kapur's (2010, 2004) and Spilimbergo's (2010) notion that mostly individuals in key position and elites have the opportunity to influence their country of origin and that those messages carried by community members that have **a higher status or social recognition** get heard more loudly and have more effect and visibility than messages carried by members who are less powerful (Levitt 1998, 939; Grabowska & Garapich 2016b, 2156). Social remittances carried by those who are **considered successful** are also more likely to be heard (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009, 141). Interviewee Sergei explains: *"They have to be in that kind of position where they can in some way have a voice. In that way that they can perhaps make a difference, but it is difficult."* (Sergei, 28 y., employed in NGO.) Power relations thus play a significant part in understanding social remittances. People might also want to be more like the higher status individuals and thus want to act in a similar way as they do (Levitt 1998, 939). Vari-Lavoisier also brings up that individuals are more likely to adopt a practice if they identify with its promoter. She writes that being similar but slightly dominant is an excellent position to diffuse beliefs and practices. (Vari-Lavoisier 2015, 10, 12.)

The interviewees relate having a societal position particularly to **having political power and/or money.** Interviewee Sergei brings up that famous people, such as tv-personalities or actors who are active in both Finland and in Russia, can have more influential social remittances because of their visible role. On a similar note, interviewee Larisa states: "*I do not have money, but If I had a lot of money then Russia would be a lot more open. Ha ha. If you pay, then they are open to new ideas ha ha."* (Larisa, 31 y., nurse.) As Vari-Lavoisier (2014) puts it: "Money talks", and wealthier migrants are more likely to diffuse their ideas and behaviours. This because, for example, the receiver might be economically or socially dependent upon the messenger and thus willing to listen to their message (Levitt 1998). This also relates to a connection between economic and

social remittances (see e.g., Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011; Boccagni & Decimo 2013; Vari-Lavoisier 2014). Sending economic remittances contributes to migrants feeling legitimate to impose their will, especially on those matters that they are funding directly (see Vari-Lavoisier 2014, 28). None of the interviewees, however, note that they themselves are in such a position that they could have a significant influence through their social remittances, nor do they find any of their acquaintances in Russia to be in such a position. Sending economic remittances is also rare among the interviewees as analyzed in chapter 6.1.10.

However, the transmission of social remittances should not be limited to highly skilled migrants only, and we should also recognise the role that migrants with vocational education (Alenius 2016, 281), mid-level non-state actors, grassroots activists and **so-called ordinary people** can have on change (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009; Grabowska & Garapich 2016b, 2155). The accessibility of internet-based communication and social media has had an important role in transforming the communication opportunities that migrants have from afar (see Dekker & Engbersen 2014). Platforms such as Facebook, Viber, Instagram, WhatsApp etc. provide various new opportunities to stay in contact. For example, Flores (2005) emphasises the potential effect that poor and working-class actors can have on challenging or upsetting reigning relations of power and privilege (Flores 2005, 22). The analysis for this research indicates that although none of the interviewed migrants consider that they themselves have a higher status or social recognition, they still describe having been able to change how their acquaintances think about Finland/Russia and welfare services. They have thus managed to transmit social remittances that have had an influence on the level of their personal network.

Moreover, having a **position of power does not automatically lead to social remittances having a larger influence**. Interviewee Natalya (42y., employed in museum) provides an example from her hometown, which also illustrated the similarity between policy transfers and social remittances discussed in chapter 3.4. She recounts that several public officers from her hometown in Russia, i.e., individuals who have power on a local level, came to visit the town she lives at in Finland, to see how things are done and to learn what could be improved in their Russian town. There was thus an attempt to achieve policy transfer, with (local) state representatives as the chief actors. According to the interviewee, there could have been many things to take on board and lessons learned from the trip, but in practice nothing came of this visit and no real changes in Russia were implemented. Thus, according to the interviewee not even these people who have some power at their local level could or would implement change.

This relates to **skepticism,** noted by several interviewees, of **whether people in general are willing to change their views and habits**. Interviewee Irina notes that she is not sure "*whether they* [= people in Russia] *really want to sit down and think and develop some new ideas about what could be done – – or if they just want to shout and complain and just want to outsource the problem – –*" (Irina, 30 y., PhD researcher). However, another interviewee, Yulia, provides an example of policy learning that has actually been successful: she notes that the postal service

in Russia implemented some ideas from the Finnish postal services regarding standards of work: *"Three years ago, they modernised their system and that is great. If many more ideas were taken, the life in Russia would be better."* (Yulia, 44 y., unemployed.) Whether migrants had anything do to with this remains unclear but at least it provides an example that also practical examples of ways of doing things can be copied from abroad and that this can also happen in a Finnish-Russian context.

Moreover, those interviewees who are more sceptical about their friends' ability to understand what life is like in Finland/Russia often seem to think that even though they, as migrants living in Finland, provide important information, this information will **only form scattered pieces** of what life is like in Russia/Finland and how the welfare systems function. Interviewee Maksim notes that his Russian acquaintances will **only have the image that he is conveying**. The interviewee emphasises that the information that he provides about Finland and the Finnish welfare system can never be completely objective information: *"It is my subjective information. So, they have new things to think about, to discuss, but they are not experiencing these things by themselves."* (Maksim, 25 y., PhD researcher.) As noted by Oddou et al. (2013, 257), especially tacit knowledge and behavioural skills are hard, and often impossible, to develop without immersion experiences in other cultures. Because of this, non-migrant acquaintances cannot form an overall comprehensive picture. According to the interviewees, it is not possible to take only things from here and there, **without changing the whole system**. Interviewee Maria notes: *"I think it is impossible without profound structuring of the system of political and administrative governing of the country. So, you cannot just take one small bit of the system without all other relationships."* (Maria, 45y., lecturer.) Social remittance transfers may thus be incomplete in which case some essential elements of what has made the policy or institutional structure a success in the originating country may not be transferred, or they may be *inappropriate,* in which case insufficient attention may have been paid to the differences between economic, social, political, and ideological contexts in the transferring and the borrowing country (Dolowitz & Marsh 2000, 17 in regard to policy transfers).

Several interviewees also emphasise the significance of **experiencing things oneself** and note that their acquaintances living in Russia/Finland will never understand what life is like in Finland and how the welfare systems functions, without experiencing and seeing it themselves. The following quotation by interviewee Ulyana illustrates this: *"Well, it* [= understanding life and welfare systems abroad] *depends on whether they have lived there or spent longer times there. In my opinion, just a story/explanation is not enough to illustrate it. You need to have an own experience to properly understand. It does not have to be years but for example if you have lived for a couple of weeks with a Russian and seen how that person lives, then you can understand it."* (Ulyana, 34 y., translator.) According to this viewpoint, living abroad for a short time can already open up new perspectives and help in understanding life in a different country. On similar lines, interviewee Olga explains that especially those acquaintances of hers, who have not lived abroad and who according to her are very attached to Russia, cannot understand or

image what it is like to leave Russia. *"Well, I do not believe that they have a very good understanding* [= of what life is like in Finland], *but it depends: some know it very well, those who have been here and who are truly interested in the society or even fans of Finland and the west. And then on the other hand there are those who are not interested in that sense that they could imagine living in Finland. So, on some level they can understand and on the other hand they cannot."* (Olga, 23 y., student.)

Several interviewees bring up that **travelling to Finland/Russia as a tourist** can already have a large impact on how well you can understand life in Finland/Russia. The interviewees emphasise that those acquaintances that have visited them in Finland already have a much better picture of their life there, which means that when discussing Finland and the Finnish welfare system they do not have to "*describe it from scratches, from nothing*" (Maria, 45 y., lecturer). The interviewees emphasise that many Finnish people have a distorted or negative image of Russia since they have never been there. According to the interviewees, those of their acquaintances who have been to Russia usually have a more positive perspective about Russia and life in Russia. However, some also note that an idea based on visiting museums and seeing some Russians on the street does not really provide a real impression. Interviewee Irina describes this:

> "They have very little real experience with Russia. Extremely few people have ever been to Russia. If they have, it was kind of a short trip and they saw a drunk person in the street and they are like: 'Ooh Russia was just horrible' or like they had some other problems or maybe they had a nice trip and the sun was shining like they had a nice meal at the restaurant and they are like: 'Yeah Russia was so nice, such a great place'. And of course, that is not really a real impression ha ha." (Irina, 30 y., PhD researcher.)

On a similar note, some interviewees, such as one of the student interviewees, emphasise that even if you have lived in Finland/Russia for a while, but **only in a certain "bubble"**, for example as an international student, you will still not understand what life really is like in that country. Interviewee Sonya, who is herself a student in Finland, notes on this: "*I think that even my idea of Finland is not as it is, like because I am just studying, so it is different. And my parents are just visiting as tourists, so it is different.*" (Sonya, 24y., employed in logistics). This exemplifies the role that integration has on the creation and content of social remittances.

To conclude, there seems to be a certain hierarchy in the minds of several interviewees: those who have never been to Finland/Russia can least understand life there. Those who have visited as tourists can understand life a bit better already and those who have come to Russia/Finland as students get an even clearer idea, which may however still be inside one specific bubble. Only those who have properly moved to Finland to "*work and earn money*" (Ivan, 21y., exchange student) will comprehend best what life is like abroad and how the welfare system functions.

6.4.3 Influencing small vs. structural issues

The research finds that the influence that social remittances can have is different on different things: in general, it seems that social remittances can influence

smaller personal aspects more than larger structural issues. This relates to the fact that the social remittances of individual people cannot be imposed directly into political systems. Instead of coercing their preference, individuals can only exhort, and they are thus dependent on government actors. However, as noted by Kapur (2004, 368), the institutions that a country has influences the degree to which people can access policymaking arenas. In Russia, accessing policymaking arenas can be difficult, as noted by several interviewees. It seems that the interviewees in general find the system in Russian such that it is very difficult to change. They believe that **people are powerless** in making change because they are separated from the leaders/politicians who have the power (cf. Kapur 2010, 118 and 2004, 377 who reports that Indian academics abroad tend to have relatively easy access to policymakers and business groups in India). Thus, even though migrants can manage to change how individuals living in the society of origin think on certain issues, these changing viewpoints will necessarily not lead anywhere, since people´s voices are not heard in decision making, at least in an undemocratic country like Russia. The following quotation by Yekaterina exemplifies the frustration caused by this: *"Of course we could* [= send social remittances], *but the Finnish officials nor Russian government do not want to hear* [deep sigh]. *We do not mean anything for the Russian parliament or somehow just I think that there is very bad time in Russia in general."* (Yekaterina, 79 y., pensioner). Individual lay people can very rarely directly coerce the acceptance of their new ideas or norms. Soft transfers of norms and knowledge are necessary but not sufficient on their own (Stone 2004, 549).

Furthermore, the interviewees tend to see themselves as solo actors in terms of social remittances. Social remittances are sent as an individual practice based on individual preferences. Owing to this, however, the role of social remittances remains limited, especially on influencing structural issues. Many of the interviewees emphasise **that one person cannot change** things, since they are not persuasive or influential enough, especially since people tend to want to hold on to their ideas and values. Interviewee Olga notes: *"I do not think that I alone can change their world view. It is just that they listen to me and think: 'Okay she can think like that, but I am right'."* (Olga, 23 y., student.) On similar lines, interviewee Galina informs that the social remittances she transmits from Finland to Russia regarding the welfare system do not have an effect: "*I tell them that it is better here, but they can do nothing about that in Russia anyways. So, it is not something that one person can do. It is something that should be done in government anyways."* (Galina, 21 y., employed in logistics.) This relates to the discussion in the research field according to which it is problematic if migrants are put in charge of changing society, instead of states (see Levitt 1997, 2001; Mata-Codesal 2011; de Haas 2012; Pellerin & Mullings 2013). The analysis indicates that the migrants interviewed for this research do in general not see that migrants should or could be responsible for social change in their country of origin. The research findings do thus not support the idea that the development effort could be privatized to individuals, i.e., migrants. In relation to this, the research findings do thus not endorse the so-called "diaspora option" as an (only) option for implementing practical changes in welfare systems.

Some interviewees note that the influence of remittances remains limited because Russians in Finland do not form a strong community of expatriates and thus only send remittances as individual actors. Although the research focuses on individual remittances, which is also reflected in the findings, it seems that among migrants from Russia a **collective dimension to social remittances is lacking**. In other words, diaspora communities do not constitute one entity with common aims and interests and with solidarity and cohesion with one another (Abdile & Pirkkalainen 2011). This is consistent with findings from Kopina (2005) who notes that Russian migrants living in Amsterdam and London report that there is no strong community among Russian migrants (Kopina 2005, 77). As interviewee Maria notes, Russians abroad consist of a "– – *multitude of people with very* [strongly emphasised by interviewee] *different attitudes and sets of minds.*" (Maria, 45 y., lecturer.) Because of this they do not transmit one strong message regarding e.g., the welfare system, but rather a multitude of ideas, information, and opinions. This might, according to some, reduce the overall impact of social remittances: "*It is very difficult to implement change and you need more people. If you are alone, you cannot do anything. No one will listen to you, and it is difficult, but if you have not just ten but a hundred people, then it is easier.*" (Anastasia, 36 y., student.) This would suggest that the migrants consider that the size of the diaspora is significant, as well as its social economic position: the bigger the diaspora group within the same country of settlement is, the more likely it is that similar issues related to e.g., policies, habits, and values from the country of settlement, get remitted back to the country of origin. As noted by Portes (2010, 1545, 1555), small displacements of people have little causative power, seldom beyond the lives of those involved and their immediate kin. The larger and more resource-endowed migrant communities are, relative to their countries of origin, the more profound the changes that they can bring about. Thus, although migrants from Russia may form the largest migrant group in Finland, however, if these numbers are contrasted to the size of the entire Russian population or emigrant population, they are rather small. This echoes Levitt's (1998, 941) notion that when remittances are transmitted through multiple pathways, their impact can also be more prominent.

To conclude, migrants' personal influence on larger societal issues such as the welfare system, democracy and equality is seen as limited. This is related to most interviewees believing that they can through their social remittances only **influence small things** and the views of their personal acquaintances and not e.g., structural issues or large significant aspects of society. The transmitting of selective social remittances, i.e., practical explanations on how things are done in Finland is found easier than the transmission of wide-ranging social remittances, such as providing a understanding of how society or for example taxation function. This signals that social remittances have limited possibilities to have wider societal impacts (cf. White 2019), since changing those factors that are impacting deeper levels of society would have more significant consequences in producing change, than those impinging on its surface level (Portes, 2010, 543), which are found easier to change. As such, the research findings are in line with

those of de Haas (2012), according to which migrants' capability to have a lasting effect on structural development issues remains limited.

