



Settlement or Mobility?

Factors intervening in the migration-decision making process of recently arrived Germans in Switzerland

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1. Introduction

During the past 20 years, migration in Western Europe has been shaped by a post-Fordist economic setting and a context of expanding globalization. European integration has induced a shift from state-controlled manpower recruiting to predominately market-regulated migration (Braun and Arsene 2009; Favell 2008) as well as to an Europeanization of immigration flows. The principle of free movement of persons, who now have the right to move, travel, study and work anywhere within the EU/EFTA, has led to more temporary and circular forms of migration (Faist 2008). However EU/EFTA citizens also have the right to settle and retire anywhere within the EU/EFTA, raising the question of how temporary and circular the current migration patterns really are.

In the context of important migration flows within the European countries, our paper¹ aims at *Understanding the factors intervening in the migration-decision making process* of immigrants. We not only analyse the individuals' consideration and/or their plan within the next year (Kley 2011) to return or to stay – a widely studied field – but also to move to another country, which has so far attracted less attention in research on migratory projects.

2. Migration decision making process

Research on migratory projects either relies on the revealed-preferences approach or the stated-preference approach. The former, primarily used by economists, focuses on the actual behaviour (e.g. the move, the settlement) and its basic premise is that people's preferences are revealed by their actual behaviour. The stated-preference approach, primarily used by social demographers, geographers and psychologists, privileges the understanding of the intentions to migrate or to settle, since research has shown that they constitute a good predictor of future behaviour (e.g. Van Dalen and Henkens 2008; Armitage and Conner 2001; De Jong 2000).

Differing intentions

The literature on migration projects of migrants, regarding their *intentions* to stay in the host country, returning to their home country, or moving to another country, is growing. However, whereas the latter is a new field in migration research (Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Ortensi 2014 propose a paper on return and onward migration intentions at the EPC 2014), the question of return migration projects has been tackled for several decades in both contexts of "Gastarbeiter"

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migration (e.g. for Germany Stegmann 2007 and Richter 2004; for Switzerland Bolzman et al. 1993) and (assigned or self-initiated) business expatriation (e.g. the literature review of Dabic et al. 2013).

Different pre-move thoughts

Adopting the stated-preference approach and inspired by marketing research regarding consumer behaviour, scholars have recently begun to examine differences between various pre-move thoughts instead of considering just one simple act in the migration decision-making process. Scholars analysing residential mobility were the first to identify different stages in the migration decision-making process. Rossi (1980), investigating the reasons of relocation of families within the metropolitan area of Philadelphia, identified a differentiation between inclinations to move and intentions to move. Other authors similarly conceptualised the move as a result of a series of preference-formation and decision-making and preparation steps (Kley and Mulder 2010; Fassmann and Hintermann 1998; Speare 1974; Brown and Moore 1970). Kley (2011), differentiating considering and planning, argued that the operationalisation of 'intentions' is crucial because the psychological and behavioural consequences of a 'wish' are quite different from those of a 'plan'.

Different factors

Empirical research has revealed that different pre-move thoughts (considering and planning) can be determined by different factors on the individual level, such as the position in the life course as well as psychological circumstances, but also on the meso-level, regarding for instance the household, and the macro-level, as for example the legal and economic context in the home or host country. Drawing from the literature, we test seven sets of factors: prior migration settings, embeddedness in the host country, satisfaction of the live in the host country, opportunity differentials between the host and the home or onward country, feasibility and preparedness, life course events and transnational ties.

3. Scope of the research

The research frame focuses on migrants who arrived in Switzerland within the framework of the Agreement of Free Movement of Persons between Switzerland and the EU (after 2002). Since that date, migration has been liberalized between EU countries and Switzerland and in 2007 the privileged access to the privileged access to the Swiss labour market by Swiss nationals over EU-15/AELE and Maltese and Cypriot citizens was abolished. The paper focuses on the specific context of Switzerland, which presents the highest immigration rate in comparison with the EU27/EFTA-countries (Eurostat homepage). Furthermore, the country experienced an increase of short-distance migration (i.e. from Germany, Italy and France): whereas in 1993, 20% of all foreign immigrants came from Germany, Italy, France and Austria, in 2008, they accounted for 45%. German migrants in Switzerland are the most prominent example of this renewal (Steiner 2012a; Stutz and Hermann 2010; Avenir Suisse and Müller-Jentsch 2008; Pecoraro 2005). They have constituted the biggest immigrant flow for more than a decade and their population increased from 118,000 in 2001 to 311,940 in 2014. Moreover, Germans predominantly seem to follow more temporary migration patterns: The median duration of residence of the Germans who emigrated in 2010 was of 2.3 years. All other major groups of foreign nationals in Switzerland had a higher median duration of residence when they emigrated in 2010: Italians 5.6 years and Portuguese 3.3 years (Steiner 2012b). According to Steiner (2014), on the aggregated level between 2002 and 2009, 36% of all adult German immigrants emigrated again. Finally, due to a

shared country border, this migration flow shares a geographic and cultural proximity² with Switzerland, reducing therefore the opportunity costs of migration and thus allowing us to better isolate individual factors.

