

## TRANSLOCAL LIFE AND INTEGRATION OF HIGHLY-SKILLED MIGRANTS IN GERMANY

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Received 20 August 2015 · Accepted 06 January 2016

**Summary:** This paper addresses the living situations of highly-skilled migrants in Germany, taking managers and persons working in the arts in North Rhine-Westphalian cities as examples. With reference to integration concepts as well as approaches to transnational migration and translocality, the results of qualitative guideline-based interviews conducted with these groups are presented. The focus is on the highly-skilled migrants' professional work conditions, their translocal mobility practices, as well as their shaping of everyday practices and networks in their German places of residence. The depicted networks and translocal practices of highly-skilled migrants reveal existing integration options and aspirations. Both, options and aspirations, are limited both by the temporality of their stays, their heavy workloads, their often limited knowledge of the German language, their focus on international networks and only little interest for social contacts on the part of the host society.

**Zusammenfassung:** Der Beitrag thematisiert die Lebenssituation von hochqualifizierten Ausländern in Deutschland am Beispiel von Managern und im Kunstbereich tätigen Personen in nordrhein-westfälischen Städten. Mit Bezug auf Integrationskonzepte und Ansätze zu transnationaler Migration und Translokalität werden die Ergebnisse qualitativer Leitfadent-Interviews mit diesen Gruppen präsentiert. Die Darstellungen konzentrieren sich auf die beruflichen Rahmenbedingungen der Interviewten, ihre translokalen Mobilitätspraktiken sowie ihre Alltagsgestaltung und Netzwerke am deutschen Wohnort. Die dargestellten Netzwerke und translokalen Praktiken hochqualifizierter Ausländer offenbaren bestehende Integrationsmöglichkeiten in die städtische Gesellschaft der jeweiligen Wohnorte. Beide, Integrationsinteresse und Integrationsangebote, sind sowohl durch die zeitliche Befristung der Aufenthalte, die große zeitliche Belastung im Beruf, häufig geringe Kenntnisse der deutschen Sprache, ihre Fokussierung auf internationale Netzwerke als auch ein geringes Interesse seitens der aufnehmenden Gesellschaft an Kontakten begrenzt.

**Keywords:** Highly-skilled migrants, translocality, integration, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany

### 1 Introduction

Over the last few decades and on numerous different societal levels, the process of internationalisation and globalisation has intensified. Manufacturing and service companies alike are developing corporations linked-up through worldwide networks and in the wake of these changes internal labour markets have developed, which more than ever induce the need for skilled professionals to always be mobile and to move between corporation locations. This trend holds particularly true for larger international corporations and has become a common phenomenon for senior management (BEAVERSTOCK 2005) who lead “mobile lives” (ELLIOTT and URRY 2010). Similar trends can also be found in other sectors such as the science (JÖNS 2009) or arts sectors (BORÉN and YOUNG 2013; BENNETT 2010). Also changes in global transportation and communication modes have been

significant. Due to faster and inexpensive means of transportation and especially the new and low-cost communication options, today we have almost perfect conditions to stay in touch with family and friends around the globe, anytime, anywhere.

Due to ongoing internationalisation and globalisation processes, and growing international competition for “brilliant minds”, many Western industrialised countries are faced with the need to attract highly-skilled workers<sup>1)</sup> from abroad (FLORIDA 2005;

<sup>1)</sup> In general, highly-skilled migrants are defined as persons possessing tertiary-level qualifications. Tertiary education – provided by universities and other higher education institutions – is the level of education following secondary schooling. However, not all highly specialised employees hold a university degree and often an academic qualification does not lead to a pursuant occupation. Hence, some analyses also include persons working as specialists in high positions without a tertiary-level qualification (Mahroum 2000). Aside from

PETHE 2006). In addition, some European countries, e.g. Germany, are subject to demographic changes leading to a shortage of a well-educated workforce. To a certain extent, international immigration is considered to be a solution to counter this shortage (OECD 2013). However, the German recruitment campaigns of today considerably differ from those in the 1960s. While former recruitment campaigns were mainly geared to blue-collar workers in the industrial sector with a temporary contract (“Gastarbeiter”), employees recruited since the turn of the millennium are highly educated and they typically work in knowledge-intensive and reputable service jobs. Furthermore, the revision of the German Immigration Act makes it easier for highly-skilled non-EU citizens to obtain permanent residence permits and for their families to follow<sup>2</sup>). In contrast to the former policies concerning the “Gastarbeiter”, current approaches tend to encourage highly-skilled migrants to stay permanently.

These changes in policies and recruitment practices are reflected in the research on migration and integration. In the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most studies on the integration of immigrants in Germany looked at rather low-skilled migrants and their families (ESSER 2001; GESTRING et al. 2006). By contrast, the discourse about the social and cultural consequences of the immigration of the highly-skilled has only recently begun. However, from what has been stated so far, it is clear that the conditions of integration into the receiving societies for the international highly-skilled workers differ from those of the so-called “Gastarbeiter”. This is due to the fact that, on the one hand, highly skilled migrants are situated in more privileged legal and socio-economical positions and, on the other hand, worldwide mobility is growing continuously (KOGAN 2011). Predominantly highly-skilled international employees have highly regarded jobs and often take home above-average wages, which typically enables them to live in neighbourhoods that meet their demands

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scientific definitions, the term “highly-skilled migrant” is also defined by immigration laws, leading to this group having easier access to a particular country than other migrant groups. The exact definitions of “highly-skilled” vary and depend on the special national economic needs. In our study we define highly-skilled as holding a master's degree and therewith are in line with the requirements of the Act on the Residence, Economic Activity and Integration of Foreigners in order to be eligible for obtaining an EU-Blue-Card.

<sup>2</sup>) Act on the Residence, Economic Activity and Integration of Foreigners in the Federal Territory Residence Act, Section 19, 19a.

