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Skilled German Migrants and Their Motives for Migration Within Europe

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Abstract German migration within Europe has so far received little attention from researchers. This is especially true of migrants with intermediate qualifications (vocational training, technical school, master craftsman's certificate). The present contribution is devoted to this phenomenon and examines the reasons why people belonging to this particular group migrate. To do this we pick up on central theoretical arguments in migration research, on the basis of which we examine the relevance of economic and social factors for Germans who migrate within Europe. It emerges that, empirically, for Germans with intermediate qualifications, economic factors are crucial. In particular, unemployment, low or falling wages, as well as poor working conditions in Germany constitute important push factors, while job offers, higher wages and better working conditions in the destination countries constitute the main pull factors. In comparison, social networks are less important factors in migration, since only in a few cases did the interviewees have solid contacts abroad. The empirical results of the study are based on the analysis of available population statistics and 40 problem-centred, biographical interviews

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carried out between October 2006 and April 2007 in various regions of Germany (Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Bremen, Lower Saxony, Berlin).

Résumé Jusqu'à maintenant, peu de chercheurs se sont penchés sur la migration des Allemands à l'intérieur de l'Europe. Notamment, les migrants avec des titres de compétences intermédiaires (formation professionnelle, école technique, certificat de maître d'œuvre) ne sont guère pris en considération. Cet article se consacre à ce phénomène et traite des raisons pour lesquelles des personnes qui font partie de ce groupe migrent. Pour ce faire, nous nous appuyons sur les principaux arguments théoriques de la recherche en migration et étudions l'importance des facteurs économiques et sociaux pour les Allemands qui migrent en Europe. Il apparait que, empiriquement, les facteurs économiques sont décisifs pour les Allemands ayant des titres de compétences intermédiaires. Plus précisément, le chômage, les salaires modiques ou en baisse et les mauvaises conditions de travail en Allemagne constituent des facteurs qui incitent au départ, alors que les offres d'emploi, les salaires élevés et les meilleures conditions de travail dans les pays de destination constituent les principaux facteurs qui attirent les migrants. Par contre, les réseaux sociaux se sont avérés être des facteurs moins importants, très peu des personnes interviewées ayant eu des contacts solides à l'étranger. Les résultats empiriques de cette recherche sont basés sur l'analyse de statistiques portant sur la population et sur 40 entrevues biographiques, qui ont été menées entre octobre 2006 et avril 2007 dans diverses régions d'Allemagne (Schleswig-Holstein, Hambourg, Brême, Basse-Saxe, Berlin).

Keywords Skilled migration · Migration within Europe · Motives for migration

Mots clés migration qualifiée · migration en Europe · motifs de migration

Introduction

The migration of Germans has long played only a marginal role in sociological research. It has mainly been a theme of social history, which has dealt exhaustively with processes of migration, mostly to North America (Hoerder and Nagler 1995; Lucassen 1987; Moch 1992). Even in more recent research, cross-border German migration has rarely been thematised, except for the special case of migration between East and West Germany and the well-studied field of highly qualified migrants. Recently, however, German migration has become the focus of public and scholarly debate as more and more people have been leaving the country: 175,000 departures in 2008 was an all-time record year. Moreover, the number of emigrants far exceeded the number of immigrants and returnees, producing a migration deficit of more than 67,000 German citizens (Federal Statistical Office 1987–2007, 2007, 2008, 2009). Through the present article we would like to contribute to a better understanding of this recent development in German migration. However, our study is not seeking to encompass as many aspects of the phenomenon as possible—for example, retirees moving to the Mediterranean, highly qualified Germans moving to the USA, migration in the context of global corporate networks, the migration of

diplomats and aid workers, or the different forms of migration resulting from marriage. Rather, our research focuses on the migration of *skilled* German *men* and *women* (*i.e.* those with technical and vocation-oriented qualifications or master craftsman's certificates) within Europe. We draw on empirical findings of a recent qualitative study on this topic and, above all, we look into the motives for migration.

We have chosen to investigate this particular group for three main reasons. First, very little research has been done in the area either in Germany or elsewhere. Traditionally, research has mainly addressed migration by low-skilled workers—for example, the "classical" intra-European migration in the 1960s and 1970s (Bade 1987; Castles 1986; Fassmann and Münz 1994; Fielding 1993; King 1993; Krane 1979; Zimmermann 2005)—or by highly qualified manpower (Ackers 2005; Beaverstock 2005; Burkert et al. 2008; Cheng and Yang 1998; Findlay et al. 1996; Gijsel and Janssen 2000; Peixoto 2001; Salt and Ford 1993). Secondly, the group we are investigating is sociologically relevant because skilled workers and technicians are crucial to the German economy; they are the very backbone of the manufacturing industry. Furthermore, it is received wisdom in research on geographical mobility that people with intermediate qualifications tend to be less mobile than those with higher qualifications (e.g., Häußermann and Glock 2004). However, recent findings on German migration (Schupp et al. 2005; Sauer and Ette 2007; ZAV 2007) suggest that people with intermediate qualifications have become increasingly mobile in the past few years.[1] As little is known about this group, our aim is to investigate the motives and general setting for this form of migration.