6.4.4 The preference to change things

Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow (2009, 122) write that the economic well-being and efficiency of most migrants' host countries constitute powerful incentive for migrants to try to equal what they have observed. Many interviewees note that they would **like to see similar welfare services implemented in Russia** to what they have experienced in Finland. Thus, besides wanting to influence what their own acquaintances think and know about how welfare services can be organized differently, migrants also bring forth a desire to change how things are arranged in their country of origin regarding welfare services. Previous research has found various reasons for this, which include e.g., wanting to improve one's family members' welfare, wanting to be able to use the same kind of facilities that they have in the country of settlement when they visit their country of origin (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2010, 6–7), and planning and investing for future return migration. When social remittances are accepted successfully, they can also generate prestige for the sending migrant and lead to a form of re-positioning of status within the diaspora (Isaakyan 2015, 27). Furthermore, undertaking social development in the community of origin can also be driven by a certain type of national pride or patriotism (see Conway et al. 2012, 206 in a Trinidadian context and Kapur 2001, 276 in an Indian context).

However, **none of the interviewees for this research describe that they feel a sense of obligation** to try to transmit new ideas or innovations through social remittances. The only time obligation is brought up is in reference to migrants feeling that they need to set straight wrongful information about Finland and Russia that their acquaintances have (see chapters 6.1.5). Furthermore, social remittances in a Russian-Finnish context do also not seem to be strongly related to a sense of obligation to improve the country of origin/country of settlement, nor do the interviewees bring up a need to give something back to their country of origin (cf. contrasting findings by Fomina 2019 in a Russian context, Conway et al., 2012 in a Trinidad and Tobago context and Abdile & Pirkkalainen 2011 in a Somali diaspora context). Additionally, none of the interviewees report of having been engaged in voluntary activities or, as termed by Isaakyan (2015, 18), ecological social remitting, through for example hometown associations or NGOs that aim at improving the society of origin. This indicates that social remittances are very much low key and everyday, instead of indented as revolutionary or aiming at significant or rapid changes. The activity of social remitting is thus not a form of activism per se, in the traditional sense, although migrants do use social remittances to raise awareness. In this sense social remittances could be understood as *communicative activism* (as defined by Lonkila et al. 2020), which refers primarily to the exchanging of information and raising awareness of societal problems and issues among people. However, in its current form, social remittances, at least regarding the topic of welfare systems and migration, do not seem to constitute a collective, uniform, or strong

opposition to Russia´s current political power. Since the focus of this research is on individual social remittances, further research could be conducted to find out if Russian diaspora organizations take part in transmitting collective social remittances and what the influence of these is.

Many of the interviewees note that they find changing certain aspects of society in Russia simply **too difficult,** which is why they do not try to. This means that although migrants would like to see the same welfare services implemented in Russia as they have experienced in Finland, this is not seen as something easily accomplished or even possible. Interviewee Sergei notes that he and his acquaintances in Russia are all aware that the thing that he keeps telling about Finland cannot be adapted to Russia because the **welfare system is so very different.** This is also emphasised by interviewee Sofia who notes: "*– – everything is different. Even though we are close.*" (Sofia, 25 y., student.) Social remittances between countries that are jurisdictionally, ideologically, culturally, linguistically, and geographically closer to each other are more likely to be assimilated quicker, than remittances travelling between countries that are further apart and culturally very different from each other, or that have a significant income gap between them (Kapur 2004, 365; Stone 2004, 552; Alenius 2016). The more similar the norms and structures are in the country of origin to those that migrants transmit from the country of settlement, the more likely and quicker it is for them to be assimilated (Levitt 1998, 940). Completely new ideas or behaviour patterns are less likely and to be adopted. If they are, the process of adoption is slower. When considering the relative differences, we should note that also the perceived differences are significant, since they have an effect on the sociocultural adjustment of migrants. Lower perceived cultural distance is a predictor of acquisition of culture-relevant knowledge and skills. (Zlobina et al. 2006, 206.) Perceived cultural differences thus effect what migrants adopt from country of settlement.

Several of the interviewees emphasise how different things are in Finland and in Russia, in regard to the welfare system, which is also why **changing little things will not have lasting effects**. As interviewee Maria notes: *"Well, I think it is totally different ha ha. Hard to explain in detail because it simply has like different principles of participation of the state and the life of a person."* (Maria, 45 y., lecturer.) Some of the interviewees even note that Finnish and Russian systems are difficult to discuss with acquaintances because they are so different from each other. Interviewee Natalya (42y., employed in museum) narrates that because her acquaintances live so far away from Finland it is like a "*different planet*" and because of this they cannot understand life in Finland, nor do they even know how to ask about it. Because the welfare systems are seen as so very different from each other, also the possibility to adopt new ideas from each other is understood as difficult or impossible by many.

On the other hand, although the welfare systems are considered very different from each other, some of the interviewees note, that **Russian culture is much closer to Finnish culture** than for example the culture of migrants who come from further away countries. Interviewee Andrei notes: *"I understood that Finnish culture and Finnish people are quite similar to Russian. There are not so many*

differences between us. It is not an Asian country were everything is done in a different way." (Andrei, 29 y., exchange student.) Interviewee Aleksei notes on similar lines: "*Russia is more close to Finland compared to maybe Syria or some of the African countries, ha ha. I think much closer. Because of this it is better be adapted to Finnish society and start to work*." (Aleksei, 71 y., pensioner.) This could indicate that social remittances from Finland are accepted more likely in Russia than social remittances from cultures which are more different. However, although Russia may seem similar in comparison to some other cultures that are geographically further away, several of the interviewees still emphasise that there are significant differences between Russia and Finland, which make the acceptance and diffusion of social remittances difficult. Interviewee Ulyana for example notes that it is only possible to bring new ideas from Russia to Finland, if they fit with local values in Finland. Values that are considered too different or contrary are not accepted.

6.4.5 Practical change – Recycling as an example

According to the interviewees, it is especially **structural constraints** that undermine the possibility of change starting from the grassroots level. A case in point, which is used by some of the interviewees, is the difference in **recycling practices** in Finland and in Russia. In Finland, recycling is taken more seriously than in Russia, and almost all glass and plastic bottles are recycled. In Russia this is according to the interviewees not the case. Some of the migrants from Russia living in Finland note that after migration they have had to learn new habits concerning recycling (see similar findings Li & Pitkänen 2018, 113) and that they have also tried to explain the advantages of recycling to their Russian acquaintances. Some report that they have even tried to introduce recycling practices during their visits to Russia to their Russian acquaintances. Interviewee Polina notes: *"I tell them how people sort garbage here. About recycling and how awesome it is."* (Polina, 29 y., on maternity leave.) On similar lines, interviewee Inga (37y., student) describes that information regarding recycling is something that is a "must" to share with visitors from Russia. Sharing about recycling practices is related especially to acquaintances visiting Finland: "*For example, we had to teach them how to recycle garbage and teach our quests that we have a bio garbage container, and that general waste is put separately as well as glass. Because in Russia you throw everything in the same. But often people understand that it is well-grounded and accept these rules."* (Igor, 31y., translator and consult.) When the practical side of recycling is shared, this constitutes a form of technological transfers, in line with the definition by Nichols (2004).

However, although the interviewees feel that even though **the benefit of recycling** is agreed upon in theory by their Russian acquaintances, in practice introducing change is very difficult. The following quotations illustrates that structural deficits in the country of origin can hinder the acceptance of social remittances: *"We just discussed this* [= recycling] *and I said that finally they made these containers* [= for recycling trash] *and my father said: 'Aha you know the real thing, they put it in the same track!' So, it does not help. It is not helping.*" (Maksim, 25 y.,

PhD researcher.) If the infrastructure for recycling is not working, then encouraging people to change their recycling habits will not help. Another interviewee, Ulyana notes: "*Sometimes during the first years that I lived I here* [= in Finland] *and when I visited* [= Russia] *I tried to gather some bottles for recycling and then I took them to these centres that they have in town which take the bottles. – – Then my parents said: 'Do not bother, it is very difficult. People do not recycle bottles because these centres are only open for a couple of hours a day and so on'. Perhaps I had this vision, but it turned out to be difficult.*" (Ulyana, 34 y., translator.) As Stone (2004, 549) states, in some cases there may be transfers of policy knowledge but no transfers of policy practice. In other words, in this case, the migrant transfers the knowledge of how recycling should be organized but does not transfer the de facto practice to Russia, because this is found impossible. This could signify that the social remittances regarding recycling practices in Finland are inappropriate for a Russian context and that insufficient attention may have been paid to the differences between contexts of the two countries. Furthermore, it seems that the remittances may also be incomplete, if knowledge regarding the infrastructure behind keeping up the recycling process is not remitted. However, even if this background knowledge is remitted, the role that individual people can have in changing it is limited, as noted previously.

Moreover, some of the interviewees have the experience that if social remittances can lead to change these **changes will not** last. Recycling is used here again by one interviewee, Mila, as an example. The interviewee describes that she had a recycling project going on with several schools in Russia. According to her, the organization she is active at in Finland took the idea of recycling from Finland to some Russian school, where it was implemented for a while. However, when the project ended and there were no funds to continue it, also the recycling in the Russian schools ended. This example illustrates how difficult it is to make change last if there are not structures to support it, and it also illustrates how economic and social remittances can reinforce each other (see Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011 for example). Those remittances that travel with other remittances and are supported by for example economic flows often have a stronger effect (Levitt 2005, 4; Mata-Codesal 2013).

6.4.6 Changing mentality

Changing welfare practices would, according to some of the interviewees, first involve **changing how people think.** Interviewee Sonya notes: "*First people should change and then maybe the system will work.*" (Sonya, 24 y., employed in logistics.) She however continues that because there are so many people in Russia, changing the people is not easy. According to her, it is especially the **Russian mentality** of not caring and not believing that change can occur, that makes change impossible. Also Interviewee Sergei brings up the Russian mentality as hindering the effect of social remittances: according to him, experiences from the Soviet time are still affecting people in such a way that they do not feel a need to change things. He notes that in the Soviet Union "*– – people were only a part of the community, and they could not imagine that they could change things in anyway and in*

some ways. This is also entrenched into migrants here. And for this reason, they do not feel a need to consciously make change." (Sergei, 28y., employed at NGO.) The Russian mentality is contrasted to the Finnish mentality, which is found more modern and accepting of change (see similar findings by Cingolani and Vietti 2019), which could also signal self-orientalisation (see Andreouli & Howarth 2018; Krivonos & Näre 2019). Another interviewee, Ivan, notes on similar lines that even though Russia is still *"a third world country because it still largely depends on the price of oil"* and there is a need for new ideas, these are however difficult to transfer because of the Russian mentality. According to the interviewee, Russians are lazy to change things because they do not want to "*start from the beginning again*" and thus rather remain in status quo. The interviewee further notes that new ideas should first be brought to "*Central and Eastern Russia because Western Russia is really overpopulated, and everything is invented there, but Central and Eastern Russia it is… it requires to be renovated.*" (Ivan, 21 y., exchange student.) Similar findings have been made by Neviskaitė (2016) and Karolak (2016) who report that so-called "soft obstacles" such as mentality, thinking, and culture are obstructing the effect that social remittances could have. According to the migrants in Karolak's (2016, 32) research, the lower income level and worse employment standards in Poland, compared to those that they have experienced in the UK, are a result of the "Polish Mentality". Like the migrants from Russia in this research, the interviewees in Karolak's research see this mentality as a structurally embedded issue, upon which they consider their own agency as weak.

However, although changing the mentality of society is found difficult, as noted by Levitt (2005, 5–6), the transformative significance of social remittances is formed when the social force of even a small group of people who are regularly involved in their country of origin, together with some being periodically involved, adds up over time. Although public opinion might not always directly show in policy or policy change, its role should not be underestimated. Public opinion does not equal policy change, but it certainly plays a significant role in it (see e.g., Page & Shapiro 1983). The attitudes that citizens have towards various things have been found to impact realities. Page and Shapiro (1983) have found when looking at historical patterns, that policy almost always tends to go in the same direction as opinion, especially when concerning very large and stable change in public opinion. The extent to which policy follows opinion also varies according to the types of issues involved: moving towards more liberal opinion seems to bring about more congruency with policy. (Page & Shapiro 1983, 177, 181, 183.) Based on their research, Page and Shapiro state that changes in **opinion are important causes of policy change** (1983, 189). For example, the attitudes that the masses have towards democracy has been found to impact levels of democracy. Those countries in which emancipative attitudes are more widespread are more likely to attain and to sustain democracy (Inglehart & Welzel 2005; Weiste-Paakkanen et al. 2007). Effective democracy does not emerge because elites choose in a vacuum to adopt democracy (Welzel & Inglehart 2008, 131). In a similar way, it could be argued that functioning welfare services do not just emerge in a vacuum because elites choose to adopt them. In the case of this

research, this means that the attitudes and knowledge that people have about welfare are meaningful. Social remittances about welfare policies can thus have a role in the building of consensus. Changing the mentality of the society starts by changing how people think. Considering things noted previously in the analysis, this is significant: the interviewees recognize that they can, through social remittances, influence the values and knowledge that their acquaintances have. Thus, if it is people's mentality that needs to change first then social remittances could be the first step towards larger structural changes.

To conclude, the interviewees consider that having an influence on Russia, especially on issues related to welfare and democracy, is not easy. Especially structural issues are found mostly insurmountable by social remittances. However, the interviewees also note that change always has to start somewhere, whether it is in a specific geographic part of Russia or in the mentality of Russians, as described above. As noted by Vlase (2013, 88) often more time is needed before the impact of social remittances can be assessed and for example interviewee, Sofia, notes: "*it is just hard to change everything at once, but I think there are some processes going on and I hope it is moving towards being an open-minded society*." (Sofia, 25 y., student.) Furthermore, the importance of changing small things should not be downplayed. As interviewee Irina notes: "*Even small changes are changes. Even though you might not see the effects. And of course, people are also not very eager at admitting* [= that they were wrong]. If *they just said this, they do not want to change their mind in front of you. But they might do it at home*." (Irina, 30 y., PhD researcher.) This also underlines that the migrants might in fact not be aware if their social remittances have influence or not, since the recipient may not always want to be open about this. Figure 17 summarises what the outcomes of the transmitted social remittance can be from the perspective of the remitter.

