

Returning 'home' after retirement? The role of gender in return migration decisions of Spanish and Turkish migrants

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Abstract

This paper examines how gender plays a role in the decision-making processes of older migrants on where to live after retirement. It is based on 20 in-depth interviews with Spanish-born migrants and 56 in-depth interviews with Turkish-born migrants who spent their working lives in the Netherlands and returned to their country of origin or started moving back and forth between both countries after retirement. Existing studies on return migration have shown that women are often more reluctant than men to settle back in their country of origin, yet these studies also acknowledge that more in-depth research should be conducted on the role of gender in migrants' decision-making on return migration. In this paper, we examine, firstly, why our female respondents were often more reluctant to return and how this influenced the decision-making processes of couples or families. Secondly, we analyse how the different citizenship statuses of the respondents (Dutch, Spanish, Turkish and/or European) influenced their decision-making and how citizenship interacted with gender differences.

Keywords

return migration, citizenship, gender, Turkey, Spain

Introduction

The moment of retirement provides migrants the opportunity to reconsider their country of residence since work obligations no longer tie them to the host country. Existing studies have shown that the decision-making process on where to live after retirement is highly gendered and that women are often more reluctant than men to settle back in their country of origin (cf. King et al., 2004). This paper examines how gender plays a role in these decision-making processes. It is based on interviews with Spanish-born and Turkish-born migrants who have spent their working lives in the Netherlands. We will discuss, firstly, why our female respondents were often more reluctant to return and how this influenced the decision-making processes of couples or families. In answering these questions, we will pay

special attention to caring roles and expectations, which are often gendered. Secondly, we will examine how the respondents' citizenship status influenced their decision-making. As EU citizens, Spanish migrants can move freely between the Netherlands and their country of origin. The same applies to Turkish migrants who have acquired Dutch citizenship; they have the possibility to spend longer periods of time in their native country without losing the right to take up residence in the Netherlands again. By contrast, migrants with (only) Turkish citizenship lose their permanent resident status in the Netherlands when they stay outside the country for a year. We will consider the impact of those differences on the decision-making process on where to live after retirement and how it interacts with gender differences.

Gender and (retirement return) migration

Although retirement migration in general is increasingly studied, the experiences of post-retirement returnees are still largely under-researched, especially from a gender lens (exceptions include Ackers and Dwyer, 2002; *Balkir* and Böcker, 2015; Bolzman et al., 2006; De Coulon and Wolff, 2010; De Haas and Fokkema, 2010; Hunter, 2011; Krumme, 2004). Earlier studies on return migration to the Mediterranean region have focussed mainly on the return of working-age migrants and do not incorporate the experiences of post-retirement returnees in their analysis.

Recent studies on Turkish and Spanish return retirement migrants who have worked in a Northern European country show that older migrants often prefer to maintain a flexible migratory pattern (instead of returning permanently to their country of origin), because of a 'duality of resources and references' in both the country of retirement and the country where they spent their working life (Bolzman et al., 2006; cf. Krumme, 2004). Low cost flights between Northern Europe and the Mediterranean and cheap communication possibilities have made it possible to "exploit, maintain and continue to develop residential opportunities, social networks and welfare entitlements in more than one country" (Warnes and Williams, 2006: 1265). Although we assume that gender plays an important role in the decision-making processes on where and how to retire, gender is often left out of consideration in studies on return retirement migration.

King and his colleagues (2004) confirmed in a state of the art report on *Gender, Age and Generations* that the dynamics of return are highly gendered. They argued that, although men and women may yearn for

'home', women are often more reluctant to return to the country of origin because generally women do not want to give up their newly won freedoms and do not want to return to conservative social conditions (idem: 39). According to King and his colleagues, more in-depth research on the role of gender in migrants' decision-making on return migration is needed as well as on how a (non-)return decision is taken within the family. A comparable conclusion was drawn by Mahler and Pessar (2006) who paid attention to the ways in which gender forms a key constitutive element of migration. They argued that more attention should be paid to the importance of gender in the negotiation of where and how to retire. According to Mahler and Pessar (2006) people do 'gender work'. The term gender work refers to the fluid practices and discourses through which people negotiate relationships and conflicting interests. This raises the question of how a possible return is negotiated within the household setting between the husband and wife and broader family, and how gender influences this process.

Citizenship from a bottom-up perspective

In this paper, Spanish and Turkish return retirement migrants are compared. Both groups of retirement migrants have different citizenship statuses and consequently different rights and possibilities. Therefore, we will focus on the interrelation between the citizenship statuses of the retirement migrants and how this intersects with gender differences.