(BEAVERSTOCK 2005; GLEBE 1986). Furthermore, their assignments are often temporary and heavy workloads are common (KREUTZER and ROTH 2006). Consequently, questions concerning their integration did not arise (KOLB 2006, 169; WHITE 1988, 411). It is only recently that scholars have stressed the diversity of this group with regard to their professional and economic situations (CONRADSON and LATHAM 2005, 289f.) and questions concerning the settling-in processes and the social networks of highly-skilled professionals are becoming more important (cp. e.g. studies by FÖBKER et al. 2014a; IMANI et al. 2014; PLÖGER and BECKER 2015).

Against the backdrop of the growing number of highly-skilled professionals in Germany, our paper aims to contribute to the research on this particular group by shedding light on their everyday lives and their possibilities to integrate into the urban societies they find themselves in. In a first step, we will turn to the current debate on the international migration of highly-skilled employees and we will argue that the observed forms of migration can be described as transnational migration, with migrants embedded into translocal everyday contexts (Section 2.1). We will then sum up the German academic debate on integration (Section 2.2) and concretise the current state of research on the integration aspirations and options of highly-skilled migrants (Section 2.3). After a description of our empirical studies in Section 3, we will elaborate on some aspects of the integration process of highly-skilled migrants (Section 4). For this purpose, we will concentrate on two aspects and discuss them in Sections 4.1 and 4.2: the professional environment and social networks, which have both been identified as being fundamental factors for integration.

## 2 Conceptual framework of this paper: migration and integration of highly-skilled migrants

### 2.1 Transnational and translocal perspectives of migration

The concept of transnational migration was developed early in the 1990s. Due to its growing complexity and circularity, international migration could no longer be understood in the classical unidirectional sense of migration that takes place between sending and receiving countries. Transnational migrants are considered to be persons who develop multi-faceted and transnational familial, economic,

social, organisational, religious and political ties both in their country of origin and in their current country of residence. They “take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (GLICK SCHILLER et al. 1992, 1f.). Hence, transnational migrants do not experience “ordinary” integration processes in the receiving countries. As a consequence of migrants’ cross-border activities, transnationality and translocality have become catchwords of a progressively growing interconnectedness of different national and local contexts. PRIES (2001) describes this kind of interconnectedness as expanding “social spaces” in which the pluri-locality of everyday life moves to the foreground.

The concept of transnationality was originally developed for an US-American context (GLICK SCHILLER et al. 1992, 1997; MARTÍNEZ 1994) but more and more it has also become a staple when analysing European migration processes (cp. PRIES 1997; JURGENS 2001; NOWICKA 2007). Since transnational migrants are integrated into the society of origin and the receiving society simultaneously, they have developed new transcultural identities (PRIES 2001, 2008). The assumption that people can be part of different local, regional or national contexts at the same time originally was attributed to mobile, highly-skilled persons, who, in the course of their international careers, relocate numerous times. Due to their high social capital, these persons have developed professional and private networks transcending national borders and they maintain these networks throughout their migration biographies (BAUDER 2015; BEAVERSTOCK 2005; SCHEIBELHOFER 2006).

One essential point of criticism on the research of migration is that the local processes often are not accordingly considered (GLICK SCHILLER and CAGLAR 2009). Even empirical studies tend to focus on the level of the national state (“methodological nationalism”; cp. WIMMER and GLICK SCHILLER 2002) whereas the everyday practice of transmigrants, especially their interconnectedness, takes place in various local contexts (VERNE 2012). It is also argued that, despite their transnationality, migrants must be embedded on site somewhere (YEOH and HUANG 2011; FEATHERSTONE et al. 2007). As a consequence, the scenes and localities (APPADURAI 1995) of transnational migrants have been moved to the foreground (cp. BRICKELL and DATTA 2011; FREITAG and OPPEN 2010). Translocal perspectives involve the specific spatial living environments of migrants and their local and temporal situatedness as well as those rela-

tions created by migrants between localities (SMITH and GUARNIZO 1998): “Translocality draws attention to multiplying forms of mobility without losing sight of the importance of localities in people’s lives” (OAKES and SCHEIN 2006, 1).

In this paper we adopt the focus on translocal contexts, especially when discerning the different forms of settling into local living and work environments. In this context, locality can refer to the neighbourhood, city and region where the migrants live, where they meet friends, where their work environments are situated and where they spend their leisure time. In line with the conceptual framework we will also draw attention to localities elsewhere in which our interviewees are embedded.

## 2.2 Integration as a normative element and a process

Even though integration generally concerns all persons in a given society (FASSMANN 2007), in Germany this concept is predominantly applied to the integration of those permanently immigrating to Germany. This approach goes back to PARK and BURGESS, who, in the 1920s, developed an assimilation theory whereupon non-native ethnic groups undergo different phases of social interactions. According to this concept, assimilation is the final stage of an integration process that may take several decades, and after which all differences between locals and immigrants have disappeared (HAN 2006).

In Germany, this theory was taken up by ESSER (1980). He, however, did not conceive assimilation as a strictly linear process, but instead conceded that there are discontinuities and regressions. ESSER defined four successive dimensions of integration which serve as analytical categories. The four dimensions are cultural (command of the national language, knowledge of norms, habitus), structural (income, labour market position, spatial de-segregation), social (networks, participation) and finally emotional (sense of belonging; ESSER 2001). When turning the spotlight on highly-skilled migrants, as is the case in this paper, it seems obvious that, due to their income situation and the fact that their stays often are only temporary, potential integration problems are particularly situated along the cultural (language and values) and social (networks) dimensions.

