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**EU-enlargement and fear of mass migration:  
About the sense and non-sense of migration forecasting**

-draft paper, not for citation-

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**Abstract**

Academic research on transnational migration is not adverse to numbers. Quantitative migration forecasts (guesstimates of future patterns of migratory movements drawing on past patterns) abound. The enlargement process of the European Union has brought forward yet another large series of migration forecasts. Fear of mass east-west migration after enlargement has been widespread, and so were concerns about these migrants' impact on employment, housing, social security, multicultural society and so forth in present member states. The aim of this paper is not to challenge the usefulness of engaging in migration forecasts as such, as a strict social-constructionist perspective would prescribe. It does, however, seek to explore underlying grounds, which are sought in (western) society's desire to border and order social space. It is argued that the "tangible" numbers migration forecasts produce, provide a certain justification for restrictive migration policies, both order-enhancing and fear-decreasing. The rationale for carrying out migration forecasts therefore is not just research for policy, since they also address a latent desire to keep the social order within a formally de-bordered nation-state "pure". The paper places methods, outcomes and policy influences of major forecasts of east-west migration against a background of (geographical) literature on aesthetics, order, exclusion and difference in (European) social space.

**Introduction**

Academic research on transnational migration is not adverse to numbers. Quantitative migration forecasts (guesstimates of future patterns of migratory movements drawing on past patterns) abound. Many migration reports are produced for supranational or national governments or large non-governmental institutions such as the OECD and the International Organisation for Migration, which raises questions about the underlying grounds for making migration forecasts. Obviously, policy- and decision-makers are concerned about the impact of migration and mobility on populations, employment levels, social security systems, multicultural society, and so on. In a time of ageing labour forces, economic slowdown, backing welfare states and fierce political and public discussion about minority integration and cultural identity, there can be little doubt that these concerns are, at least from a policymaking point of view, justified.

The enlargement process of the European Union is the reason why yet another large series of migration forecasts has been conducted from the late 1990s, when it became clear that many

post-Soviet nations from central and eastern Europe would be accessing the EU in the foreseeable future, until their actual accession in May 2004 onwards. Because the 2004 enlargement round has implied a breakdown of national borders for 75 million inhabitants from ten new member states with relatively low incomes per capita and high overall unemployment levels, many feared mass east-west migration flows to become reality. In the years prior to enlargement, particularly in the course of 2003, national governments in current member states consecutively decided to restrict east-west migration, either by installing quota to the number of immigrants to be admitted into specific sectors of the economy, or by closing down the labour market altogether. In many cases, the decision-making process was informed by the outcomes and results of migration forecasts, which induces one to conclude that the influence of migration forecasts on EU and national migration policy has indeed been considerable.

The aim of this paper is not to challenge the righteousness of engaging in migration forecasts as such, but rather, it seeks to explore some underlying grounds and deeper explanations. These are sought in (western) society's desire for "purity" and "order". Migration forecasts provide visible, almost tangible proofs that immigration restricting measures are necessary to secure this order. The paper starts with a search into the aesthetics of migration research. With "aesthetics" I refer to the fact that current migration research follows a modernistic line of research, wherein structure, order and clarity predominate. I will illustrate this idea by means of two relevant examples. This is followed by a conceptual exploration of this quest for order and cleanliness, by drawing on the inspiring work of some recent writers on socio-spatial exclusion. Subsequently, it will be argued that the numbers migration forecasts produce may provide a certain rationale for order-enhancing policies. With the theoretical framework thus established, an analysis is made of major forecasts of east-west migration in an enlarging European Union. It will be argued that most recent migration forecasts are too much of a scientific construct bounded by assumptions and preconditions, and above all too different from one another to approach reality well. The true reason for carrying out such studies is not so much research for policy, as it would seem, but for a justification of an innate desire to keep society within a formally de-bordered nation-state ordered and purified, and therewith still bounded.

### **The aesthetics of "orderly" economic (migration) models**

In the beginning of his career, geographer David Sibley once watched regression parabolas being visualised on a computer screen. Struck by the order and beauty of these otherwise simple geometries, he describes the experience as very "aesthetic" (Sibley, 1998b). However, the "orderly" geometries displayed on screen sharply contrasted with Sibley's research experiences acquired in the field, while studying policies towards Gypsy and other minorities in Great Britain. He recalls:

"My enthusiasm for such simple geometries was soon followed by disquiet about the impact of neat and ordered plans on the lives of the peripheral minorities whose cultures were represented by social control agencies as disordered. Geometries that had formerly seemed

beautiful appeared oppressive when they proved the principles for designing settlements and sites. Their impact on the lives of the Inuit and Gypsies was largely negative.”  
(Sibley, 1998b, p. 235-236)

British planning policies in the early 1980s were directed towards the creation of living space for those minorities considered outsiders “within” in British society. By drawing settlements in the form of typically British-style neighbourhoods, national and municipal planning departments enabled Gypsies (and other travelling people) to live a home-based life, thereby normatively assuming that a localised life is what they really *should* be living and moreover, what *should* enhance their integration into British society. In this case, perfect geometries in the form of planned spatial order were imposed upon peoples whose lives had of old been inclined to mobility and nomadism instead of localism and spatial fixity (Sibley, 1998b).

The tension between the aesthetics of “order” as such and the sense of imperfection Sibley got when seeing this order translated to a real-life planning case can be found in most if not all academic disciplines and particular streams or theories within these disciplines<sup>1</sup>. In this respect, Sibley brings in reference the well-known “central places theory” in economic geography, developed by two of the field’s founding fathers Christaller and Lösch. Their work, representing the heydays of modernism in spatial science, focuses on the spatial distribution of economic activities, which would be characterised by hexagon-shaped, isotope spaces draped around central market places. These hexagons are spread over economic space equally through perfect competition according to Christaller, and unequally through monopolistic competition according to Lösch. As a consequence of assuming perfect competition, Christaller’s theory offers symmetry and therefore the most orderly and beautiful geometries. The theory of Lösch, which assumes less and is therefore closer to real-life, results in less ordered graphic representations.

