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# Mobilities in Asian-German transnational spaces: Temporary migrants' experiences, perceptions and motivations

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## **Abstract**

Temporary migration has become an increasingly important phenomenon, also within the German migratory context. This report identifies the qualitative characteristics of temporary transnational migration in the German-Asian transnational space. It concentrates on temporary migrants from Asia in Germany and to a lesser degree on German return migrants from Asia in the categories international students, professionals, family members, asylum seekers/refugees, as well as lifestyle migrants. The presented findings are the result of qualitative interviews, in which temporary migrants were asked about their perceptions, experiences and aspirations related to their stays. Based on these results, the report aims to provide an overview about the interviewees' motivations to migrate, their feelings of acceptance and belonging in the society of destination, the forms and intensity of their transnational links and activities, as well as their future plans. These aspects are separately addressed for the politico-legal, socio-economic and socio-cultural realms and in the conclusion brought together and related to aspects of temporariness.

## **Keywords**

Temporariness, transnational, migration, mobility, Asia, Germany

## 1. Introduction

This report provides empirical insights into the current situation of temporary migration in the Asian-German transnational spaces.<sup>1</sup> In order to better understand the contemporary migration context in its politico-legal, socio-economic and socio-cultural dimensions, it is also important to take into account the history of immigration to Germany. Past immigration to Germany until 1989 took place under two different political systems. In the case of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), the first large group of immigrants consisted of about 14 million persons of German origin who were expelled from Central and Eastern Europe after the Second World War (Kossert, 2008). While these immigrants came to Germany as refugees, the second major group of people arriving in Germany consisted of labour migrants. During the 1950s, temporary labour recruitment initiatives, with the objective to attract relatively short-term cheap and young labour from the peripheral neighbour countries of Southern Europe, were initiated (*Gastarbeiterprogramm*). This programme was based on the idea of temporariness and considered as a rotating system, meaning that guest workers should return to their countries of origin after the end of the contract and be replaced by other ones. The rationale for the initiation of the guest worker programme was a booming economy and partly resulting labour gaps. These labour sectors should be filled temporarily by around 14 million guest workers, who arrived in West Germany between 1950 and 1973, when the recruitment programme officially ended (Bade and Oltmer, 2007). After the recruitment ban (*Anwerbestopp*), the numbers of international migrants related to the guest worker programme rose, due to family reunification, to 16 million people who came to Germany until 1990. At the same time, about 12 million former guest workers and family members returned to their countries of origin (Bade and Oltmer, 2007, Treibel, 2008). Although significantly lower in quantities, after the end of the *Gastarbeiterprogramm* foreign skilled labour immigration to West Germany continued, based on exceptions to the recruitment ban (*Anwerbestoppausnahmeverordnung*). This was the case for different sectors, including gastronomy as well as medical, home and child care, but also family reunification and international studies were still important motives for immigration (Treibel, 2008). Regarding the case of asylum seekers

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and refugees, the inflow from former Yugoslavia played a central role at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, leading to a peak of almost half a million applications in 1992 (Borkert and Bosswick, 2011).

The motivation for the employment of foreign temporary labour migrants was in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) very similar to the reasons in West Germany. However, the labour force was recruited from a different range of countries, often representing political allies, such as Poland, Hungary, the USSR, Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, Algeria, Mozambique, and later Angola and China. The total number of foreigners amounted in 1989 to 190,400 people in the GDR (Gruner-Domić, 1999).

Nowadays, international migration in Germany has gained again increasing importance in quantitative terms. In 2013, Germany was the second most popular immigration country after the USA in absolute numbers (BAMF, 2015a). Currently, with 12.4 per cent of all international migrants, immigration from Asia represents the third largest inflow of foreign people after EU and non-EU countries (Kreienbrink and Mayer, 2014). The number of Chinese nationals in the category of international students is particularly important and has been constantly rising since 2000. In 2013 more than 9,000 international first semester students from China were enrolled in German higher education institutions, which is by far the highest share of all international students and only followed by France, Spain, the United States and India with slightly more than 4,000 international students from each of these countries (BAMF, 2015a). In the category of high-skilled migrants, India and China are the most important countries of origin. Related to this growing importance of China and India as countries of origin of high-skilled workers and international students is the concomitant rise of the number of family reunification visas issued for Chinese and Indian nationals between 2007 and 2013. In contrast, the number of family reunification visas for Turkish nationals steadily decreased, so that the total of family reunification visas issued during this period remained relatively stable at around 40,000 cases p.a. (BAMF, 2015a). The largest share of immigrants in Germany is currently represented by asylum seekers and refugees. The number of asylum applications in Germany has been significantly rising from 48,589 applications in 2010 to 202,834 applications in 2014 and 256,938 applications from January to August 2015. In August 2015, 30 per cent of all asylum applicants originated from Syria, other important countries of origin were the Balkan states, particularly Albania, as well as Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea and Pakistan (BAMF, 2015b).

In general terms, the number of German emigrants has remained relatively stable over the last decade. While most of them moved to other European countries or the USA, emigration to Turkey also continued to be important, with 4.4 per cent of German emigrants moving there. Asian countries are not among the major destinations of Germans, with the exception

of China and Thailand. Migration to China is of particular relevance in the categories international students and researchers (BAMF, 2015a).

The growing significance of immigration to Germany has been increasingly considered in the politico-legal realm (Aksakal and Schmidt-Verkerk, 2014). Particularly, policies on immigration in Germany were adapted by the New Foreigner Law (*Neues Zuwanderungsgesetz*) in 2005, where several legal opening mechanisms were created and institutionalised. Legal opening mechanisms in many countries are selective in nature and geared towards the attraction of migrants with particular characteristics, for instance by providing easier entry for high-skilled than for low-skilled migrants (Beine et al., 2015). Also in Germany, immigration policies are designed to attract certain migrant categories, such as professionals or students from non-EU and non-European countries (Aksakal and Schmidt-Verkerk, 2014). This selective opening, as expressed in the law to limit immigration (*Zuwanderungsbegrenzungs-gesetz*) is strongly related to the need of foreign professionals due to a present – but above all a future – scarcity of skilled people. As argued by Castles (2009) in general terms, also in Germany this scarcity is mainly related to demographic change and consequent gaps in certain labour segments that might affect the country's competitiveness in the global economy.

There are different legal aspects that reveal the interplay between the duration of stay and the intended selection of migrants (Aksakal and Schmidt-Verkerk, 2014).<sup>2</sup> While the 2005 New Foreigner Law foresaw options for high-qualified migrants and their families to easily and quickly obtain a permanent settlement permit (*Niederlassungserlaubnis*), the 2012 Blue Card scheme, implementing a 2009 EU directive, limits the stay to up to four years (Green, 2013). Another remarkable aspect is visible in the context of international students, whose stays are limited to the duration of their studies. However, according to the New Foreigner Law, after completion of their study they had the right to stay for 12 months to find a job in Germany. This period was extended in 2012 to 18 months (Mayer, 2013), indicating the intention of the German government to facilitate the transition from study to work, which is likely to include longer stays in Germany. In the context of legislation concerning asylum seekers and refugees, particularly two aspects relate to temporariness. On the one hand according to a federal law (*Gesetz über den Aufenthalt, die Erwerbstätigkeit und die Integration von Ausländern im Bundesgebiet*), all successful asylum applicants need to prove the legitimisa-

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<sup>2</sup> Rather than showing a full picture of current immigration policies in Germany, the above discussed points highlight in an exemplary manner existing legal challenges with regard to the steering of international migrants' temporariness, mostly emerging by the need of skilled foreign professionals.

tion of their stay based on humanitarian reasons after three years, which leaves them with a high level of uncertainty with respect to their future in Germany. On the other hand, based on more recent legislation (*Gesetz zur Einstufung weiterer Staaten als sichere Herkunftsstaaten und zur Erleichterung des Arbeitsmarktzugangs für Asylbewerber und geduldete Ausländer*), since November 2014 asylum applicants have the right to enter the labour market after three months in Germany, which represents a further reduction of the waiting time from nine months after September 2013, and one year before September 2013. This development rather suggests that the German government wants high-skilled asylum applicants to stay and integrate into the labour market. Even more complicated is the situation for tolerated persons who do not obtain a residence permit but who cannot be expelled from Germany either (*Gedultete*). According to a new law, which came into force in August 2015 (*Gesetz zur Neubestimmung des Bleiberechts und der Aufenthaltsbeendigung*), tolerated foreigners can obtain a residence permit after living in Germany for six years (with children) or eight years (without children), when they can prove that they are integrated into German society, which includes employment. Particularly, young people can obtain a residence permit, if they pursue university education or vocational training or work in a high-skilled profession, corresponding to a bottleneck labour sector in Germany. In this case the right to residence is thus linked to an economic contribution to German society.