In the latest academic discussion (AMELINA 2010), terms like assimilation, acculturation, settling-in, integration, incorporation and inclusion are used synonymously since they are analysed within

the same categories (labour market integration, development of networks, language skills). Regarding highly skilled migrants, we decided to use the term ‘integration’ which is frequently used in public and academic debates. We use ‘integration’ synonymously with settling-in, inclusion and incorporation. Indeed, we find concepts of assimilation and acculturation in the sense of a total liquidation of differences between locals and immigrants inappropriate, especially against a background of a growing multiculturalism.

When focussing on the dimension of social integration, ESSER (2001, 19) distinguishes between four types: “multiple integration” in both the society of origin and the receiving society, “marginality” for the lack of any kind of social integration, “assimilation” for an exclusive social integration into the receiving society and “segmentation” for integration into a community of origin or into a particular (ethnic) group in the receiving society. Whereas “multiple integration” is regarded as an exception that can only be achieved by diplomats, academics and cosmopolitans (ESSER 2001; see critical appraisal in PRIES 2015), this assessment has been criticised by other scholars referring to the growing importance of transnational migration, which is characterized by a simultaneous incorporation in (at least) both the sending and receiving contexts (LEVITT and GLICK SCHILLER 2004). From this point of view, the maintenance of strong relations to different localities or former places of residence are actually quite normal. This finding allows a conceptual approach for analysing processes of integration in the case of transnational migrants.

From a geographical point of view, integration of transnational migrants is foremost understood in its spatial dimension; manifested in more or less segregated patterns relating to places of residence and spatial (everyday) practices. In contrast to migration research and urban studies dedicated to classical concepts of assimilation, which conceptualise segregation as an expression of non-integration, discrimination and exclusion, more recent studies emphasise the potential of “multiethnic communities” for migrants’ integration (SKOP and LI 2003, 116) and recognise the “ethnic factor” (ZHOU 1997, 990) as an advantage for the integration processes. Lately, this change of perspectives is also reflected in integration concepts found in large German cities that today are more and more focussed on migrants’ potential for urban development, instead of problems arising from their presence (PÜTZ and RODATZ 2013).

With regard to highly-skilled migrants who often only work temporarily at a given locality, integration must be seen as an open and unbiased process, which takes place in different parts of society and with different degrees of intensity, speed and direction (cp. LUCASSEN 2006). Regardless of their fixed-term contracts, highly-skilled migrants have to choose a place of living, get bureaucratic processes over and done with (such as the registration at the office for foreigners) and organise their everyday life at work and in their neighbourhood. All in all, it is not about a successful integration – as it was discussed in case of the ‘Gastarbeiter’ – but rather about which types of integration can be achieved and what kind of aspirations in terms of the integration process highly-skilled migrants uphold – always in relation to the social spaces available.

### 2.3 Integration processes of highly-skilled migrants

What do we know about the integration processes of highly-skilled migrants? For a long time, the integration processes of what BEAVERSTOCK (2005) calls the „transnational elite“, a small group of highly-skilled, globally mobile top earners endowed with plenty of economic, cultural and social capital, was considered to be unproblematic (KOLB 2006). Since top managers or scientists would be migrating into global metropolises like London, New York or Singapore for a specific job and for a set period of time (BEAVERSTOCK 2005), “ordinary” integration problems, e.g. finding a job, an apartment, learning the language or integrating into social networks, were considered as inexistent. However, in recent years scholars have pointed to the fact that not only professional elites are highly mobile on an international scale, but also employees with more middle-class-backgrounds and mid-level career positions. Despite their continuously growing importance, the situation of the international highly-skilled “mobile middle-class” to date has captured little attention (SCOTT 2006; FAVELL et al. 2006; CONRADSON and LATHAM 2005).

In addition, recent research on highly-skilled migration emphasises the diversity of this group concerning the duration of stay. For the most part, transnational professionals move to a place only for several years, some of them, however, intend to migrate permanently. Further targets of migrations very often are unclear or have to be modified over the years (HESS 2009; FÖBKER et al. 2014b).

Therefore, we assumed that the duration of stay would impact clearly on aspirations of integration into the local society.

The residential situation of highly-skilled migrants was also hardly expounded on for a long time (GLEBE 1986). Due to their above-average economic resources and their high social acceptance by the receiving society, it was assumed that they would have unrestricted access to the preferred sectors of the housing market (GLEBE 1997). Research findings on the residential areas of high-ranking migrants in European metropolises often very clearly show a spatial concentration in upscale neighbourhoods in either the city or, depending on their family phase, in suburbia (SCOTT 2006; GLEBE 1997). Then again, studies also show that the spatial distribution following socio-economic factors in some cities is superimposed by the formation of so-called “expat enclaves” (GLEBE 1986; 1997; WHITE and HURDLEY 2003); a finding we could support for the Japanese community in our research city Düsseldorf.

Having a good command of the language in the country of residence is regarded as an important indicator of cultural integration. To date, we have only few findings regarding learning and having good command of the national language when it comes to the integration of highly-skilled migrants. Firstly, whether and how well the language of the host country is learned is closely correlated with the planned duration of stay (NOWICKA 2006). However, the extent to which one can manage without speaking the national language depends highly on whether sound knowledge of the national language is necessary for exercising one’s vocation and managing daily life. In this regard, immigrants can be confronted with quite different demands and expectations depending on the circumstances (VOGEL and RINKE 2008). Secondly, English is the lingua franca in many international corporations and academic institutions. Hence, sound knowledge of the respective national language in addition to English is expected to become less important for highly-skilled migrants (THANG et al. 2002). In contrast to this, studies on highly-skilled migrants working in Germany showed that many of them still need good or even very good language skills to practice their profession (HESS 2009). In addition, being able to establish social contacts within the receiving society does require sufficient command of the national language. However, good command of the local language is not a guarantee for contacts since another prerequisite is the receiving society having interest in getting in touch with them (FÖBKER et al. 2014b). So, when looking

at social integration, command of the national language is a necessary requirement, although not in all cases a sufficient prerequisite for settling into the receiving society. Furthermore, the work environment of highly-skilled migrants’ social integration is crucial and their shared job activities and similar professional interests, long working hours and low language barriers are factors that can help develop social contacts with colleagues (GUTH 2007).