In citizenship literature, there is an ongoing debate on the changing form and nature of citizenship. According to some scholars, national citizenship is giving way to new, postnational or transnational forms of citizenship. For example, Soysal (1994) argued that European nation states have been extending rights which used to be reserved for citizens to noncitizen migrants, and that migrants' claims for rights within host states are increasingly framed within discourses of universal human rights. Other scholars emphasise the resilience of national citizenship and its continuing relevance (see for example Faist 2001). However, it seems that a bottom-up perspective is largely absent in the citizenship literature. There are few empirical studies which examine what meaning citizenship actually has in people's lives (cf. Jones and Gaventa 2002; Lister et al. 2003; Miller-Idriss 2006). An interesting exception is a study by Leitner and Ehrkamp (2006), based on ethnographic research among migrants from various countries of origin in Germany and the US.¹ It analyses the values and meanings

¹ Leitner and Ehrkamp (2006) conducted interviews with Turkish and Kurdish immigrants in Duisburg, Germany, and with Somali, Sudanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Mexican and Central American immigrants in Minnesota, USA.

migrants assign to citizenship. Particularly relevant for our topic is their finding that the intersection of gender and national identity may lead to conflicting decisions about naturalisation. For example, whereas Turkish women in Germany and Mexican women in the US did not see a contradiction between their Turkish or Mexican identities and acquiring the citizenship of the host state, their male compatriots were more reluctant to apply for naturalisation because they felt it would betray their original national identity. This study also shows that national citizenship continues to be meaningful in migrants' struggles for cross-border mobility, legal protection and access to social and political rights. Similar to Leitner and Ehrkamp (2006), we will examine what values and meanings (older) migrants attach to citizenship of the host country, paying special attention to (the intersection of) gender and nationality differences.

Methodology

This paper is based on semi-structured interviews with Spanish and Turkish return migrants. The interviews were conducted in the framework of different research projects. Böcker interviewed Turkish return migrants in 2009-2010 as part of a comparative project on retirement migration to Turkey.² Gehring conducted interviews with Spanish and Turkish return migrants in 2012-2013 for her ongoing PhD research on retirement migration. The interviews with Turkish return migrants took place in Karaman, Kayseri and Ordu, Turkey, and in the Netherlands. The interviews with Spanish return migrants took place in Cadiz and Gijon, Spain, and in the Netherlands. The interviews followed a life history approach and focused on the different migratory decisions which the respondents had made over their life course. Specific attention was paid to the different social, legal, economic, and cultural factors which influenced this process as well as the negotiations between the partners and within the broader family.

Respondents were recruited through purposive snowball sampling. Organisations assisting return migrants in the Netherlands, Spain and Turkey brought us into contact with our first respondents. The main selection criteria were that respondents were retired in the sense that they had chosen or been required to give up paid work, they had spent (a large part of) their working lives in the Netherlands, and that they had returned to their native country Spain or Turkey upon their retirement for at least six

² The research was carried out in collaboration with Canan Balkır (Department of EU Studies, Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir). It was made possible by a grant from MiReKoc, the Migration Research Program at the Koç University (MiReKoc Research Projects 2009-2010). For the research report, see Balkır and Böcker, 2015.

months per year. We attempted to include migrants with different family and health status and migration patterns in both the Spanish and the Turkish sample. Most of our respondents had settled back permanently in Spain or Turkey, but we also interviewed migrants who divided their time between the Netherlands and their country of birth. Finally, as we were interested in the effects of different citizenship statuses, we attempted to include equal numbers of Turkish and dual (Dutch/Turkish) citizens in the sample of Turkish returnees.

The advantage of pooling our interview data is that we can make use of data from a larger number of interviews. However, this advantage is limited to the Turkish sample. We conducted 20 interviews with Spanish migrants and 56 interviews with Turkish migrants. Most of the interviews were with couples. Of the 20 interviews with Spanish migrants, 11 were with couples and 9 were with individuals. Of the 56 interviews with Turkish migrants, 30 were with couples and 26 were with individuals. Thus the total numbers of respondents added up to 31 Spanish and 86 Turkish respondents. The Turkish sample included 51 male and 35 female respondents. The Spanish sample included 15 men and 16 women. We were unfortunately not able to include similar numbers of male and female respondents in our Turkish sample. The main reason was that associations of return migrants and an organisation providing advice and guidance to return migrants brought us more easily in contact with male than with female Turkish respondents.

