

# **Resourceful Cities**

Berlin (Germany) 29---31 August 2013

## **Mobile lives and local footprints - Highly skilled migrants and their attachment to places**

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**Paper presented at the International RC21 Conference 2013**

**Session: From global to local - and back again – Mobilities and place among elites and the  
middle class**

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## **Abstract**

Global labour migration is increasing as a consequence of the worldwide interrelation of production and labour markets. This spawns new forms of circular migration and an increase in mobile lifestyles. Within this context, highly qualified migrants play a more prominent role than previously, which is illustrated by national policy initiatives to recruit skilled professionals as well as the strategies by individual cities.

There is little empirical evidence about the impact of this particular group of migrants on cities and urban societies however. Our contribution aims at investigating their patterns of spatial incorporation, place attachment and everyday lives by drawing on the transnational perspective and the new mobilities paradigm. We can assume that the local 'footprint' and the place attachment of this group are less pronounced, for example due to temporary character of stay or the maintenance of multiple transnational ties. We address the following questions: Which are the relevant spatial levels for high-skilled migrants? In how far are they incorporated into spatial settings? How do they evaluate their current place of residence?

The empirical research uses qualitative methods and focuses on high-skilled migrants from non-European countries in a declining and a booming German city. Through the comparison of these different urban settings we aim at gaining insights about the relationship between mobile groups and urban development processes on different scales.

## **Introduction**

International migration patterns are reflecting global change, as people are adapting to changes in their personal or professional lives as well as to overall conditions by relocation. Global economic and labour market developments often result in the movement of people within and beyond the confines of nation states. So do socio-economic inequalities between countries and regions which clearly shape migration movements towards higher-income countries or those providing access to further career or educational options. Another important factor is the changing geography of political crisis that results in particular migration patterns of refugees. Lastly, a growing number of persons are living increasingly mobile lifestyles for work, family or

leisure purposes (e.g. Urry 2007). Within these fluctuating patterns of international mobility and migration we see the increase of more temporary or circular forms of migration. All of these processes result in the spread of transnational social spaces in between locations, characterised and enabled by the exchange of information, communication, transactions and networks (Pries 1997: 17).

It seems thus logical, that increased interconnections between spaces will also result in the transformation of specific places, particularly those receiving and sending mobile populations (e.g. Smith, 2001; Glick-Schiller/Caglar, 2011; Krätke et al., 2012). Their practices transform cities with regards to labour market, housing, education, civic engagement, 'integration', service provision, infrastructures and quality of life (Dittrich-Wesbuer/Plöger, 2013). In the past, much of the attention on the impact of migration on cities in industrialised countries has focused on the emergence of relatively low-skilled groups, often concentrating in "ethnic" neighbourhoods and the resulting urban problems (e.g. segregation).

Only recently are migrants with higher educational levels and skills receiving more attention from scholars as well as political decision-makers on the national, regional and local levels. Lately, many industrialised countries have designed policy initiatives to recruit skilled professionals as a response to a real or forecasted shortage of qualified workers. Increasingly, the competitiveness of cities and regions is also becoming linked to their ability to attract and retain talented people including migrants. In terms of access and migration regimes, these groups are clearly advantaged in contrast to their lower-skilled counterparts.

This raises questions about the impact of these groups on cities and urban society in general as well as about the role of their assumed transnational ties. Our research aims at highlighting these changes by investigating relevant spatial ties on different scales that highly mobile and high-skilled migrants maintain and develop, i.e. their relation to new spatial settings. Therefore we have chosen various factors to be analysed which include the migrants' attachment to different spaces, the relevance of migrant communities and their networks, their activities and civic engagement on different levels, and finally, the significance of local space for the same.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We are aware of the transnational perspective on migration and thus do not lose sight of other spatial contexts. For building our argument we nevertheless opt for focussing on the receiving context, yet keeping in mind that this may neither be the only nor the most important context for the

The following section addresses the current political and scientific focus on highly-skilled migrants. In the next chapter we develop our argument by building on existing theories and empirical findings with regards to the relationship between this particular group and urban space. This is followed by information on the research design, which is based on qualitative methods and draws from two German case study cities. Some findings are presented next before ending with a preliminary conclusion.

### **1. In demand - highly-skilled migrants**

Highly skilled migration represents an increasingly large component of global migration streams (cf. Iredale, 2001: 8). This type of migration occurs in different ways including permanent settlement in major immigrant receiving countries, temporary migration both within and outside multinational corporations, refugee movements and family reunions. The situation is further complicated by varying definitions of skilled migration in different countries and the poor availability and comparability of data.