In addition to this example from geography, I would say that similarly tempting ones can be drawn from economics, the science which provides the theoretical rationale and the techniques for migration forecasting, the research activity of interest in this paper. The examples are taken from international trade and migration theory, respectively, from which some interesting geometries have come out as well. Consider for example the diagram shown in figure 1 (derived from Meade, 1952). This diagram demonstrates the net gains from free trade in a two-country two-commodity situation: country A exporting A-exportable goods to country B and country B exporting B-exportables to country A. Under conditions of unimpeded trade, this results in static open economy trade equilibrium. It is a nice, simple diagram wherein two perfectly mirroring parabolas (named offer-curves) cross at the optimum trade relations intersection. The relative prices of B-exportables in country A and A-exportables in country B corresponding to this stable trade equilibrium (also known as the terms of trade) is represented in the dotted line drawn from the origin. In a way, the figure exhibits economic order, which in this case coincides, surprisingly,

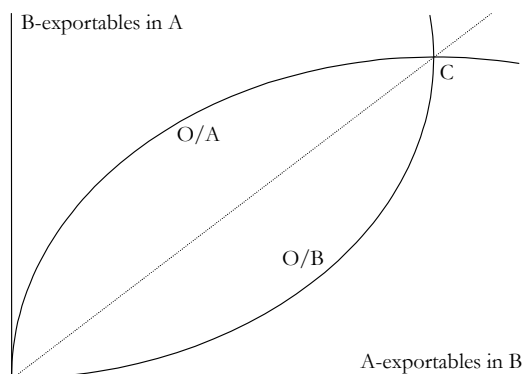
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<sup>1</sup> Modernism and the aesthetics of “order” can be found in many more realms of life ranging from architecture to fine arts. With regard to the latter, the works of Dutch artists Escher and Mondriaan are often mentioned, praised for their strict adherence to structure and (bogus) order.

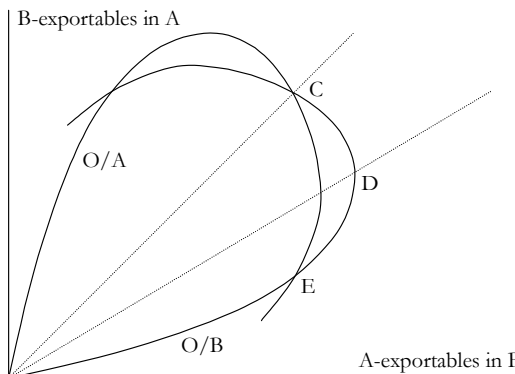
with an absence of national borders as barriers to movements of production factors labour and capital.

Now consider the second diagram, displayed in figure 2. Because changes in exports and imports rarely respond proportionally to changes in price, stable trade relations between two countries rarely establish easily. When import demand for a specific commodity responds less than proportional to a price change, this demand is called “inelastic” (Meade, 1952). The existence of import inelasticities causes the offer curve to take on a wholly different shape, leading to multiple trade intersections instead of just one. The intersection in the middle (point E) no longer is stable, as there is an excess supply of exportable goods. Stability is reached only then, when a perfectly functioning market mechanism allows the terms of trade to decrease until point F is reached, which is stable. However, this situation can hardly be called trade “equilibrium”, as it will lead to a rather strong trade deficit for country B. The disorderly geometries in figure 2 therefore represent trade instability.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1: Trade equilibrium**



**Figure 2: The shoelace diagram**



Source: derived from Meade, 1952

The geometry of international trade fits well into the modernist tradition propagated by Christaller and Lösch, also regarding the timeframe in which it was developed. The “ordered economy” allows no incomplete information and irrationality, and much less borders hindering the movement of goods and capital between trading countries. Trade equilibrium is only obtained when strict assumptions are held onto. Illustrative for this is the assumption of identical tastes for goods and ditto possibilities to obtain these goods among individual citizens of a country. About the composition of so-called indifference curves, out of which the offer-curves are derived<sup>3</sup>, it is said that:

<sup>2</sup> With a sense of horror I remember the hand-drawn version of this figure, appropriately nicknamed the “shoelace diagram” because of the resemblance of the offer-curves to badly tied shoes, which further underlines the disorder the figure intends to demonstrate. A joke repeatedly told among my fellow ex-economics students has it that no-one of us will ever wear shoes with shoelaces again because of the rather traumatic experience of having had to reproduce the shoelace diagram at the international trade theory exam.

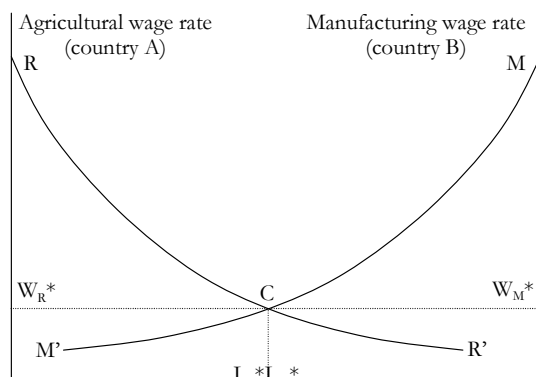
<sup>3</sup> Individual indifference-curves express combinations of (two) goods among which an individual citizen is indifferent. Community indifference-curves are country aggregates of individual indifference-curves. The offer-curves in the above figures 1 and 2 are geometrical connections of points where indifference curves (not visualised for reasons of transparency) touch upon alternative terms of trade.