Next to these politico-legal aspects also socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects are important for understanding recent immigration to Germany (Green, 2013). In public discourse, controversial views on immigration are still continuing, which can not only provide important insights into societal settings in Germany but also influence the temporariness of international migration. Two forms of discourses can be identified, on the one hand discourses on the societal creation of a “welcome culture” (*Schaffung einer Willkommenskultur*). On the other hand, there is a debate on “poverty migration” (*Armutsmigration*) that thematises recent immigration as a threat for the German social system that is in turn associated with adverse societal impacts in Germany. These controversial political discourses indicate that immigration to Germany is currently polarised between those immigrants, who supposedly represent a development threat (asylum seekers and refugees from safe third states), who are perceived as poverty migrants, and those, who are associated with development benefits (e.g. professionals and entrepreneurs from non EU-countries) (Aksakal and Schmidt-Verkerk, 2014). Particularly, the discussion on “poverty migration” in Germany is directed to the socio-economic aspects of current international migrants, often, but not exclusively, discussed in Germany in the case of current immigration from poorer regions of the EU. This includes, according to this perspective, better employment opportunities, access to the benefits of existing social policies and improvement of incomes, assumedly involving high costs for the German society. However, no research-based evidence exists that could confirm that

current temporary migration produces these disadvantages. To the contrary, in general terms (Black et al., 2005) and particularly in the case of Germany (Hinte et al., 2012) there are considerations which suggest that the opposite is likely to be true.

Bearing these reflections in mind, this report aims to provide empirical information on previously noted politico-legal, socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects from a migrants' perspective. The report concentrates on temporary migrants from Asia in Germany, as well as to a lesser degree on German return migrants from Asia, with which it is intended to provide a holistic picture of the Asian-German transnational spaces. Temporary transnational migration is a relatively less considered type of human movement, and in line with the objectives of the EURA-NET project ([https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/%28en%29/tdrc/ag\\_comcad/research/EURA-NET.html](https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/%28en%29/tdrc/ag_comcad/research/EURA-NET.html)), this report seeks to contribute to understanding this migratory context by researching the Asian-German transnational spaces.

Accordingly, this report represents a country-specific analysis that addresses the qualitative characteristics of temporary transnational migration from different Asian countries to Germany and vice versa. It is based on a total of 84 qualitative interviews, 73 with Asian migrants in Germany and 11 with German return migrants from Asia, in which migrants' perceptions, experiences and aspirations in the politico-legal, socio-economic and socio-cultural dimensions were investigated. Most interviews were conducted in English, some in German and some – with the help of native speakers – in Urdu, Mandarin Chinese and Tagalog. The most important categories of Asian temporary migrants in Germany are identified as international students, professionals, family members and asylum seekers and refugees. According to the population size and significance of each country of origin in the respective migrant categories, we interviewed 26 international students, 21 professionals, 13 asylum seekers and refugees and 13 family members. The most relevant countries of origin were represented by temporary migrants from China, India, Turkey, Ukraine, Pakistan, Syria, Korea, the Philippines, Afghanistan and Vietnam. In the context of temporary migration from Germany to Asia we interviewed two lifestyle migrants, three professionals and six international students who temporarily stayed in China, Korea, Thailand, Japan and Turkey.

The categorisation into different migrant groups is based on the legal status as well as people's motivations to migrate. However, this does not mean that they represent clearly distinguishable migrant categories. In fact, some respondents demonstrate high flexibility related to their attachment to respective migrant categories, meaning that they are often simultaneously situated in different categories. This multiple embeddedness can already be a characteristic of people previous to the arrival. An example are prospective migrants who already studied in their countries of origin and who aim to continue their studies in Germany but who, due to legal convenience, first enter Germany as family members and then enrol in



higher education. However, the simultaneous involvement in different, for the present research relevant, migrant categories can also occur later on during the stay. This is, for instance, the case when international students engage in entrepreneurial activities while they are studying. Similar methodological challenges occur when studying undocumented migrants. Due to the difficulty of access to undocumented immigrants, they could not be considered explicitly in the investigation. However, a broad range of interviewed asylum seekers and refugees entered Germany as undocumented migrants and later applied for asylum. This observation indicates a methodological challenge because the information provided by these people can be distorted due to the reference to previous experiences that do not correspond to their current category.

Hence, it was decided to categorise these particular cases according to their relevant legal status at the time of the interview, which often but not always corresponds to their own idea about the purpose of their stay and their consequent identification with a migrant category. The interviews provide a rich source of qualitative information. The most important empirical results with regard to temporary transnational migration between Asia and Germany are categorized, and analysed in the remainder of this report. It is divided into four sections providing information on the migration context and the politico-legal, socio-economic and socio-cultural dimensions of Asian-German transnational spaces.

## **2. Migration context**

The majority of the interviewed temporary Asian international students and professionals in Germany have previous internal or international migration experience. Thereby international destinations vary between other Asian countries, the USA, or other European countries. Previous shorter stays in Germany, for instance as exchange students or participants in a summer school, are also common. In line with this statement, there is evidence that the attachment to certain migrant categories can change in the course of different migratory experiences. This means that previous migration experiences were often based on different motivations than the current ones. An example for this change in migrant categories are previous stays of high-skilled workers who became international students in Germany, or vice versa, as becomes visible in the case of an Indian professional: “Uh, it was like, from India I went to the US, to study, and from US I came back to India, worked there for about three and a half years, and then I moved to Germany” (Prof. 1, 21/05/15).

Although many of the interviewed asylum seekers and refugees spent only several days or weeks in transit before arriving in Germany, there is also empirical evidence of longer stays on the way to Germany for different purposes, such as education or the financing of the journey to Germany. One asylum applicant from Syria said that he had pursued medical

studies in Ukraine and then moved on to Germany where he would like to get his approbation and work as a medical doctor. Another asylum applicant, also from Syria, had to earn money in Turkey first to pay the smuggler: “In Istanbul I worked in a restaurant for a year. Then I bought [the passage to Germany] with the smuggler” (Asyl. 1, 10/03/15, translation from German by authors).

One exception regarding previous migratory experiences represents the category of family members who followed their spouses to Germany, often as a first international movement. As some of the interviews with family members show, previous international stays of the spouses were limited to only a few months, for instance to complete a short-term work assignment or for the purpose of studies and therefore without a fixed income. It is likely that in these cases it was considered as difficult to move with the whole family due to the limited time period and/or financial restrictions, particularly when the family members also worked in the country of origin.

Similarly to Asian migrants in Germany, previous migration experiences are also important for German migrants in Asia and are equally diverse as discussed among Asians in Germany. German returnees who went to Asia as international students, young professionals or lifestyle migrants had worked, studied or undertaken extensive travel in other countries, not necessarily restricted to Asia. This stays in relation to the fact that migrants in these categories enjoyed traveling previous to their current stay. Yet, as in the case of Asian migrants in Germany, some German returnees had already established some professional or personal bonds with the Asian country they temporarily lived in through previous visits. For example, one lifestyle migrant who worked for a UN agency in Bangkok in the 1980s and 1990s and who now spends six months in Bangkok every year, said: “after that professional period in Thailand, I worked, and now I come back during my early retirement” (German\_Life. 1, 15/12/15).

Back to Asian temporary migrants in Germany, in general terms, motivations for emigration are based on career development, particularly for professionals; getting to know new cultures and extending the personal horizon, especially for international students; and for searching protection in the case of asylum seekers and refugees. Migrant networks (Boyd, 1989, King, 2012) are relevant among almost all temporary migrants since they facilitate outmigration and serve also as stimuli to migrate to particular destinations. Asylum seekers and refugees constitute a particular case since forced outmigration represents an unexpected disruption in the life courses of people, which foils future plans. Plans not only require a secure living environment but also adequate structures for the achievement of career trajectories and the conclusion of studies. This means that next to the search for protection, career and educational development are additional motives for outmigration. In contrast to some existing public discourses that identify asylum seeking and flight as predominantly

economically motivated South-North migration, results show that people often seek a continuation of interrupted career and education goals.