A variety of definitions for 'highly skilled migration' are used not only in the scientific and political field but also in national migration regulations. In general discussions - and as a main requirement in most immigration policies - highly skilled migration is defined by (holding) a university degree or (having) an equivalent experience in a certain profession (cf. Chaloff/Lemaitre, 2009: 11). Another way to categorise highly skilled migrants and regulate their immigration is by profession or by wages. For the purpose of this article 'highly skilled' is defined from an educational perspective which means migrants with a university degree and can include labour and refugee migration as well as family reunion.

It must be noted that in many countries, a substantial share of high-skilled migrants is 'hidden' in other visa types (e.g. for refugees, family reunification or labour purposes) (cf. Nohl/Weiß, 2009: 13f). Many migrants in Germany are working below their qualifications, a problem that within the debate on the lack of skilled professionals is only recently being addressed by policy change (cf. Heß, 2012: 16).

The total amount of highly skilled migrants cannot be exactly stated, but an OECD report from 2011 gives an interesting insight into the migration flows to OECD countries, based on 2005/2006 data from the DIOC<sup>2</sup>. At that time about 26 million immigrants holding a university degree were living in OECD countries with 5.2 million people holding a university degree (cf. Widmaier/Dumont, 2011: 9). Increasingly economies are based on knowledge and information with these factors being the major driving forces behind economic growth, innovation and productivity (cf. Krätke, 2002).

Current demographic trends point to a significant decline in the working-age population in most developed countries (cf. Hays, 2012: 4). This includes Germany, where a skills shortage due to economic restructuring and demographic change is predicted for STEM-occupations<sup>3</sup>, and the healthcare and social sector (cf. Hays, 2012: 11). In recent years, several countries have responded by introducing policies which facilitate the recruitment of skilled professionals – thereby intensifying the global competition for talent. In 2009, the European Union improved the conditions of entry for highly qualified persons from non-EU countries in order to increase its economic competitiveness. In Germany, this directive was implemented with the introduction of the Blue Card in 2012.

The first step towards the recruitment of skilled migrants in Germany was the introduction of the Green Card in 2000 to facilitate the immigration of ITC-experts from third countries. Nearly 18,000 migrants, mainly from India (26.4%), used this option (Heß, 2009: 16; Schreyer/Gebhardt, 2003: 5f; Kolb, 2005: 2). The Green Card triggered a wide public debate about immigration. A new immigration law in 2005 expanded the Green Card's regulations to all highly-qualified professions (cf. Heß, 2012: 21), marking a fundamental paradigm shift in Germany's migration policy. The long-standing slogan, "Germany is not an immigration country", was replaced by, "Germany needs immigration" (cf. BAMF, 2005: 22). The Blue Card was a further measure to facilitate the access to the labour market for academics and professionals as well as for international students.

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<sup>2</sup> DIOC - Database on Immigrants in OECD countries.

<sup>3</sup> STEM - science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

During the recent economic crisis, highly skilled migration to Germany has increased to a degree that the country now has the fastest growing rate of highly skilled migration of all OECD countries (cf. OECD, 2012). Furthermore, migration channels were established to countries with little previous connections such as India.

Like Germany, many countries make greater efforts to attract and retain skilled personnel permanently, but migration policies remain based upon temporary permits thus fostering temporal and circular migration. The internationalisation of education and professions and the technical developments in communication and transport technologies (cf. Iredale, 2001) are facilitating the increasingly mobile and transnational way of lives.

The next chapter focuses on the interdependencies between the temporal migration of the highly skilled and cities as the nodes in these migration flows. We also have a closer look at the transnational and local lives of this group.

## **2. High-skilled migration - a driver for urban change?**

### **Highly-mobile elites in the global city**

Studies about highly skilled migrants are a relatively new field of investigation in the spatial and social sciences. Within the last twenty years this group was mostly discussed in the context of globalisation and with regards to their role in the functioning and development of the global city system, for example focusing on highly skilled corporate employees.

Sassen (2001) describes these mobile professionals as members of a cross-border culture who are embedded in a global network of local places within the international finance centres (ibid: 188). In Manuel Castells (2000) vision of the 'network society' the 'managerial elite' embodies the cross-border circulation of knowledge, skills and intelligence in the 'space of flows'. They occupy the leading command and control positions in global cities. Their "personal micro-networks" are grounded in "residential and leisure orientated spaces, which along with the locations of headquarters, tend to cluster dominant functions in carefully segregated places" (Castells, 2000: 226, cited

in: Beaverstock, 2005). Elliott and Urry (2010: 74) emphasise the significance of mobility or the potential for being mobile as a prerequisite of new global elites.