Interviewing couples was done partly for pragmatic reasons. It is easier to arrange a joint interview in a couple's home than two interviews after another. Joint couple interviews tend to be seen as inferior to individual interviews. In our experience, the presence of both spouses often added to the richness of the data, as the husband and wife could react to each other's stories and the researcher could observe the couple's interaction (cf. Bjørnholt and Farstad 2014). This gave us some insight in differences in perceptions, preferences and power between husband and wife regarding their return decisions. However, one weakness of couple interviews was that differences of opinion were sometimes not revealed until one of the spouses left. We experienced a few times that a female Turkish respondent brought up a conflict or another delicate issue only when her husband had left the room for a while or during informal talks with the interviewers. The researchers overcame this issue by making sure that during interviews with couples there was a moment of informal talk with the women. The researchers being female enabled them to create these informal moments with the women to obtain insight into views with specific gender orientation. The male respondents seemed to feel fewer

restrictions to express their position and situation within an interview setting.

The ethno-national background of the researchers (who are both native-born Dutch) enabled the respondents to relate their stories to shared experiences and knowledge of the Netherlands. It seemed in particular that Turkish respondents felt less inhibited to talk about the concerns they had about losing their residence rights in the Netherlands than they would have felt being interviewed by (non-migrant) Turkish researchers.

A limitation of our data is that not all interviews were audiotaped, transcribed and translated verbatim from Spanish or Turkish into English. Some of Gehring's interviews with Spanish and Turkish migrants were conducted with interpreters. The majority of these interviews were audiotaped and transcribed and translated together with the interpreter. However, these translations were not always verbatim. Mainly because of time and financial restrictions, Böcker, who speaks Turkish, did not audiotape most of her interviews with Turkish migrants. Instead, she took extensive notes during the interview, including as many verbatim quotes as possible, and transcribed and translated these notes immediately after the interview.

Gender and the decision-making process

In this section, we examine the dynamics between the actors who are involved in the decision-making process on where to live after retirement. Special attention is paid to the question of why women may be more reluctant to return permanently to their country of origin. The decision-making process does not end at the moment of (re-)settlement in the country of origin, but is a continuous process influenced by life-cycle events such as the death of a partner or deterioration of health. In these moments, migrants may reconsider their decision to return. They may also consider changing their migration pattern, for example because moving back and forth between two countries becomes increasingly difficult due to health reasons.

Negotiation, discussions, and quarrels

The migratory decision-making process of retired migrants concerns a process of negotiation, discussion and sometimes also conflict between the persons involved. One of the main issues in the negotiations and possible disagreements concerns the choice between a permanent return and temporary or seasonal stays in the country of origin. Generally speaking, the

interviewed women more often preferred a fluid migratory pattern with back-and-forth moves and the men more often expressed a preference to return permanently to their country of birth. In most cases, compromises were found and migratory patterns were negotiated between the partners. A fluid pattern with regular back-and-forth moves was often an example of a negotiated migratory pattern. Sometimes the couple could not agree on a common migratory pattern and as a result one of the partners already returned and the other partner continued to move back and forth between both countries. The following example shows how a husband and wife negotiated their mobility pattern:

The respondents are a Turkish couple. The husband has lived in the Netherlands since 1970, the wife since 1981. They became eligible for a Dutch state old-age pension in 2000. Since then, they have been spending half the year in the Netherlands and the other half in Turkey. During the interview, the husband explains why they did not return to their native country permanently, although that would have been his preference. He points out that especially his wife has a lot of friends in the Netherlands and that she likes the freedom she has here to go outside. In Turkey she stays more at home and their family visits them. In the Netherlands she goes out and does whatever she wants. That is why she doesn't want to return to Turkey for the whole year. His wife had a bypass operation a few years ago and he doesn't want to upset her in any way. So he keeps on travelling, although he actually doesn't like to travel. (Interview with Turkish couple, pendular migrants, November 2009.³)

A few respondents hinted at quarrels they had had with their spouse about where and how to return to their native country. In most of these cases, the husbands wanted to return permanently, whereas the wives were more reluctant or wanted to remain in the Netherlands, as shown in the following excerpt from our notes of an interview with a Spanish couple:

The husband migrated to the Netherlands in 1972 and the wife followed soon afterwards. They both worked in the Netherlands until they returned to Spain. The husband wanted to return to Spain because he became disabled and could no longer work in the Netherlands. While talking about the decision to return the wife becomes emotional. She explains that she did not want to return permanently to Spain, because she didn't want to be far away from her children and grandchildren. She had many discussions and quarrels about this with her husband, but she did not feel free to negotiate the return with him. In the end she felt forced by her

³ The interview was not transcribed verbatim. The excerpt is from the researchers' interview notes. This also applies to all the following examples from our interview material.

husband to return permanently to Spain. Their daughter, who is visiting the couple at the time of the interview, explains that her father still lays down the law in their marriage. After returning to Spain, the wife went on holidays to the Netherlands and there she saw that her children were doing fine without here. After this visit she felt more at ease in Spain. (Interview with Spanish couple, permanent returnees, August 2012.)