These findings clearly demonstrate that highly-skilled professionals are a quite heterogeneous group concerning their professional status, their migration paths as well as their experiences in the respective destination context (CONRADSON and LATHAM 2005). So far, only few empirical studies focused on Germany as a receiving country for international highly-skilled migrants. Most of the research was conducted in English-speaking countries. However, it can be assumed that integration processes in Germany differ significantly, since the German language cannot be considered to be lingua franca comparable to the English language (EUROSTAT 2010).

In this paper we analyse highly-skilled migrants in this very context. We focus on two different occupational groups, namely on migrants working in management positions and on migrants working in the arts sector. This provides an insight into the diversity of living and working conditions and different integration processes. In the presentation of our findings (section 4) and our final discussion (section 5) we consider the following questions: Which opportunities for integration into the local society are available to highly-skilled migrants? What is the motivation behind their wish to integrate and what are their aspirations? In which specific spatial and social contexts does integration take place?

### 3 Empirical basis of the study

The findings that will be depicted in Section 4 are based on a research project focussing on the migration and settling-in process of highly-skilled migrants. It was jointly conducted by the Institutes of Geography of Aachen, Bonn and Cologne and financed by the German Research Foundation.

The targeted occupational categories are migrants working in either management positions or working in the arts sector in the North Rhine-Westphalian cities Bonn, Cologne, Düsseldorf and Essen. The selection of these occupational groups is based on RICHARD FLORIDAS’ (2002) concept of the “creative class”. Managers represent a part of the

“creative professionals”, while “bohemians” are occupied in the arts sector (cf. the overviews for the German situation by FRITSCH and STÜTZER (2007) or GOTTSCHALK et al. (2010)). However, diverging from FLORIDA’S concept, we attribute greater importance to the interviewees’ formal qualifications (university degree) and thus avoid a point of criticism directed at his approach (GLAESER 2005).

At the beginning of our project, the interview partners were contacted via extended personal networks, international companies and social media as well as via the register of artists that is available online. Later on, we could also use ‘snowballing systems’ to recruit further interviewees. The focus of our research is on their integration into the respective urban societies. Qualitative guideline-based interviews with highly-skilled migrants served as the most important method to gain insights into their integration processes; all in all, 40 qualitative interviews were conducted (17 with managers, 18 with artists and 5 with accompanying partners; see Tab. 1), discussing each person’s biography, their experiences with arriving in the new local context and settling in their professional and personal everyday routines as well as their personal networks. The interviews were conducted in English or German, audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The quotes used here are extracts from the interviews. German quotes have been translated into English.

Overall the sample is very heterogeneous and incorporates a variety of social characteristics which are expected to impact on the integration process of highly-skilled migrants and their accompanying partners. First, our interviewees originate from 22 different countries of which 11 are non-EU countries. In contrast to working migrants coming from third countries, EU citizens have the right to move and reside freely within the EU and do not require any kind of residence or work permit. Access to labour market is much easier for them too. Second, the occupational situation of our interview partners is quite diverse. Distinct differences not only between our two subclasses, but also within these classes became apparent. Our interview partners holding management positions work in different sectors and company types. Furthermore, they are at different career stages and hold different positions within their respective organisations.

The Bohemians’ occupational fields are even more diverse. They range from museum director and tenured art professors to actors and directors often with termed engagements, thus forming a transient area to other subclasses, to freelance artists who

make a living in other areas. The personal status of our interviewees is similarly diverse, including single and divorced persons, married and non-married partners with or without children. Finally, our interviewees also differ with regards to their migration motivation (e.g. migration following company internal labour markets or independent job choices), migration biography (more senior mobility experiences or first career step), level of language skills and duration of stay (for a few months or since a number of years; see Tab. 1).

#### **4 Translocal everyday lives and integration into urban society of highly-skilled migrants in German cities**

In the following we will first give an overview of the interviewees’ occupational situation and the importance of mobility in their everyday lives (Section 4.1), which, to a great extent, structure their local living and the conditions for integration. In a second step (Section 4.2), we will examine the establishment of new local networks. We will then proceed to draw conclusions from our findings to discern the options and aspirations of interviewees’ integration into the receiving urban society (Section 5).

##### **4.1 The everyday life: the importance of the workplace and mobility for highly-skilled migrants in German cities**

The workplace can be seen as one of the most important contexts (spatial as well as social) for our interviewees, since this is the place where they spend most of their time and establish their first social contacts. Furthermore, the occupational situation immediately determines the available economic capital. Even though it was seldom that exact information was given on the financial situation, especially the financial resources of our interviewees working in management positions proved to be advantageous. The interviewed managers, for the most part, have privileged contracts including many extra benefits, e.g. partial assumption of rental expenses, relocation expenses or tuition fees for children’s schooling. More financial opportunities can facilitate a satisfying arrival, since e.g. up-scale housing in attractive neighbourhoods then becomes affordable. Some companies offer relocation services for this group, ranging from assistance to find an apartment, dealing with authorities or finding a language course.