According to Hannerz (1996) such global elites, albeit still a minority, are constitutive for a city's global status. Furthermore, he points towards the importance of their transnational connections and relationships as they "are physically present in the world cities for some larger or smaller parts of their lives, but they also have strong ties to some other places in the world" (ibid. 129). Sklair (2005) identifies an emerging 'transnational capitalist class' which is characterised by global economic interests, the formation of similar global lifestyles and their self-representation as cosmopolites.

Within the context of globalisation and the quantitative as well as qualitative change of international migration since the 1990s, the transnational perspective has gained prominence (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992; Vertovec, 1999; Castles/Miller, 2003). Following a more agency-oriented approach, it directs the attention on the experiences and actions of individuals and groups. This perspective considers not only the (mobile) migrant but also the (immobile) non-migrant and comprises, both, the places of origin and destination (e.g. Faist, 2007: 378). The transnational perspective is particularly interested in the manifold connections, networks, practices, behaviours and actions between places, which constitute the formation of 'transnational social spaces' (e.g. Pries, 1997: 17). This takes into account that individuals may have multiple spatial attachments; their activities, behaviours, thoughts, emotions or identities are thus not fixed to one location. As a consequence, 'territorial spaces' are less and less coinciding with 'social' or 'cultural spaces' (Pries, 1997: 26; Smith, 2001: 151).

Transnational practices do not take place in an imaginary 'third space' in-between national territories as Guarnizo and Smith (1998) point out. Even if spatial mobility, dense social ties and intense exchanges across national borders are increasing, transnationality is not a detached process, free from the constraints and opportunities of national or local contexts. Transnational practices are "embodied in specific social relations established between specific people, situated in unequivocal localities, at historically determined times" (Guarnizo/Smith, 1998). As we argue below, there is a lack of research in the relationship between transnational social fields and the



relationship to specific cities or localities and urban transformation (Glick Schiller, 2012: 36).

In an attempt to conceptualise the different modes and dynamics of migrant incorporation and transnationalism, Glick Schiller and Caglar (2011) are emphasising the scalar dimensions of cities. City scale can be defined as a “differential positioning of a city, which reflects its articulation of flows of political, cultural and economic capital within regions, state- based and global spanning institutions and the shaping of these flows and institutional forces by local histories and capacities” (ibid: 74). The scalar positioning of cities within broader domains of financial, political, and cultural power thus offers different opportunity structures and therefore determine migrant practices, their patterns of organisation, and strategies of participation (cf. Glick Schiller, 2012: 41)

### **Between mobility and locality**

While there is a wide scientific debate about the relevance and function of mobile professionals in the context of the globalisation process, the scope of empirical analyses appears comparatively low. Beaverstock (2002/2005) made an important contribution with his empirical work on British Expatriates<sup>4</sup> in Singapore and New York (ibid 2002/2005). While the expatriates in Singapore are embedded in their local working environment and in professional networks, which are both global and local in scope, the British expatriates in New York have very weak social ties to work colleagues or to other British nationals in the city. They try to avoid formalised expatriates networks, because they seem to hinder network formations with U.S. or other nationals (cf. Beaverstock, 2005). Nonetheless, the expatriates’ daily life and social context in Singapore is mainly disembedded from their place of residence, since there are little interactions with local Singaporean society (Beaverstock, 2002: 537). The difference between both expatriates’ lifestyles can be taken as an indication for the relevance of the specific urban and socio-cultural environment as a context for processes of incorporation and embedding.

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<sup>4</sup> Beaverstock characterises expatriates by frequent short term and non-permanent movements between nation-states which is facilitated by intra-company transfers (ibid. 2005: 245).

The findings about the disembeddedness of social contacts and the relevance of places for corporate mobile professionals are confirmed by Nowicka (2006) and Kreutzer (2006) who show, that the social embedding of the mobile employees mainly take place in globally spanned networks. By organising the residence and working permits, insurances and taxes for their employees the company assumes the functions of a nation state and becomes the relevant unit of identification and social integration. The participation in a global organisation leads the professionals to establish a “global citizenship and a transnational identity” (cf. Kreutzer, 2006).

These previous findings can mainly be attributed to the group of ‘permanent’ or ‘existential expatriates’, who are frequently changing their place of work on an international scale (cf. Kreutzer, 2006: 106). Apart from this ‘elite of globalisation’ (Nowicka, 2006: 190) there is a huge skilled labour migration, which is either organised individually or through intermediate institutions within the global labour market. These highly skilled migrants, who can neither be assigned to the expatriates nor to the permanent immigrants, have hardly been in the focus of research yet.