This example shows that a return migration does not only affect the lives of the migrant(s) involved, but also influences relations with family members – mainly children and parents (when alive). The decision to return was often negotiated with close family members who may live in the Netherlands or in the country of birth, as the following example illustrates:

The respondents are a Spanish couple who lived in the Netherlands from 1962 to 2006. They returned to Spain after the husband became unemployed and the wife became disabled. During the interview, the wife explains that their son gave them his permission for their return to Spain. He told them: “Mum and dad, you both have worked very long and you made sure that we could have a good job. I’m a grown-up now. I studied at Utrecht University and I can take care of myself now.” She states that both their sons have a good life in the Netherlands and that she felt that she could return now. The husband adds that it hurts to leave children behind in the Netherlands, but that it would also be difficult not to fully enjoy the last years of their life. (Interview with Spanish couple, permanent returnees, August 2012.)

Permanent returnees, both male and female, emphasised that the decision to settle back permanently in their country of birth was not an easy one, because it meant leaving their family and friends in the Netherlands and leaving a country which had become familiar during the years they lived there. The decision to return permanently was particularly difficult for Turkish migrants without Dutch citizenship, because of the implications for their residence rights in the Netherlands. These migrants were aware that settling back permanently in their native country implied that they would lose their permanent resident status in the Netherlands. Spanish migrants, on the other hand, are not affected by this restriction. As EU citizens, they can make use of their free movement rights and take up residence in the Netherlands again also after a longer stay in their native country. We will elaborate on this topic and its gender implications in the section on citizenship.

Reluctance to return

As stated already, women tend to be more reluctant to return permanently to the country of origin than men. A broad range of reasons can be found for this reluctance. In this section, we discuss the three main reasons. First of all, similar to what was found in other studies, particularly Turkish women felt that they have gained more freedom in the Netherlands and are therefore more 'at home' there than their husbands.⁴ The social life of Turkish women may become more restricted upon their return, whereas their husbands may enjoy a richer social life and thus may find it easier to re-adapt in Turkey, as suggested in the following excerpt from our interview notes:

The respondents are a Turkish couple. They returned to Turkey in 2007 after having lived almost thirty years in the Netherlands. During an informal conversation which takes place when the husband is outside the room, the wife explains that she did not want to return to Turkey. However, because her husband had a very hard time in the Netherlands she decided that it would be better to return together. The first year after their return she felt very depressed. She explains that she felt freer in the Netherlands. "I had my own car, my own money, but here I have to ask my husband for everything." She explains that it was much easier for her husband to build up a new network in Turkey, because he can go to a tea house, something which women, in her opinion, cannot do. She spent many hours inside the house during that first year. (Interview with Turkish couple, permanent returnees, January 2013.)

Whereas a return move sometimes implied a loss of newly won freedoms and status for women, for men the opposite was often true. Among our male Turkish male respondents, the wish to settle back permanently in their native country often seemed to have been triggered by forced unemployment (as a result of dismissal or disability), experiences of discrimination, humiliation or injustice and feelings of alienation in the Netherlands. When asked about their motives to return, many of these men referred not only to pull factors attracting them to Turkey, but also to push factors in their life in the Netherlands. Although our female respondents were in general more reluctant to return, some of them also stated that they preferred to return to Turkey or Spain because of language difficulties and feelings of isolation and alienation in the Netherlands.

⁴ Moreover, some Turkish women were younger than their husbands and a few were still working when the decision to move back to Turkey was taken.

A second reason why our female respondents tended to be more reluctant to return permanently than their husbands was the presence of children and grandchildren in the Netherlands. Although both men and women found it difficult to leave their children and grandchildren behind, for women this seemed to be more often a reason not to return permanently to Spain or Turkey. The following example shows how a Turkish couple negotiated these different needs:

The respondent is a Turkish man. He states that he would prefer to return to Turkey for good because in the Netherlands he is under great psychological pressure all the time. His wife does not want to return yet. She wants to wait until their youngest son is married and settled. However, she does not want to stop him, and he accepts that she wants to stay in the Netherlands for another six years or so. He told her: "Stay here for another six-seven years, find a girl for our youngest son." He intends to come back to the Netherlands and stay with his wife for three months each year, as a tourist. His wife can come to Turkey and stay with him for about six weeks each year. So they will not be separated all the time. (Interview with Turkish man, about to settle back permanently in Turkey, January 2010.)