Related to the motives of outmigration are the reasons for choosing Germany as a destination. In line with previous findings (Bessey, 2012), the interviews showed that in the case of international students the very low tuition fees in comparison to other countries often determined the choice. As one of the interviewed international students put it:

The concept of not paying for my education was very appealing to me, I have to be really honest, because Master and education in the US is very, very expensive. It's very expensive. Especially the universities I got admission to, it was a lot of money as well. So that was definitely the fact for me to consider as well (Stud. 11, 01/05/15).

This is particularly the case for international students who consider themselves as not belonging to the wealthier population segments in their country of origin: "Free education was the first thing, because the UK university was comparatively expensive, and plus, I am not from a very rich background" (Stud. 2, 09/05/15). Yet, also the reputation of certain university disciplines, such as engineering, are major aspects for choosing Germany as study sites:

It was mainly from people only because in India most of them would opt for the US, since they all are from computer science and information science background. But I was from mechanical background. So, for me all my seniors mainly told about Germany is mainly known for automotive mechanical sector in this way. So, this is one of the reasons why I considered Germany (Stud. 12, 30/04/15).

Similarly, for professionals the reputation of several sectors of the German labour market, particularly in certain areas of science, and personal career development are perceived as the most important reason for temporary stays in Germany. In this vein, professional stays in Germany seem to be considered as advantageous for career development, particularly in highly specialised areas of science: "Because my subject is the high polymer, Germany is one of the origins of this subject, so I came here afterwards" (Prof. 21, 06/05/15, translation from Mandarin Chinese by the interviewer). Also, some migrants believe that Germany has a high reputation in the field of medical studies, and there is evidence that professionals choose to stay there, even if they did not have any previous links to the country. Consider the statement of a medical doctor from Turkey:

No, I have no links to Germany, no one I knew in Germany, but I always wanted to do neuroscience and when I was looking for institutes good in neuroscience, Gottingen was one of the best institutes where I can go. So that's why I chose Germany (Prof. 6, 02/03/15).

For the interviewed Germans who returned from Asian countries the main reasons for temporary stays abroad were often equally based on a mixture of cultural, educational and research-related goals. Related to the motives for international stays of researchers, consider the following statement:

In Kazakhstan I wanted to conduct a field work for my current research project [...] so I decided to get in contact with the European Union delegation in Astana, Kazakhstan and

during my stay there I was research intern at the EU delegation for the first 4 weeks and then I worked out a cooperation with another University in Kazakhstan, but in Almaty, which is the German-Kazakh University there. So I was conducting research but I had this institution supporting me (German\_Prof. 1, 27/05/15).

Another German researcher who stayed various times in China, Indonesia and Thailand for the purpose of research and teaching reflected on his choice of the destination countries:

It was crucial that research interests of the colleagues from the region corresponded to my research focus. On the other hand, the interest in the countries and, in the role of the respective countries and societies for my research was also crucial and important. So I cannot say it was either or, but rather both (German\_Prof. 3, 13/05/15).

For the case of German students in Asia, the reasons for choosing particular destinations are often related to temporary stays due to credit mobility (the study of only one semester abroad), to the language skill development and to thematic specialisation phase of students.

Regarding the latter, a German MA student said:

Why I chose the host country? Well, as a sinologist, a Chinese speaking environment is adequate. That is why going to China or Taiwan was a logical step. Therefore, for me there was no doubt to decide to go there (German\_Stud. 6, 10/06/15, translation from German by authors).

Turning back to Asian migrants in Germany, their future migration plans are subject to a high level of uncertainty, and much seems to depend on adequate opportunities in Germany and elsewhere:

Right now as I said that after doing MA I don't know that I will be applying or taking so many options from other European countries, maybe USA and the UK also, so the best option, it depends, I will go for the best option (FM. 17, 15/05/15).

A range of the interviewed migrants expressed wishes to stay in Germany, for instance to find a job after completing their studies, but also envision a transnational mobile lifestyle and could imagine returning to their countries of origin. These considered options for the future are strongly influenced by different legal, social and economic factors, which are discussed in the respective sections and brought in relation to temporariness in the conclusion.

For the case of international German migrants in Asia, particularly international students, evidence shows that the temporary stay abroad among international students represents only one phase of their career development, and that qualification processes often continue in Germany. This means that the particular purpose of being abroad mainly determines the duration of stay. Reasons for returning are often related to personal motives, such as to conclude their studies:

Because it was just for one semester, of course my plan was to come back to Germany... I didn't graduate before I went to China so I had to come back to Germany to study and to graduate (German\_Stud. 2, 19/05/15).

Furthermore, temporary forms of migration involve cross-border bonds. These bonds include transnational social spaces and social practices at different levels (Aksakal & Schmidt-Verkerk, 2015, Faist et al., 2013). Our research results on Asian temporary migrants in Ger-

many show that transnational relations and activities play a major role during different stages of the temporary stay in Germany. However, in contrast to previous studies about long-term labour migration (Basch et al., 1994, Glick Schiller et al., 1992), the interviews show that temporary migration is linked to transnationalism in different ways, sometimes depending on the attachment to particular migrant categories. As discussed in the corresponding sections of this report, these variations are expressed in different dimensions.

Interviews with German migrants showed that some of them would like to return to Asia or move elsewhere, indicating that in the future circular migration can play a role. People's cross-border transactions do not necessarily have to be based on spatial mobility but can also include virtual forms of exchange, which is approached by Urry (2000) under the term "immobilities". This means for Germans in Asia that transnational relations include contacts to people in their hometowns during their stays abroad but also contacts to people in previous destinations after return.

### **3. Politico-legal aspects**

The politico-legal sphere includes different analytical levels, such as the international, the national and the local. This section focuses on the national and the local level. At the national level, it addresses national regulations on migration, including the treatment of temporary migrants by institutions. At the local level, individual aspects, such as migrants' obligations and rights, as well as their political participation in different spatial contexts, are relevant. In the following these individual aspects are addressed by the employment of empirical data. These empirical considerations are revisited in the conclusion where the theoretical implications regarding migrants' temporariness are also discussed.

On the national level, legal regulations can have an important influence on the entrance and stay of temporary migrants. Particularly, this is relevant for international students who meet the requirements for studying in Germany with respect to their skills (previous diploma, grade averages, language skills, etc.) but who have difficulties to prove their financial independence by holding a bank account with EUR 8,000, which is also a requirement for receiving a student visa. As the following quote illustrates, this poses a difficulty to some international students due to their socio-economic family background:

About visa, it was quite hard, because without scholarship you cannot easily get visa. I had to deposit 8000 euro in my bank account to show them that I'm financially ok and I'll be there for my year, it will be no problem for them or I will not ask for money or this kind of stuff. So, first I asked my family to give my money...And I deposit it on my bank account here. And the process for bank account it is also a hard process, because you have to go to embassy to do testation for your form and all stuff and at the end you have sent it and they will send you and you have to transfer money (Stud.1, 27/11/2014).

Another hurdle perceived by family members as a result of immigration laws are language skill tests. Since 2007, dependents from non-EU countries need to prove German language competence prior to their arrival in Germany (Green, 2013).

At the first time we applied for the language learning visa, we had decided together that I came firstly to have a look, if I found here good, then we could live here, if not, then live in China. Consequently my first application was rejected [and] we had waited for a long time...After the rejection of my first application, it seems that you have a record of rejection of any one European country, it is impossible for you to get any visa of other European country (FM. 13, 06/05/15, translation from Mandarin Chinese by interviewer).

Institutional practices of immigration policies are perceived differently by distinct temporary migrants. The personal considerations on policies and institutions vary due to the category in play and given to the support received previous to and during the stays. As in the case of a Philippine nurse who came to Germany on the basis of a bilateral labour programme, institutional support by the German government exists. This support has led to the perception of a smooth visa application process:

It was fast. It was well organized. It was God's blessing; it's already planned. It was not like, when you arrived you didn't know what to do. Everything was ok. The process was smooth (Prof. 19, 23/06/15, translation from Tagalog by interviewer).

In other cases empirical findings also indicate that support by employers is perceived as a facilitator during the process of obtaining a visa, as becomes evident in the following quotation:

Thankfully, my firm had basically coordinated, my visits, my appointments with the foreigners' office. So, it was very easy for me. So all I had to do was to go there talk to them and out. And but from what I've heard, I think the people at the foreigners' office are quite helpful. I don't think it's a big challenge to interact with them (Prof. 1, 21/04/15).