Furthermore, these studies often do not make specific references to the relevance of places and local structures. Little is known about the different processes of settling-in within the group of skilled migrants and the role of their transnational ties. Therefore our study aims to analyse their modes of acculturation by looking at the patterns of their use of space, the relevance of local migrant communities and infrastructures as well as their activities and civic engagement on different spatial levels.

### **Modes of acculturation of highly skilled migrants**

Classic migration studies and the transnational perspective offer distinct theoretical approaches for the assimilation and incorporation processes of migrants. Furthermore they provide first indications about the relevance of migrant communities and infrastructures for these incorporation processes. In traditional migration research ‘assimilation’ is described as the common way for immigrants to settle-in in the society of arrival (cf. e.g. Gordon, 1961; Alba/Nee, 2003). As current studies on highly mobile professionals show, separation and multiple integration as different types of negotiation within a new culture are highly relevant for analysing their processes of acculturation and identification. Integration takes place, when there

is an interest in maintaining one's culture while participating and interacting intensively with the host culture in different sectors of society. When individuals place a high value on holding on to their home culture and interaction with the host culture is avoided, it can be defined as separation (cf. Berry, 1997: 9).

For the research on the relevance of places for highly skilled migrants it can be anticipated that "multiple integration" will be the most relevant concept. We expect that due to their lifestyles and experiences highly skilled professionals organise their life in an area of tension between movement and settlement and maintain close connections to their country of origin as well as to other stations in their migration biography. Therefore it can be assumed that they find different pathways of incorporation on the different local, regional, national and transnational levels and through economic, cultural, political and social structures of opportunity (cf. Glick Schiller et al., 2004: 1). Because the concept of incorporation is extended on different spatial levels, research about integration processes is no longer limited to the nation state as a container (cf. Pries, 2010: 64).

In conclusion, we can expect different ways of migrant acculturation, which have different degrees of validity for the group of highly skilled migrants. Our study examines the relevance of distinct local infrastructures, transnational networks and migrant communities and thus also the significance of the city as a context of acculturation processes.

### **3. Interim conclusions and research hypotheses**

There is a significant increase in the migration of professionals, which is characterised by mobility and presumably transnational connections. We assume that these new participants in urban society have an impact on cities and urban structures. Concomitantly, we expect that the urban structures as framework affect the processes of incorporation and the constitution of transnational ties. Our investigation therefore aims to gain insights into the following fields of research:

*Modes of local incorporation:* As explained above, we expect that highly skilled professionals find different pathways of incorporation on different local, regional, national and transnational levels and through economic, cultural, political and social

structures of opportunity. In light of their mobile lifestyles and transnational connections we analyse which spatial levels are the most relevant for their incorporation and identification. We expect that they develop multiple place attachments and are thus less incorporated into their current place of residence. The incorporation process is, both, shaped by and expressed through several factors. We lay our focus on the following aspects:

*Future Perspectives:* It seems obvious that plans for the future and the intention of staying or leaving directly determine the ambitions and processes of local incorporation. Thus many studies are either dealing with permanent immigrants and their acculturation within a new society or with highly mobile expatriates and their pragmatic relationship to places. Regarding the group of highly skilled migrants, it was assumed that their short duration of stay restricts incorporation. Yet for a substantial part of mobile professionals the duration of stay and further migration plans are not specified at all, and often modified and adapted to changing conditions. This raises questions about the varying modes of acculturation which are induced by different future perspectives.

*Transnational or local ties:* The relevant social networks of expatriates mainly consist of other expatriates and are globally spanned. The social network of skilled migrants, who can neither be assigned to the expatriates nor to the permanent immigrants, is less investigated. We analyse how and to what degree their social contacts and individual day-to-day realities are characterised by transnationality. We assume a strong transnational orientation within this group, furthered by the ubiquitous availability of communication technologies and various modes of transportation and as a development of flexible and less permanent employment structures. This results in multiple place attachments and a lower degree of local incorporation. A correlation between the intensity of local and transnational ties is expected as well.