“... each country is made up of a set of citizens with identical tastes and factor endowments, so that the indifference map, while it may differ as between a citizen of A and a citizen of B, is the same for all the citizens in either of the two countries. In these conditions we can derive community-indifference curves directly from individual indifference-curves.”  
 (Meade, 1952, p. 9)

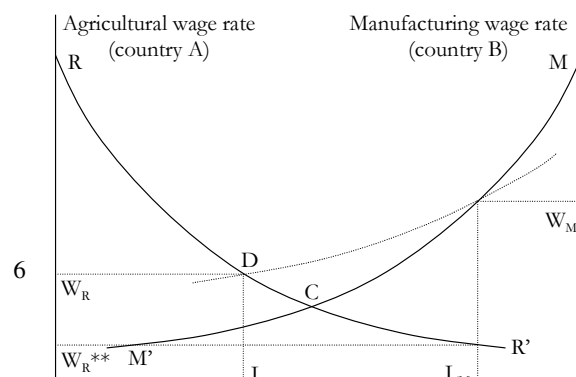
This lack of diversity and apparent need for uniformity finds expression in the denotations used in the mathematical models behind such geometrical figures. “All the citizens” Meade speaks about in the above text fragment are either named “C” (consumers) when describing the demand side of the economy, or “L” (labour) when describing the supply side. Note that in the above example drawn from traditional trade theory, movement of people is not included in the first place: the equilibrium state is reached through international labour division rather than international labour mobility. Later versions of this theory do incorporate labour mobility as equilibrating factor. And indeed, forthcoming economic migration models offer yet another interesting illustration of geometrical “ordering”. The example I would like to elaborate on next is a special case of this stream of economic theory, as it focuses on underdeveloped countries and internal rather than transnational migration.

The so-called Harris-Todaro model was developed in the late 1960s by economists John Harris and Michael Todaro and describes migration from rural to urban areas in a two-sector type analysis, with manufacturing activities located in cities and agricultural activities located in the countryside. In spite of disadvantageous living circumstances to be awaited in developing countries’ larger cities, many were (and still are) drawn by “bright city lights” due to perceived higher wages in comparison to those gained in rural areas (Harris and Todaro, 1970). An important characteristic of the Harris-Todaro model therefore is that it takes into account expectations of future income, thereby on purpose ignoring the question whether these expectations might or might not be realistic. Since the focus of this paper is on east-west migration, I continue describing the model as a two-country situation, rather bluntly assuming that an accessing EU member state corresponds to country A and a present member state would fit the profile of country B. Suppose country A specialises in the production of agricultural goods, whereas B produces manufactured goods. According to standard neo-classical theory, unimpeded movement of labour would automatically lead to a stable equilibrium situation wherein wages of both agricultural and manufactured products reach the same height (see Figure 3). With the horizontal axis representing the total amount of labour  $L = L_A + L_M$  available in both countries, it can easily be seen that this amount is equally divided over both sectors.

**Figure 3: Migration equilibrium**



**Figure 4: The Harris-Todaro model**



Source: derived from Harris and Todaro (1970) and Todaro (1997)

However, Harris and Todaro start from the more realistic assumption that wages in the manufacturing country are institutionally determined (through the efforts of labour unions, for instance) at  $\hat{W}_M^*$ . As can be seen from figure 4, this minimum wage level is fairly high above  $W_R^*$ , thus providing an incentive for migration towards country B. Obviously, though, the existence of artificially high wages in manufacturing induces employers to hire less workers, which in turn causes unemployment (note that the perfect geometries shown in Figure 3 indicate full employment). Thus for potential migrants, the decision to migrate becomes a trade-off between higher expected earnings and the possibility of ending up jobless. In Figure 4, this is visualised by means of the dotted indifference curve, which connects points where the probability of finding a job in country B makes agricultural income equate manufacturing expected income. The horizontal axis in figure 4, which as a whole represents the total labour pool in the two countries, shows  $L_R$  to  $L_M$  workers unemployed and as a consequence often forced to engage in informal-sector activities. Here again, the distorting influence of imposed order (downward inflexible wages) is clearly visible, as well as the distorting role of migration itself. In their paper, Harris and Todaro explicitly state that they view migration as a “disequilibrium phenomenon” (Harris and Todaro, 1970).

Let it be clear that the geometries of international trade and international migration presented above are based on a series of complicated mathematical models. For, model-based inquiry is of course what (mainstream) economists generally engage in. Economic quantities operate in the highly complex and volatile surroundings of everyday life, and making statements about economic problems without some form of “simplification”, which is what mathematical models basically are, is difficult. Central concepts in this quest to single out this economic coherence are *maximisation* (of gains, utility or efficiency for example) and *equilibrium* (of for instance production and consumption, or imports and exports) (Krugman, 1995). Model-based “economics” thus bring in order in the reality of “the economy”, subject to so many insecurities. Paul Krugman writes:

“What we do when we construct an economic model is to try to use those two principles [maximization and equilibrium] to cut through the complexities of a situation. And the remarkable thing is how often that effort succeeds. ... the basic principles of economics tell us that there is an unexpected order in the outcome, which is quite independent of the details.”

(Krugman, 1995, p. 75)



When considered carefully, the way in which Krugman elaborates his argument here is not unlike the aesthetic experience Sibley had when watching his “perfect geometries”. In fact, quite a rich literature exists on the value of aesthetics in practising orderly mathematical research. Sinclair, for example, identifies a number of aesthetic roles attached to different phases of the mathematical research process (Sinclair, 2002). The satisfaction experienced at moments of discovery or when pursuing a line of inquiry, as well as the “transforming effects” felt when coming to new mathematical understandings are proofs of “the aesthetic quality of ... mathematical experiences” (Sinclair, 2002). For this reason, one might derive some understanding for mainstream economists like Krugman when expressing their appreciation of mathematical models and their modernistic geometrical representations. The way the model-based researcher bridges the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the aesthetics of orderly academic research and everyday life is elegantly described by Da Costa Marques, who argues that: “mathematics construct the gates or frontiers that separate a hidden, stable, coherent, and incorruptible world, Nature, from Society” (Da Costa Marques, 2004). In the next section, I will demonstrate that in spatial science as opposed to economics, new ideas have been raised about ordering (or not-ordering) social space which view migration and mobility as essentially equilibrating rather than disequilibrating phenomena, even though reaching a state of equilibrium itself is considered a matter of secondary importance.