This perception indicates that some temporary migrants feel privileged due to the support they receive. However, in some cases, interviewed migrants perceived that although they had support, bureaucracy was quite difficult; consider the case of an Indian professional who tried to change her legal status from an international student to a professional visa:

I mean when I had to apply even for my Blue Card visa my university professor had to write a letter why I should be, ok first of all they did not recognize innovation manager suitable for Blue Card visa, because they've never heard this status before. So even though my company sent all, filled up all the requirements they need to, my professor has to write an extended letter to the office explaining what innovation management is and why it's required. So yes, it was a little bit of a bureaucratic nightmare (Prof. 10, 13/05/15).

Others who do not benefit from such support perceive even higher bureaucratic hurdles in the acquisition of visa, indicating inequalities resulting from different migration channels. This is illustrated by the following statement of a family member from Pakistan.

Yes, I was not satisfied on this whole process. Like, initially they took so long on the verification process in Pakistan. In Pakistan, for an appointment in embassy you have to book it 3-4 months before, as there is a huge number of the applicants. There is no seg-

regation of the visa categories like student, business, visit and family re-union. So, I think that they should assign some segments to different categories. I think in this way one can consume less time (FM. 17, 27/08/15, translation from Urdu by interviewer).

One reason for the high level of bureaucracy considered by those who do not benefit from any formal support is the level of knowledge of the German language. This is perceived as the most important obstacle when formally dealing with institutions. It is noted as particularly striking for those who had previous migration experiences.

Everything is in German and I came here with absolutely no language skill in German, so I had to get, like it was really, really difficult to get the things done actually. It was not as straight forward as in UK or in the US (Prof. 10, 13/05/15).

Also, institutional discrimination is identified as an important hurdle during legal procedures. These barriers are not only perceived as bureaucratic but also related to the language aspect, which includes the difficulty of officials to communicate in other languages. This situation is sometimes associated with practices of discrimination.

I feel like whenever I come into a contact with the German bureaucracy, like at the foreigners' office or like address registration place and again, I don't know if this is real or my own perception, but like I've been told "you need to, I can't help you, you need to bring a German person with you here" or something like this. And I mean she said that to me in English, so she obviously understands English and I didn't really quite understand you know, why she felt the need to tell me that I need to bring someone else to translate things. So that kind of a, like I wonder if it's an instance of racial discrimination (Prof. 3, 06/05/15).

Arbitrariness and the lack of knowledge and organisation by officials are criticised as important additional issues in the visa procedure, as stated by the following family member:

And, and it's basically, all of them don't have the same information across the board. Even [in] the same office [in the] morning, one person says, I can give you, that's the rule, I can give you. And [in the] afternoon, [an]other person says, no, the rule says something else to me... Probably people don't have clarity because blue card is probably a new concept and just came before two years. I don't know two years is too long time to educate people? (FM.8, 27/06/15).

Particularly refugees and asylum seekers, for whom less formal support exists in dealing with their asylum application, argued that the long waiting time and the uncertainty about decisions regarding the outcome of their applications was perceived as highly stressful:

We all are under psychological stress. Every night when I go to sleep I thought what will be my answer to immigration authorities during interview for asylum. Many people are waiting for their turn who came here before me. Due to psychological pressure many people cannot describe how they had travel (Asyl. 12, 18/05/15, translation from Urdu by interviewer).

While immigration policies constitute a fixed formal framework aiming to manage immigration, including the maximum length of stay in different migrant categories, the question how long migrants effectively stay is not in the reach of such immigration policies. As noted above, migrants' motivations seem to play a major role for decisions about the actual length of stay within the legally determined timeframe. As the empirical data show, temporary migrants think that different kinds of issues in the politico-legal realm exist in Germany that they

perceive as barriers, such as lack of support, institutional discrimination and arbitrariness and complex bureaucratic procedures, including the formal recognition of foreign qualifications. Related to the above noted uncertainty of many international migrants with respect to their future migration plans, these politico-legal aspects might contribute to final decisions about the length of stay in Germany.

In the case of temporary German migrants in Asia, there is a diverse picture of perceptions by international students and professionals of immigration policies and the treatment by institutions, sometimes depending on the respective countries where they stayed but also on the migration channels. Consider the case of a German international student related to the experiences of the visa application in China:

The first visa was just, the university in China sent me something like the invitation letter, and, yeah, they sent me this letter, then, I call the agency here in Germany they helped me to apply for the visa because they normally you have to go on your own to the, in person to the embassy in Frankfurt or in Berlin or in Hamburg (German\_Stud. 2, 19/05/15).

In the case of lifestyle migrants, these facilities do not exist in the same way and bureaucratic processes are sometimes perceived as highly demanding.

[It was] very complicated, because you need to write down everything as a Non-Chinese national. This means every day you need to indicate where you sleep, where you travel to, how you enter the country and how you are leaving the country. I think this is very complicated (German\_Life. 2, 25/06/15).

Similar to the experiences of Asians in Germany, also the Germans in Asia experienced a low level of bureaucratic hurdles, when their stays were embedded in formal institutional arrangements by companies or universities. With regard to the institutional treatment of Germans in Asian countries there is evidence that some German migrants who were in touch with official institutions perceived those as not well-informed and not very demanding in comparison to German ones.

Turning back to Asian migrants in Germany, with regard to obligations and rights, the majority of temporary migrants in the different categories value the opportunities related to the freedom of movement. This means, with exception of the UK, practically an expansion of travelling as a part of the professional and free-time activities within Europe in contrast to travelling to other countries, such as the USA, Canada or Australia. In most migrant categories traveling due to the freedom of movement was used for extensive free-time journeys. Also professional activities are a concrete outcome of the possibility to freely move within Europe, as a family member states with regard to the conferences she attends together with her husband.

Yes, I visited Switzerland, France, South Africa, and Italy. Within Germany I visited Munich, Cologne, Bonn, Hamburg and Paderborn. I visited all these places in vacations and to participate in some conferences (FM. 18, 29/07/15, translation from Urdu by interviewer).



The importance of freedom as a right is not only limited to free movement, but also includes the possibility of free expression of opinions. This is especially relevant with respect to sending countries, in which the expression of the political viewpoint is hardly possible, which typically disembogues in flight and seeking for asylum. Interestingly, the freedom of expression of opinion is also a relevant topic for other migrant categories. Consider this statement of a professional, stressing the motivation to come to Germany:

I have better impressions here, while I worked a year in Turkey and my best motivation to come here was politics. And I cannot read newspapers now in Turkey while, every day I can hear bad news and it makes me, and I worked one year and I realised that the system is not so good in Turkey and if I stay there I would be, I don't want to spend my life in Turkey, because it gets worse every day (Prof. 6, 02/03/15).

A broad range of interviewed temporary migrants do not exhibit significant political engagement in homeland and immigration policies. Also little commitment exists in labour union activities for the case of professionals, which might be connected to distinct understandings of the role of workers in the context of labour politics.

With regard to the transnational political engagement in hometown associations (HTAs) there is also a contrast. Previous empirical findings suggest that long-term immigrants are politically engaged in HTAs' self-administration in Germany (Çağlar, 2006). In the context of temporary immigration in Germany this is only the case among certain international students, who are involved in student union activities and thereby influence general university policies. Complementing the findings by Schüller & Schüler-Zhou (2013) on Chinese student associations, another interesting example is the one of an Indian student association, which provides help for newly arriving international students in Germany, organises some Indian cultural activities and supports Indian students – in collaboration with the Indian embassy – to find internships or employment positions in Germany.

During summer fest we provide Indian culture and Indian food to people ... so we make money through that which is fully replaced towards receiving students and helping them arrive safely in Hamburg, ... we provide them with tutors which they can contact for any further purposes. Second, we have a website through which we answer all relevant questions for every student who would like to join here. So we actually give them a preview through our website about how their life would be in Germany and answer these questions. Another objective that Indian association does take care of is to search for internships for students through companies here by showing our students. That's basically through the Indian consulate will be very helpful in helping us find organization of business people who are in requirement of students as interns (Stud. 13, 13/04/15).

As the quotation shows, this student association provides support not only during the stays in the form of assistance upon arrival and after graduation, but also in preparation of the stays. The interviewed international students active in these associations are not directly involved in politics related to countries of origin and destination, but engaged in formal political structures of higher education institutions.