However, if one or more children live in the country of origin, the decision to return permanently was easier for both men and women, as shown in the following example. The respondents are a Turkish couple. They returned to Turkey in 2012. During the interview, they explain that the main reason was that they never managed to bring their disabled daughter to the Netherlands. The wife therefore always moved back and forth between the Netherlands and Turkey and the husband spent the summers in Turkey. After 25 years in the Netherlands, the couple decided to live permanently in Turkey so that they could take care of their disabled daughter. The husband states that the return was easier for his wife because she never stayed on a permanent basis in the Netherlands and all her family members are living in Turkey. (Interview with Turkish couple, permanent returnees, October 2012.)

This example illustrates a third reason influencing the decision-making process. It shows that care obligations and expectations also influence the choice for a certain migratory pattern. Although the social networks of both men and women often include family relations in the 'home' as well as in the 'host' country, caring roles and expectations and the involvement in informal care arrangements within the family are highly gendered. Baldassar, Wilding and Baldock (2007) showed in their work on transnational families that care can be exchanged across borders. Caring is not restricted to people who live in close proximity to one another. Yet the

way care can be exchanged is influenced and transformed by migration, geographical distance, borders and the passage of time, and certain forms of care do require proximity.

We found that families find creative ways through for example telephone contact, Skype and e-mail to maintain intense caring relationships. However, providing hands-on care requires proximity. Particularly our female respondents were often involved in providing care for grandchildren. This involvement, and the desire to remain involved in these informal care arrangements often led to a fluid migratory pattern in which the couple, or the wife alone, moved back and forth between the Netherlands and the country of origin, as shown in the following example:

The respondents are a Spanish couple. The husband migrated to the Netherlands in 1962. Two years later, he met his wife in the Netherlands and they got married. The wife explains that her husband wants to return to Spain next year, when he retires, but that she cannot go with him. She takes care of their granddaughter during two days a week. She cares for her during the six months that they are in the Netherlands. She enjoys doing it and their daughter does not have the financial means to pay for the kindergarten. She argues that she can think about a permanent move to Spain when their grandchildren are old enough. (Interview with Spanish couple, pendular migrants, July 2012.)

Post-retirement returnees move at a stage in their lifecycle which is often associated with an increased need to receive care themselves. This factor also influenced the migratory pattern of post-retirement returnees. For some couples, receiving care from their children was an incentive to stay in the Netherlands, yet for others it was a reason to return once again to the Netherlands. Notably, women who returned permanently to Spain or Turkey considered more often than men a final return move to the Netherlands when they would be in need of care or when their partner would pass away. With the Turkish respondents, the husband and wife sometimes gave different answers to the question of whether they would prefer to move back to the Netherlands in certain situations, as shown in the following example:

The respondents are a Turkish couple. They returned to Turkey in 2007, after having lived for more than thirty years in the Netherlands. During the interview, the wife states that, if her husband would die, she does not want to stay in Turkey alone, she would to go to her children in the Netherlands: "God knows, but I want to go to my children, if they [Dutch immigration authorities] let me, or the children should come here to stay

with me.” Her husband says he will stay in Turkey under all circumstances. (Turkish couple, permanent returnees, October 2009.)

Partly as a result of these differences, the decision-making process seems to be stressful and sometimes conflict-laden. Our male respondents often found it easier to decide to return to the country of origin while our female respondents more often preferred to maintain dual residences. Yet, this was only partly because they did not want to lose their new-won freedoms, as King et al. (2004) argued. Our interviews show that many women also prefer to move back and forth in order to enable access to a broader range of informal care resources and to maintain a transnational way of family life. For most Turkish respondents the decision to return permanently was particularly difficult because of their citizenship status. We will further elaborate on this topic in the next section.

Significance of dual or EU citizenship

In the past few decades, most Turkish-born migrants in the Netherlands have acquired Dutch citizenship. A large majority were not required to renounce their Turkish citizenship, thus becoming dual nationals (Böcker, 2004; Balkır and Böcker 2015). Spanish-born migrants, and migrants from EU member states more generally, have shown a much lower propensity to naturalise, even though they are generally allowed to retain their former citizenship (Böcker and Thränhardt, 2006). Migrants with Dutch or EU citizenship can move freely between the Netherlands and their country of origin. By contrast, Turkish migrants who have not naturalised lose their permanent residence status in the Netherlands if they remain outside the country for a year. In this section, we will examine how this influences the decision-making of the migrants concerned, and how it interacts with gender differences.

More than half of our Turkish respondents acquired Dutch citizenship while they resided in the Netherlands. Among our Spanish respondents, a much smaller proportion had naturalised. In both groups, practically all migrants who had not applied for naturalisation said they had not done so because they did not see (important) advantages in comparison with their permanent resident status or their Spanish (EU) citizenship. They argued that their permanent resident status or their Spanish citizenship gave them largely the same rights as Dutch citizens. Turkish respondents argued, moreover, that a Dutch passport would not protect them against discrimination. In hindsight, however, a few Turkish returnees regretted that they had not applied for naturalisation. They realised that a Dutch passport would have offered advantages over a permanent resident status.