*Activity and Engagement:* Activity and Engagement can be seen as indicators of incorporation on different spatial levels. The increase of mobile lifestyles is associated with the erosion of local social relationships, a loss of the sense of belonging to places and communities as well as with the reduction of civic engagement. According to Elliott and Urry (2010: 189) a weakening of urban societies is likely as “the modes of international movement do not so much weaken the nation state, but hollow out (the functioning of) civil society”. These assumptions

have not yet been confirmed by empirical findings however. Highly skilled migrants are equipped with cultural and economic capital, which correlates with civic engagement and activities. Moreover, transnational connections can be used as a strategy to continue activities and engagement in the country of origin. We suppose that new participants in urban society transform the activities of existing migrant communities and organisations through their cultural and economic capital as well as their transnational ties.

*Agents of urban change:* The pathways of incorporation in and transnational connections to cities differ in ways that reflect the position of these cities. Migrants can also be identified as agents of urban transformation. They are integral parts of the labour force upon which the cities build their competitiveness and contribute to the comparative reassessment of the desirability of various cities and neighbourhoods (cf. Glick Schiller, 2012: 41). They contribute to the international network of cities and regions and raise their awareness and image by maintaining transnational connections and opening new migration channels (Grabow/Becker, 2009).

In the past, much of the attention on the impact of migration on cities in industrialised countries has focused on relatively low-skilled groups, often concentrating in specific – sometimes “ethnic” – neighbourhoods and the resulting urban problems (e.g. segregation). We assume that the practices of temporal and transnational citizens transform cities with regards to labour market, housing, education, civic engagement, ‘integration’, service provision, infrastructures and quality of life, which also leads to new challenges for urban decision makers (Dittrich-Wesbuer/Plöger, 2013).

*City as context:* While migrants as agents of urban change transform their place of residence, cities, in return, function as the framework condition influencing migration flows and the opportunities for incorporation processes and transnational connections (e.g. Glick- Schiller/Caglar, 2011). Smith (2005: 18) states that the local sites of translocal practices like cities, suburbs, or communities offer migrants dissimilar contexts of exit and reception, and thus differing political and economic opportunities and constraints. Moreover local economic structures and labour markets influence how migrants are perceived by city decision-makers and urban society. Consequently, the utilisation of their cultural capital is not only shaped by regulations on the national level but also by the particular local context.

We can thus assume that varying forms of incorporation are related to the distinct opportunities provided by different cities. These opportunities can include variations in regulatory regimes, local infrastructures, possibilities for economic activities, employment, education, housing, and entrance into local politics and cultural life. There is a lack of research in the relevance of specific local structures as influencing factors in the incorporation processes and for the transnational connections of migrants (e.g. Krätke et al., 2012: 2). We aim at providing new insights about the interrelation of urban structures and migrants' incorporation by basing our research on two contrasting German cities.

#### **4. Research Design and Sample**

Our analysis is based on two research projects that were developed in close coordination. Both examine the interrelation between recent migrant groups and urban space. The research design is based on qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews).

The research focuses on highly qualified migrants from non-European countries that are currently residing in two selected German cities.

##### **Selection of case studies**

As laid out above, Germany currently provides an interesting example for studying the spatial logics, practices and attachments of high-skilled migration. Following the argument about the relevance of scales developed by Glick-Schiller and Caglar (2011), we assume that the relation between migration and space varies between cities.

We have thus opted for comparing two larger cities, which show quite different paths in terms of economic, demographic and social development. The shortage of skilled professionals shows regional variations. Cities with structural problems and those outside the major agglomerations often lack a sufficiently diversified and innovative economic base and are generally more affected by this shortage than more dynamic regions (e.g. Geppert/Gornig, 2010; Krätke et al., 2012). Due to weak labour markets

and – in many cases – a lower quality of life the local economy struggles to attract or retain high-skilled workers (Plöger/Weck, 2013). Dortmund - located in the old-industrial Ruhr Area, on the one hand, has experienced profound economic restructuring and continues to struggle with urban decline. Hamburg - Germany's second largest city, on the other hand, can be characterised as an economically dynamic hub with a growing population.

### **Sample criteria**

The recruitment of the sample in both Dortmund and Hamburg was based on four selection criteria:

(1) Immigration from a non-European (EU) country: This is based on the assumption that 'distance' – in geographical, cultural, or emotional terms or due to visa restrictions – plays a role in migration decisions. In contrast with EU citizens who migrate over relatively short distances and have easy access to labour markets, this group requires more preparation of their migration decision. It also implies being further away from one's existing personal network (family, friends and colleagues). The relocation should be voluntary, thus excluding political refugees and asylum seekers. The sample does however include persons who arrived with or in order to be followed partners (family reunification visa).