Yet, transnational political practices are more explicitly expressed in the motivations of asylum seekers and refugees regarding their future political engagement with homeland policies. As noted, this represents an exemption with respect to the political engagement among temporary transnational migrants in general. Consider the statement of a Bangladeshi asylum seeker:

My wish [is] to learn [from] here and I need to spread it to Bangladesh, because we are learning, we are developing country and you are developed, fully developed country. Because I'm learning something from here I want to share with my country people "please go this way, because this way is good for you, this way is good for the people". So I want to learn from Germany, I want to share with my people and fundamentalist people actually, yes. Yes, my wish to here, because I want to learn from here and I want to share with my friends, with my society in Bangladesh do this, do that, because it's humanity and this is a right way for the people (Asyl. 5, 15/05/15).

The aimed political engagement mentioned in the previous quote has not yet been realised but it currently only based on future plans. Nevertheless, the statements show that asylum seekers and refugees as temporary migrants maintain their transnational bonds; they do not only plan to benefit from political freedom in Germany but are also willing to contribute to the right to free expression in their countries of origin.

A similar panorama prevails in the case of Germans in Asia, who also did not engage in transnational political activities during their stay. Yet, in some cases, after return engagement in a respective migrant organisation was mentioned. In line with this observation, German return migrants remain interested in political and societal developments in the countries of previous temporary residence.

#### **4. Socio-economic aspects**

This section focuses on temporary migrants' employment conditions, professional qualifications and opportunities either in Germany or in the transnational context. The study reveals that the majority of interviewed professionals had at the time of the interview a full-time employment, often representing the reason for migration and the stay in Germany. The most important labour opportunities used by temporary transnational migrants in Germany are in the areas of different kinds of engineering, medical professions, science, management, journalism, law, and consultancy. Also, a range of international students maintain themselves by different kinds of part-time jobs, either in the university as student assistants or in other labour sectors. With regard to the latter, consider the following statement of a Pakistani student:

I have a contract as Aushilfe [auxiliary stuff] in Burger King. I have to do everything. Like in Germany... cleaning, or... cleaning the washrooms and all. All stuff. Is, when you are working there, you have to do everything (Stud. 2, 09/03/15).

In contrast, most investigated professionals perceived their labour environment and personal satisfaction positively. Professionals, who are recruited in German companies, often argued that they consider the content of work, working hours, work load and responsibility as positive, as the following statement of a Philippine nurse working in a hospital indicates:

It is a little difficult and seems new because there are some things practiced in the Philippines which are not done here and vice versa. Because here you think, you decide. In the Philippines, the doctor will order this that then you do it. Here, you think, for example the patient is this that, I think what to do this that then I will tell the doctor. Here the relationship between doctor and nurse is like partners. Sometimes, I would suggest, "do you like to give this that?" "Ok, go, you give." Here, you need to be brainy, you need to think. That's where some people find it difficult. Because in the Philippines we are used to spoonfeeding. The doctors says you do. And another thing, the technology. It's really advanced here. (Prof. 14, 23/06/15, translation from Tagalog by interviewer).

Although most family members are involved in unpaid housework, some argued that they perceive this situation not as negative, and expressed their satisfaction with not being responsible for the household income, as becomes visible in the following statement:

Now in Germany I don't have any job and I have to stay at home for the whole day. Some time I thought that I was the person who was bread winner of the family and suppose to do everything. In my culture men are not supposed to sit in the home. They are supposed to work and remain outside for whole day. Right now in Germany I don't have any job. I am staying at home more than staying outside. No, I am having an amazing free time. I love movies. I love to have internet browsing. I always wanted to have some time for myself. So, right now I have all the time for myself. While staying at home I am enjoying my time (FM. 17, 14/08/15, translation from Urdu by interviewer).

The formal consideration of skills was often perceived as a long bureaucratic process by international students. Professional qualifications of highly-skilled migrants were mostly fully recognised, which was also facilitated by degrees obtained of many international students at internationally recognised institutions in the US or in other European countries. Medical doctors represent an exception because their qualifications are only partly recognised, which means that they have to pass additional exams in Germany:

There are two exams that I must pass for my approbation to have here. And they are about medical German and my medical information here. That's about communication with other doctors, other patients and how can I do documentation in hospital or so. And then I can have for two years working permit and then I must do another exam in this period, in this two year (Prof. 6, 02/03/15).

Next to this formal recognition also the acceptance of skills at an informal level matters, for instance by employers in the process of recruitment. The fluency of the working language, attitudes and social skills, often expected in German companies, can represent important mechanisms of exclusion, potentially leading to social inequality between foreign and domestic professionals. This corresponds to the perception of many migrants in different categories about the importance of speaking German in order to advance professionally, and to pursue career-related labour opportunities as expressed by a successful asylum applicant:

Ah actually it depends on my education. If I finish my education then I will try to get a good job. At the same time I will look for a, you know a factory job, cause I can't go for an

official job, because I can't speak very well German, so I can't go for an official job, so maybe I will look for a factory job (Asyl. 5, 15/05/15).

This is also relevant for family members who engage in entrepreneurial activities in Germany, as shown for the case of an Indian woman working in a traditional German family business:

My job as I'm getting, my biggest barrier in the language here, because I live in a very small village and since it's a family business you know, people are not naturally exposed to international languages [such as] English so my biggest obstacle is the language if once, now that I'm fluent somewhat in German I'm getting to do a lot of things corresponding to my education. (FM. 7, 27/04/15).

Another important socio-economic aspect temporary transnational migrants experience is occupational mobility, which is embedded in the broader context of social mobility. Social mobility can be defined as the movement of temporary migrants from one social position, category or situation to another (Berger, 2000).

Many of the interviewed professionals perceived migration experiences as an upward mobility in their life-course (intra-generational), as stated by an intercompany transferee with regard to his employment:

In India I was confined to one particular sales job, but here in this profile I'm more into general management. So in terms of exposure, in terms of profiling I'm better placed now (Prof. 16, 03/07/15).

Empirical evidence suggests that professionals working in German companies experience occupational upward mobility to an even higher degree than intercompany transferees in comparison to their previous position in the company. At the same time, for professionals who did not migrate in the context of an intercompany transfer, the probability of changing the field of work is higher, as careers do not depend on company structures.

In contrast to the majority of professionals, other temporary migrants in Germany perceive their stays as downward occupational mobility. There is evidence that international students often experience a temporary downward occupational mobility because enrolling in university studies means for them to give up previous high-skilled jobs in the country of origin or in a previous destination, mainly in the expectation of career enhancement in the future. Some of the interviewed family members expressed their regret that they gave up their previous jobs before migrating to Germany fearing potential disruptions in their careers and experiencing limited financial resources and the lack of social contacts. These concerns become visible in the following statement:

... if you've been used to working and you've been, you have had your own friends, colleagues, so yes, it makes a difference. Of course I don't have, I'm not working right now, so that goes on in my mind and I don't know how long it will go on...Then of course it would be tough for me because it would be a big career break. (FM. 10, 13/04/15).

In turn, the downward occupational mobility of asylum seekers and refugees needs to be considered as involuntary, and what is most striking: if qualifications are not fully recognised,

this occupational shift is likely to be more permanent. Furthermore, asylum seekers and refugees can experience gradual occupational downward mobility during different migration experiences over time, as the following reflection of a Pakistani teacher shows.

I was a teacher in Pakistan...I had no problem of money. My father was a landlord and my brother had a handsome salary. We also have some agri-business as well. So [I had] no financial problems [With regard to his occupation in a previous destination, he states:] I was satisfied there and worked in a construction company as a foreman. I started work as a labourer but after two months I was promoted as foreman, because I was familiar and [knew how to] handle the heavy machines. The company gave me a handsome salary (Asyl. 11, 19/07/15).

In turn, some temporary migrants perceive vertical social mobility not as exclusively related to occupation and income but also to other not exclusively material aspects of life. These include, for instance, the access to high-quality education, the possibility to expand professional networks, an increase in the quality of living arrangements, and the expanded possibilities of free time activities. In other words, this indicates that temporary migrants not only associate vertical mobility with changing income and personal careers prospects for themselves, but also with shifts in the quality of life of themselves and their families, as noted by a professional:

I think it is positive only. I am personally getting very different and nice exposure in terms of my professional career. My children are getting better education here. My wife is getting better life here. My kids are getting better exposure, because they are now exposed to multicultural, multinational kind of environment. So all in all I think it's positive for me (Prof. 16, 03/07/15).