In particular, it would have enabled them to spend longer periods of time in Turkey without risking to lose their residence rights in the Netherlands.

The following examples show that for Turkish migrants who are dual citizens, their Dutch citizenship is above all a source of freedom and security, enabling them to come and go as they want and guaranteeing them the right to return back to the Netherlands if things would not work out in Turkey.

The first example is from an interview with a Turkish man. He and his wife have dual citizenship. They applied for Dutch citizenship when he reached retirement age and they started to spend six months a year in Turkey. During the interview, he explains why his Dutch passport is fairly important for him: he can come and go whenever he wants; he can stay away for longer periods of time; and when he arrives back at Schiphol airport, the queue for EU citizens is always shorter than the other one, for non-EU citizens. (Interview with Turkish man, pendular migrant, January 2010.)

The second example is also from an interview with a Turkish man. He returned to Turkey alone; his ex-wife and their children and grandchildren all live in the Netherlands. He returned with a Dutch disability benefit. During the interview, which takes place a few months after his return, he explains that his Dutch passport is important for him because it ensures him that he can go back to the Netherlands if he loses his disability benefit⁵: “They cannot throw me out.” He finds it reassuring to know that in case of need, he can go back and apply for social assistance in the Netherlands. He adds that in Turkey, without income, he would be on the street. (Interview with Turkish man, permanent returnee, May 2010.)

Another respondent, a woman, called her Dutch passport “a kind of insurance” against more or less foreseeable risks. She and several other returnees with dual citizenship said they would not have returned to Turkey without their Dutch passport. Particularly for female respondents, however, this had not only to do with retaining access to the Dutch welfare state, but also, or primarily, with maintaining family relations. Their Dutch passport assured them the easiest and most certain access to the country of residence of their children and grandchildren, as shown in the following example:

⁵ This is not an imagined risk. We interviewed several returnees who had lost their disability benefit or had seen it reduced as a result of a re-examination years after their return.

The respondent, a Turkish woman, divorced, settled back permanently in Turkey in 2005, after having lived for thirty years in the Netherlands. She explains that without her Dutch passport, she would not have returned. Her daughter and grandchild live in the Netherlands. She wants to be able to board a plane to visit them without first having to apply for a visa. Her dual citizenship, her having two countries, also makes her feel rich. And whenever the situation in one country deteriorates, she can move to the other country. (Interview with Turkish woman, permanent returnee, April 2010.)

The Spanish respondents found it important, for similar reasons, to retain access to the Netherlands. However, Spanish migrants do not need Dutch citizenship to enjoy the same feelings of freedom and security since their Spanish (EU) citizenship provides them with these rights. They can visit the Netherlands with their Spanish passport (or just their Spanish ID card). One of our Spanish respondents commented on this:

The respondent, a Spanish woman, followed her husband to the Netherlands in 1973. She explains that the first years in the Netherlands were rather difficult. After their housing situation had stabilised and she had built up a supporting social network in the country, she started to feel at home in the Netherlands. Because of her social life in the Netherlands and her close relatives who were also living in the Netherlands, she did not want to go back to Spain. It was her husband who decided that they would return. She found it hard that she could not see her grandchildren growing up and to be separated from her daughter. However, six years after her return she feels happy in Spain. Twice a year she visits her children and grandchildren in the Netherlands, while her husband stays here. She can travel without restrictions, take her passport and go. (Interview with Spanish woman, permanent returnee, June 2012).

Respondents with only Turkish citizenship, on the other hand, were well aware that they would not be allowed to settle back in the Netherlands after a longer stay in their country of birth. This made the decision to return permanently such a difficult one for this group. For the respondents with dual (Dutch/Turkish) or Spanish citizenship, 'permanent' did not have the same, dramatic, connotation, even if they were aware that a return to the Netherlands may not be possible because of financial or other practical constraints.

Losing Dutch citizenship

Return migrants with dual citizenship may lose their Dutch citizenship if they do not have their Dutch passport renewed within ten years after their

return (and subsequently every ten years). Moreover, dual citizens may be required to give up their Dutch citizenship if they want to make use of the Dutch Remigration Scheme. This scheme offers older migrants from former recruitment countries who face problems in the Dutch labour market the option of returning to their country of origin. They receive a monthly allowance to help cover their costs of living and/or a lump sum for their moving expenses.⁶ However, they have to return for good. Migrants with permanent residence status lose this status, and naturalised migrants are required to renounce their Dutch citizenship. All Turkish users thus lose the option of moving back to the Netherlands. In this section, we focus on those who had to give up their Dutch citizenship.