Tab. 1: Guideline-based interviews with highly-skilled migrants; sample structure

No.	Country of origin	Sex	Occupational group	(Accompanying) Family*	Duration of stay in Germany (in years)
1	England	f	manager/economic development (council)	yes	17
2	Luxemburg	f	freelance artist/painter	yes	8
3	China	m	journalist	yes	13
4	Austria	f	freelance artist/singer	yes	7
5	England	m	manager/telecommunication	no	2
6	Ireland	m	manager/telecommunication	no	2
7	Switzerland	f	director/institute of art	yes	7
8	China	m	manager/energy sector	yes	7
9	South Africa	m	manager/education	–	1
10	Netherlands	m	manager/consumer and industrial sector	yes	5
11	England	m	manager/energy sector	yes	7
12	Italy	m	manager/consumer and industrial sector	yes	5
13	Spain	m	manager/consumer and industrial sector	yes	2
14	Czech Rep.	m	manager/consumer and industrial sector	no	3
15	Ireland	f	manager/logistics	yes	4
16	India	m	manager/energy sector	yes	4
17	Belgium	f	management/production	yes	5
18	Kazakhstan	m	artist/theatre	no	1
19	Turkey	m	freelance artist/curator	yes	24
20	France	f	director/museum	yes	6
21	Japan	m	manager/production	yes	6
22	Japan	m	freelance artist/sculptor; professor	yes	42
23	France	m	EU institution	–	4
24	India	m	energy service company	yes	2
25	Romania	f	energy service company	yes	2
26	Iran	f	freelance artist/painter	no	12
27	China	f	freelance artist/painter	yes	16
28	Czech Rep.	f	freelance artist/dancer	yes	12
29	Peru	m	freelance artist/lecturer	yes	8
30	Belarus	f	freelance artist/composer	yes	11
31	Japan	m	manager/insurance	yes	15
32	Italy	f	freelance artist/painter	yes	4
33	Belgium	m	singer/theatre	–	1
34	Taiwan	f	freelance artist/dancer, lecturer	yes	15
35	Portugal	m	manager/telecommunication	yes	6
36	Netherlands	f	freelance/HR	yes	5
37	India	f	natural scientist/honorary	yes	8
38	England	f	not employed	yes	7
39	Portugal	f	controller/looking for employment	yes	6
40	France	f	entrepreneur/professor	yes	6

\* Including accompanying partnerships and children as well as partnerships and children established/born in Germany (yes); partnerships and/or children in home country (no); no partnership/children (–)

These services can clearly facilitate the first arrival in new surroundings. The extent of the support offered by the relocation service depends on the job

position, being more extensive for people in higher positions. Highly-skilled professionals working in multinational companies thus can draw on a specific

support structure, often institutionalised, facilitating not only their arrival in a new country, but also in a new professional context. Such structures can be found particularly in companies regularly practicing international intra-company transfers of their employees.

What further facilitates the integration into a new working context, especially for interviewees working in international companies, are low language barriers. Since the working language in many companies (at least in some departments) is English, communication with colleagues is unproblematic, even if the national language skills are poor at the beginning. Often there is only little time to learn the national language after arrival. However, all the managers we interviewed acquired at least basic national language skills in the course of their stay – even if they planned to stay only short-time.

The situation for those working in the arts sector is more heterogeneous. While some in this group have well-paid and secured positions, e.g. managers of museums, the majority is working as freelance artists. The latter can neither draw on institutionalised support-structures offered by their employers, nor on extensive economic capital. Many of our interviewees working as artists moved to Germany for postgraduate studies. Only very few of them can make a living through their art and most of them therefore find themselves in precarious positions and in need of additional financing, e.g. state subsidies, grants or part-time work, which sometimes does not have any kind of reference to their real profession (HAAK and SCHMID 2001; BORÉN and YOUNG 2013). Nevertheless, most of them are planning to stay in Germany. This is strongly influenced by the personal situation, since partners and children can hinder further migrations (FISCHER in HAUG and SAUER 2006). Furthermore, our interviewees consider the working conditions for artists in Germany, and especially in this region, to be comparatively good. These include the number of art-related institutions, the political willingness to support these institutions as well as the general freedom of the arts.

*We have been to Japan several times and after that we realised, we cannot return to Japan that easily (...). It is incredibly difficult to be an artist in Japan, in Germany it is easier to live as an artist. (...) There are art clubs, art galleries, art museums. There are so many possibilities for public exhibitions. And then there are galleries and collectors everywhere and these structures do have a tradition in Germany. (22)*

In addition to financial aspects and support from their employers, the temporal perspective is

also vital for the integration processes of highly-skilled migrants. Highly-skilled migrants working in management positions often have temporary work contracts. Thus, their duration of stay in Germany is limited before they are moved to different positions in different countries by their companies. As a consequence of this built-in latent mobility, the desire to immerse oneself into the receiving society is not very strong, especially when managers are not accompanied by their families. However, the duration of a stay can also be extended, turning the temporary stay into a permanent one. This change of perspective can strongly influence the need and aspiration to integrate.

*It started with two years as a contract, where my husband was expecting to return, well, we were expecting to return at the end of two years. Then we did a further year (...) and each year it was extended for a year, but not made permanent, so it was still a UK contract that we were doing in Germany. And then he changed positions in [company], moved companies within [company] and was given a permanent German contract, so we bought a house. (38)*

Working as an artist requires a high level of flexibility and the willingness to be mobile is just as inevitable for artistic careers, as it is for managers (HAAK and SCHMID 2001, 163). Very often their contracts or grants are short-term. Furthermore, actors or musicians often make guest appearances in other cities, regions or countries, requiring further flexibility and mobility.

The interviewees stress the great influence of their work on their private spheres. Since their workload is high and working hours are long, they have only little time at their own disposal, impeding the establishing of local networks outside of work.

*And, well yes, normally from Monday to Friday you can't really do anything. Well, you know, you also have to go dinner with visitors from Japan or London or from wherever. And I'm maybe once a week home early. But for the rest I always come home around nine or ten. (31)*

In this context, the frequent professional mobility, which is part of the everyday working life for more than a few of our interviewees (artists and managers), is important. Frequent business trips on a national or even international scale limit disposable time for private activities and social contacts.