Figure 17 Outcomes of social remittances

7 CONCLUSIONS

The three most significant scholarly fields which the research has contributed to are 1) the discussion on the migration and development nexus and migration-related changes, 2) research on living a transnational life and 3) research on social remittances., i.e., transferring ideas, norms, values, and information across national borders. The third field especially has provided the research conceptual tools with which to investigate the phenomenon and provide answers to the research questions**.** The research has provided an empirical perspective, in a Finnish-Russian context, on the ways in which migrants can transmit ideas, negotiate values, and explain to their acquaintances what it is like to live in a different society with a different welfare system. By doing so, migrants can influence what their acquaintances think, believe, and know about these issues, which can also have wider societal implications. This chapter will conclude the overall research findings by discussing the answers to the research questions. In relation to each research question, it will be considered what was found and how this reflects to previous research in the field. In the end, it will be considered why the information that was found has value and how it can be applied. There are also reflections on the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

7.1 What is remitted and how

- What kind of social remittances do the interviewees believe they create when they transcribe their life in the country of settlement and its welfare system to their non-migrant acquaintances?

The research set out to find out what kind of information on migration, living in the country of settlement, and the country of settlement's welfare system

migrants provide non-migrants with, and how this occurs. In answer to this research question, the research finds that migrants share various types of socio-cultural capital acquired abroad, in the form of social remittances, with their acquaintances, mostly friends and family. The findings also show that **social remittances regarding welfare systems and services do circulate** in the transnational space between Finland and Russia. In addition, migrants share information about what it is like to live in Finland/Russia. Through transmitting social remittances, migrants attempt to influence the information and ideas that their friends and family have.

The research finds that when migrating to Finland, individuals from Russia are often faced with political, social, and cultural norms and attitudes that may be very different from, or even in conflict with, those prevailing in their country of origin (in line with Jiménez 2008; Fargues 2005, 16; Fidrmuc & Doyle 2006, 2). When migrants then stay in contact with their friends and family living in their country of origin, they often **describe what their everyday life is like in the country of settlement and what kind of things they have encountered.** This is done especially because migrants want to make their friends and family understand what their life currently looks like. To do so, migrants tell and explain about their everyday experiences, and also about the difficulties that they have experienced. As Levitt (1998, 926) notes, through social remittances individuals can envision a world beyond their direct experience.

To make acquaintances understand their current circumstances, migrants often also have to **describe how the Finnish welfare system functions**. Thus, through explaining their everyday life in Finland, migrants, as a side product, end up transmitting social remittances regarding the Finnish welfare system: they explain what this system is like, what services they can get from it, what aspects of it function well, and what do not. Thus, social remittances often start out to describe the individual live of the migrants and end up describing how society and the welfare system function. Pages 47-48 of this research contain a list of topics that migrants have previously been found to transmit to their country of origin through social remittances. The findings of this research add to this list by showing that migrants also share social remittances about welfare services and systems, i.e., policy remittances. Through providing information about Finland among Russian acquaintances and Russia among Finnish acquaintances, migrants take on various **roles as representatives**. The interviewees find that they are bridge builders or reputational intermediates abroad, they represent Finland to their acquaintances in Russia, and their life in Finland comes to represent a western lifestyle. Furthermore, migrants strive to provide information of life in Russia among acquaintances in their country of settlement in order to break negative stereotypes. However, it also becomes clear that the social remittances produced about living in Finland, i.e., "the west", ought to be understood through **self-orientalisation.** While Finland represents the global 'west' (See also Krivonos 2019) which exemplifies European values of modernity and progress, Russia on the other hand is seen as part of the east and as backward and traditional. This sets the backdrop to the transmitted imagery.

There are, however, also contrary ambitions, and some actively try to shape the negative perspective of backwardness that their Finnish acquaintances have of Russia and bring forth a more complex image of Russia.

In the case of this researched context, it seems that especially the fact that **the welfare systems in Finland and Russia are so different from each other** sparks migrants to explain and describe what the system in Finland is like to their acquaintances in Russia. Comparisons enable migrants to make sense of the contradictions they experience, to explain the differences and to manage them when relating them to acquaintances. The previous information that migrants have, which is based on e.g., their own experiences and information (sometimes more up-to-date) provided by acquaintances living in the country of origin, provide the framework through which the welfare system of the country of settlement is understood and evaluated, also during discussions with acquaintances.

The research reveals that **certain aspects of the welfare system are discussed**, with acquaintances in the country of origin, more often and more comprehensively than others. Welfare state services, such as free education, health care, and social security benefits are the topics most often discussed with Russian acquaintances. These are practical parts of the Finnish welfare system that often have a central and visible part in the individual's life. This is also why they are easy to recount to acquaintances living across the border, and during the interview. The fact that migrants focus on certain aspects of the welfare system illustrates that it is difficult or impossible to describe the entirety of what constitutes the welfare system. It would be too complex to describe, and it is unlikely that the migrants even have a comprehensive idea of what the welfare system all encompasses. Instead, the welfare system presents itself to the migrants as certain services and policies, depending on the personal experiences of migrants in the country of settlement. Therefore, migrants select certain aspects to concentrate on and to describe during their transnational communication. The longer migrants have been in Finland, the more experiences they have, also regarding the welfare system and services. Having been a longer time in Finland generally also means that migrants have more access to welfare services, or at least that they are less expensive to use. However, the findings show that the extent of communication with acquaintances living in Russia may become less over time, which would indicate less opportunities for social remitting.

The research illustrates that social remittances regarding welfare systems are not randomly selected but, instead, there are various factors that shape who is told and what: First of all, migrants mainly discuss welfare-related **topics that are related to their own life** and especially t**opics that they themselves have first-hand experience of**. The topics that migrants have experience of are strongly related to their interests and on the different things that they do in leisure time and for their work (see also Mata-Codesal 2011, 174). Migrants put emphasis and value on their own experiences and consider that having experienced something themselves gives them authority and enables them to

provide analytical information, compared to information that is biased or uniformed.

Second, what is discussed varies according to who is talked with, since **social remittances are tailor-made** for each recipient. This means that migrants exercise agency when they make the decision who to talk to about what. The outcome is thus that different people are told different things and some people are not told anything related to the welfare system. If it is found that the recipient is not interested, the topic is dropped, which limits the overall role that social remittances can have in bringing about change in views and opinions. Instead, it seems that those who are already interested can learn more and get their initial ideas amplified. By doing so, migrants anticipate the reception of social remittances, since people are told what they either want to hear or what the recipient believes will not negatively affect the relationship. This also demonstrates, in line with Levitt & Merry (2009, 446), Adams (2012, 6), Vianello (2013, 92), and Alenius (2016, 272), that the ideas that are picked up and then transmitted are vernacularized, transformed, translated, and modified by the migrants, instead of being passively learned and repeated. Thus, besides making social remittances fit local conditions and context better (Stone 2004, 549), social remittances are also modified to make them fit the recipient better, and thus to ensure their more effective reception.

Third, the research indicates that migrants do not only share positive aspects about their life in Finland but instead they **also share criticism,** also regarding the welfare system. This strongly relates to the need to make acquaintances in the country of origin understand the life of the migrant in the country of settlement. The migrants find that often their acquaintances have an understanding that in Finland everything is very easy and that individuals are pampered. This idea is something that the migrants, through their social remittances, want to break, to make acquaintances understand that they have also had challenges in their life and had to work hard to accomplish a certain lifestyle in their country of settlement. However, the interviewees note that some of their acquaintances have not been receptive to criticism towards life in Finland. According to the interviewees, some acquaintances see this as criticism towards life in "the west", and those who do not want their idea of the west challenged are thus unreceptive. Some issues might also not be discussed and therefore not part of social remittances, because they are considered too provocative or offensive.

In terms of developing the concept of social remittances further, the research provides various examples which illustrate the **multidirectional nature of social remittances** (in line with Levitt 1998; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011; Jakobson et al. 2012; Pitkänen et al. 2012; Mata-Codesal 2013 & Isaakyan 2015). The research finds that ideas are not just transmitted from country of settlement to country of origin but also the other way around. Furthermore, the research identifies examples of "reverse remittances", in which migrants receive information from their acquaintances living in the country of origin. These findings confirm that social remitting is a process during which both the sending

and receiving countries' societies and culture are constantly influencing each other (Mazzucato 2010).

However, the research findings also indicate that the multidirectional process of transmitting social remittances is **not always symmetrical**, and this is something that should be kept in mind in future research: There is a difference especially in the quantity of ideas, values and norms transmitted between the society of origin and the country of settlement. The migrants identify many more social remittances transmitted from the country of settlement (Finland) to the country of origin (Russia) than the other way around. The Russian welfare system is being discussed less often with Finnish acquaintances than Finland with Russian acquaintances. There are various reasons for this imbalance, the following two of which are especially important to note: the research finds that migrants do not have that many native friends with whom to share their ideas, values, and knowledge in the country of settlement, and furthermore, migrants are often not able to share their professional skills since they have difficulty entering the labour market and getting their previous skills recognized (see also e.g., Alenius 2016, 279).

When considering **how to categorize the transmitted social remittances characterized in this research**, it seems that there is no one pre-existing category to include them in. Most closely, the social remittances regarding welfare services seem to be to political remittances, since besides emphasising how the welfare services are in practice implemented in Finland, a lot of the discussion is formed around the political decision, justifications, and moral rationale behind offering certain kinds of services. The findings suggest that alongside the previously identified categories of technological transfers (Nichols 2004), occupational remittances (Alenius 2016), civic remittances (Isaakyan 2015), political remittances (Piper 2009; Tabar 2014; Fomina 2019; Krawatzek & Müller-Funk 2020) and cultural remittances (Flores 2005; Isaakyan & Triandafyllidou 2017), also the **category of policy remittances** would be useful. Policy remittances include transmitting ideas, values, and information about why and how certain policies are designed and implemented. This concept would come close to that of policy transfers, but instead of describing how institutions and policies in different political settings can learn from each other, it describes how individuals who have experienced policies in two different settings describe and compare the policies and what effect this may have.

- How is the transmission of social remittances perceived to be entwined in sustaining transnational social relations, and what affect does transmitting social remittances have on these relations?

Social remitting is thoroughly a social process. The sending of social remittances is a way to maintain and reproduce social relations between family members (Carrasco 2010, 190), and because of the emotional benefits that stem from increased contact with emotionally significant relations such as family and friends, the migrant's quality of life may be enhanced through transnational

communication (O'Flaherty et al. 2007, 819). The transmitting of social remittances depends on **maintaining communication with acquaintances living in the society of origin and in the country of settlement**. The research findings provide knowledge on how migrants from Russia in Finland conduct their everyday transnational life and how they remain part of two societies simultaneously, through maintaining social ties. The interviewed migrants have a social presence among their community in Russia, despite their physical absence. Social remitting is a part of how migrants present themselves, their lifestyle and everyday reality to their friends and family living in a different country. As noted in the answer to the previous research question (above), social remitting regarding welfare systems thus often occurs as a "side product" when migrants attempt to explain what their life looks like in the country of settlement to their near ones. Making friends and family understand is an important part of maintaining and rebuilding social relations.

In terms of adding to previous research on living transnationally, the research finds that **migrants from Russia are frequently in contact with their acquaintances in Russia**, through communication from afar and through visits. In terms of social remittances, the role **of internet-based communication** is especially important, and common communication methods include **sending short messages** on a mobile phone and talking with each other on the internet. The short messages enable the transmitting of social remittances in a frequent but somewhat confined way. It does not enable discussing complicated or complex issues. Talking on the internet and during visits, on the other hand, occurs less often but provides the possibility to go deeper into specific topics. Some interviewees even note that they only discuss more elaborate issues, such as the Finnish/Russian welfare system, during visits when they meet face-to-face.

However, not all migrants are able to **visit** their country of origin (regularly). The research finds that, in the case of the interviewed migrants, it is mostly economic aspects that constrain the migrant's ability to visit their country of origin, instead of bureaucratic issues such as legal status or visas. Thus, although the possible agents of cultural transfers may have diversified compared to previous centuries (Adams 2012, 7, 30), in practice economic circumstances still largely determine how often migrants can visit their country of origin. That bureaucratic obstacles were not found central mainly relates to the fact that no irregular migrants or asylum seekers or refugees were included in the research, but instead most of the interviewees were highly skilled. Thus, the interviewees constituted a group of people who have also in previous research been found privileged in their opportunity to visits and make their migration journey cyclical (Portes 2009; Carrasco 2010; Mata-Codesal 2011; Krivonos 2015). Also, geographical distance has an important role in this, and those migrants that have acquaintances living close to Finland in Russia have more opportunities to visit, and during these visits to attempt and change what their acquaintances think and know about living in Finland (in other words the "west") and its welfare system. Visits by acquaintances to Finland also have a central role in the transmission of social remittances: because of visits, and acquaintances gaining first-hand

experiences of the migrants' country of settlement, the migrants do not have to explain everything about their life to them from zero, which makes transmitting subsequent social remittances easier.

The role of **return migration** as a channel for social remittances is in this context not found significant, since only few of the interviewees are even considering return migrating to Russia. Furthermore, in practice there are many hindrances for social remitting through return migration and the research findings confirm that the gains of return migration are lost if the society is not willing to or able to capitalize on the practices, skills and knowledge gained abroad.

The research finds that **extent of communication sometimes becomes less** with more time spent in the country of settlement. In the beginning of migration, the communication is most frequent and thus there are timewise most opportunities to transmit social remittances. The interviewees also note that in the beginning, after having recently arrived, they have tended to discuss their observations regarding Finland, Finnish welfare services, and the differences between Finnish and Russian services more than what they have later done. However, when migrants have recently arrived at the country of settlement, they may not yet be aware of the various nuances of life in Finland and the Finnish welfare state. This information accumulates over time in relation to integration. Later, the social remittances by migrants may thus be more informed.

The reason why communication sometimes decreases, is partly related to findings according to which the transmitting of **social remittances can cause a strain on social contacts and friendships.** Although most of the interviewees maintain their transnational connections, even after a long time in Finland, some also note that their communication with some acquaintances living in Russia has stopped. Many of the interviewed migrants find it hard to share their life with their friends and family living in Russia, for example due to negative or jealous reactions. Furthermore, according to the interviewees, their Russian acquaintances can often not understand their life in Finland, nor do they believe the things that are told. If friends and family do not believe what migrants are telling them, or do not want to change their opinion of Finland/Russia based on the information provided by the migrant, this puts a strain on maintaining a social relationship. This relates to migrants finding it important to make their family and friends understand what their life is like in the country of settlement, and especially that everything is not always easy and perfect. Many find it especially hurtful if friends and family are not interested or do not want to understand the challenges that they have faced during their life in Finland, for example regarding finding employment. This seems to be a common occurrence, and the migrants find it especially hard to change previous opinions based on information provided by the media. In this, **remaining an "insider**" is important, and when migrants are no longer considered as part of the group or informed of how things are in the country of origin, their opinion becomes less valued and accepted, also in terms of comparing the country of origin and the country of settlement. Because of this, some feel overlooked and ignored. When

acquaintances do not want to change their opinion, migrants may stop sharing things again and thus the impact of social remittances is reduced. There seem to be two reactions: either contact is lost, and social remittances can thus lead to falling out with friends and family members, or the communication and the transmitted social remittances are shaped so that unpleasant topics and themes are avoided. This signals that maintaining relationships and keeping things pleasant is for many more important than conveying ideas or information. Things that are found too provocative or that might offend people are thus avoided. Such topics seem to include politics, democracy, and LGBT rights. When transnational linkages are severed or lost, the possibility to transmit social remittances through them disappears.