### **Towards a de-ordering of social space: thinking pro-nomadism**

In spatial science, the dominant approach towards migratory movements has been similar to that of standard economic theory for a long time, as Tim Cresswell writes in an inspiring essay on the production of mobilities. Geography textbooks published in the 60s or 70s regarded mobility, again quite in accordance with modernist thinking, as a necessary evil (for economic efficiency) to be minimised (Cresswell, 2001). These textbooks featured concepts such as place (dis)utility, the “match” between need and supply of mobility, and transferability (the physical ability of something to move) (Cresswell, 2001). The modern to post-modern transition in social theory, however, did not bypass spatial science to the extent it bypassed economics<sup>4</sup>. Against a background of increasing mobility in the real world, attention for personifications of mobilities and migration as well as for non-work related forms of mobility has increased considerably. In Cresswell’s words, the main focus has diverted away from viewing mobility as being largely “dysfunctional” to considering diversified “spaces of flows” as an essentially “good thing”. In the remainder of this section, I will draw on the work of recent contributors to the theorisation of inclusion/exclusion, b/ordering and difference within spatial science.

In his work on exclusionary geographies in Britain, David Sibley mentions a recurring ambiguity in the way British dominant culture looked at the Gypsy minorities. Gypsy life was, on the one hand, romanticised into semi-primitive activities of playing folk music, living in harmony with

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<sup>4</sup> Having said this, it is important to add that one can certainly speak of a “cultural-institutional” turn in for instance economic growth and development theory. This increased attention for non-purely economic factors has however not meant a radical change in the way economic models are constructed: statistical proxy and dummy variables are used in order to express these “soft” factors in hard, orderly, mathematics.

nature and travelling the globe (Sibley, 1995). In earlier centuries, painters used these stereo-typed images as a source of inspiration, portraying Gypsies camping out in wild landscapes, for instance. In present times, clever marketing managers design typical packing material for consumer goods that in some way or another are related to a specific nomad (e.g. Roma) lifestyle (Sibley, 1995). These wrappings often demonstrate such rough yet innocent scenes of people travelling places. Sibley refers to these places as “landscapes of desire”, and the painting and marketing activities described above as creating “imaginary geographies of desire” (Sibley, 1995; 1999). There is however a much less bright side to this process of romanticised stereotyping, too. Although romantic representations of the kind described above mean no harm, they do reflect the ambiguities by which stereotypes are characterised; blended feelings of desire as well as repulsion (Sibley, 1999). Gypsies, as well as many other “categories” or personifications of strangers are considered out of place in real-life planned and economic space rather than fitting into imagined landscapes of desire. In everyday life, therefore, they face restrictions on entering and travelling space rather than freedom. Many countries in fact do so, not only Britain. Accounts of violence and sheer racism against Gypsies amount, not least in nations where they have been for a long time (Romania, Slovakia). This notion of being out of place implies being “abject”, considered morally unfitting in society (Sibley, 1995, 1998a, 1999, Cresswell, 1996).

Policy efforts which remove or keep out the abject from a territory result in “purification of space”. This well-known notion introduced by Sibley is derived from psycho-analysis, and more particularly from the psychology of the human body (Sibley, 1988, 1995, 2001). Forthcoming an innate desire to keep one’s own body free from dirt, humans require cleanliness and purity in their immediate socio-spatial environment as well. Transferring this idea to colonial settings, not being white can be considered being dirty and “to be purified”, consequently<sup>5</sup>. Although geographies of exclusion thus draw back to racist policies in colonial times, many (other) good contemporary examples can be found in literature regarding restrictive bordering policies and practices towards minorities entering domestic space. In a book appropriately called “Entry denied”, for instance, Eithne Luibhéid writes about the exclusion of (female) sexuality from US territory from the 19th century onwards. In a nation built upon, amongst others, a predominantly male and heterosexual (and white) identity, the female body represented in any other way as a “baby-maker” could be regarded as a threat. This was the case especially for prostitutes and lesbians, whose different status was supposed to come to the fore in physical looks and appearances, to be identified by border guards and immigration officials. Luibhéid argues that for a long time, women could be stopped at the US border based on the suspicion of accompanying a man without being married to him or just “looking like a lesbian” (Luibhéid, 2002)<sup>6</sup>.

It is important to stress here that many of the women who were denied access for reasons of sexuality were merely entering the US for work purposes (Luibhéid, 2002). Being excluded from US territory and the US labour market clearly could and still can have underlying grounds, related

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<sup>5</sup> For an extensive elaboration of Sibley’s argument, see his 1995 book “Geographies of exclusion”.

<sup>6</sup> Basing her conclusions on a case of a woman who was accused of being a lesbian, but who’s actual sexual inclination was never revealed, Luibhéid ironically remarks that “lesbians do cross borders” (Luibhéid, 2002). The juridical ban on lesbian/gay admittance was lifted only in 1990. Entering the United States as a prostitute remains illegal.

to being non-conformist or just “different”. This is similar to what Sibley concludes from his exclusion studies:

“Recognising that some groups are abject also suggests that it is insufficient to focus solely on problems of integration into labour markets. Exclusion from labour markets may be a consequence from their abject status or ... being in or out of a labour market may not be an issue.”