However, mobility has significant impacts in other contexts too. The termination of contracts linked to frequent job changes as well as career progression within a company demanding international mobility, cause not only international migration biographies/paths, but also extensive translocal networks. The



interviewees are living away from their families and friends in their home countries. Furthermore, they have private as well as professional contacts living in former residential locations. Especially in those cases in which the stay in Germany comes at a later point in the interviewee's career, extensive professional and private networks on a translocal scale exist. The cultivation of such a pluri-local network by regular visits again requires mobility during the interviewees' leisure time. "Classical" vacations or discovering new vacation spots take a back seat; the priority is on regularly visiting the most important private localities. There is a close connection between localities and the network structures and the time spent with maintaining relationships to families and friends. Often highly-skilled migrants have important emotional connections to places where siblings or parents live as well as to places where they lived earlier in their lives and often they identify strongly with these places, repeatedly returning there.

*My grandfather bought a house in [an Italian region] in the 50s and it's a vacation home. But for our far-scattered family it's really our home. And that's the place that, no matter where I am, whether I continue living in [a European country] or in Hong Kong, it doesn't matter, I will always go to this house in [the Italian region]. Well, I mean, it's like a fixed date, because I know that's where, well, where I can truly relax. (7)*

Hence, the mobile highly-skilled migrants in our sample are by no means de-territorialised cosmopolites (NOWICKA 2007). Instead there are very important spatial anchors, which clearly stand out in all translocal action spaces. One of our interview partners (9), who has worked in many different international locations, for instance, talked about his house in Cape Town. He grew up there and to this day he spends as much time there as possible and calls it his "emotional base". It is important to note that the maintenance of intensive translocal networks by regular visits (and not only by phone calls or Internet) can be (easily) realised because of the above-average financial situation of many of our interviewees.

In some other cases it is also evident that the desire to be mobile on an international scale during their leisure time is not very prominent. Instead, being mobile is limited to the immediate residential surroundings. This pattern is especially prominent among highly-skilled migrants who have just recently relocated to Germany. A bike ride along the river Rhine or a visit to the park is preferred to short city trips in Europe, since there is more interest to discover the local surroundings and to spend time with their families at the new location.

All in all, we can note that neither the termination of contracts, nor high workloads or frequent mobility, lead little interest on the part of the interviewees to integrate in Germany. However, our interviewees often reported uncertain perspectives concerning their duration of stay as a factor. In the following chapter we will present the contexts in which integration is intended and what kind of social networks can be established outside the workplace.

#### 4.2 The everyday life: the importance of networks of highly-skilled migrants in German cities

When analysing the everyday lives of our interviewees concerning the establishment of social networks, we found out that three segments can be identified. Contacts can be developed to a) the German receiving society (e.g. German colleagues, neighbours, friends, sales people), b) a multinational community (a network consisting of persons of various nationalities, who mainly communicate in English) and to c) an ethnic community (a network consisting of people with the same nationality who mainly communicate in their mother tongue). However, it is important to note that establishing contacts to one community does not exclude making social contacts in another community.

##### Life in the receiving German society

Leading a life as part of the receiving German society is understood as leading a life in a German-speaking environment, with German colleagues, German neighbours and includes exchanges in German when taking care of everyday business with e.g. sales people and waiters.

We can assume that the experiences international professionals make in this context are considerably influenced by their language skills (FÖBKER et al. 2014b). Our sample includes a variety of levels of language proficiency, from beginners to interview partners who speak the host country's language also in their home country, e.g. in Austria. However, only very few interviewees spoke German on arrival. Most have learned the language after their migration and thus had only poor language skills at the beginning of their stay. Hence, some interviewees try to take part in

language courses to acquire or improve language skills. However, due to their long working hours, they cannot spend as much time on language courses as they deem to be necessary.

*And also [company] has the possibility to study languages here. But this is the problem. When you are arriving here with an executive position you don't have a lot of time to study languages. So you can study languages or be with your family. And I was taking the decision being with my family. And I'm spending only 1 1/2 hour per week learning German. But it is still not enough. So I need a lot of time to that but I cannot.* (13)

Moreover, they are learning by doing and often spend a considerable amount of time on preparing everyday situations like calling the phone company or dealing with local authorities. Many of our interviewees reported bad experiences with the latter and some even told of experiences of being discriminated against.

*So if I start speaking in German and the other person knows that my German is not so good, they will start speaking in English. So I speak in English. (...) But the people sitting in the [Foreigners] office, they're like, "Ugh, if you can't speak German you don't need to live in Germany". That's their attitude.* (37)

Lacking language skills can also be a barrier for socialising with locals. Particularly at the beginning of their stay, some interviewees had only poor language skills and thus felt inhibited in speaking the foreign language and probably in making mistakes. Moreover, language skills are often not sufficient to discuss complex topics (e.g. emotions; cp. VOGEL and RINKE 2008, 264).

*I was talking to my mother on Skype and she told me since last two or three times I speak to you, you don't look happy. What's wrong? And I said, I am stressed. And I don't know why, since last month I have a very strong feeling now that language is stopping me in this country. (...) So I have a network in India and other countries where my friends are, I have good people still but I am not able to have that here.* (24)

This quote illustrates that, after migration, the reduced personal network (family, friends) cannot easily be compensated for in the new surroundings. Hence, at least at the beginning of their stay, the personal network in their home country stays important as a source of emotional support and advice (cp. KUPKA and CATHRO 2007).

However, good command of the local language is not a guarantee for actually being able to establish contacts with locals (FÖBKER et al.

2014b). Some interview partners report that building up friendships with locals is challenging – irrespective of the particular language skills (cp. RYAN and MULHOLLAND 2014).

*They [neighbours] are all quite nice, but we have never been invited by anybody. Even when we moved in our house, we invited the whole neighbourhood for a drink. To get to know each other. Nobody reciprocated to us. Nobody.* (36)

Actually, our interviewees seldom report of any problems e.g. with their neighbours or colleagues and there seem to be few causes for conflicts. That notwithstanding, it is rare that more intensive contacts develop either at work or at home. In fact, some neighbourhood contacts are seen as being valuable and helpful and some of our interviewees report of common activities. Nevertheless, they emphasize that they feel a distance since they do not share common ground with them.