Besides being a part of maintaining and building social relations with acquaintances living in the country of origin, sharing information, values and norms can also be a part of **building social relations with individuals in the country of settlement**. In general, it seems the migrants are finding it challenging to build social contacts and make friends with individuals who have a native Finnish background, which confirms that a transnational way of living can, in some cases, be a response to migrants not being able to access full social membership and incorporation within their host countries (Glick Schiller et al. 1995, 52; Levitt 2001, 19). However, it seems that sharing information about the society of origin with individuals in the country of settlement is not always unproblematic. If the information shared by migrants does not fit into the idea that Finnish acquaintances have of Russia, this may case issues. Some interviewees note that their Finnish acquaintances have mainly wanted to see Russia as the sinister other and discuss its negative aspects, instead of hearing migrants' perspectives. Sometimes this annoys the migrants, who end up avoiding the topic of Russia altogether, curtailing the influential role that social remittances can have.

Another aspect from which to consider the social role of social remittances is their influence on **migrant networks**. The research finds that through transmitting social remittances about what it is like to live in Finland and how the Finnish welfare system functions, migrants contribute to migrant networks. As found by Massey (1988, 397), Levitt (2001, 8), Levitt & Lamba-Nieves (2011, 19), and Mukherjee & Rayaprol (2019, 67), migrant networks and the information shared through them can make subsequent migration easier for those who consider migration. When non-migrants learn about new ways of living, and that the economic and social opportunities in the country of settlement and the country of origin are not equal, this may lead to out-migration (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011, 19). The research confirms that diaspora knowledge networks are used to share information regarding the migration process itself and about the country of settlement. Such information includes, in line with findings from Vertovec (2007) and Isaakyan (2015), for example how to get jobs and find places to live. However, there is no indication that the information provided by migrants strongly acts as a pull factor for further migration, and this also does not seem to be the purpose of migrants.

7.2 Reception of social remittances

- What is the perceived reception of social remittances and what factors are considered to influence this reception?

The findings establish that migrants' role as change agents largely depends on the reception of social remittances, i.e., how non-migrants perceive, believe, and react to the things that migrants tell them. The research setting and selected focus enable to conclude the way that the reception of social remittances is perceived by the migrants, i.e., the remitters themselves. The findings regarding reception can be divided to a macro and a micro perspective.

The **macro perspective** comprises of how the interviewees perceive the overall openness of Russian and Finnish society to influences from abroad, and hence the role that social remittances can have. Considering this macro perspective, the research finds that migrants in general do not find Russian society open to influences from abroad. However, some social remittances are perceived to be accepted more likely than others. Things that are found deeper-set in society are found more difficult to influence, especially from abroad. Aspects that are considered *surface level* aspects are on the other hand found more easily influenced. It seems that, among the interviewees' Russian acquaintances, ideas about culture and businesses are accepted more favourably than ideas regarding politics and democracy. Furthermore, what is interesting also for future research to consider, is that the country of settlement's reputation in the society of origin is perceived to have a significant effect on the acceptance of social remittances. According to the findings, Finland is generally seen in a positive light among Russians, which makes it easier to transmit social remittances from there. However, also the political relationship between countries has a role in the perception of the country of settlement, and social remittances from Finland are perceived to be less likely accepted now that Finland has, as part of the European Union, placed economic sanctions on Russia. This is an interesting finding which illustrates the importance of considering the context of the studied social remittances.

The selected context of Finland and Russia is found especially interesting because of its **geopolitical nuances**, which seem to influence especially the perceived reception of social remittances: a perceived profound difference and conflict between the west, which Finland is considered part of, and the east, which Russia is considered part of, is found to strongly influence the reception of social remittances. From a macro perspective, Finnish society is considered open mainly to western influences, and not so much to eastern, such as Russian influences. Migrants from Russia seem to have the idea that in Finland, any new ideas introduced by them would not be accepted keenly. What is further interesting is that migrants seem to have internalised the idea that as newcomers they in general should not even try, or it would not be appropriate for them to try, to transmit new influence from their own culture and society to Finland.

Instead, they should adapt and assimilate into Finnish society. This kind of thought significantly hinders the opportunity for social remittances to form a multidirectional process in which both the country of origin and country of settlement keep influencing each other.

When concluding the findings regarding the reception of social remittances from **a micro perspective**, personal differences and preferences of acquaintances become central: some acquaintances are found more open to social remittances than others. Factors that are found to influence the receptivity include e.g., the age of the recipient, the recipient's extent of patriotism, and the geographical and cultural distance of the acquaintance. Those acquaintances that are younger, live closer by, and are more familiar with Finland, are perceived more accepting to social remittances. Some acquaintances are also found keener on ideas from abroad in general, whereas others are found not to accept anything that is not Russian. This relates to the viewpoints that the acquaintances have about "the west" and on migration: Since Finland is seen as part of the west, opposed to Russia in the east, social remittances from Finland come to represent ideas, values and information coming from the western, European, and liberal lifestyle. If these ideas are opposed to on principle, then also social remittances from Finland are not keenly accepted. Moreover, those acquaintances that do not support or understand the migration decision of their acquaintance, especially to the "west", are considered less receptive to social remittance transmitted by them. In this, the remitter's status has a central role: whether she/he is seen as a "traitor" who has decided to leave their country, or as a successful person who has managed to move abroad. This also relates to whether migrants are able to stay attuned and keep up with contextual factors in Russia and remain insiders, while simultaneously integrating into Finland. It seems that time spent in the country of settlement has an effect on this, and the longer individuals are abroad the less they are considered part of their original group in the country of origin and the more their opinion, especially regarding Russia, is found insignificant among non-migrant acquaintances in Russia.

The research findings illustrate that, besides migrants' background and frames of meaning influencing what things end up being remitted (Levitt 1998, 930; Mata-Codesal 2013, 26), also the recipients' frames of meaning influence how social remittances are received. Examples of social remittances that have been met with criticism among Russian acquaintances include the way that unemployment benefits are handled in Finland and the idea of a basic income to all citizens (which has thus far only been trialled in Finland for a short period with a limited number of people). The critical attitude towards these welfare services stems from the interpretative framework that the recipients of social remittances have previously formed based on their own experiences in Russia: if experiences regarding e.g., unemployment benefits have not been positive in the Russian context, this may also hinder the acceptance of ideas on how to implement unemployment benefits from abroad.

- How is the interpersonal information provided by migrants through social remittances perceived to be situated besides information gained from other sources, such as the media?

When considering the role of social remittances and their potential influence, it is important to note that social remittances are not the only source of information that individuals have regarding migration, living abroad, Finland/Russia as a country, and the Finnish/Russian welfare system. Because of this, the information gained from social remittances should be understood in relation to information from other sources. Based on the findings, especially the role of information provided by the media, in relation to information from social remittances is central to consider.

The research finds that the interviewed migrants are very aware of the fact that their non-migrant acquaintances receive information about the migrants' country of settlement / country of origin from various sources, and thus that the social remittances that they transmit are only one part of this. Especially **the role that media has** in providing information and shaping attitudes is found central. However, not so much in a positive way, and many interviewees emphasise that the media has given their acquaintances mainly one-sided, erroneous and biased information, which often shows Finland/Russia in a negative light. This constitutes an important motive for migrants to try to explain the migration process, what life is like in the country of settlement and the what the country of settlement's welfare system is like from their own perspective, based on their own experiences, to their acquaintances. Essentially, migrants feel that they have to step in to correct wrongful information, especially since the images created by the media also affect how non-migrant acquaintances understand the context in which the migrants live their live and thus the migrants themselves.

Changing the ideas and images created by the media is however found very difficult if not impossible. The social remittances transmitted by migrants are, as perceived by the migrants, often not able to change the non-migrant acquaintances' attitude if they are in contradiction with things learned from the media.

The case of **Russian children supposedly being taken away by social workers in Finland** is brought up by several interviewees, which illustrates the difficulty in changing the opinions that acquaintances have regarding life in Finland. Although migrants have tried to explain to their acquaintances that children are not taken from Russian parents without sufficient reason, many have not wanted to believe them. The research thus finds that although macrolevel global flows, provided for example by media, that forego social remittances, can in some cases reinforce the acceptance of social remittances, this is not always automatically the case. In some cases, previous ideas that have already reached non-migrants in some way or another, can make it more difficult for social remittances to be accepted, which contrasts previous findings by Levitt (1998, 937); Levitt (2005); Levitt & Rajaram (2013a, 356).

7.3 Outcome of social remittances

- How do the interviewees perceive that social remittances change how acquaintances living in the country of origin see the country of settlement, especially in terms of its welfare services, and the life of the migrant in it?
- Are social remittances transmitted from a small and geopolitically less influential country (Finland) to a large country with significant geopolitical power (Russia) perceived to be able to have an influence beyond changing how acquaintances think (scaling out)?

The Finnish-Russian context provides an interesting case of remittances transmitted from a small and not so influential country, Finland (c. 5.5 million inhabitants), to a large geopolitical giant, Russia (c. 144 million inhabitants). The research provides empirical evidence that social remittances produced by such a setting can have an impact. What is further interesting is that both selected countries are situated in the "global-north" and neither of them is considered a "developing country". Thus, this research does not provide information about how social remittances are transmitted in an unequal setting, from a developed country to a developing country, and what influence this might have on the development of the developing country. Instead, it provides an empirical example of how social remittances can be transmitted between a so called "developed economy" to an "economy in transition". The research also provides more evidence of social remittances in a European context, contributing especially to the discussion on social remittances from Western countries to towards post-communist countries (see e.g., Fidrmuc & Doyle 2006; Mahmoud et al. 2014; Kubal 2015; Grabowska & Garapich 2016a; 2016b; Karolak 2016; White 2016; Grečić 2019; Cingolani & Vietti 2019; 2020; Drbohlav & Dzúrová 2021; Glorius 2021). Besides being seen as a "western country", Finland is also categorised as a Northern European country, which brings an interesting viewpoint to the research, especially in terms of the welfare system, which has previously not been focused on within the scholarly field in terms of social remittances.

In general, the consequences of migration and social remittances are not easy to determine since they are not easily categorised or quantifiable. The question of the influence of social remittances can be divided into two parts: 1) influence on a personal level, i.e., among the acquaintances of migrants, and 2) influence beyond the personal circle of migrants, through spill-over and diffusion. The interviewed migrants in general have the idea that they can, through the stories and examples that they transmit, **influence what their acquaintances in Russia think and know** about life in Finland and Finnish welfare state services. Through social remittances, the perspective that non-migrants have on living abroad, and on what welfare services should be like, has changed. Non-migrants have been explained that there can be different welfare

services in different countries, and what these and their differences are like, in the case on Finland/Russia. This has also sparked criticism towards services that exist in the country of origin. The influence also works the other way around, and the interviewees indicate that they can have an impact on what their Finnish acquaintances think and know about Russia. The interviewees find it important and worthwhile to try and affect the image that their acquaintances have of Russia/Finland, since this also influences how they themselves and their life are seen.

The migrants, however, find it either **difficult or impossible to exert influence beyond the first recipient** of the social remittances, i.e., among those who they have no direct contact with. Bakewell (2008, 1346), Skeldon (2008a, 8), and de Haas (2010; 249) have emphasised that economic and social remittances generally only go to specific areas within countries, and to specific groups within the communities, and that they thus do often not influence the poorest households, who are not connected to migrant networks. This research further contributes to this thought, and illustrates that in the case of social remittances, ideas and innovations mainly go to those who have direct links to migrants. The migrants are thus doubtful that the social remittances that they remit can lead to spill over, scaling out or up, or diffusion, and thus have larger societal implications. This is mainly due to the fact that the migrants feel that they are mostly in contact with people who are **within the same "social bubble**" and who already think somewhat similarly to how they do: These people are same-minded and have similar previous information as the migrants themselves. Because they are same-minded, they are also receptive to the information provided by migrants from abroad. However, these ideas will not have any profound change on how the persons thinks. Those people that think more differently are outside the social bubble and thus more difficult to reach and influence. Because of this, the overall revolutionising impact of social remittances remains limited. This might be a context specific aspect especially, since staying within close social circles is according to the interviewees a part of Russian society. This may however be different in different contexts and remains to be explored in future research.

Overall, changing society through introducing new ideas and values is not found easy in a Finnish-Russian context. The research finds that **changing the welfare system and its services directly** through social remittances is found especially difficult, and in fact this is not something that the interviewees actively aim to do. The migrants do not indicate that they consider that they through their social remittances should or could take on responsibility of development. This also means that there is no indication of a privatization of the development effort (as defined in Mata-Codesal 2011, 235; de Haas 2012, 10; Pellerin & Mullings 2013, 9) in terms of improving welfare services in the country of origin. At most, interviewees attempt to introduce new ideas and information within their own social circle. Migrants are thus using their voice from abroad (in Hirschman 1970 terms), but mainly to influence how their own acquaintances see their lives in the country of settlement, and not much beyond that. The interviewed migrants do

not indicate greater ambition, which mainly seems to relate to them not feeling able to bring about change in Russia. In some way, they can be considered to have "admitted defeat" in light of the magnitude of things that would need to be changed, and the impossibility of change due to structural constraints. This arguably also relates to the size of country, Russia being one of the largest countries in the world. In this sense, migrants have not replaced or even tried to replace states as the main actors behind changing the welfare system, and thus migrants' efforts have not led to states, in line of Levitt's (1997, 518; 2001, 192) argument, "getting off the hook" in improving welfare services. Instead, the inability of migrants to exert influence on the welfare system of their country of origin has enabled the state to continue to pursue unfavourable welfare policies. This relates to another characteristic of the Russian context, since this is a context in which people are generally found powerless to influence decision making, with several structural constraints against them. In other words, there are unfavourable conditions that obstruct the influence of the human, economic and social capital of migrant population. This supports Skeldon's (2008a, 13) Portes' (2009, 17) and Nevinskaitė's (2016) argument, that if there are no structures or they are weakly developed, the effect that knowledge and skill transfers and returning highly skilled migrants can have is limited.