The situation of temporary migrants from Germany in Asia has to be addressed in a different way because the interviews only included students, professionals and lifestyle migrants who already returned to Germany. Accordingly, with regard to professionals, the employment status, satisfaction with occupation, consideration of skills and occupational mobility stay closely in relation to their professional positions and careers in Germany and are more clearly perceived as a transitional stage in their careers. This means that their stays abroad were considered only as an additional qualification in their already existing curriculum (e.g. research experiences abroad). The reflections of a German researcher with a broad migration experience confirm this idea:

It's difficult to name concrete outcomes, also because these research stays have no direct outcomes for my career here, but [for] better research, higher quality research outcomes, more internationally visible outputs, books that are co-written by European and Asian scholars, of course, attract more attention than a book on Asia written exclusively by Germans. I would say, and I do strongly believe that the outcome is more relevant, interesting and in general, of higher quality [...] but in general, in our, in my profession, international visibility, contacts are appreciated, and my impression is that they are indeed valued (German\_Prof. 3, 13/05/15).

With regard to the previously discussed topics on the socio-economic aspects of temporary migrants, German return migrants' stays abroad are explicitly used for future occupational mobility. Experiences gained abroad and transnational professional contacts can be used as

a distinguishing attribute for their future career in Germany. In line with this idea, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees conclude in their 2013 migration report that the increasing temporary mobility of Germans can be interpreted as an expression of globalisation, leading to a gain of social and cultural capital as well as professional knowledge (BAMF, 2015a).

As noted previously, an important characteristic of international migrants are their cross-border bonds to people in the country of origin, as well as in previous places of destination. However, one particularity of temporary migrants seems to be the way how transnationalism is expressed in relations and concrete social practices, which can provide further information on transformative characteristics and is discussed in the section on socio-cultural aspects. In the socio-economic sphere transnational features can be framed, for instance, by the involvement in transnational businesses, labour opportunities and financial transfers.

As migration scholars argued, the quantitative significance of financial remittances in the context of international labour migrants is often highlighted in association with broader development outcomes in countries of origin, which is however not conclusively proven (de Haas, 2010, Faist, 2008, Kapur 2004). According to the interviews, these transfers play a relatively minor role among temporary transnational migrants. As the following consideration shows, some temporary migrants send money back home which is related to the previously discussed upward occupational mobility:

... let's say recently, so since I have this good job here, and since the things in Ukraine don't go very well, so... I send money, or I bring money to them, so... now I feel like, I can provide some financial help, and also that they actually need some financial help (Prof. 17, 11/03/15).

However, the majority of the interviewees indicate either that there is no socio-economic need by significant others, or that temporary migrants are not in the economic position to remit money back home. In the case of international students, reverse financial remittances, meaning frequent money transfers from countries of origin to the destination (Khadria, 2009), are particularly at the beginning of stays, used for financing the living abroad, as this Indian PhD student reflects:

For the first like one and a half years, it was from my parents' expenses and now I am doing a research assistant job but still I am getting some money from parents (Stud. 9, 08/04/15).

Turning back to the German returnees, evidence shows that transnational economic activities are limited to financial remittances, which means that interviewed international students were sometimes supported by their parents to finance their studies and their stays abroad. In contrast to the case of Asian temporary migrants in Germany, transnational businesses and transnational labour opportunities played a minor role for the interviewed German temporary migrants in Asia.

In contrast, temporary Asian migrants engage in transnational businesses related to a wide range of products, including components, household items, cosmetics, baby food, alcoholic beverages, as well as services. In principle, these transnational businesses can be differentiated into entrepreneurship that existed previous to the stay, were developed in Germany, or are planned for the future. In all cases, the most important business category was international trade between the country of origin and Germany. The empirical findings show that family members and students have established these border-crossing economic activities during the stay in Germany, as visible in the case of an international student:

Actually, I got the financial support from my father, and also, we have a family company in Turkey, which is an export company, mostly export to Germany. So I try to coordinate things here and work for the family company. And also, I get the salary from this company (Stud. 14, 19/01/15).

There is evidence that these practices serve to gain first insights into entrepreneurship, but students also perceive these activities as a way of gaining financial independence during their studies and stay. A range of students also plan entrepreneurial activities after their studies based on the knowledge gained and the access to social networks they acquired in Germany.

But my plan is like totally different, like we, me and my dad are setting up a business soon. I'm reading entrepreneurship books and the project, the Master's thesis that I'm doing is related to my business plans and that's what I'm doing (Stud. 9, 08/04/15).

In addition to these two forms of transnationalism of temporary migrants, transnational labour opportunities represent another area of significance. As suggested by the concept of brain circulation (Saxenian, 2005), these can lead to significant development outcomes, in countries of destination and origin, as well as among the migrants themselves. Yet, as the present research shows, for some of the interviewed professionals these opportunities serve as an important escalator for career development in Germany, because professional knowledge is combined with expertise on the homeland economy. In turn, this background facilitates access to prestigious management positions and consequently leads to upward social mobility.

I mean, I basically work for Indian companies investing into Germany and other parts of Europe. I also work with German companies on their investments into India. I mean, I do cross-border work, basically. I'm basically representing the firm, I travel a lot, I attend conferences, I've been to good seminars. And, not only in Germany but, you know, I've been to London, and I've attended conferences. I travel to India to represent the firm and to meet with the clients (Prof. 1, 21/04/15).

As the empirical data show, different kinds of socio-economic aspects exist in the case of Asian migrants in Germany that potentially influence their temporariness. These are discussed here as career opportunities that stay in relation to the possibility for occupational upward mobility. Other aspects relevant in this dimension are the recognition of qualifications, beyond the formal ones, such as attitudes, language and social skills that are expected

by employers. Also the opportunity for upward social mobility, such as the expectation to provide a better education for the children is an important influencing factor of temporariness.

## 5. Socio-cultural aspects

Socio-cultural aspects embrace questions related to the host country context, such as temporary migrants' social adaptation and changes to worldviews including comparisons between relevant countries, as well as between previous and current migration experiences. Additionally, temporary migrants' social relations in Germany and elsewhere are focused; on the one hand social relations in Germany, including the support received by and free-time activities carried out with these relations. On the other hand, transnational relations are addressed that also embrace the characteristics of border-crossing relations and immaterial transfers.

Empirical findings indicate that temporary immigrants in all categories have experienced important shifts in their worldviews and perceived that these stays had consequences in their personal life. The most significant statements are related to their views on Germany in comparison to previous destinations and countries of origin, the current migration experiences in comparison to previous ones, and the development of open-minded and tolerant attitudes. The comparative viewpoints on the countries and migrant experiences are often characterised by objective aspects, which are reflected, for instance, in the following statement of an asylum seeker from Afghanistan:

Afghanistan has fertile land, everything is beautiful; and the most important thing is the Muslim population. There is a huge difference in the food habits of Afghanistan and Germany. The best thing in Germany is implementation of law and order. Often I follow the traffic signals. Even if there is no traffic at all but all people whether male or female all follow the traffic signals and wait for green light. I like Germany (Asyl. 12, 18/05/15).

The stay in Germany helped people to gain independence, which is especially relevant for international female migrants in order to overcome personally experienced gender inequalities in places of origin. Additionally, interviews with female temporary migrants indicate that gender-related emancipative ideas (Levitt, 1998) created during the temporary stays in Germany are remitted back home. Furthermore, some interviewees reflected how they had to learn to cope with the separation from their social environment, and thereby acquired skills they considered useful for living abroad, as visible in the statement of the following international student:

Now I am trying to get some habits, like cooking for example. I mean, I should learn it for my own life or for example how to go to an official place and how to act. That's something you have to learn for your own self, because back in Turkey maybe I would go with part of family or with a friend, now I'm really trying to learn everything to do some things on my own and it's a real challenge, because it's a different country first, but doesn't matter, now I'm getting totally separate individual than anyone else. Yeah, I'm learning to live alone, it doesn't mean that I don't have friends, of course, but I have to do things on my own,



without any help. So that's what I learnt, to be individual, separate person. (Stud. 3, 03/05/15).

These changes in awareness and behaviours towards an independent life, might serve as a coping strategy as well a catalyst of developing noted open-minded and tolerant attitudes regarding different ways of life. Simultaneously, it is considered an important component of the young lifestyle in Germany. These attitudes contribute to temporary migrants' well-being and are likely to stay in close relation to the perception of being a part of German society.

Beside of these favourable aspects of the personal migration experience respondents also reported adverse consequences such as psychological issues and disruptions to social life, particularly caused by the separation from significant others.