Both among our Spanish and our Turkish respondents, there were returnees who had made use of the Remigration Scheme and who had been required to give up their Dutch citizenship in return for a remigration allowance. The Spanish respondents did not seem to be bothered by this requirement; they thought their EU citizenship provided them with equal and sufficient rights. As one of them remarked dryly: "I still have my Spanish passport." The Turkish respondents, on the other hand, found this requirement difficult to accept and some felt aggrieved by it. They pointed out that they have lived in the Netherlands for many years, that they brought up their children there, that the Netherlands had become their second mother- or fatherland. Particularly male respondents also referred to their economic contributions, pointing out how many years they had worked and paid taxes in the Netherlands.

These Turkish respondents did not always explicitly mention – probably because it was so obvious for them – that together with their Dutch citizenship they also gave up the possibility of returning back to the Netherlands. This was different for the Spanish respondents, as was illustrated in an interview with a returnee who lost her Dutch citizenship because of the ten-years rule:

After having lived for six years in Germany, this respondent and her husband moved to the Netherlands in 1975. They obtained Dutch citizenship and became dual citizens. After returning to Spain she did not renew her Dutch passport because, as she explains, she does not need it anymore. During the interview she shows us her expired Dutch passport which she keeps in a nice box, along with pictures and other souvenirs from

⁶ To be eligible for the monthly allowance, return migrants must be aged 45 years or older and must have been receiving a social benefit or pension for at least six months prior to their application. In 2014, the Remigration Act was revised. Eligibility requirements were tightened. The age to apply for a remigration benefit was increased from 45 years to 55 years. The lump sum for moving expenses was abolished.

the Netherlands. (Interview with Spanish woman, permanent returnee, May 2012).

This Spanish respondent expressed a merely symbolic or emotional attachment to her Dutch citizenship. The naturalised Turkish respondents clearly attached a different value or meaning to their Dutch passport. This value or meaning can also be grasped from what parents said about their children's citizenship. The following two examples illustrate that Turkish return migrants attach great value to their children retaining Dutch citizenship; they want to ensure their children the possibility of returning to the Netherlands:

The first example is from an interview with a Turkish man. He returned to Turkey with his second wife and his youngest children in 2009. He and the children had dual citizenship. He had to renounce his Dutch citizenship to be eligible for a remigration allowance. He explains that he found it "a bit difficult", because he lived for thirty years in the Netherlands. He states that he was also asked to hand in the passports of his children, but did not do this. So the children still have their Dutch passports. He intends to have them renewed every five years because the children may want to return to the Netherlands when they are grown up. (Interview with Turkish man, permanent returnee, May 2010.)

The second example is also from an interview with a male Turkish returnee. He returned to Turkey with his wife and daughter. He had only Turkish citizenship – he never applied for naturalisation in the Netherlands – but his wife and daughter were dual citizens. His wife had to renounce her Dutch citizenship when she applied for a remigration allowance for the family. He remarks that their daughter, who was only eleven years old when they returned to Turkey, also could not retain her Dutch citizenship. He and his wife feel bad about this. They are afraid that their daughter may blame them when she is grown up. They did not ask for her consent, she was too young. He points out that he is not interested in Dutch citizenship for himself, but he would like his daughter to get back hers. (Interview with Turkish man, permanent returnee, March 2010.)

The latter respondent was afraid that his daughter would later reproach her parents for having cut off the way back to the Netherlands for her. De Haas and Fokkema (2010) found, similarly, that sons of Moroccan return migrants tend to resent their fathers' decision to return since it blocks their own chances of gaining admission to Europe.

As already explained, women are often more reluctant than their husbands to return permanently to their country of origin. As a compromise

solution, some couples settled for a fluid migration pattern. Another compromise is that the husband filed the application for a remigration benefit and gave up his Dutch citizenship, so that the wife could retain hers. In some cases, this compromise was explicitly negotiated between wife and husband. In other cases, it was a sort of tacit compromise between the husband's wish and the wife's reluctance to settle back in Turkey. We found much fewer examples of women who gave up their Dutch citizenship so that the family could return with a remigration benefit. In one case, this was because both spouses wanted to return, the wife even more than the husband, while the husband was more reluctant to give up his Dutch citizenship because of his political refugee past.