In the Russian context, such **structural constraints** have to do with individuals feeling detached from policy makers, and people's power to influence policy change being slim, due to lacking democratic institutions and a lack of opportunity to reach policy makers. Because of this, the migrants consider that individual people can in general only change small things and not large or structural issues, especially in Russia. Although migrants can potentially, in the long term, influence structures through affecting the opinion climate, this process is slow. The potential societal influence of social remittances is thus found to depend on, besides existing infrastructures, the competitiveness of a state, the quality of governance and openness to foreign skills, technology, capital, and business ideas (Portes 2009; Siar 2014), also **the kind of power structure/state** that people are living in. The research finds that besides bad infrastructure, corruption (Isaakyan 2015, 29–30), lack of security (Abdile & Pirkkalainen 2011), a lack of macroeconomic stability, market failure, absence of appropriate public policies, a lack of legal security and a lack of trust in government institutions (de Haas 2005, 1275), also a **lack of democratic institutions** and **access to policy makers** constrain the positive effect that migration might have on development. This finding contributes to previous discussions on the absorptive capacity/receptivity of the country of origin, providing an empirical perspective from a state in which people feel detached from decision makers. Such detachment makes the scaling up of social remittances especially difficult.

In the research, social remittances regarding **recycling practices** are presented as an example of ideas being strained by structural constraints. Even though the migrants can and have been able to convince their acquaintances living in Russia, based on their own experiences in Finland, that recycling is worthwhile, this will according to them not lead to change because there are no

structures in place to uphold the change in Russia. This confirms findings by de Haas (2012), Glick Schiller (2012) and Skeldon (2008a) that the diasporas capabilities to solve structural development problems are not always effective and that migrants can thus not be held responsible for improvements in the country of origin alone.

Besides the states' power structure, the societal power that migrants can have, through transmitting (new) ideas, values and information seems to be dependent on several other factors as well, and it is in no way automatic. The position that migrants are in, the kind of transnational contacts they maintain, and the receptivity of the non-migrants, all have central roles in determining the overall influence that social remittances can have. The findings also illustrate that trying to change how people, even within their own personal social circles, think about certain issues, such as welfare, democracy, or gender equality is **not easy**. The societal power exercised through social remittances is curtailed by a level of resistance to ideas from abroad. It is difficult to introduce change that is not wanted. In the Russian context, this unwillingness relates especially to not wanting to take on ideas from the "west". The findings also illustrate that it is not automatic that social remittances or reverse remittances can be transmitted from a powerful country to a small country. It seems that, besides the power position and the size of the country, also other factors are important to consider. The Finnish and Russian example illustrates the centrality of **country reputation**: Whereas Finland is in Russia seen in a mostly positive light, and thus social remittances are mostly accepted, except among those who want nothing to do with the west which Finland is seen as part of, Russia on the other hand does not enjoy such a positive image in Finland, which is why social remittances from Russia are less likely to be accepted. Because of this, reverse remittances from a large influential country do not have significant sway in Finland, which represents a small and geopolitically not so influential country.

Although the research does find that social remitting is an everyday phenomenon that is to some extent performed by all migrants, including so-called ordinary lay people, the findings also indicate that the **social remittances of some people may be more significant than those of others**. It seems that migrants feeling unable to have influence beyond their own social circle relates to this especially, and those individuals who have a societal position, a large audience and/or money are found by the interviewees to have more opportunities to get their social remittances accepted by non-migrants, and thus more opportunities to have an effect through their social remittances. The social remittances by elites may thus be more powerful than those transmitted by so-called ordinary people. However, this should be investigated further in future research, since none of the interviewees interviewed for this research find themselves to have such a powerful position and none consider themselves to represent the elite. In the case of this research, the connection between economic and social remittances, also in the reception of social remittances, is not emphasised, since none of the interviewees are active economic remitters, and

thus looking more specifically into this aspect, in this context, also remains something for future research to look at.

What is also interesting, the research confirms that the **position and size of the diaspora** in the country of settlement is found to have an effect on their ability to transmit social remittances to the country of origin. As Kapur (2001, 272) notes, the benefit of networks increases rapidly with network size, and large countries are more likely to benefit from the network advantages of diasporas. However, according to the interviewees, Russian expatriates living in Finland are not found powerful nor uniform enough to install change in the country of origin. This can be explained by the fact that, although a large amount of people migrate from Russia, of the total number of emigrants only few end up migrating to Finland. Those that do migrate to Finland are by the interviewees not found to form a group with similar interests. Thus, as could be excepted, although social remittances can flow from small countries to larger ones, their impact remains limited and should be considered mainly in specific areas. As Kapur (2001, 276) notes, the potential importance of the diaspora is influenced by the global importance of the country of settlement. When considering this, Finland cannot be described as a major influencer, mainly due to its small size. In the Finnish-Russian context, the influence of social remittances transmitted by migrants from Russia is largest on areas that are closer to Finland, mainly the Karelian area, which is also both geographically and culturally close to Finland. However, as noted in the introduction, up to 7,3 million people in Russia have been found to be influenced by current or previous migrants living in Finland, and this is no insignificant number (Finnish Foreign Ministry - country brand report 2021). Furthermore, it is likely that migrants from Russia in other European, and especially Nordic welfare states, might remit similar ideas about their country of settlement to their country of origin, in regard to what it is like to live in a democratic welfare state. There are thus potentially small trickles of information coming in from various places, and when these are combined, they may have a significant overall impact.

In general, it seems that we should avoid notions of change in welfare systems brought about by social remittances alone, since the interviewees identify the difficulty of making anything happen via diaspora ideas. Moreover, we should be cautious about the idea of transferring ideas as such without modifying them to fit different contexts. Each country has built its social policies in accordance with its own cultural and societal structures. Historical characteristics and perceptions about the state, family and gender differences, religion, crises brought on by war, and the organizing of citizens into movements and organizations, are all examples of factors that have had a role in the emergence of welfare-statism and in the shaping of social policies (Anttonen & Sipilä 2000, 238; see similar perspective of Bloom & Standing 2008 on how European and US health sector practices are often not appropriate as such to be adapted in China and India). The interviewees find that transferring entire good practices from one context to another is often impossible, instead they emphasize the role of transferring (snippets of) knowledge, ideas and breaking stereotypes.

Confirming what Kapur (2004, 367) has stated, it is hard to calculate social remittances or demonstrate their causal effect, and the research does not directly indicate how welfare systems could be changed by sharing ideas about them across national borders. However, it must be kept in mind that change from the bottom up can be slow and the changes that are occurring through changing mentality may not become evident in the short time frame of the research. Thus, although it may seem that migration is not an effective way to bring about societal change, the research shows that migrants can influence the opinion of people, also of non-migrants, and this may have long term consequences that will manifest in the long run on how society is shaped. Whether the changed perspective of acquaintances will eventually lead to changes in welfare service implementation remains beyond the scope of this research. Perhaps social remittances can have a role in laying the foundation to societal change through changing the perspective that people have. The following figure summarizes the various factors that are considered to influence the effect of social remittances.

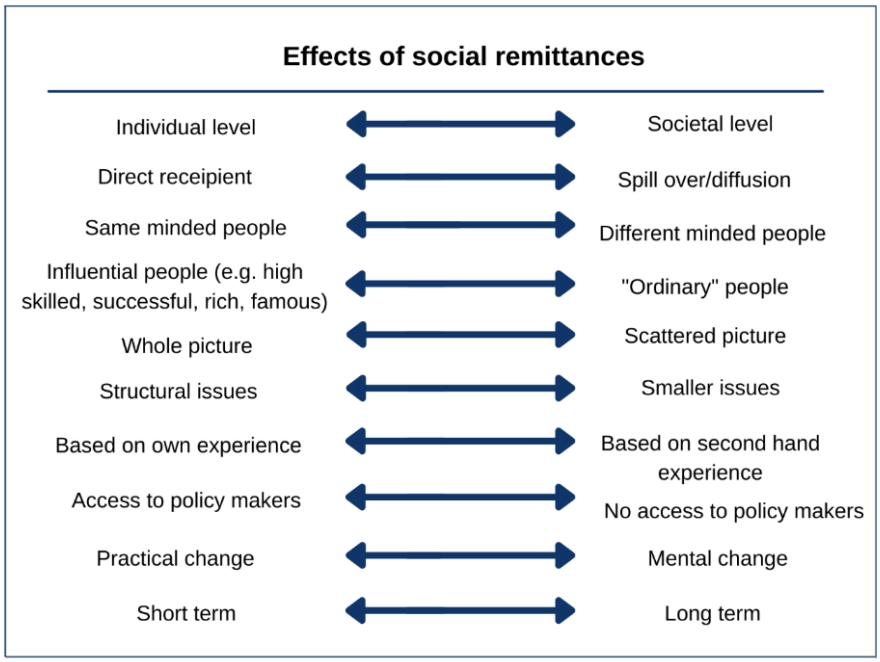

Figure 18 Aspects to consider in relation to effects of social remittances

7.4 Overall conclusions and reflections on the research

To conclude the overall findings, social remittances are transmitted through the transnational linkages between Finland and Russia maintained by migrants. Social remitting occurs as part of everyday communication and especially when migrants attempt to provide their friends and family an idea of what their life is like in the country of settlement. As part of explaining what their life looks like, migrants compare differences of the origin and host societies and their welfare

systems, share information about migration, living abroad, Finland as a country of settlement and its welfare system, and attempt to change the opinions that their non-migrant acquaintances have of Finland/Russia. Although the migrants do have the sense that they have managed to influence their acquaintances' thinking, this is not always easy and sometimes social remittances are rejected. Moreover, having influence on ideas, opinions, and norms beyond one's own acquaintances, through social remittances, is found difficult and the role that social remittances can have on changing the existing welfare system is considered limited. However, changing the mentality of people, which social remittances are to some extent successful in, at least among personal contacts, is considered a first step in accomplishing change on a societal level.

There are, however, several **limitations** that should be kept in mind when considering the findings, which also relate to **recommendations for future research**. Several of these have already been mentioned here and there in the text but some will be highlighted here: one central crosscutting aspect which defines the extent of the results is that the research only considers the perspective of the remitters. To gain a more comprehensive understanding, further research could be carried out among the recipients of social remittances, to see whether the opinions of the remitters and the receivers align in terms of factors influencing e.g., the reception and outcome. Furthermore, the interviews have revealed that besides looking into what is *told* about Finland/Russia and their welfare systems, it would be interesting and important to look more specifically into what is *showed*, i.e., the role of pictures in social remittances. In future research, the role of pictures shared among migrants and their acquaintances should be considered as potential research data. Additionally, since this research only looks into direct interpersonal contacts, the way that the concept of social remittances could be used in studying the sharing of information that is not specifically targeted at a specific person through i.e., blogs, vlogs, written articles, social media posts, or comments in discussion groups, could be elaborated. Furthermore, the research does not provide insight into the social remittances transmitted by migrants from Russia collectively, i.e., collective social remittances, and thus more research into this perspective is needed. This is not only a recommendation for this specific context, but for the research field in general, since it seems that previously collective remittances have solely been studied from the perspective of transmitting money or goods and not from that of transmitting ideas and values. This kind of research would benefit from considering social remittances as a form of activism. Overall, it seems that more research is needed on social remittances between systems that are more similar to each other, e.g., economically or in terms of welfare systems.

What should be further considered at the end of the research is whether using the **concept of social remittances provides** the best way to research the phenomenon of migrants influencing their non-migrant acquaintances, their society of origin and country of settlement, through introducing ideas, values, and information. The concept *social remittances* enables conceptualizing and discussing the kind of transnational communication that migrants maintain.

However, the concept of social remittances is derived from the concept of sending economic remittances such as money and goods. In this, the significant difference is that the amount of money and goods that are transmitted can be concretely measured unlike the ideas, values and thoughts that are transmitted. In addition, the transmission of social remittances is also a very different kind of process than the sending of social remittances, in the sense that nothing is in fact sent as such. Instead, the social remittances are constantly discussed and negotiated.

Overall, as noted by Boccagni and Decimo (2013), the concept of remittances covers such a diverse set of phenomena that there is some concern about the analytical clarity and operationalization of the concept. Thus, to develop the concept of social remittances there are several aspects, based on the findings from this research, that should be considered: For social remittances to be a meaningful tool there need to specific definitions of what they are and what their limits are, otherwise, they begin to describe all international human communication.

It seems that two definitions of social remittances, a narrow definition and a wide one, emerge:

According to the **narrower definition**, social remittances are new ideas, values, and norms that migrants pick up from the country of settlement after having migrated there and share with their non-migrant acquaintances living in their country of origin. The benefit of such approach is that it makes social remittances a more specifically defined phenomenon. According to this definition, sharing information about the country of origin with acquaintances in the country of settlement can be a part of transnational communication but should perhaps be defined as something else than social remittances. If social remittances are defined as information, values, norms, and ideas that migrants have encountered *during their migration*, then in fact ideas, values and norms that are initialized pre-migration and then shared with non-migrant acquaintances in the country of settlement should perhaps not be understood as remittances at all, but as something else. That is not to say that ideas could not be brought or transmitted from country of origin to country of settlement, however according to a narrow definition these should not be conceptualised as social remittances. This definition puts emphasis on picking up *new* information from the country of settlement, and is thus in contrast with e.g., Järvinen-Alenius et al. (2010) and Fomina (2009), who propose that social remittances need not always be based on new information. In relation to this, the research finds that in practice much of the discussion regarding welfare that migrants have with their acquaintances is based on the new ideas that they have noticed in the country of settlement: migrants recount things that they have encountered in their country of settlement to their acquaintances in their country of origin.

According to the **wider definition**, besides sharing ideas from the country of settlement to the society of origin, when individuals migrate, they take with them to the country of settlement their ideas, values, and norms. When these are shared in the country of settlement, they are social remittances, and they can challenge and transform the ideas and practices of people already living in the

country of settlement (Levitt 1998, 930). Furthermore, while living in the country of settlement migrants may gain information, values, and norms from their acquaintances living in the country of origin, as also found by this research. Through social networks, migrants may for example seek up-to-date and reliable information on their country of origin, both to plan their return and to feel satisfied in their lives abroad (Tiemoko 2003, 10). When these are shared in the country of settlement or country of origin, they can be considered a type of social remittances. This approach takes into account a larger variety of issues related to sharing information in a transnational setting. However, it also makes the concept less well defined and operational.

In future research, it would be useful to define whether a wider definition or a narrower definition of social remittances is used.