(Sibley, 1998a, p. 95)

These words precisely underline my main argument in this paper. In spite of the range of formal reasons to exclude labour immigrants from new and future EU member states, and countries beyond sight of (immediate) EU accession, there seems to be a latent fear for the immigrant as an unknown and hence abject other determined to enter “our” trusted environment. This is because, firstly, immigrants can be considered undesired simply for belonging to a certain minority (ethnic, sexual). This argument of “othering” draws on the work of early post-modern writings such as Edward Said’s “Orientalism” and is widely found in exclusionist literature (s.f. Van Houtum and Van Naerssen, 2002, Sibley, 1998a, Luibhéid, 2000). In addition I would, however, like to elaborate on two related, yet less well-known causes of fear, put forward by McVeigh (1997). The idea here is that migrants pose a threat to the dominant “way of life” discourse of “sedentarism”, which can be defined as:

“that system of ideas and practices which serves to normalise and reproduce sedentary modes of existence and pathologise and repress nomadic modes of existence.”

(McVeigh, 1997, p. 9)

Sedentarism has become dominant over nomadism particularly since the establishment of the nation-state and, more importantly so, since the creation of national borders surrounding them. The sheer amount of space claimed by bordered nation-states leaves few room for nomads and other travelling people to move to and from without intervention by some governing authority. McVeigh sees borders as “key metonym for the sedentary social formation” (McVeigh, 1997). Prostitutes and lesbians being stopped at the US border and Gypsies put in place by British control politics are merely two examples of spatial purification expressed through processes of bordering (and ordering and othering, see Van Houtum and Van Naerssen’s 2002 paper title) taking place both at and within state boundaries. Within the context of the nation-state, put quite accurately, “movement is associated with not-belonging” (Sibley, 1998a): nomadism is rendered suspicious and frightening. The very emergence of modernism thus plays a key role here: “if modernism was about ordering and controlling, then the nation-state became the key mechanism for securing order and control”, says McVeigh.

The definition of property rights systems, with (first) limited large-scale and (later) widespread small-scale landownership constitutes the third reason which caused the sedentary/nomadist tension to be decided in favour of sedentarism (McVeigh, 1997). Landownership went accompanied by the rise of wage work as a key feature of the way in which labour markets are

organised. Wage work implies, in the majority of cases at least, attachment to a factory, firm or other type of business organisation for a long time, if not for a lifetime in the 18th/19th centuries. The nomad, while crossing sedentarist space engaging in temporal paid work or self-subsistent, became an unwanted element of pre-modern times herewith. As the settled and the nomad share the same social space but occupy it in essentially different ways, tensions inevitably arise (McVeigh, 1997). With work-induced mobility as well as temporal forms of transnational migration gaining importance in current times (see Wallace, 2001), the question arises why sedentarism and nomadism lifestyles co-existing still is problematic.

In offering a possible explanation, Cresswell (1996) has argued that place, by definition being bordered space, is a “fundamental form of classification”. Classification by place, in turn, is a key ideological mechanism allowing the order-searching individual to put processes of othering into practice (Cresswell, 1996). According to Cresswell, such an ideology involves:

“... the removal of beliefs and actions from their sociological roots and their placement in the realm of ‘nature’. The materiality of place gives it the aura of ‘nature’. The ‘nature’ of place can thus be offered as justification for particular views of what is good, just and appropriate”.

(Cresswell, 1996, p. 161)

Herewith, Cresswell reinforces Sibley’s argument drawn from psycho-analysis by setting it against a wider backdrop of the transition to post-modernism in real life as well as social theory. From this, it becomes clear that this transition has not quite gone accompanied by post-modern policy practice, as restrictive migration policies taken by most EU member states demonstrate. On the contrary: the “classical belief” in socio-spatial order through processes of bordering and re-bordering still is “modern practice” (Van Houtum, 2003). As will be demonstrated in more detail in the next section, the case of labour immigrants being denied access onto labour markets of present member states fits well into the idea of bordered nomadism. Immigrants from new EU-member states pose a yet unidentified threat to western European to *national* labour and housing markets, *national* welfare states and *national* cultural identity. Closing borders and limiting labour market access are effective strategies to stop mobilities of which both magnitude and impact are uncertain – and threatening.

It is further important to underline that, and I think this aspect remains undertheorised in many exclusion writings, minorities do a good job in claiming and fencing living and cultural spaces for themselves, spaces in which “dominant” influences are not always welcome. McVeigh (1997) for instance points at feelings of pride and superiority Gypsies have with regard to non-Gypsies. Heirs to a traditional culture which prescribes a rather internally oriented way of life, they themselves leave few possibilities for outsiders to become acquainted and trusted with the Gypsy community (Sibley, 1999). From reading Luibhéid’s book and based on my own experience, I get much the same impression when it comes to the gay- and lesbian community. Strikingly however, some forms of self-exclusion are quite necessary in order to guarantee the continued existence of the minority as a social group in the first place. Gay- and lesbian parties, for instance, which seem

to abhor many regardless if they do or do not take place behind closed doors, mainly function as spaces to meet, greet, interact and “just be oneself”, really. In the case of labour immigrants who come in with the mere goal of gaining additional income, much the same reasoning applies. Especially seasonal or temporal migrants rarely engage in non-work-related social interaction with receiving country residents. I would say that some extremer forms of self-exclusion and self outplacement do not help majorities to overcome their prejudices and rejection of difference.

Thus, the emergence of capitalist nation-states featuring borders, property rights and wage work has led to a demand for order which is reinforced by reciprocal processes of “othering” (from both the side of “dominant” decision-makers and those supposedly excluded). Nevertheless, one should be aware of a strong sense of perspective here, as the risk exists of oversimplifying the (assumed) dichotomy between those who accept and those who reject diversity and difference. As Sibley says:

“It is important to emphasize that life for most is rather messier and boundaries are more ambiguous, fuzzier, than my argument implies. The good and the bad may be tempered through engagement with others and the experience of other places.”  
(Sibley, 1999, p. 126)

The increase of the magnitude and number of transnational migration flows is one of those overall risk-enhancing developments caused by continuous boundary blurring and re-definition of who’s in and who’s out in today’s globalised world. However, since large-scale events occurring globally by definition have an impact locally (see Da Costa Marquez, 2004), it is particularly at this local level where efforts need to be made in order to balance fear and desire, purity and heterogeneity. Generally, these attempts are genuine and well-intended, which implies that top-down imposed purification strategies may expect (strong) opposition. For the exclusionist writer, engaging in good minority/bad majority assumptions implies a normative, almost paternalistic view on reality which would not do justice to those working or volunteering in asylum seeker shelters or migrant/minority representative organisations, for instance.<sup>7</sup> At the local level, counter-aesthetic though otherwise rather indefinite concepts such as “spaces of difference” are shaped in a concrete way. Here, balancing modernist policy practice and normative ideas about diversity is an everyday challenge. Nevertheless, “the aspiration of a world of purity and order remains powerful” (Van Houtum, 2003).