We also found quite a few examples of couples where the husband renounced his Dutch citizenship while the wife retained hers. Thus, gender differences may not only lead to conflicting decisions about naturalisation, as Leitner and Ehrkamp (2006) found with regard to Turkish migrants in Germany, but also to conflicting decisions about denaturalisation. As a consequence of such conflicting or compromise decisions, the husband and wife (and children) may have different citizenship statuses. Our interviews with Turkish returnee women who had retained their Dutch citizenship made it clear that these women attach great value to their Dutch passport, as a kind of insurance policy and because it offers them the easiest and most secure access to their children in the Netherlands.⁷ At the same time, they were aware that their husbands could no longer claim these citizenship rights. This raises the question whether these women experience this as something which empowers them or rather as something disempowering. It is difficult to say on the basis of the following two examples. However, both women presented their Dutch citizenship as a resource which they would use for the benefit of their husband or family, too.

The first example is from an interview with a couple. The husband had to hand in his Dutch passport; his wife and daughter retained theirs. During the interview, the husband explains that he found it hard to give up his Dutch citizenship, but he did it because he wanted to return. The wife says: "It is very important for me and I find it still more important for our daughter. You never know what will happen, one day we may want to return to the Netherlands." She adds that her husband will have to stay here, in Turkey, but that she may be able to have him come over to the Netherlands after some time. (Interview with Turkish couple, permanent returnees, February 2010.

⁷ To be sure, fathers also wished to retain access to their children and grandchildren in the Netherlands. However, they saw this less often as a reason to stay in the Netherlands.

The second example is from an interview with a woman who returned to Turkey together with her husband. She still has dual citizenship, her husband renounced his Dutch citizenship so that they could make use of the Remigration Scheme. Asked whether her husband did not find this difficult, she answers: "As a matter of fact, he did, because it is a kind of insurance. If things go wrong, you can return to the Netherlands." She adds that, in case of emergency, she can move back first, and apply for family reunification. (Interview with Turkish woman, permanent returnee, March 2010.)

We also found examples where the difference in citizenship status among the spouses was clearly experienced as awkward and limiting. Several couples were forced to cancel or change their plans to visit relatives in the Netherlands because the husband's visa application was refused. In one case, the wife decided not to go either; in another case, she went alone. In both cases, the wife as well as the husband felt humiliated by the Dutch state.

Conclusions

Our paper confirms that the process of deciding where and how to reside after retirement is strongly gendered. Women tend to be more reluctant to return permanently to the country of birth. King et al. (2004) mentioned two reasons for this reluctance: (1) women do not want to lose their newly won freedoms and (2) they do not want to return to conservative social conditions. Our Turkish respondents also refer to those two reasons. Our data shows however that a third motive should be added which was important for both Spanish and Turkish respondents: the role of women within the family and the exchange of care. Both Spanish and Turkish women prefer to maintain dual residency in order to live a transnational family life and to provide and receive informal family care when needed (cf. Ackers, 2004). Spanish and Turkish retirement migrants negotiate their post-retirement migratory pattern within the household setting – between the husband and wife and within the broader family. This process can be conflict laden because of contradictory preferences of the husband and wife and/or close family members. The decision for a certain migratory pattern is thus a continuous process in which the people involved do 'gender work' while negotiating their different motives and possible conflictive preferences (Mahler and Pessar, 2006).

Our data show that decision-making processes are also influenced by migrants' citizenship status. For naturalised Turkish migrants, their citizenship of the 'host' state is a source of freedom and security, ensuring

them access to family members there and guaranteeing them the right to return back if and when the need arises. For Spanish migrants, their EU citizenship fulfils the same functions. This makes the decision to return 'permanently' much less dramatic for these groups compared to migrants who are third-country nationals. The options of the latter group are constrained by the host state's immigration rules. Although EU nation states have extended rights to third-country nationals which used to be solely reserved for citizens (see Soysal, 1994), many of these rights are territorially bound and cannot be exported to another country by noncitizens. Thus, a (hierarchical) difference with regard to access to rights continues to exist between citizens and noncitizen migrants when they leave the nation state where the citizenship rights were built up. Because (non-naturalised) Turkish migrants are faced with these consequences when they leave the Dutch territory, they often prefer to obtain a flexible migratory pattern in order to maintain access to Dutch citizenship rights. Furthermore, migrants' perspectives on citizenship are influenced by gender differences. From a gendered view, again we found that particularly women value their citizenship of the host state or, for that matter, their EU citizenship, above all in terms of the access it ensures them to their children and grandchildren. Turkish women are therefore also more reluctant to give up their citizenship of the host state than Turkish men. These findings reveal new directions for return migration research as well as citizenship studies. It shows the relevance of including gender in the analysis when studying both fields of research, yet more research needs to be conducted in order to further map the intersections between gender and migratory decisions as well as gender and the perception of citizenship.

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