As a final thought, a few examples of how the findings of this research could be considered **in practice**, in e.g., policy making, are provided. In terms of policy makers in the country of settlement, and in this case in Finland, it should be kept in mind that the way migrants are taken as part of society, integrated, and welcomed influences the kind of attitudes and image that they form about their country of settlement and what image they then distribute among their non-migrant acquaintances. Policy makers can through their action, e.g., integration actions, influence the kind of messages that are transmitted about Finland, and thus practice soft power or soft influence. The research findings should also be considered of special interest to those who work with or are involved with building (Finland's) country brand abroad. Since the research results indicate that social remittances transmitted by migrants have an important role in distributing information about Finland and its welfare system abroad, social remittances as a phenomenon should thus be considered when investigating how to build and influence a country brand abroad.

Since the focus is on social remittances regarding welfare services, the findings have also revealed interesting aspects of how migrants from Russia living in Finland are experiencing the Finnish welfare state and its services. This is important information to consider in light of ensuring equality and accessibility of welfare services, also for migrants. As stated in the previous chapters, there are several aspects that the interviewees are not content with in regard to welfare services, which mainly have to do with services not being accessible or them being difficult to understand. An aspect that should especially be paid attention to is that several migrants from Russia are not satisfied with Finnish health care services. This is something for policy makers in welfare services to take notice of.

Also, the research results are of special interest to those doing research or otherwise involved in considering **how to get information to people who are living in a country in which there is no free media**. The findings illustrate that although Russia is tightening control over media and internet, and the free distribution of information has become difficult, there are still also other channels to consider that are more difficult to control by governing elites. Social remittances form such a parallel channel, besides traditionally considered

channels such as media or education, that can carry information, attitudes and information which might otherwise not reach people. And thus, it is not only Russian propaganda that reaches people, about e.g., Finland, Europe or living in the "west". The information shared by migrants can potentially influence the general attitude towards what life should look like and what kind of welfare service should be available. In addition, the social remittances travelling between Finland and Russia are only one example and similar or other types of social remittances are also transmitted between Russia/Finland and other countries. Although the migration of educated, critically thinking and opposition-minded individuals might not be problem for the authoritarian regime, in a political sense (Lassila 2019), it may become a problem if these people do not just stop using their voice upon exit, but instead exit with voice, and keep influencing their country of origin (in line with Waddell 2014, 117; Fomina 2019; Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009, 131).

To conclude, the research shows that migrants have agency and that, besides seeing migrants as individuals who need to be "influenced" in the sense that they need to integrate, to learn the language of the country of settlement and its habits, they should also be seen as individuals who can themselves be influencers both in their country of origin and their country of settlement.

SUOMENKIELINEN TIIVISTELMÄ

Tässä tutkimuksessa lähtökohtana on, että henkilön muuttaessa maasta toiseen hän usein säilyttää yhteyden lähtömaassa asuviin perheenjäseniinsä ja ystäviinsä. Tästä muodostuu ylirajaisia yhteydenpidon väyliä. Pysymällä yhteydessä lähtömaahansa siirtolaiset voivat toimia yhtäaikaisesti osana sekä lähtömaansa että nykyisen asuinmaansa yhteisöjä ja yhteiskuntaa. Täten siirtolaiset voivat vaikuttaa myös lähtömaahansa, vaikka eivät siellä asuisi. Siirtolaiset voivat toimia viestin tuojina, muutosagentteina ja innovaattoreina (kuten Klagge & Klein-Hitpaß 2010 heitä nimittävät). Kun siirtolaiset ovat yhteydessä lähtömaassa asuviin tuttaviinsa, he voivat jakaa kokemuksiaan ja näkemyksiään muun muassa nykyisestä asuinmaastaan ja ulkomailla asumisesta tuttavilleen ja perheelleen. Tutkimuksessa tästä ilmiöstä käytetään termiä "sosiaaliset siirtolähetykset".

Sosiaaliset siirtolähetykset voivat olla ideoita, tietoa, taitoa, kulttuurisia käytäntöjä, käytösmalleja, maailmankuvia, asenteita, identiteettejä, symboleja ja sosiaalisia arvoja, joita välitetään transnationaaleja verkostoja pitkin maasta toiseen (Levitt 1998, 926; Suksomboon 2008, 463; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2010). Sosiaaliset siirtolähetykset perustuvat tuttavien välisiin yhteyksiin ja tapahtuvat usein henkilökohtaisesti ja suoraan sellaisten ihmisten välillä, jotka tuntevat toisensa. Tämän vuoksi sosiaalisten siirtolähetysten "polkua" voidaan usein seurata, ja siirtolaiset sekä heidän tuttavansa yleensä tietävät mistä ja miten ovat uuden idean, tavan tai ajatuksen saaneet (Levitt 1998, 936; Levitt 2005, 3). Aikaisemmat tutkimukset ovatkin havainneet, että henkilökohtaisten suhteiden kautta kulkeva tieto on usein merkityksellisempää ja vaikutusvaltaisempaa kun esimerkiksi median kautta kulkeva tieto (Lindstrom & Muñoz-Franco 2005, 277). Tällaisten siirtolähetysten on aikaisemmissa tutkimuksissa havaittu vaikuttaneen tiedon leviämiseen ja asenteiden muuttumiseen hyvin moninaisista aiheista ja teemoista, kuten muun muassa terveydestä (Levitt & Rajaram 2013; Holdaway et al. 2015; Main & Gózdziak 2020), hygieniasta (Goldman et al. 2001), vanhemmuudesta ja perhe-elämästä (Levitt 2001, 82; Rahman 2009; Vlase 2013; Grabowska & Garapich 2016b; Main & Gózdziak 2020), työelämästä (Klagge & Klein-Hitpaß 2010; Karolak 2016; Grabowska & Garapich 2016b; 2018; Haynes & Galasińska 2016), demokratiasta (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow 2009; Mahmoud et al. 2014; Fomina 2019), pukeutumisesta (Levitt 1998, Grabowska & Garapich 2016b; Mukherjee & Rayaprol 2019) ja sukupuolinormeista (Levitt 2005; Dannecker 2009; Vianello 2013; Mukherjee & Rayaprol 2019; Main & Gózdziak 2020).

Siirtolähetysten lähettäminen jakautuu prosessina karkeasti neljään eri vaiheeseen: 1) siirtolähetysten muodostaminen, 2) siirtolähetysten välittäminen, 3) siirtolähetysten vastaanottaminen ja 4) siirtolähetysten levittäminen/leviäminen. Kanavia siirtolähetysten välittämiselle ovat muun muassa yhteydenpito tuttaviin etäältä esimerkiksi puhelimitse tai internetin välityksellä, siirtolaisten vierailut lähtömaahan, tuttavien vierailut siirtolaisten nykyisessä asuinmaassa ja paluumuutto lähtömaahan. Lisäksi on huomioitava, että siirtolähetykset eivät liiku vain asuinmaasta lähtömaahan vaan myös toisinpäin: siirtolaiset ja heidän tuttavansa voivat välittää ajatuksia myös siirtolaisten nykyiseen asuinmaahan.

Tutkimusasetelma

Tässä tutkimuksessa keskitytään erityisesti siihen, millaisia siirtolähetyksiä Venäjältä Suomeen muuttaneet maahanmuuttajat jakavat elämästään Suomessa ja suomalaisesta hyvinvointivaltiosta Venäjällä asuville tuttavilleen. Tutkimus selvittää, miten maahanmuuttajat yrittävät vaikuttaa sellaisten henkilöiden tietämykseen ja ajatuksiin Suomesta/Venäjästä, ulkomailla asumisesta ja hyvinvointivaltiosta, jotka eivät itse ole muuttaneet ulkomaille. Lisäksi selvitetään, miten maahanmuuttajat itse kokevat onnistuvansa yrityksissään välittää tietoa ja muuttaa asenteita.

Sosiaalisia siirtolähetyksiä on tutkittu Suomessa vielä hyvin vähän, eikä Venäjä ole ollut siirtolähetyksiin keskittyvän tutkimuksen keskiössä. Suomalaiset ilmiötä koskevat tutkimukset ovat pääasiassa keskittyneet analysoimaan Suomen ja Viron välillä kulkevaa tiedonvaihtoa (Jakobson et al. 2012; Alenius 2015; 2016; 2018). Tähän tutkimukseen valittu suomalais-venäläinen konteksti on kuitenkin oiva konteksti tutkia tätä ilmiötä, sillä kyseiset naapurimaat edustavat maita, joilla on toisiinsa verrattuna hyvin erilaiset geopoliittiset asemat ja hyvin erilaiset hyvinvointijärjestelmät. Maiden välisten eroavaisuuksien vuoksi on kiinnostavaa selvittää, kuinka maahanmuuttajat navigoivat erojen välillä ja kuvailevat niitä tuttavilleen. Kertomalla Suomesta ja suomalaisesta hyvinvointimallista maahanmuuttajat itse valitsevat, mitkä piirteet ovat heistä kiinnostavia ja jakamisen arvoisia. Tutkimus keskittyy henkilökohtaisiin ja yksilöllisiin sosiaalisiin kotilähetyksiin, ei niinkään joukossa organisoituihin (esim. järjestöjen) sosiaalisiin ja materiaalisiin siirtolähetyksiin (näistä lisätietoa mm. Levitt 1997; Goldring 2004; Orozco & Lapointe 2004; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011, 13; Burgess 2012; Pirkkalainen 2013; Pirkkalainen 2015). Venäläiset maahanmuuttajat ovat valikoituneet tutkimukseen myös siksi, että he muodostavat suurimman maahanmuuttajaryhmän Suomessa.

Tutkimuskysymykset on jaettu kolmeen teemaan, joiden alle muodostuu yhteensä kuusi kysymystä. Kussakin kysymyksessä keskitytään maahanmuuttajien omiin kokemuksiin ja näkemyksiin tutkittavasta ilmiöstä:
Millaisia sosiaalisia siirtolähetyksiä välitetään ja miten:

- Millaisia sosiaalisia siirtolähetyksiä haastateltavat kokevat tuottavansa, kun he kuvailevat elämäänsä nykyisessä asuinmaassaan ja maan hyvinvointijärjestelmää sellaisille tuttavilleen, jotka eivät ole muuttaneet ulkomaille?
- Kuinka siirtolähetysten välittämisen koetaan olevan kytköksissä transnationaalien sosiaalisten suhteiden ylläpitoon, ja millainen vaikutus siirtolähetyksillä on suhteisiin ystäviin ja perheenjäseniin?

Siirtolähetysten vastaanotto

- Millaiseksi haastateltavat kokevat välittämiensä sosiaalisten siirtolähetysten vastaanoton, ja minkä tekijöiden koetaan vaikuttavan vastaanottoon?

- Kuinka henkilökohtaisesti sosiaalisten siirtolähetysten kautta välitetyn tiedon koetaan sijoittuvan muista lähteistä tulevan tiedon, kuten median välittämän tiedon rinnalla?

Siirtolähetysten lopputulema

- Kuinka haastateltavat kokevat, että siirtolähetykset muuttavat sitä kuvaa, joka heidän Venäjällä asuvilla tuttavillaan on Suomesta ja erityisesti sen hyvinvointijärjestelmästä?
- Voivatko sosiaaliset siirtolähetykset, jotka lähetetään pienestä ja geopoliittisesti vähemmän vaikutusvaltaisesta maasta (Suomesta) suureen ja geopoliittisesti merkittävään maahan (Venäjälle), saavuttaa yhteiskunnallista vaikuttavuutta?

Tutkimus ammentaa erityisesti transnationalismiin ja siirtolaisuuden ja kehityksen väliseen yhteyteen keskittyvistä tutkimuskentistä. Siirtolaisuuden ja kehityksen väliseen yhteyteen keskittyvä tutkimuskenttä on aikaisemmin painottanut tutkimusta, joka on selvittänyt kuinka ns. kehittyneissä maissa asuvat siirtolaiset voivat välittää ajatuksia ja innovaatioita kehittyviin maihin ja siten vaikuttaa positiivisesti köyhempien maiden kehitykseen. Tässä tutkimuksessa ei kuitenkaan puhuta ”kehityksestä” eikä sen aikaansaamisesta. Sen sijaan, että keskitytään siihen, kuinka siirtolaiset voivat vaikuttaa yhteiskuntaan laajemmin, keskitytään siihen, kuinka he yrittävät vaikuttaa yksittäisten ihmisten näkemyksiin, tietoon, normeihin ja ajatuksiin. Tutkimus painottuu siis siirtolaisuuden mikrotason seurauksiin.

Siirtolaisten rooli tiedon, ajatusten ja näkemysten välityksessä on mielenkiintoinen muun muassa siksi, että he ovat kokeneet elämää kahdessa tai useammassa yhteiskunnassa. Kun henkilö muuttaa maasta toiseen, hän vaihtaa kulttuurista, sosiaalista ja taloudellista ympäristöä (Fargues 2005, 16) ja on usein altistunut uusille ajatuksille ja tavoille tehdä asioita (ks. Sandu 2010, joka tarjoaa useita esimerkkejä). Tämän seurauksena henkilö kohtaa poliittisia, sosiaalisia ja kulttuurisia normeja ja asenteita, jotka voivat olla hyvin erilaisia tai jopa konfliktissa hän aikaisemmin tuntemiensa normien ja asenteiden kanssa (Fidrmuc & Doyle 2006, 2). Koska siirtolaisilla on kokemuksia ja tietämystä oman yhteisönsä ulkopuolelta, ja lisäksi he tuntevat kontekstin sekä lähtömaassaan että asuinmaassaan, voivat nähdä ideat, arvot ja informaation kummankin kontekstin perspektiivistä ja voivat tuoda uutta tietoa yhteisönsä jäsenille. Lisäksi he voivat muokata tietoa ja käytäntöjä siten, että ne sopivat kuhunkin kontekstiin. Kyse ei siis ole siitä, että siirtolaiset suoraan poimisivat ”parempia” tai ”edistyneempiä” ajatuksia asuinmaastaan ja välittäisivät niitä kopioitavaksi ja lainattavaksi lähtömaahansa. Sen sijaan ajatuksia ja käytäntöjä muokataan jatkuvasti kuhunkin kontekstiin soveltuvaksi (Adams 2012; Alenius 2016, 272; Holdaway et al. 2015). Tässä korostuu erityisesti siirtolaisten oma toimijuus prosessissa. Transnationaalit suhteet ovat linkkejä, jotka sitovat siirtolaiset ja heidän ystävänsä, perheenjäsenensä ja tuttavansa toisiinsa ja mahdollistavat sosiaaliset siirtolähetykset.