(2) Current place of residence is the city of Dortmund or Hamburg: Following the assumption that place is indeed relevant and that different spatial settings or scales provide different contexts and influence how migrants are received ('absorbed') and incorporated ('integrated') thus shaping differentiated opportunity structures as well as the emergence of local ties and the maintenance of transnational ties (Glick-Schiller/Caglar 2011, Smith 2000, Krätzke et al., 2012).

(3) Duration of stay between a minimum of 0.5 and a maximum of 6 years. The purpose of such limitation is to prevent the over-representation of either transnational or local ties. We assume that such a duration comprises a group which has already 'arrived' - being reflected for example in their ability to cope with everyday necessities and having acquired some knowledge about the place of residence, but which has not yet 'settled down' – being reflected in a relatively small local personal network as well as a general uncertainty about the future place of residence.

(4) Highly-qualified persons, holding at least a bachelor degree or higher.

### **Sample composition**

The Dortmund sample comprises 24 (13 female, 11 male) persons from 16 nationalities that were usually from urban backgrounds, including several mega-cities. The empirical work in Hamburg is still on-going; the sample currently consists of 10 persons (5 male, 5 female) from 7 different countries. In terms of age, both samples are relatively homogeneous, roughly ranging from 25 to 40 years. While in Dortmund two thirds were married with very few singles, most interviewees in Hamburg were single. As a consequence, half of the persons in Dortmund already had children, while in Hamburg all except one woman were childless.

With regards to their duration of stay, 11 of those in Dortmund resided between one and three years, 8 over three years and 5 below one year in Germany. In Dortmund, a majority arrived on the basis of a student visa (15), some of which were later transformed into work visa (4), other visa types included family reunion (5) and work (4). In Hamburg, the majority of the interviewees are holding working visa (6), one a student visa and three came for family reunion. While most persons arrived directly from their respective countries of origin, some had a more complex migration biography and migrated from other countries in both cities.

All persons are highly qualified. They completed at least part of their education in their home countries. In Dortmund, two thirds had either achieved additional degrees at higher education institutions in Germany or were currently doing so – as in the case of several PhD students. In contrast, only two persons from the Hamburg sample completed their education in their home countries while the majority (7) holds degrees from higher education institutions elsewhere.

All interviewees were renting apartments in Dortmund with the majority residing either in inner-city boroughs, predominantly south of the city centre (11) or in proximity to the university (11). In Hamburg, the interviewees resided in inner-city boroughs or - in the case of those employed at a large research institution - in proximity to their workplace.



## **5. Preliminary findings**

This chapter summarises some preliminary findings from the interviews with highly-qualified migrants in Dortmund and Hamburg – the majority of whom have been residing in either city for an intermediate period of time.

So far, there are few signs indicating that the interviewees are settling down. This can be attributed to a variety of partially overlapping factors, including the individual career status and family biography (status, background of spouse etc.); their current job perspective (e.g. fixed-term contract), as well as the intended duration of stay and related future plans to relocate or return home.

The following quotes illustrate different positions regarding the level of local incorporation depending on the intentions to return, move on or stay. The first quote provides little clarity about the candidate's future place of residency:

“And then we don't know if we return or if we find a job here. He [husband] studies informatics. It is much easier for him [than me] to find a job. His English is very good and we don't know if we move on to America or if somewhere else or if we return to China or go to Taiwan. We have thought about it, but it remains very open.” (DO\_05, female, China, studies, translated from German)<sup>5</sup>

The two following quotes are from two individuals who mentioned that invested time and effort would bias their decision towards a more long-term stay:

“I am investing my time and my life here. I am learning German and I have to make something out of it.” (DO\_23, female, Iran, family reunion)

“But now, step by step, because we are doing things, I mean, after 6 or 8 years already, you say, ok, I am starting to make many friends. And you don't have the same connection with all friends over there in Chile because everyone has taken distinct paths.” (DO\_20, male, Chile, work, translated from Spanish)

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<sup>5</sup> The information provided in brackets includes the code attached to the interview as well as the interviewee's gender, country of origin, main immigration purpose, and a remark if the interview was translated into English.

Several interviewees noted that their exposure to different cultures and ways of thinking while abroad had changed their perspectives on their own futures and on their home countries and cultures.

### **Transnational networks and local communities**

One important aspect of our research is the analysis of the relationship between transnational social networks and the intensity of local incorporation. Therefore interviewees were asked to name the location of those people most important in their lives and to indicate the nature of their relationship.<sup>6</sup>

The majority of the people named are either part of the interviewee's immediate family (parents, siblings, spouses or children) or friends. Less often they belong to the extended family (e.g. uncles/aunts, cousins, grandparents), or are colleagues. These networks exist on a global scale as two-thirds of all persons listed live in a faraway location. In most cases, family members (esp. parents) reside in the place of origin, which indicates the interviewee's strong ties to the home country or city/region. Just over one-fifth of their network contacts reside in Dortmund, due to the presence of immediate family members (spouses, children). In six cases, none of the most important persons live nearby. Few network contacts residing elsewhere in Germany or Europe were mentioned.