### **The “ordering” function of migration forecasting**

It is precisely this challenge which makes policymaking actors want to search for ways to identify or measure insecurities surrounding migration and mobility. Migration forecasts may provide such identification as, following the reasoning of Krugman and Da Costa Marquez in the second section, they bring order into the complex and wide variety of factors influencing transnational mobility flows.

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<sup>7</sup> Although leading a life of total indifference seems to attract many as well.

## *Methods*

Quite a number of conceptual and methodological difficulties may arise when doing migration forecasting. Not surprisingly; for there are many (s.f. Straubhaar, 2001, Kupiszewski, 2002, Brücker, 2003). A recurring problem, for instance, relates to the definition of transnational migration, which in its broadest meaning can be interpreted as “leaving one’s accommodation in addition to leaving the country” (Kupiszewski, 2002). Obviously, the migration definition employed in a forecast may have far-reaching consequences for the required data and in turn for the study’s outcomes. In table 1, an overview is presented of six high-impact migration forecasts: high-impact in the sense that they were all prepared for key policy-making institutions (to which I will return later). Moreover, these particular studies are considerable in size and therefore widely cited in academic and policy literature concerned with the issue of east-west migration. The forecasts are by Fassmann and Hintermann (1997), Wallace (1999), Bauer and Zimmermann (1999), Boeri and Brücker (2000), Sinn et al. (2000) and Hille and Straubhaar (2001). The respective authors involved are experts in migration research with academic backgrounds in economics, geography or sociology and have all published widely on east-west migration and EU-enlargement.

The forecasts presented in table 1 employ a variety of research methods. As can be seen from the table, Boeri and Brücker and Sinn et al. use regression analysis based on EU-wide data sets including among others GDP and (un)employment, whereas Bauer and Zimmermann and Hille and Straubhaar extrapolate migration data from the EU’s enlargement with Spain, Portugal and Greece in the 1980s to the current eastern expansion. From scrutinizing the model specifications of these four model-based forecasts in the lower part of table 1, a remarkable conclusion can be drawn. Highly advanced in terms of mathematical complexity and know-how, the models are nevertheless based on the Harris-Todaro migration model, which was presented as a typical example of orderly modernist theorising in section two. Although minor amendments are in place for each study, the following migration estimation function is used throughout (based on Brücker, 2003):

$$Mst_{fht} = f(w_{ft}, w_{ht}, e_{ft}, e_{ht}, P_{ht}, Z_{ft})$$

In this general model,  $Mst$  typically represents the migrants’ share in the population of the receiving country. “f” and “h” denote the foreign (receiving) country and the home (sending) country, respectively. This share (at time = t) is a function of a number of variables which are recurring in most migration forecasts, namely wage (w) and employment (e) rates in both sending and receiving countries. “P” refers to the population in the home country and “Z”, finally, is a variable which captures, usually by means of a proxy, country-specific factors such as geographical proximity and language difference (Brücker, 2003). As can be read from the table, Bauer and Zimmermann and Boeri and Brücker indeed make use of such a variable. In spite of this, all of the four model-based forecasts emphasize unemployment rates, income differences and (expected) wages as determining factors. For this Krugman offers a strikingly simple explanation:

“The problem is that there is no alternative to models. We all think in simplified models, all the time. The sophisticated thing to do is not to pretend to stop, but to be self-conscious – to be aware that your models are maps rather than reality.”

(Krugman, 1995, p. 79)

Although Krugman’s point sounds appealing as it confirms the idea of an “innate desire for order”, there exists, in fact, an alternative to strict mathematical model-based migration forecasting. Taking on a constructionist rather than a positivist point of view, survey-based migration forecasts such as the ones by Wallace and Fassmann and Hintermann (see table 1)

**Table 1: High-impact migration forecasts**

<i>Study / author(s):</i>	<i>Made for:</i>	<i>Method:</i>	<i>Destination countries:</i>	<i>Origin countries:</i>	<i>[Number of] migrants after [number of] years:</i>	<i>Percentage of population:</i>
Bauer & Zimmermann, 1999	Department of Education and Employment, United Kingdom	Econometric modelling / Data extrapolation	EU-15	Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania	2,500,000 / 15	3 %
Boeri & Brücker, 2000	European Commission, DG of Labour and Social Affairs	Econometric modelling / regression analysis	EU-15	Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania	3,700,000 / 15	3.7 %
Fassmann & Hintermann, 1997	n.a.	Survey / Migration potential	Western Europe, US, Canada, Australia, Poland, Hungary	Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic	4,000,000 long term general migration potential 700,000 long term actual migration potential	7.6 % 1.4 %
Hille & Straubhaar, 2001	OECD	Econometric modelling / Data extrapolation	EU-15	Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania	188,000 – 396,000 annually (!)	0.2 – 0.4% annually (!)
Sinn et al., 2000	Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, Germany	Econometric modelling / regression analysis	Germany	Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Romania	3,200,000 – 4,000,000 / 15	4 – 5 %
Wallace, 1999	International Organisation for Migration	Survey / Migration potential	EU-15, US, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia	Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, FR of Yugoslavia, Ukraine, Belarus	13 – 68 % short term migration potential 18 – 57 % long term migration potential 7 – 26 % permanent migration potential	