My sisters and my family, they think that I'm more serious. More serious person now. Maybe because I'm living alone here, and so it's affect my personality. And I feel bad sometimes when I visit my family. I feel bad because so many things, so many issues, hard to solve (Stud. 2, 15/04/15).

In order to compensate these emotional and social gaps, most of the interviewees maintained close transnational social bonds either through temporary visits, phone calls or social media. With regard to the communication to her family via calls, consider the statement of a Turkish student:

My parents are getting a bit old and more emotional. Because in Erasmus I would contact them less, now they're missing me more and I'm missing them more, so I would Skype maybe once a week. And also, when I cook some nice food I like to take the picture and send them, because to show them that I can cook. I have a sister; she is also academician so I keep contact with her. And also I get some advices academically, or if I'm feeling very, very down "I don't want to study anymore" then she would motivate me. (Stud. 3, 03/05/15).

Regarding the transnational links of German returnees, this situation needs to be evaluated differently. Links established by German return migrants in Asia are mainly based on new relations established in the course of the stay, which was planned as being of a temporary nature from the beginning. This means that there is often less social cohesion. Nevertheless, most of the interviewed Germans with temporary migration experience in Asia still maintain personal contacts to people they met during their stay and who either remained in the country or moved elsewhere, as reflected in the following quotation:

Almost two years ago, in a summer we were doing a long travel to the East of Turkey, because this was, I mean it was my idea, but this friend, she was very happy about this idea. I have not during my time in Turkey arrived to get to know very East and then we travelled ... and I also again visited Ankara and my former colleagues there. I mean the contact has become less, no question, but particularly there is with this one very good friend and we do regularly write and Skype sometimes (German\_Prof. 2, 28/06/15).

Many of them after their return also remain interested in the country they visited and attend, for instance, cultural events and, as noted above, follow political developments.

Transnational links constitute migrant networks, which also can be understood as a form of social capital for migrants. Social capital can be used in many cases for providing and re-

ceiving social support, because it facilitates access to information. The findings show that in the case of Asians in Germany this is relevant for all interviewed temporary migrants previous to their arrival, during their stay and for future plans. Particularly, these resources are relevant in those cases where the planning of the migration course is highly insecure and no formal supportive structures exist, such as among asylum seekers and refugees, reflected in the following statement:

Agents are easily available to arrange this illegal journey. I consulted with an agent in Afghanistan. One of my friends gave me the contact number of the agent and I consulted with him. The agent had directed us to follow his instructions while crossing different borders. He informed us about the people who helped us to cross the border. Agent had arranged some people who facilitate us; some time two people three people. They travelled with us and they also looked like migrants. I just followed them (Asyl. 12, 18/05/15).

In contrast to the previous statement, support is not only received but also provided by temporary migrants in Germany. This exchange is particularly relevant among some professionals and students, who provide social remittances, defined as the flow of ideas, skills, settings, and behaviours (Levitt, 2001). The exchange of ideas can also be expressed by providing useful network contacts, as an Indian professional who uses his networks to provide specific knowledge to his family and friends highlights:

When my relative needs my help in various areas, I help develop sufficient contacts in India to help them. Sometimes somebody is asking some kind of medical assistance, for instance like in Mumbai which I know well. So I turn contact to relevant persons and get all the appointments. So I'm in touch, so they come for help (Prof. 16, 03/07/15).

The empirical findings show that existing transnational ties are characterised by different patterns regarding the frequency and the means of communication. Despite this heterogeneity all these communicative transactions serve as kind of 'glue' of cross-border bonds (Vertovec, 2004). Striking is that kinship links seem to be the most relevant transnational relation because communication with family members takes place more frequently and often in the form of phone calls. Contacts to friends are often more sporadic and mainly established through the use of social media. In turn, professional contacts are the least frequently contacted group of people, and the communication is often based on emails; high-skilled migrants, who maintain professional contacts as a crucial part of their work, represent an exemption. Also the frequency of visits to countries of origin and places of previous destinations varies among the interviewed migrants, depending on the geographical distance, available economic resources, travel opportunities related to the current occupation, and the level of attachment to significant others. An exemption represents the case of asylum seekers and refugees, for whom return visits are not an option due to the political situation in their countries of origin.

Evidently, temporary migrants' social relations are not limited to those with people in countries of origin and previous destinations, but also involve relationships to people living in

Germany, including relatives, friends, colleagues and acquaintances met in different social contexts. Results show that these relations include co-nationals, other international migrants and to a lesser extent German nationals. Social relations in Germany are perceived as important for the sharing of free-time activities. Particularly, in the case of asylum seekers and refugees as well as of international students the lack of social contacts in Germany often leads to free-time activities on an individual basis, which is in some cases associated with feelings of loneliness. This is particularly evident, when temporary migrants come from cultural backgrounds, where the level of social cohesion in kinship and friendship relations is higher that is also reflected in the everyday life. Consider with regard to this aspect the following quote by a Syrian asylum applicant:

In Germany all people are active and have an issue. Many people are alone and I don't know why. Why are they all alone? Why? In Syria all friends and family members eat together at one table. But in Germany there is a difference: the mother is alone, the father is alone, the children are alone. I don't know why. But I like eating together, playing together. I don't like to spend time alone (Asyl. 1, 10/03/15, translation from German by the authors).

As the interviews show, also social relations in Germany serve as sources of social support. This becomes evident in the case of some international students, who receive substantial support from tutors, professors, co-nationals and fellow students. Among asylum seekers and refugees support is often received from civil society organisations, and initiatives focusing on asylum and flight, above all, when the application process is advanced.

Finally, temporary migrants' perceptions of integration into the German society represent another important area of analysis. Major components of integration addressed in the interviews include contacts to locals in Germany related to the ability to communicate with them and the feeling of belonging and acceptance.

Starting with the contact to locals, it is especially evident that a range of temporary migrants perceive a social distance by locals. Consequently, many of the interviewed temporary migrants mainly engage with co-nationals and international migrants and to a lesser extent with Germans. Personal links in Germany are often restricted to professional contacts, while friendships with Germans are considered as more complicated by some migrants. This situation is not only relevant for those temporary migrants who recently arrived but also for those who have spent several years in Germany, as the statement of a Turkish high-skilled migrant who previously studied and presently works in Germany illustrates:

Sure, I have more Turkish friends, unfortunately. It would be better to have more German friends. Maybe my German would be better. Also during my studies, my circle of friends mainly consisted of international students, all from Turkey. We ate and studied together. With other international students there was hardly any contact, with exception for the aim to exchange notes of the seminars, nothing else other than that. Other types of exchanges, or friendships did not exist. I never had a real friendship with a German (Prof. 12, 06/06/15, translation from German by the authors).

As this quote, but also other statements of temporary migrants, show missing language skills and the perceived unwillingness of some Germans to speak in English with them lead to the perception that a lack of communication exists that in turn hampers relationships with locals, as well as influences the integration of temporary migrants into the society. As the research findings show, spouses of a German partner represent an exception, because these family members are often able to connect to existing kinship and friendship networks.

In contrast, most of the German return migrants perceived the contact to locals during their stay in Asia positively. As a consequence, their own migration experience also helped them to develop a more open-minded and cosmopolitan perspective towards people, who have distinct cultural backgrounds, including the contact with migrants in Germany, which Hannerz (1990) has discussed as a concrete competence.

Back to the perceptions of Asian migrants in Germany, related to the feeling of belonging it can be observed that temporary migrants often identify “home” as their countries or cities of origin. There is no evidence that temporary migrants identify with societies of previous destinations. In some cases, people relate “home” to their current place of residence but not explicitly to Germany, defining it either as the city they live in, or as Europe:

Well, at the moment, I'm sitting at home, in Hamburg, so... yeah, I mean, home is where your heart is, so right now, my focus is, in Hamburg, and of course, yes. My parents are back in India, and I do miss them, but right now, home is here (Prof. 17, 27/06/15).

Also the feeling of acceptance is relevant in the context of integration. On the one hand, there is evidence that temporary migrants feel accepted and welcomed, as expressed by this family member from India:

No, they treat you well, they always. They find people from India very exotic actually, I feel. They always want to talk to you, they want to make conversation with you and they are pleasantly surprised when you can talk to them in German. It's a good thing. I mean, you don't really see that people are rude to you, no, they are friendly. People in Germany are friendly [...], when you're meeting them in a superficial setting, they are friendly (FM. 7, 27/04/15).