*Uh, I mean our neighbours are very nice, we talk to each other and everything, but I don't depend on them for anything. (...) They're our neighbours, we talk, we help each other out. We meet each other, we see football games together, but we don't do anything much. Because we have nothing in common.* (37)

Altogether, there is only little interest in establishing intensive contact with newcomers – either from other parts of the same country or from abroad. Hence, most local friends of our interviewees are internationals themselves or have moved from other parts of the country and were thereby open for new social contacts.

While most of our interview partners reported that they had only few social contacts with locals, others depicted that in their own experience, foreigners in Germany are treated “differently” and thus discriminated against because of the colour of their skin.

*Hence, assimilation is more difficult when people do not speak German or if (...) you can see that they are foreigners. If their skin is darker or something like that. They can experience difficulties here, indeed. And then it is not that easy to get along here. In fact people talk to one in English easily, linguistically it is not such a problem, but when you are “other” (anders), you will be treated differently. And that is what the people realise.* (9)

Obviously, the political paradigm change during the last decade towards a more open immigration society did not yet affect all parts of the society, since “this is a culture change and you will not change it with a law” (13). Therefore, the shared ex-

periences of migration and being “alien” can create common ground that can be the basis for new local networks, containing only few native locals.

### Multinational community life

*Where it is not only about the job, there are always international friends, I don't know, somehow that's perhaps because they are more open-minded and show interest and so on, a different point-of-view. Often they are people who have made some kind of international experience. (7)*

For most interviewees it seemed comparatively easy to develop social contacts with other international professionals abroad, like this quote above illustrates. Low language barriers as well as shared experiences (of mobility; of being a foreigner) can help with connecting with other internationals.

Here the workplace plays a significant role, since in international working contexts, colleagues from abroad (or English-speaking German colleagues) can support the new arrivals. Often the original social networks of our interviewees are diminished at the beginning of their stay (cp. KELLY and LUSIS 2006). Hence, colleagues introducing them to the new workplace and everyday life in a new city can be an important support for them, particularly at the beginning of their stay.

Furthermore, children attending an international school often lead to connections to a multinational community. However, social networks established in the context of international schools are particularly important for accompanying partners, who often do not work, particularly at the beginning of their stay. Compared to their working partners, they do not find themselves within a social network of colleagues after migration (GUPTA et al. 2012).

For those international professionals who are in Germany without their families, web-based social networks like InterNations.org or meetup.com are of great importance. These platforms are commonly organised through local sub-groups, offering events, joint activities or regulars' tables for cultural or language groups for international professionals and other people interested in international exchange (PLÖGER and BECKER 2015).

*We have in [our company something] like expat communities. So we meet once per month, for dinner, so it's organized internally. But there are also different groups like Meetup or InterNations that you can meet people from foreign countries out of [our company]. And this also would be a place for the people, if they are here alone, to [get to] know someone and so on. (14).*

While, on the one hand, it is fairly easy to establish new friendships through these platforms and other international infrastructures such as international schools, on the other hand they are fairly volatile since fluctuation is high. Nevertheless, these international infrastructures can support the establishment and maintenance of (trans-)local networks.

### Ethnic communities

Some of those interviewed described their everyday lives and private networks as taking place almost exclusively in ethnic communities. In the following this will be illustrated with the experiences of interviewees from Iran and Japan as examples.

An Iranian female artist who has lived in Germany for more than ten years and who studied the arts here, has no German friends, despite the fact that she speaks German very well and that she has become a German national. Her everyday contacts are concentrated on family members and Iranian friends, some of whom live in the same city, some who live in other German cities. Most of her family and friends are living in Germany permanently. Caused by the political and societal conditions in their native country they do not intend to return. During the German classes she took in the first years of being in Germany she made friends with other Iranians and they have become good friends in the meantime. The shared activities with Iranian friends often also have a connection to their native country.

*I always had a lot of contact with Persians. Right from the beginning I had a good friend, my girlfriend, they both came to Germany before I did, a close girl-friend from the academy, our academy in Teheran, for instance or the other girlfriends. So right from the start I had contacts here too. [...] Yes, there are plenty of Persians in Germany, no worries! (26)*

Her second, non-artistic job with which she makes a living requires Persian language skills and thus again there is a strong connection to her native country. Her profession as an artist has involuntary turned into her side job. Although she shares a studio with both German and international artists, this did not lead to social networks outside her ethnic community.

*To be honest, we don't have much to do with one another. If we happen to meet, okay, we talk for a bit, but if not, it's just as well. For example: if I don't happen to see these people for a few months, nobody really cares where I am or anything like that. (26)*

In the Rhineland, Japanese professionals also tend to be drawn to their ethnic community (GLEBE 1986). The strong national concentration and the high number of facilities has several reasons: Many of the highly-skilled Japanese interviewees work in middle- to upper-management levels of Japanese companies, their stays are limited to a few years in the German branch offices and already geared to their returning to Japan.

Often, neither they nor their family members speak German or English well and so communicating with people outside of the Japanese community is rather difficult. Especially in Düsseldorf one can find a wide range of ethnic infrastructure tending to Japanese needs, e.g. a Japanese school, Japanese kindergartens, a Japanese club, a number of informal Japanese regulars' tables as well as Japanese and Asian supermarkets. The infrastructure found in Düsseldorf is also attractive for highly-skilled Japanese not living in Düsseldorf and they often visit Düsseldorf for day trips.