Tutkimuksen metodologia

Tutkimusta varten on toteutettu 35 haastattelua Suomessa asuvien Venäjältä muuttaneiden maahanmuuttajien keskuudessa. Aineiston avulla pystytään selvittämään, mitä haastateltavat itse ajattelevat yhteydenpidostaan lähtömaassa asuviin tuttaviinsa, mitä he muistavat heille kertoneensa ja miten he kokevat, että heidän kertomaansa tietoon on suhtauduttu. Ainoastaan sellaisia henkilöitä haastateltiin, jotka pitävät yllä jonkinlaista yhteyttä Venäjällä asuviin tuttaviin, ystäviin tai perheenjäseniin. Suomessa olon kestolle ei asetettu rajoituksia: osa haastateltavista oli ollut Suomessa vasta muutamia kuukausia, kun taas osa oli ollut Suomessa jo vuosikausia. Haastattelut toteutettiin joulukuun 2018 ja toukokuun 2019 välisenä aikana. Osa haastatteluista toteutettiin osana Euroopan Komission rahoittamaa "*SIRIUS – Skills and Integration of Migrants, Asylum Applicants and Refugees in European Labour Market*" -tutkimushanketta (hankenumero 770515). Haastattelut toteutettiin kasvotusten, ja ne kestivät noin 30–120 minuuttia. Haastattelut toteutettiin suomeksi, englanniksi ja venäjäksi. Venäjänkielisten haastattelujen kohdalla apuna oli venäjänkielinen tutkimusavustaja. Haastattelut nauhoitettiin, minkä jälkeen ne litteroitiin. Litteroinnin jälkeen haastatteluteksti analysoitiin temaattista sisällönanalyysiä käyttäen. Apuna käytettiin kvalitatiivista analyysiohjelmaa, jossa aineisto koodattiin. Koodeja luotiin 85 ja niiden pohjalta 11 kategoriaa. Kategorioita yhdistämällä luotiin vielä neljä yläkategoriaa: 1. sosiaalisten siirtolähetysten luominen ja sisältö, 2. sosiaalisten siirtolähetysten välittäminen, 3. sosiaalisten siirtolähetysten vastaanotto ja 4. sosiaalisten siirtolähetysten vaikutus. Nämä neljä yläkategoriaa muodostavat analyysilukujen rakenteen.

Haastateltavat olivat muuttaneet Suomeen vuosien 1993 ja 2018 välisenä aikana. Pääosin haastateltavat olivat muuttaneet Suomeen Venäjän Euroopan puoleisilta alueilta, ja erityisesti edustettuina olivat Suomen lähialueilta muuttaneet. Suomessa haastateltavat asuivat suurissa ja keskikokoisissa kaupungeissa, kuten Helsingissä, Jyväskylässä ja Kuopiossa. Maaseudulla, rajaseudulla tai pienellä paikkakunnalla asuvia ei tähän tutkimukseen haastateltu. Keskeiset syyt Suomeen muutolle haastateltavien keskuudessa olivat opinnot (12), perhesyyt (12), suomalaiset sukujuuret (11) ja työt (2). Haastateltavat tulivat pääosin keskiluokkaisista taustoista, ja monet heistä olivat hyvin kansainvälisesti suuntautuneita. Tutkimukseen haastateltiin 29 naista ja 9 miestä. Vanhin haastateltava oli 85-vuotias ja nuorin 21-vuotias. Useilla haastateltavilla oli sekä Suomen että Venäjän kansalaisuus. Merkittävä osa haastateltavista (12) opiskeli haastattelun toteuttamisen aikana Suomessa. Myös useat sellaiset henkilöt kertoivat opiskelevansa tai opiskelleensa Suomessa, joilla oli jo aikaisempi korkeakoulututkinto Venäjältä. Yleisesti ottaen haastateltavat olivat korkeasti koulutettuja (30/35 haastateltavasta). Haastateltavista 14 oli työssäkäyviä ja heillä oli hyvin moninaisia ammatteja (mm. opettaja, kääntäjä, tutkija, sihteeri, sairaanhoitaja, sähkömies, konsultti, järjestöasiantuntija). Kaksi haastateltavaa oli työttömänä, viisi eläkkeellä ja yksi äitiysvapaalla. Suurin osa haastateltavista kertoi, että heillä on vain vähän suomalaisia tuttavia tai ystäviä. Useimmat kertoivat puhuvansa Suomea vähintään tyydyttävästi tai hyvin. Osa kuitenkin kertoi puhuvansa suomea hyvin vähän.

Tutkimuksen tulokset

Mitä välitetään: Tutkimus osoittaa, että siirtolähetysten lähettäminen tapahtuu maahanmuuttajilla osana arkista kommunikaatiota. Se ei ole välttämättä mitään sellaista, jota lähdetään erikseen tekemään. Useimmiten haastateltavat tulevat välittäneeksi sosiaalisia siirtolähetyksiä Suomesta ja suomalaisesta hyvinvointijärjestelmästä, silloin kuin he kuvailevat omaan elämäänsä liittyviä asioita tuttavilleen. Haastateltavat pitivät tärkeänä sitä, että kertoivat tuttavilleen millaista heidän elämänsä on Suomessa. Siirtolähetyksissä korostuvat usein siis henkilökohtaiset kokemukset ja omakohtaisten kokemusten koetaan tuovan uskottavuutta ja puolueettomuutta. Kaikki haastateltavat kertoivat havainneensa suuria eroja siinä, miten suomalainen hyvinvointijärjestelmä ja venäläinen järjestelmä toimivat. Nämä erot olivat heistä mielenkiintoisia keskustelunaiheita Venäjällä asuvien tuttavien kanssa. Usein maita ja niiden järjestelmiä vertaillaan toisiinsa. Vertailu on tapa kuvailla asioita ja saada tuttavat käsittämään, millaista elämä Suomessa on. Samaan aikaan useat haastateltavat kuitenkin kritisoivat vertailua ja pitivät sitä huonona tapana. Suomalaisille tuttaville ja ystäville venäläistä järjestelmää kuvaillaan huomattavasti vähemmän kuin venäläisille tuttaville suomalaista järjestelmää.

Yleisiä keskustelunaiheita ovat erityisesti sosiaaliturva, työttömyysturva, erilaiset virastot (Kela, TE-toimisto) ja niiden toiminta, eläkkeet, asuminen, koulutus, lastenhoito, sukupuolten tasa-arvo, työelämä, verotus ja terveydenhuolto. Tutkimus osoittaa, että maahanmuuttajat välittävät hyvinvointipalveluista sekä kiittäviä että kritisoivia siirtolähetyksiä. Lähetetyt siirtolähetykset ovat myös usein yksilöityjä ja niiden sisältö vaihtelee sen mukaan, kenen kanssa keskustellaan. Eri Venäjällä asuville tuttaville kerrotaan tai painotetaan siis erilaisia asioita elämästä Suomessa ja suomalaisesta hyvinvointijärjestelmästä. Tähän vaikuttavat erityisesti henkilöiden koulutustausta ja kiinnostuksen kohteet. Haastateltavat välttivät keskustelemista tietyistä teemoista sellaisten henkilöiden kanssa, jotka eivät osoittaneet kiinnostusta. Osittain tiettyjen aihepiirien välttely johtuu myös vahvasta halusta ylläpitää hyviä suhteita ja rauhaa. Tuttavia ei haluta hermostuttaa yrittämällä keskustella aiheista, jotka saattaisivat aiheuttaa eripuraa. Erityisesti liian provokatiivisia aihepiirejä ja sellaisia aihepiirejä, jotka saattaisivat aiheuttaa kateutta tai pelkoa, vältellään. Tiettyjen aiheiden välttely liittyy myös siihen, että maahanmuuttajat pyrkivät pääosin korostamaan positiivisia asioita elämästään Suomessa, jotta he eivät aiheuttaisi huolta lähimmäisissään. Tämä ei kuitenkaan tarkoita, ettei hyvinvointivaltioita ja suomalaista järjestelmää myös kritisoitaisi. Useat haastateltavat kertoivat, että he pyrkivät välittämään monipuolista kuvaa, jotta heidän tuttavansa Venäjällä eivät ajattelisi, että elämä Suomessa on yhtä ruusuilla tanssimista ja helppoa. He halusivat korostaa kovaa työtä, jonka ovat joutuneet tekemään tultuaan Suomeen. Useat haastateltavat ovat lähettäneet kriittisiä tai negatiivisia siirtolähetyksiä erityisesti suomalaisesta terveydenhuollosta. Kriittisten ajatusten välittäminen Venäjälle Suomesta ei kuitenkaan ole aina helppoa, ja useat haastateltavat kertoivat, että jotkut heidän tuttavansa eivät halua kuulla pahaa sanaa Suomesta, joka edustaa heille länttä ja läntistä elämäntyyliä.

Maahanmuuttajat määrittävät itselleen lisäksi sovittelijan roolia ja pyrkivät vastustamaan väärää tietoa ja stereotypioita. Tätä kautta maahanmuuttajat osallistuvat Suomen maakuvan rakentamiseen ja välittämiseen ulkomaille. Sen lisäksi, että tietoa Suomesta välitetään Venäjälle, haastateltavat kertoivat välittävänsä myös Venäjästä tietoa Suomeen. Erityisesti haastateltavat toivoivat voivansa murtaa suomalaisten negatiivisia käsityksiä Venäjästä ja venäläisistä. Haastateltavat kuitenkin kokivat, että heidän suomalaiset tuttavansa eivät ylipäätään ole olleet kovin kiinnostuneita Venäjästä.

Lähes kaikki haastateltavat kertoivat, etteivät ole lähettäneet rahallisia siirtolähetyksiä Venäjällä asuville tuttavilleen. Muutamat haastateltavat kertoivat vastaanottaneensa rahaa Venäjällä asuvilta vanhemmiltaan.

Miten välitetään: Tutkimus osoittaa, että siirtolähetyksiä välitetään Suomen ja Venäjän välillä useita erilaisia kanavia pitkin. Siihen miten ja miten usein siirtolähetyksiä välitetään vaikuttaa erityisesti se, millaisia transnationaaleja suhteita haastateltavat ylläpitävät. Haastateltavat kertoivat olevansa yhteydessä säännöllisesti Venäjällä asuvien tuttaviensa, ystäviensä ja/tai perheenjäsentensä kanssa. Erityisen tiivistä yhteydenpito on useimmilla haastateltavilla ollut omien vanhempiensa ja erityisesti äitinsä kanssa. Perheenjäsenet ja läheiset tuttavat määrittyvät siis keskeisenä kohdejoukkona, jonka ajatteluun pyritään siirtolähetyksillä vaikuttamaan. Jotkut haastateltavat pitivät yhteyttä myös vanhoihin työkavereihinsa. Erityisesti Internetin rooli yhteydenpidossa korostui kaikkien haastateltavien kohdalla. Postitse lähetettyjä kirjeitä tai perinteisiä puhelimella soitettuja puheluita haastateltavat kertoivat käyttävänsä yhteydenpitoon hyvin vähäisesti. Lyhyet ja usein lähetetyt viestit kännykällä ovat korvanneet pidemmät kirjeet. Lisäksi valokuvien rooli on korostunut. Usein yhteydenpito on kaikkein vilkkainta heti Suomeen muuton jälkeen, minkä jälkeen se hiljalleen harvenee. Siirtolähetysten kannalta tämä on mielenkiintoista, sillä haastateltavat kertoivat kuvailleensa Suomea ja suomalaista hyvinvointijärjestelmää tuttavilleen erityisesti alussa muutettuaan juuri Suomeen. Tällöin haastateltavilla oli vähiten kokemusta Suomessa asumisesta ja suomalaisen hyvinvointijärjestelmän toimivuudesta. Myöhemmin yhteydenpito keskittyy arkisen elämän kuvailuun ja kuulumisten päivittämiseen. Osa haastateltavista kertoi, että yhteydenpito joihinkin tuttaviin on ajan saatossa katkennut kokonaan. Yhteydenpidon katkeaminen liittyi usein elämänkulkujen erilleen ajautumiseen, mutta joskus myös siihen, ettei tuttavien enää koettu voivan ymmärtää haastateltavien elämää tai sitä, millaista elämä Suomessa on. Tämän koettiin joskus aiheuttavan eripuraa tai mielipahaa, minkä vuoksi yhteydenpito oli vähentynyt tai lakannut. Useimmat haastateltavat, myös ne, jotka olivat olleet Suomessa jo vuosikausia, olivat kuitenkin edelleen säännöllisesti ja tiivisti yhteydessä useiden Venäjällä asuvien henkilöiden kanssa. Myös vierailujen koettiin olevan tärkeä osa suhteiden ylläpitoa ja ajatusten ja ideoiden vaihtoa. Vierailujen aikana tuttavat pääsevät itse näkemään, millaista elämä on Suomessa. Tämän koettiin tukevan sosiaalisten siirtolähetysten välittämistä, sillä vierailujen seurauksena kaikkea ei itse tarvitse selittää juurta jaksain alusta saakka esimerkiksi viesteissä tai puhelimessa. Suurin osa haastateltavista kertoi, ettei halua muuttaa takaisin Venäjälle asumaan. Täten

paluumuutto ei tässä kontekstissa näyttäydy merkittävänä väylänä sosiaalisten siirtolähetysten välittämiseen. Haastateltavat kokivat kuitenkin, että yleisesti ottaen paluumuuttajat voivat olla merkittävä etu Venäjällä ja tuoda sinne uutta tietoa ja taitoa.

Siirtolähetysten vastaanotto: Haastateltavat kokivat, että heidän välittämiensä siirtolähetysten vastaanottoon Venäjällä vaikuttavat monet erilaiset tekijät. Jotkin ideat, ajatukset ja käytännöt otetaan mielellään vastaan, kun taas toiset saavat osakseen vastustusta. Makroperspektiivistä katsottuna venäläisen yhteiskunnan koetaan yleisesti ottaen olevan melko vastahakoinen ottamaan vastaan ajatuksia ja ideoita ulkomailta. Kuitenkin haastateltavat kokivat, että jotkin ideat otetaan vastaan suopeammin kuin toiset. Haastateltavat kokivat, että erityisesti yritysmaailmaan ja teknologiaan liittyvät uudet ajatukset omaksutaan helpommin kuin esimerkiksi politiikkaan tai demokratiaan liittyvät ajatukset. Suomesta tulevat ideat ja innovaatiot ovat haastateltavien näkemyksen mukaan yleensä tervetulleita, koska Suomeen suhtaudutaan Venäjällä positiivisesti. Tämä osoittaa, että maahanmuuttajat kokevat maiden välisten suhteiden vaikuttavan siihen, miten ajatukset ja tiedot niiden välillä voivat liikkua. Jos suhteet ovat hyvät, ja jos yleinen mielikuva maasta on positiivinen, siirtolähetysten lähettäminen on helpompaa. Suomen sen sijaan koettiin olevan vähemmän vastaanottavainen Venäjältä tuleville ajatuksille ja tiedolle. Haastateltavat kokivat tämän johtuvan suomalaisten vahvoista ennakkoluuloista ja Venäjän melko negatiivisesta maabrändistä Suomessa. Osa haastateltavista myös koki, että Suomi on enemmän auki läntisille vaikutteille, ja osa taas koki, ettei Venäjältä olisi Suomelle mitään tuotavaa. Lisäksi osa haastateltavista kertoi, ettei heistä ole sopivaa, että maahanmuuttajat yrittäisivät tuoda ajatuksia ja käytäntöjä omasta lähtömaastaan Suomeen, vaan sen sijaan heidän tulisi sopeutua suomalaiseen tapaan tehdä asioita.