Most of the interviewees maintain an intense relationship with persons residing in geographically distant places. Modern technology greatly facilitates the communication, often on a daily basis:

“Obviously, I would always wish for more [contact], but... I mean it's possible for me to go back to India once a year or so, considering the finances and everything, but I would... obviously I wish to stay in touch with them, so I make it at a point that I talk with them every day” (DO\_25, female, India, family reunion)

“[...] Of course, you like see them more often, but, I mean the Skype and telephone is great because you can get all the news, and you know, talk to them frequently. Of course the personal contact you're still missing right, and

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<sup>6</sup> The following analysis only refers to the Dortmund sample. The analysis of the Hamburg data is currently ongoing.

the flight is so long and so expensive that it is complicated to actually do it more frequently. Already I think we were lucky enough to do it quite frequently, compared to other people that are staying here. But [...] what I was missing a little bit, is the daily connection you know, the time just the possibility to spend time just hanging out with friends and family.” (DO\_26, male, Argentina, work)

Not all interviewees voluntarily maintain this intensive level of communication with members of their important social networks. Some described it as a burden because it absorbs considerable time that could otherwise be invested in meeting new people or engaging in socialising activities:

“And, ja, most of time goes in talking on weekend. Half, if I take Sunday or Saturday, almost thirty to forty percent, thirty percent or forty percent time will go and talking to India. Because they expect our call on Saturdays and Sundays. My parents, my sisters, my friends or. So, they all expect my call.” (HH\_10, male, India, work)

Intense communication with family and friends who reside in the country of origin serves as an instrument for the interviewees to keep in touch with their home cultures. Many reported the need to frequently communicate with people from their own cultural backgrounds. This may result from their experiences participating in a different cultural environment.

„But finally you feel you have some special thoughts and you cannot share them, because there are a sort of unclear or people don't know what you are talking about.“ (HH\_08, male, Russian, work)

„Yes, I feel a need in communicating in Ukrainian. I, in general, I do it via social network because I have very, a lot of close friends in L. [home town], and I chat with them via skype or contact, which is the russian version of facebook.“ (HH\_01, male, Ukraine, work/studies)

In addition, some interviewees search for close contacts to people with a similar cultural background in the host society. This depends on the existence of, or access to the local ethnic communities in both cities. At this point, we assume significant differences between Hamburg and Dortmund because of the distinct composition of their migrant population. In the Dortmund sample, Chinese and Pakistani

interviewees as well as those interviewees from Latin America belong to migrant communities:

“So now I spend my free time with my family. With exception on Friday, there is a Pakistani community, we are students at the university, Master students, PhD students, on every Friday we play Cricket at the [...] parking area.” (DO\_03, male, Pakistan, PhD)

“Mostly with, of course with my family and friends I met here in the Institute. So work colleagues basically, but also from community friends, like people that we met in this Spanish community [...].[...] Usually it's a group in which one of the parents come from a Spanish speaking country, the other one is usually German and they want their kids to learn Spanish and play in Spanish.” (DO\_26, male, Argentina, work)

Contrasting experiences dominate in the Hamburg Sample. Interviewees from Ukraine, Russia and the Philippines talked about unsatisfying, even unpleasant contacts with their local communities in Hamburg.

„There is a tendency, It's a cultural thing, I think, if, if, if there..., they [Philippine community] have a tendency to be jealous of you. And they bring it on seriously. So I rather not be friends with people who are like that. (HH\_09, female, Philippines, work)

„There is a Ukrainian church and the Ukrainians, they, in general from the western part of Ukraine, they, you can find ukrainians around church and they, these guys are that type. Hm, from the other side, I do not communicate with the Ukrainians outside DESY.“ (HH\_01, male, Ukraine, work/studies)

These experiences can be traced back to the social, educational and demographic composition of the local communities, which differs from the interviewees' backgrounds. This may result from the varying migration paths among immigration groups. For example, it was reported that the Philippine community comprises mainly women with German husbands. Therefore it is very likely that the highly skilled migrants and their local communities are part of different social milieus and thus have distinct value orientations. For this reason, they find their social contacts predominately in their international work environment, if they work with a larger

institution. Thus, different forms of international or ethnic community building can be observed at these institutions.