4. Survey

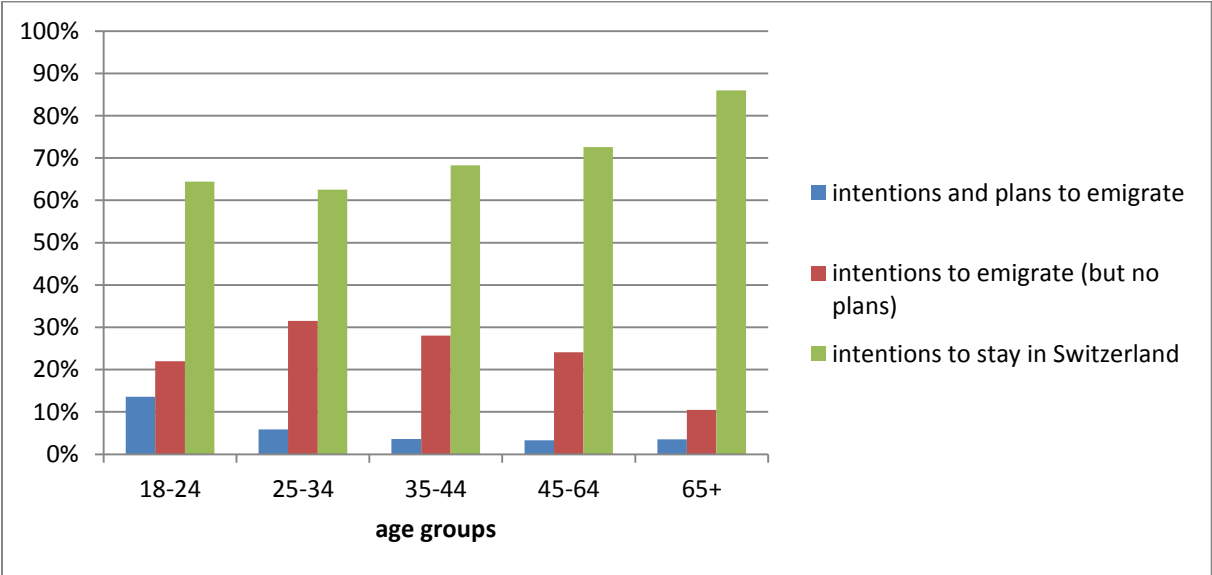
To answer our research question, a survey is carried out among 2000 adult German immigrants who have arrived since June 2002 in Switzerland. A stratified random sampling strategy was applied in order to represent different stages in the life course. Key subgroups are therefore represented according to age, gender and duration of residence in Switzerland. In order to reach the more mobile migrants as well as the well-established ones, we opted for a mixed method for the data collection: self-administrated online questionnaire (CAWI) and computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). The survey instrument is the same questionnaire for both methods (CAWI and CATI) and was developed in early 2015 in corporation with the Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung BiB, Wiesbaden.

The survey started in mid-September 2015 and will end on January 8th, 2016. We have so far obtained 1850 responses³ (92.5% of the objective).

First results show that, on the one hand, only 5% of the surveyed Germans intend and plan to leave Switzerland, whereas 23.6% only intend on emigrating. On the other hand, the vast majority (71.3%) intents on staying in Switzerland for at least one more year. The surveyed women express slightly less often the intention to stay than men do (respectively 70.4% and 72.2%).

Unsurprising, the youngest age group (18-24) intents and plans to emigrate more often than other age groups do (Figure 1). The absence of a family and therefore commitments undoubtedly influences the decision whether to return or to migrate to another country. In exchange, the intention to stay in Switzerland increases with increasing age.

Figure 1: Overarching conceptual framework



Survey results as at December 10th. Authors own representation.

² This applies predominantly to Germans immigrating to the Swiss-German speaking part of the country, which is according to official statistics the case of 91% of German immigrants (Steiner 2014).

³ as at December 10th

5. References

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