<i>Study / author(s):</i>	<i>Model specifications:</i>
Bauer & Zimmermann, 1999	$\ln \left( \frac{\text{Emigration}_{srt}}{\text{Population}_{st-1}} \right) = \beta_0 D_s + \beta_1 \ln \left( \frac{\text{Unemployment Rate}_{st-1}}{\text{Unemployment Rate}_{rt-1}} \right) + \beta_2 \ln \left( \frac{\text{Real GDP}_{st-1}}{\text{Real GDP}_{rt-1}} \right) + \epsilon_{srt}$ <p>Where s: sending country, r: receiving country, t: year, D: dummy variable for sending countries, Real GDP: inflation-adjusted Gross Domestic Product .</p>
Boeri & Brücker, 2000	$\text{mst}_h^* = (\beta_4 / -\beta_7) \ln(w_f / w_h) + (\beta_5 / -\beta_7) \ln(e_f) + (\beta_6 / -\beta_7) \ln(c_h) + \beta_8 / -\beta_7 \text{FREE} + (\beta_9 / -\beta_7) \text{GUEST} + (\beta_{10} / -\beta_7) \text{COUNTRY}$ <p>Where mst: ratio of stock of migrants to home population, h: home country, f: foreign (host) country, w: wage rate, FREE: dummy variable for freedom of movement within EU, GUEST: dummy variable for bilateral working agreement, COUNTRY: dummy variable for country-specific effects.</p>
Hille & Straubhaar, 2001	$\text{migrate}^{s,n}_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \log(1 - Y^s / Y^n)_{t-1} + \beta_2 \log(\text{UE}^n / \text{UE}^s)_{t-1} + \beta_3 \log(\text{MS}^n)_{t-1} + \beta_4 \log(D^{ns}) + u_t$ <p>Where migrate: ratio of stock of migrants to home population, s: sending country, n: ..., t: year,</p>
Sinn et al., 2000	$B_t^* = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 YV_t + \alpha_2 G_t + \alpha_3 \text{EU}_t + \alpha_4 \text{FR}_t + \alpha_5 B_{t-1}$ <p>Where B: ratio of stock of migrants to German population, t: year, YV: ratio income per capita Germany to income per capita sending country, G: output gap in Germany, EU: dummy variable for EU-membership sending country, FR: dummy variable for free movement within EU.</p>

Sources: Bauer and Zimmermann (1999), Boeri and Brücker (2000), Fassmann and Hintermann (1997), Hille and Straubhaar (2001), Sinn et al. (2000), Wallace (1999), Fassmann and Münz (2002) and Kunz (2002).

focus on migration intentions people may have. Depending on the time frame considered, a migration potential of up to 57 or 68 percent of the population was reported to consider moving westwards after EU-enlargement (Wallace, 1999). Obviously however, people may easily respond positively when asked about potential migration plans in a survey or in-depth interview. Actually migrating when the chances are there is far less likely to occur. In their study, Fassmann and Hintermann (1997) attempt to overcome this problem by differentiating between “general” and “actual” migration potential (general versus concrete migration intentions, see also Fassmann and Münz, 2002). In general however, survey-based migration forecasts are strongly criticised. Brücker, for instance, labels surveys as opposed to model-based migration forecasts as “simple back-of-the-envelope calculations” (Brücker, 2003). Kupiszewski is even more outspoken about the (non-) sense of the concept of migration potential:

“Constructing forecasts of future migration flows without being able to demonstrate what percentage of those who had declared an intention to migrate actually migrated makes no sense whatsoever.”

(Kupiszewski, 2002, p. 636)

Although it is quite clear that very different views exist on the issue of how to approach east-west migration scientifically, a fierce debate about the question as to which forecasting technique produces the best results is nevertheless absent. At best, migration researchers working in a positive-quantitative tradition and those in a constructionist-qualitative tradition hardly interact apart from citing each other<sup>8</sup>. Experiences with migration forecasts in the past, however, suggest that survey research methodology provides no better alternative for model-based migration forecasts (Straubhaar, 2001, Kupiszewski, 2002, Brücker, 2003).

#### *Outcomes: an “unexpected” order*

In spite of the variety of model-specifications, definitions and time ranges employed, the outcomes yielded by the four model-based forecasts presented in the table are surprisingly similar. On the long-term, 10 to 15 years after enlargement that is, 3 to 5 percent of the population of new member states is expected to will have permanently moved to old member states. This rather well-determined “rule of thumb” is confirmed by empirical literature on the southern enlargement round involving Greece, Portugal and Spain and other larger migratory movements elsewhere (Straubhaar, 2001, Brücker, 2003). And still, several authors suggest that even this otherwise modest percentage range might be overstated, as most migration forecasts fail to take in to account short-term migration such as seasonal migration and cross-border commuting as well as socio-cultural factors discouraging people to move (Straubhaar, 2001, Kupiszewski, 2002). According to Kupiszewski:

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<sup>8</sup> An epistemological debate of this kind is present, however, embedded in a wider academic discussion on how to “do” social science. In this debate, adherents to a more quantitative view stress the need for validity and transferability of research results, whereas qualitative researchers emphasize the importance of case-specific features.

“The economist’s belief in money as the only factor which makes people move is very outdated and many economic models just ignore the vast body of research on migration conducted over the last three decades.”

(Kupiszewski, 2002, p. 642)

When viewed through the lens of orderly economic trade and migration theory, unrestricted movement of goods and labour is regarded a determinant for bridging employment and income gaps. “Obstacles” that might also influence individual mobility decisions such as borders, identities, cultural differences and mental maps are accounted for only to a limited extent. Model-based migration forecasts start from preconditions similar to those used in traditional international migration theory such as the Harris-Todaro model, therewith singling out the notion of borders as legal and mental barriers as well (Kupiszewski, 2002). Qualitative/constructionist research on transnational migration is “left over” to those researchers in for instance spatial science who have adopted the difficult task of having mobilities disposed of the negative image attached to them by modernist theorising.