Another way of finding an easy local incorporation is by obtaining membership in a religious association. These associations are mostly organized on a national level with regional subgroups and meetings. They can be used to establish first contacts in a new environment, or for joint activities:

“For me, because I was part of an organization, so, I could easily get in touch. But for others it was not that easy. [...] And this group again, it has many activities. Like we have meetings also. So we go and we going for our meetings. It’s on weekends also.” (HH\_10, male, India, work)

If work environments or local ethnic/religious communities do not facilitate social connections, digital social networks and internet platforms are a common way of getting to know other people at the current place of residence. The most favourite networking platforms mentioned by almost all interviewees in Hamburg are Internations.org and couchsurfing.de. These platforms also provide regional subgroups and offer a variety of events and joint activities. It was noted that single persons made more effort in meeting new people than those living with their families.

„It was not a problem [to meet new friends]. Even if it would be a problem, there is the couchsurfing service, you know that, yes? (I: Yes.) I am locked in and you can always come to some meetings and meet some new guys, new friends. (HH\_01, male, Ukraine, work/studies)

„And then there is another girl, I posted there [on couchsurfing.com] I needed a book for Vienna. And then she, ahem, she offered me her book. And we met in this coffee shop here. (Laughs) And we started to hanging out, too. And then there is another girl who said she needed one or two girls to play bowling with them. (Laugh) And then we started to hanging out, too.“ (HH\_09, female, Philippines, work)

Other networking options include local regulars' tables for cultural or language groups, which are also organized via the Internet. Examples are meetup.co (e.g. English-speaking regulars' table) and Facebook (girls gone international; mexicanos en Hamburgo). These web-based networks are also used to get in touch with single persons from the same cultural background in order to build permanent friendships:

„So, I thought it would be nice to have a couple of Brazilian friends here. Sometimes just to talk in Portuguese. And then I found her in internations and then I invited her for a coffee and we became friends.“ (HH\_05, male, Brazil, family reunion)

These examples show that the information and communication technology is not only used to maintain intensive transnational contacts. It is also used to connect with local people who share similar interests or socio-cultural backgrounds. Therefore the internet can be described as an instrument to foster the establishment of regional social networks, which is likely to be an indicator for local attachment.

## **6. Interim conclusion and outlook**

The first findings highlight the transitory character of the interviewee's stay in Germany as well as the intensity of their transnational ties. Furthermore, they reflect different strategies and practices for local incorporation.

On the one hand, the maintenance of long-distance ties suggests that these may be barriers to the development of more profound local ties and attachment. Some interviewees report strong social, emotional, cultural connections and/or ties based on a shared identity with their respective home countries, regions or cities. In this context, the availability of inexpensive and increasingly sophisticated technology is facilitating the maintenance of transnational ties. This may impact the formation of local ties and thus contribute to a lower degree of local incorporation. In addition, the short duration of stay and the intention to return home or relocate in the future may also explain weaker local ties and a stronger maintenance of transnational connections.

On the other hand, some migrants have succeeded in establishing stronger local social networks. A diverse and international work environment, where people can connect with others who share common interests, fosters local ties. Furthermore, many interviewees pursue a close contact to people with similar cultural backgrounds. Interviewees actively participate in a migrant community to maintain their cultural identity, for acclimatisation purposes or in order to address recurrent cultural differences. In this context the internet has also an important function. Digital

social networks and platforms are used to connect with local people and with people from the same cultural or international background. The internet makes migrants less dependent on existing local migrant communities, which may not share the same values and interests.

In summary, it can be said that highly qualified migrants are actively involved on different spatial scales (through communication, transactions, identification, emotions, travelling), which explains why their activities in both cities may be different from those of more settled parts of the population. The existence of such multiple spatial attachments suggests a less profound relationship with local spaces and that this group is less embedded into everyday local life. In contrast, different strategies for local incorporation were found. The intensity and character of these activities as well as the composition of their local social networks seem to largely depend on their future perspectives, their family status and their work environment.

The next step comprises further analysis of the relation between migration, incorporation and transnationality. This will include a comparison of the Dortmund and the Hamburg case studies, which is expected to produce insights about the interrelation of urban structures and the incorporation of migrants. The different economic framework conditions and job opportunities, as well as the divergent infrastructures and varying migrant communities will be analyzed as influencing factors for different ways of incorporation, and in relation to the intensity of transnational connections. Based on these findings, we will further investigate how transnational ties, the use of space and civic engagement affect the cities' society in different sectors like local participation, education, housing market, infrastructures and service provision.

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