On the other hand, some migrants also made negative experiences, such as discrimination in everyday life or the feeling of not being accepted. Perceived discrimination and lack of social acceptance in the everyday life is also directly related to different other aspects, such as self-confidence, and identification with Germany. Consider this statement of another family member, also from India:

And when you walk on the street, nobody talks to you, and some people even give you a stare, like, as if you are an alien creature. So... that makes me feel, a little awkward, you know, like, to be here. That doesn't happen back at home, you know? You are like one among the millions of people there (FM. 8, 27/06/15).

These perceptions of social acceptance in Germany or the lack thereof are likely to influence future plans and consequently the length of the stay.

The empirical data thus indicate that at least two kinds of issues in the socio-cultural realm are addressed by temporary migrants in Germany that are related to temporariness. These aspects are on the one hand perceptions of acceptance in Germany, which can be positively or negatively considered. Both can influence decisions about leaving or staying in Germany and consequently influence migrants' temporariness. Also the feeling of belonging can play a central role in this kind of decisions, because strong identification with the home country in combination with psychological stressors, sometimes resulting from experiences of discrimination, can act as a magnet and affect the duration of stays abroad. In contrast, the development of a cosmopolitan attitude that often corresponds to the identification with regions or cities, can counteract these factors and lead to longer stays in Germany or elsewhere.

Related to the previous insights in the section on socio-economic aspects, decisions about the return of Germans who stayed in Asia did not depend on personal feelings of belonging and acceptance, on the quality of social relations established abroad, or on homesickness. Motives for return are rather based on the fact that their stays in Asia were from the beginning designed as a temporary experience in order to achieve an additional qualification for their career development in Germany.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the empirical results on experiences, perceptions and aspirations of temporary migrants presented in the previous sections, now the objective is to provide some final general reflections with respect to the politico-legal, socio-economic, and socio-cultural dimensions of analysis. This will be achieved on the one hand by addressing the determinants that influence the temporariness in the different migrant categories. On the other hand, temporariness will be discussed in relation to two other analytical categories, namely transnationalism and development. Based on conceptual considerations, developed elsewhere (Aksakal and Schmidt-Verkerk, 2015), the following evidence-based reflections are of importance:

*First*, in the migration literature, temporary forms of international migration are generally less considered, and if they are, they are often focused from a policy perspective and an economic point of view. From these perspectives, temporary migration is often related to the duration of stays, meaning the consideration of legal frameworks, or of migrants' economic motivations. This indicates that an alternative focus on the phenomenon is needed in order to broaden the perspective on temporariness by including several influencing factors (Aksakal and Schmidt-Verkerk, 2015). With regard to politico-legal aspects this means that beside of immigration policy, aspects such as the lack of institutional support, complex bureaucratic procedures as well as perceived arbitrariness and discrimination related to the functioning of institutions, represent important factors that are likely to influence the temporariness of cur-

rent Asian migrants in Germany. Regarding socio-economic aspects, evidence shows that beside of monetary considerations, career opportunities in relation to the pursuit of occupational upward mobility, the recognition of previously gained skills in the German labour market and general satisfaction with the job are important aspects. In addition, the search of social upward mobility is also associated with non-economic and non-career-related aspects, such as enhancing the quality of life on a personal and/or family level. The evaluation of these factors is likely to disembody in rationales that influence migrants' temporariness.

Socio-cultural aspects are seldom considered in the analysis of the temporariness of migration, which – as mentioned above – mainly focuses on legal frameworks and economic opportunities for migrants. Yet, from a sociological point of view, the empirical data on temporary immigration to Germany show that aspects related to the migrants' identification with cultures and places in countries of origin or current and previous destinations are also significant. These include experiences of social inclusion or exclusion; the latter aspect is often leading to psychological stressors and affecting decisions about the temporariness of migrants' stays.

*Second*, international migrants' transnationalism is rarely explicitly addressed for the case of temporary migration in the existing literature. The above presented findings give interesting insights into the relationship between transnationalism and temporariness. In the social dimension, research findings show that most temporary migrants in Germany in all categories maintain strong linkages to countries of origin and to a lesser extent to relevant previous countries of destination. The frequency of contacts with different groups of people in these places is often hierarchized. This means that family members, who are the most important contacts, are often contacted by phone or Skype calls. Communication with the second most important group, which are friends, mainly takes place via social media. Less frequent communication is achieved with professional contacts, often based on emails, the latter particularly evident among international students and professionals. An exception represent those professionals, who maintain their contacts in the context of their current employment. Similar results were found for the case of Germans in Asia.

With regard to the politico-legal dimension it is worth noting that, in general terms (with the exception of asylum seekers and refugees), the lack of transnational political engagement with homeland or immigration policies, is a distinguishing feature. Temporary international students' political involvement in migrant organisations is often limited to the commitment in student unions. The findings also show that asylum seekers and refugees are highly motivated to engage in future human rights activities in their countries of origin, either while staying in Germany or after their potential return. Similarly, German returnees did not engage in politics during their stay in Asia, however, some cases indicate that after returning particular political interest and engagement in country-related organisations can be observed.

Another characteristic of temporary migrants regarding their transnational commitment are socio-economic aspects. One interesting finding represents the relatively low significance of financial remittances to significant others in countries of origin. There is evidence that most families back home are well off and often do not need financial support. In contrast, reverse forms of transfers, meaning economic help mainly provided to international students by relatives in places of origin or in previous destinations are highly relevant. These revenues are often received at the beginning of the stay in Germany. Especially, among some professionals and international students, transnational businesses are important features, indicating frequent cross-border activities with places of origin and previous destinations. In some cases these projects were already started previous to the arrival, as evident among some international students. Other cases show that they emerge during the stay in Germany, such as visible for some professionals and family members. Additionally, there is evidence that some international students plan to establish border-crossing enterprises, while their current studies are perceived as a part of the entrepreneurial strategy with regard to gaining knowledge and building networks. Finally, there is evidence that Asian professionals in Germany can have important career advantages, when they use effectively transnational labour opportunities. The findings suggest that this is often achieved when professional know-how is meshed with knowledge on the economy of the home country or previous destinations. This groundwork enables professionals to have access to higher occupational positions in Germany. With regard to German international students in Asia the findings reveal that regarding border-crossing transactions only financial remittances played a role, similarly to the previously noted, it was used for financing expenses during their stays.

*Third*, the relation between migration and development can be differentiated into the impacts and outcomes for individual migrants and countries of destination and countries of origin. With regard to temporary international migrants, occupational and especially social mobility is one of the most important indicators of development outcomes and impacts. Research findings show that on the one hand, downward mobility occurs among some international students, family members and particularly among asylum seekers and refugees. In contrast to the latter category, for which downward mobility is often depicting a long-term situation, among several cases of international students who gave up their previous employment, downward mobility has a more temporary nature, which is expected to end in the transition from study back to work.

Regarding the development potentials of temporary migration and impacts triggered by them for Germany at least two aspects are of relevance. As noted in the introduction, current immigration to Germany signifies the compensation of labour shortages in certain sectors as a broader impact of the demographic change in the country. On the other hand, the German economy is mostly based on exports, which means that for securing competitiveness in the

global economy, there is a need for well-educated young professionals who are able to represent German companies abroad. Immigration policies are designed to attract migrants with these qualities. Therefore, German legislation can be considered as open towards certain high-skilled mobile people but at the same time as selective with respect to international migrants in general. However, as our findings based on the subjective viewpoints of migrants in different categories show, the temporariness of migrants cannot be completely controlled by immigration laws but also depends on the above discussed aspects influencing the decision to stay or leave.

As reflected in dichotomous public discourses in which migrants are perceived either as a potential or as a threat, international migration can also entail social transformation due to rising cultural diversity in relation to uncertain societal challenge, sometimes leading to fear in society. Thus, as currently observed in the case of asylum, these emerging fears can lead to growing nationalist sentiments and to violence against temporary migrants, indicating a societal and particularly political challenge for Germany. Finding sustainable solutions to this challenge will be crucial for the future economic, social and political development of the country.

In turn, temporary stays, particularly by professional Germans in Asian countries and elsewhere might contribute to more intensive collaborations between Germany and other relevant countries, enriching cultural exchange. Additionally, experiences abroad might reduce fears of migrants and antiforeigner sentiment not only based on experiences by returning temporary migrants but also by their social contacts.

Finally, it can be argued that a more concrete picture on the transformative characteristics, political and broader development effects of temporary migration on the German society can be provided after the interviews with experts on migration and migration policies will be



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