Mikroperspektiivistä katsottuna haastateltavien henkilökohtaisten tuttavien reaktioiden siirtolähetyksiin koettiin vaihdelleen suuresti. Joidenkin henkilöiden koettiin olevan vähemmän vastaanottavaisia ajatuksille Suomesta kuin toisten. Haastateltavat korostivat, että erityisesti heidän isänsä olivat usein olleet vähemmän vastaanottavaisia. Lisäksi useat haastateltavat kokivat vanhempien tuttavien ja kovin isänmaallisten tuttavien olevan vähemmän vastaanottavaisia uusille ajatuksille Suomesta ja myös vähemmän halukkaita keskustelemaan siitä, miten asiat tehdään eri tavalla ulkomailla. Haastateltavat kokivat, että sosiaalisia siirtolähetyksiä liittyen liberaaleihin arvoihin ja sukupuolivähemmistöjen oikeuksiin vastustettiin joidenkin henkilöiden osalta. Lisäksi haastateltavat kertoivat, että laajemminkin, hyvinvointivaltioon liittyen, ajatukset perustulosta ja työttömyysturvasta ovat jakaneet mielipiteitä ja kohdanneet osaltaan vastustusta. Osa haastateltavista kertoi kokevansa myös, että joitakin heidän kertomiaan asioita ei uskota. Haastateltavat toivat esiin esimerkkejä ns. lapsiasiakiistasta. Kyseisessä kiistassa on kyse selkkauksesta, jonka osana Venäjän mediassa levitettiin väärää ja yksipuolista tietoa, jonka mukaan venäläisiä lapsia kaltoinkohdellaan Suomessa ja heitä otetaan huostaan väärin perustein. Kun haastateltavat olivat yrittäneet keskustella asiasta Venäjällä asuvien tuttaviensa kanssa, nämä eivät aina olleet suostuneet uskomaan maasta muuttaneiden näkemyksiä asiaan.

Osa haastateltavista koki, että etenkin Venäjän median vahva rooli erilaisten viestien välittäjänä on vaikuttanut tähän asiaan. Haastateltavat kokivat erityisen vaikeaksi mediasta saatujen ideoiden ja ajatusten muuttamista tai kumoamista. He korostivat, ettei ihmisten ajattelun muuttaminen ole helppoa ja että muutoksen esteenä on erilaisia asioita, kuten edellä kuvatut median luomat vahvat mielikuvat, ”idän” ja ”lännen” vastakkain asettavat ajatusmallit ja negatiiviset näkemykset maastamuutosta. Suomi koettiin osaksi länttä, ja siksi Suomesta välitetyt siirtolähetykset muodostuvat laajemmin osaksi lännestä tulevia ajatuksia ja ideoita. Tämä saattaa osaltaan vaikuttaa niiden vastaanottoon, sillä jos lännestä tulevia ajatuksia vastustetaan yleisesti, ei Suomestakaan tulevia ajatuksia oteta suopeasti vastaan. Toisaalta taas osa haastateltavista kertoi, että jotkut heidän tuttavistaan suorastaan fanittavat länttä ja ovat vastaanottavaisia ajatuksille erityisesti lännestä. Kuitenkaan tällaisissa tapauksissa tuttavat eivät usein ole vastaanottavaisia länttä käsitteleville kriittisille ajatuksille. Osa haastateltavista myös koki, että heidän muuttoaan länteen on kritisoitu, minkä vuoksi heidän ajatuksiaan tai ideoitaan ei enää haluta kuunnella. Haastateltavat kertoivat, ettei heitä välttämättä enää nähdä osana porukkaa eikä heidän ymmärrystään Venäjän nykytilanteesta pidetä ajantasaisena. Siirtolähetysten vastaanotto ei siis ole itsestäänselvyys, ja sen koetaan vaihtelevan eri sisältöjen ja henkilöiden mukaan.

Siirtolähetysten lopputulema: Tutkimus osoittaa, että lähettämällä sosiaalisia siirtolähetyksiä maahanmuuttajat voivat vaikuttaa siihen, millaisia ajatuksia ja tietoa heidän tuttavillaan on Suomesta, joka edustaa laajemmin ”länttä”, ja Venäjästä, joka edustaa laajemmin ”itää”, sekä näiden maiden hyvinvointiperiaatteista ja palveluista. Tutkimus ei anna osviittaa, että maahanmuuttajien välittämä tieto vahvasti motivoisi tuttavia muuttamaan Suomeen, eikä tämä myöskään ole maahanmuuttajien tarkoitus. Sellaisten ihmisten ajatusten ja arvojen muuttaminen, jotka eivät ole suoraan maahanmuuttajien henkilökohtaisessa tuttavapiirissä, koetaan erityisen hankalaksi. Sen sijaan haastateltavat kokivat pystyvänsä vaikuttamaan erityisesti oman lähipiirinsä ajatteluun esittelemällä heille uusia ajatuksia ja käytäntöjä. Lähipiiriläisten toisaalta koettiin olevan jo valmiiksi samanmielisiä, jolloin siirtolähetysten vaikutus ei ole kovin mullistava. Sellaisten henkilöiden ajatuksia, jotka ovat lähtökohtaisesti hyvin erilaisia, koettiin hyvin vaikeaksi muuttaa. Lisäksi haastateltavat kokivat, että sellaisten henkilöiden, jotka ovat rikkaita tai vaikutusvaltaisia, siirtolähetykset olisivat vaikutusvaltaisempia kuin tavallisten ihmisten, jollaisiksi he itsensä määrittelivät.

Haastateltavat kokivat, että laajempien yhteiskunnallisten muutosten aikaan saaminen siirtolähetysten kautta, esimerkiksi liittyen venäläiseen hyvinvointijärjestelmään, on hyvin vaikeaa tai ainakin hidasta. Venäjältä tulleet haastateltavat kokivat yleisesti oman roolinsa lähtömaansa yhteiskunnan muuttamisessa rajoitetuksi, koska he kokevat olevansa erillään päätöksentekijöistä. Tämä liittyy myös siihen, että haastateltavat kokivat yksittäisten ihmisten olevan voimattomia Venäjällä. Haastateltavat eivät kuvailleet lähettävänsä kollektiivisia siirtolähetyksiä muiden venäläisten maahanmuuttajien kanssa. He kokivat välittävänsä vain tiedonmurusia suomalaisesta hyvinvointijärjestelmästä, eivät kokonaisvaltaista tietoa koko järjestelmän toimivuudesta. Tämän vuoksi myös

venäläisen järjestelmän laajempi muuttaminen siirtolähetysten avulla koettiin mahdottomaksi. Erityisesti venäläisen muutosvastaisen mentaliteetin koettiin rajoittavan sitä vaikutusvaltaa, joka siirtolähetyksillä voisi olla yhteiskunnallisella tasolla. Kuitenkin haastateltavat korostivat, että muutoksen täytyy aina alkaa jostain ja välittämällä uutta ja vaikuttamalla oman lähipiirinsä ajatteluun he voivat saada aikaan pieniä muutoksia, jotka ajan saatossa mahdollisesti voisivat johtaa suurempiin asioihin.

Loppupäätelmät

Haastateltavat tuottavat ja välittävät siirtolähetyksiä, joissa he kuvailevat omaa elämäänsä ja kokemuksiaan Suomessa. Osana tätä he tulevat kuvailleeksi usein yksityiskohtaisestikin sitä, miten suomalainen hyvinvointijärjestelmä toimii. Haastateltavien mukaan he välittävät sekä positiivisia että negatiivisia ajatuksia ja kokemuksiaan liittyen hyvinvointijärjestelmään. Välitetyt siirtolähetykset ovat usein henkilökohtaisesti mukautettuja kutakin vastaanottajaa ajatellen.

Siirtolähetysten välittäminen on kiinteästi yhteydessä transnationaalien sosiaalisten suhteiden ylläpitoon. Sekä yhteydenpito etäältä että vierailut ovat keskeisessä roolissa. Maahanmuuttajien tarve saada tuttavat ymmärtämään heidän nykyistä elämäänsä ulkomailla ajaa heidät tuottamaan sosiaalisia siirtolähetyksiä suomalaisesta yhteiskunnasta. Kuitenkaan siirtolähetysten lähettäminen ei aina edistä suhdetta, vaan joskus ne aiheuttavat eripuraa. Siksi tiettyjä aiheita vältellään, eivätkä sosiaaliset siirtolähetykset kata kaikkia elämän tai hyvinvointijärjestelmän osa-alueita.

Haastateltavat korostavat, ettei ihmisten ajattelun muuttaminen ole helppoa ja että muutoksen esteenä on erilaisia asioita, kuten ”idän” ja ”lännen” vastakkain asettavat ajatusmallit ja negatiiviset näkemykset maastamuutosta. Lisäksi median aikaisemmin luomat mielikuvat koetaan vaikeiksi muuttaa siirtolähetysten kautta.

Sellaisten ihmisten ajatusten ja arvojen muuttaminen, jotka eivät ole suoraan maahanmuuttajien henkilökohtaisessa tuttavapiirissä, koetaan erityisen hankalaksi. Haastateltavat uskoivat kuitenkin voivansa vaikuttaa oman lähipiirinsä ajatteluun ja mielipiteisiin. Laajemman yhteiskunnallisen muutoksen aikaansaamisen haastateltavat uskoivat vaikeaksi erityisesti sen vuoksi, että yksittäisten henkilöiden koetaan olevan voimattomia Venäjällä ja erillään päätöksentekijöistä.

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APPENDIX I

General questions

1. Could you tell me a bit about yourself and your life in Finland?
2. Could you tell me about your move to Finland?
3. What did you know about Finland before you moved here?
4. Have you lived in any other country?
5. Could you tell me about your life and your family in Russia before your migration?
6. Do you feel that you have integrated into Finnish society? Why? Why not?
7. Are you actively in contact with other Russian migrants in Finland?
8. Are you active in Russian organizations in Finland? Or the activities by the Orthodox church in Finland?
9. Do you know and are you in contact with many native Finnish people? Could you tell me a little about this?

Communication

10. Are you in contact with people (family, friends, and acquaintances) from your country of origin? Could you tell me a bit about his?
11. What kind of things have you told them about Finland and living in Finland?
12. What do your acquaintances, friends and family think and know about Finland?

Visits

13. Do you visit Russia? Could you tell me about your visits?
14. Have your acquaintances, family or friends visited you in Finland? Could you tell me about this?
15. What do you think your acquaintances, friends and family have thought about Finland after their visits?
16. Do you ever think about migrating back to Russia?

Welfare

17. Have you discussed your experiences about Finnish welfare services and social rights with your acquaintances, friends, and family in Russia? With other migrants? E.g., healthcare services, family benefits, pensions, unemployment insurance, disability services, housing services, student services?
18. Have you discussed the differences between the Finnish and the Russian welfare system and social rights with your Finnish acquaintances/friends? What have you told them?
19. How have your acquaintances, friends and family reacted to the things you have told them about living in Finland/Russia, especially regarding the welfare services and social rights?

20. Do you believe that the things that you have told your acquaintances, friends, and family about living in Finland and the Finnish social rights have had an effect on how your friends and family see Finland and its welfare model?
21. Have you discussed the Finnish education system with your acquaintances who live in Russia?
22. Do you believe that your acquaintances, friends, and family in Russia now have more information about migrating and living abroad? What about the Nordic welfare system? What kind of things?
23. Do you think your Finnish acquaintances know more about Russia since they have met you? What kind of things have you told them?
24. Have you discussed taxation in Finland with your acquaintances/friends/family in Russia?
25. What do you think about the integration services in Finland? (Language courses, integration training)?

Labour in Finland

26. Have you ever discussed with acquaintances, family, or friends what the labour market or working is like in Finland? What about with other migrants?
27. Have you ever discussed the differences in working culture in Finland and in Russia with your acquaintances in Russia? In Finland? Regarding e.g., working rights & gender equality?
28. Do you think that your acquaintances, friends, and family understand/can relate to what life in general and working is like in Finland? What do they understand/what do they not understand? Why?
29. Do you think your Finnish acquaintances and friends know/understand what life is like in Russia?

Democracy

30. What kind of experience & thoughts do you have about democracy in Finland? What about Russia?
31. Have you discussed the current state of democracy in Russia ((and the upcoming presidential elections)) with your acquaintances, friends, and family? What have you discussed? Why have you not?
32. Have you discussed the differences in the state of democracy in Finland in Russia with your acquaintances, friends, and family? E.g., about the differences in the presidential elections? With other migrants?
33. Have your acquaintances, friends/family members living in Russia asked you questions about Finland? What kind of? How have you answered them?
34. What kind of things have you discussed regarding living in Finland with other Russian migrants? With migrants from other countries?

Effects of migration

35. What kind of effect do you think that outmigration has on Russia? Positive effect or a negative effect?

36. Do you believe that you have acquired news skills or knowledge during your migration? What kind of? Technical skills, professional skills, or qualifications?
37. Do you think that the knowledge and skills that you have gained would be appreciated in Russia? Would they e.g., help you get a job?
38. Do you believe migrants can bring new ideas to Finland? Can you give me an example?
39. Do you believe that migrants can transmit new ideas to their acquaintances, friends, and families in Russia? Can you give an example?
40. What about new ideas regarding social rights and democracy?
41. Do you believe that Russian society is open to new ideas and practices? Could you give an example? How about ideas coming from Finland?
42. Do you believe that Finnish society is open to new ideas? How about ideas coming from Russia?
43. What kind of experiences do you have about Russia´s attitude and engagement with its expatriates? Has the state or any other organization ever been in contact with you?

Remittances

44 Have you ever send or received remittances (= money, goods. etc.) to/from your family or friends?