*We drive to Düsseldorf at least once a month, if not twice and go shopping there. Because: there they have like a couple of Japanese grocery stores. And there they also have a few Asian supermarkets here in Cologne, but you don't get everything there. And that's why on Saturday we drive there and Saturday is our big shopping day and [...] Well, of course, regular groceries we buy [in other supermarkets]. (31)*

Hence, getting in touch with other Japanese professionals as well as dealing with everyday routines is made easier for them. However, the high fluctuation of this ethnic community makes it difficult for those Japanese living in Germany for a longer time to establish intense and long-lasting relationships and thus cannot be understood as a basis for new local friendships.

*I met many Expats, exactly. Unfortunately I have only few contacts now. Maybe this is caused by the Japanese mind-set, after their return they forget. (...) I got to know thousands of names, but when they return you don't hear from them anymore. (22)*

In summing up these remarks, we can conclude that the integration of highly-skilled migrants into the receiving German society only takes place to a limited extent. Integration options can be found especially at work as well as in multinational and ethnic communities. However, our interviewees also referred to the limited benefit of social networks which are exclusively based on internationals when extensive local-specific knowledge is needed, e.g. to handle bureaucratic problems or negotiate with institutions (ANTHIAS 2007).

## 5 Translocality and integration? Concluding discussion

Up-to-date research on highly-skilled migrants has been focussed on a transnational elite (e.g. BEAVERSTOCK 2005) and has been based on the assumption that their integration into a global, urban society is typically smooth. An integration process without "ordinary" problems (finding living space and jobs, integration into social networks) was seen as the result of the highly-skilled migrants' privileged situations, their high financial, cultural and social capital and their comparatively high acceptance level in the receiving society (GLEBE 1997). Our findings confirm these kinds of privileged situations, especially for managers working for globally operating corporations receiving extensive integration support and are typically well-equipped with financial capital. For the most part, however, these assumptions do not hold true. Most of the migrants we interviewed belong to the mobile middle class and, upon their arrival in Germany, are often confronted with the same problems less qualified migrants have (finding social networks, dealing with the local authorities, finding a place to live and, in some cases, being discriminated against). We also interviewed highly-skilled migrants who are experiencing precarious income situations. This holds particularly true for freelance artists (who, in many cases, came to Germany in order to study and were faced with a difficult labour market afterwards) and thus qualifies the impression given by research findings that highly-skilled migrants find themselves in a privileged position (cp. also BORÉN and YOUNG 2013 on artists in Stockholm and BENNETT 2010 on artists in Australia).

Our results also unmistakably show that the integration paths of highly-skilled migrants are not uniform and different spheres have to be distinguished. As BEAVERSTOCK (2005, 246) remarked for that group in general, social integration mainly takes place in "a specific sphere of the host society – a transnational expat community – that has hardly any contacts with the autochthonous population and is highly spatialized in the transnational spaces of the city". In our sample we also find that integration takes place into certain segments of the urban society. For many, their multinational work environments serve as an important starting and connecting point and it is there that it is most likely that social contacts are formed and support during the arrival phase is found. Both GUTH (2007) and FÖBKER et al. (2011) noted the same focus for foreign scientists when set-

ting into the receiving German society. These findings, however, only apply to those migrants who are part of an institutional international work environment, all others, e.g. freelance artists, cannot draw on that kind of support and need to solve all settling-in issues on their own.

Other multinational communities can also be of importance, e.g. such networks that emerge through international schools or through e.g. InterNations. Establishing social contacts outside of those kinds of communities is more difficult due to language barriers and time constraints resulting from heavy workloads and mobility demands in both professional and personal lives. Most interview partners had sufficient command of the German language, only managers with expat contracts working in mainly English-speaking environments and, who at least initially, planned to stay only temporarily had insufficient to no knowledge of German. The majority of our interviewees need to have sufficient command of German at work and to organise their everyday lives (cp. also NOHL 2010 for the German labour market in general and IMANI et al. 2014 for foreign scientists as well as PLÖGER and BECKER 2015 for foreign Master and PhD students in Germany).

However, “transnational expat communities” (BEAVERSTOCK 2005) or “multi-ethnic communities” do not necessarily make up the central local networks (SKOP and LI 2003; both references for immigration to US cities). As our results show, ethnic communities can also play an important role when highly-skilled migrants settle in, even though their importance has been stressed especially for less-qualified migrants (e.g. ZHOU 1997). The interviews show that contacts to other highly-skilled members of ethnic communities are sought out, especially during the early stages of their stay in the host country and not only in the Japanese community. Networks in Germany are typically established with migrants from the same country (ethnic communities) or with highly-skilled migrants from other countries (multi-national communities). These contacts are augmented by numerous private and professional contacts to their countries of origin and by contacts from earlier stations in their biographies, which lead to translocal everyday practices.

Based on these findings questions relating to the options and aspirations of integration of highly-skilled migrants must be specified. Many highly-skilled migrants do not necessarily strive to stay in Germany long term nor do they aspire to establish themselves here. Instead, the length of their stay is adjusted to job opportunities as well as to how con-

tent they are in both their professional and personal contexts. Integration of highly-skilled migrants as currently understood in both the public and the political debate therefore can be seen as integration with an uncertain temporality. Moreover, most highly-skilled migrants are not integrated into urban society as a whole, but into specific parts of the society, be they larger multinational, ethnic communities or their professional work environment. Based on our findings and leaning on ESSER (2001; 2004) partial or segmented integration should also be understood and recognised as a “good solution”. It is this kind of integration that is sought by the highly-skilled migrants and that from their perspective leads to a satisfactory state for the time of their being in Germany. What definitively needs improvement, however, is that the local authorities as well as the local societies improve their efforts and truly create a culture of welcome.

## Acknowledgements

In addition to the noted authors, the following colleagues contributed to this project and are co-authors of this article: Claus-Christian Wiegandt and Günther Weiss. We would like to thank the German Research Foundation for their financial support of the projects.

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