Although it would be hard for me hard to disagree with the plea Kupiszewski (and others) make for more diversity in migration research, the fact remains that not taking into account “soft” variables when doing migration forecasting still produces satisfactory results, both in the sense that a good alternative as yet does not exist, and in the sense that these results generally are quite in accordance with actual mobility flows. The latter observation would imply an unexpected order in the results model-based migration forecasts produce. At first sight the vast amount of factors influencing transnational migration seems to represent a highly non-transparent and immeasurable chaos, but mathematical exercises done in model-based migration forecasts appear to “cut through these complexities”, as Krugman phrased it, rather well. In this respect, Da Costa Marques refers to the so-called “paradox of mathematics”, which states that “no matter how determinedly mathematicians ignore the world, they consistently produce the best tools for understanding it” (Da Costa Marques, 2004). Disorder in a globalizing world is but a perception, for the global, like the local, is just a matter of scale. Da Costa Marques argues that structure and mathematical ordering processes exist at every thinkable spatial scale, and that “teasing out a grand narrative from a sufficiently enlarged frame” is by definition possible. The only thing preventing mathematicians from slicing up the world in manageable bits and pieces simply is lack of mathematical knowledge.

#### *Policy-influences: the case of the Netherlands*

With regard to policy-influences, it will come as no surprise that most experts in the field of (east-west) migration forecasting come from Germany and Austria, states in which “fear of mass migration” has been particularly intense due to their geographical location. However, (fierce) discussions about east-west migration have taken place in every old member state, and policymakers everywhere have been searching for order and structure in the many factors surrounding future east-west migration flows. Migration forecasts have provided this order. And indeed five of the six forecasts in table 1 have been prepared for (supra)national governments and institutions ranging from the OECD (Hille and Straubhaar), the International Organisation for

Migration (Wallace), the European Commission (Boeri and Brücker as well as a 2003 update by Brücker), to federal ministries of national governments (Sinn et al. for Germany and Bauer and Zimmermann for the United Kingdom). There clearly has been a *demand* for migration forecasts from the side of policy-makers in the years prior to EU-enlargement, on the partial basis of which in turn decisions were taken to close borders or restrict labour market access.

I would like to illustrate my argument by pointing to the case of the Netherlands. Here, the decision to limit the access of immigrant labourers from new member states was partly based upon an advice of the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB), which was asked to provide an estimation of people coming in from new member states, most notably from Poland. The Bureau compiled and scrutinised a large number of migration forecasts (among which Bauer and Zimmermann, Boeri and Brücker, Brücker, Fassmann and Hintermann, Hille and Straubhaar and Sinn et al., see De Mooij et al., 2004), and concluded that in between 3,500 and 8,500 additional migrants were to be expected in the Netherlands after EU enlargement. Not a very high number, especially regarding the tens of thousands not mentioned seasonal workers from central and eastern Europe visiting the Netherlands each year already. In spite of the moderate inflows to be expected, the Dutch government decided to close most sectors of the economy for the labour immigrants and apply a very limited access only. The official argument given in policy documentation was that the Bureau's numerical results still was surrounded by much insecurity, whereas in fact the 3 to 5 percent range of expected long-term migration was confirmed in this (literature) study as well.

Uncovering order in a seemingly disordered world, mathematical exercises have created knowledge with far-reaching social, political and economic effects (Da Costa Marques, 2004). Model-based migration forecasts are no exception, as this section intends to demonstrate. As the well-known Lucas-critique in economic theory says, economists and other academic researchers should be very much aware about their potential influence when advising high-level decision makers to adjust their policy. For, any change in policy might alter the expectation of economic agents, which induces them to change their behaviour accordingly (see Straubhaar, 2001). In this case, this implies that potential migrants might decide to stay immobile in the case of restricting (bordering) policies, in turn taken on the basis of the results of migration forecasts. Although I would not go so far as to argue that policymakers use migration forecasts as a tool to discourage potential immigrants from coming, there seems to be evidence of policymakers using migration forecasts, even though their outcomes are not that threatening at all, in order to justify the invention and imposition of restrictive measures upon (labour) migration. In that sense, having migration forecasts made can be seen as a policy *strategy*, necessary to satisfy the desires of conservative political and public migration discourses. Restrictive migration policies prior to EU-enlargement, clearly demonstrate that in the case of east-west migration, the well-known neutral economic activity of “deciding under uncertainty” has been replaced by a value-laden “politics of fear” in most old EU-member states.

## Conclusion

From the above line of reasoning one might easily conclude that there is no sense in migration forecasting whatsoever. Most (model-based) forecasts roughly yield similar outcomes, and restricting migration policies are introduced regardless of these outcomes. Bordering processes of immigrant workers from new EU-member states in and by old EU-member states are illustrative for the irrationality of such a “fear of mass migration”.

The sense of migration forecasts does exist, however, lying in the fact that they address a latent desire to order and structure social space. Herewith, migration forecasting becomes an order-enhancing and fear-decreasing research activity, further limiting the scarce space for nomads and other non-sedentary people to move in. It was argued that post-modern writers such as those working on exclusionary geographies cited in this paper might offer a form of “resistance” (to use a term to be found in the work of Tim Cresswell) to persistent modernist thinking in mainstream (mathematical) economics, the dominant language of migration forecasts. The added value of this resistance is not spatial scientists’ capability of offering a better alternative to model-based migration forecasting, which they do not have, but to pave an alternative way of scientific thinking about migration, regarding it not so much as a distorting burden but as a way of life often though not exclusively led for economic motives. Even though emphasizing difference and diversity may not always be practically feasible, it constitutes the only normative answer to “orderly”, “aesthetic” and “pure” theory and policy. For, in the words of David Sibley, “some people are on the edge because that is where they want to be” (Sibley, 1998a).

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