The geographic horizon of the migrational movements we are examining is constituted by the emerging European migration space (Ette and Faist 2007; Favell 2003; Recchi 2005; Strüver 2005). We attach great importance to this space because the legal framework affords special opportunities for free movement and access to other labour markets. Furthermore, European Union policy promotes and facilitates mobility, thus influencing migrational behaviour. Intra-European migration is also "supposed to add to cohesion and integration … in the European Union as a whole" (Janssen 1999: 143). Our approach to the group under study was also "European" in the sense that the European Service of the Federal Employment Agency (B.A., *Bundesagentur für Arbeit*), which is associated with the European Employment Services (EURES) and handles Europe-related services for the federal government, provided the necessary access. Our qualitative investigation encompasses interviews with experts, namely job placement officers of the B.A.'s European Service, as well as problem-centred interviews with men and women with intermediate qualifications who want to migrate to another European country. The first interviews were conducted between October 2006 and April 2007 immediately before emigration, *i.e.*, during the process of planning the move. This provided more precise insight into the motives and situational framework for migration. A second round of interviews was conducted after an interval of at least 12 to 15 months to ascertain whether and under what circumstances migration had become permanent and what type of migration (e.g. permanent, temporary or transnational) was involved. This article is based on the first round of interviews and focuses on motives. For theoretical background, we use the broad

[1] In this context, it may be argued that a lack of qualified workers in other European countries has opened up new opportunities for this group.

literature on the relevance of labour market imbalances, differences in income and networks in the development of motives for migration. Evaluation of the data is based on the procedures for analysing problem-centred interviews proposed by Witzel (2000).

European Migration Space and the Migration of Germans Within Europe

Our analysis proceeds on the assumption that ongoing European integration as a form of supra-nationalisation has given birth to an autonomous European migration space (Baganha and Entzinger 2004; Ette and Faist 2007; Favell 2003; King 2002; Recchi 2005; Strüver 2005). This assumption is set against the background of specific political and legal arrangements that affect migration between member states of the European Union. Of particular note are the freedom of movement for employees and the mutual recognition of educational qualifications, which have been core elements of European integration. The decisive breakthrough for intra-European migration came in November 1993 with the Maastricht Treaty. It granted EU citizens freedom of movement and settlement and established the formal legal conditions for the unhindered mobility of EU citizens and a (western) European labour market.[2] Under the Maastricht Treaty, European citizenship granted its holders a status fundamentally different from that of non-EU citizens. On the basis of the freedom of movement, the status of EU citizen includes wide-reaching entitlements to equal treatment in the country of residence. In addition to establishing the legal conditions for barrier-free migration, the European Union has also introduced measures to boost mobility, including exchange programmes such as Erasmus or Socrates, and created special institutions such as the EURES to promote employee mobility. It should be noted, however, that the abolition of barriers to mobility has led to less migrational movement than expected by the architects of the European Union (Ette and Faist 2007; Faist 2000; Raymer 2008). Over the past 20 years, the number of foreigners from EU states living in the pre-2004 Union (the 15 core states) has increased from 5.2 million to 5.8 million, a smaller rise than among migrants from outside the EU. A number of recent publications (El-Cherkeh et al. 2006; Fischer et al. 2000; Gijsel and Janssen, 2000; Straubhaar 2000; van Houtum and van der Velde 2004) provide insight into the remaining obstacles for intra-European migration. They point to the importance of regional identities and mentalities, personal value from immobility, language skills, the availability of labour market information and differences in taxation and social security systems. However, with the accession of the new Central and Eastern European member states in 2004 and 2007, a new wave of intra-European migration has emerged. The Baltic states, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland, have experienced dramatic emigration, with people leaving for Western Europe and the USA.

Germany, however, has a specific history of migration within the European migration space (Raymer 2008; Sauer and Ette 2007). In the 1950s, some 100,000 Germans emigrated per year (see Fig. 1), with roughly two thirds going to the classic

[2] There are limits to the freedom of movement for citizens from member states that joined the EU in 2004 (the so-called "2+3+2" regulation). The other member states decided individually when to lift these restrictions, but all restrictions have to be removed by 2013 at the latest.

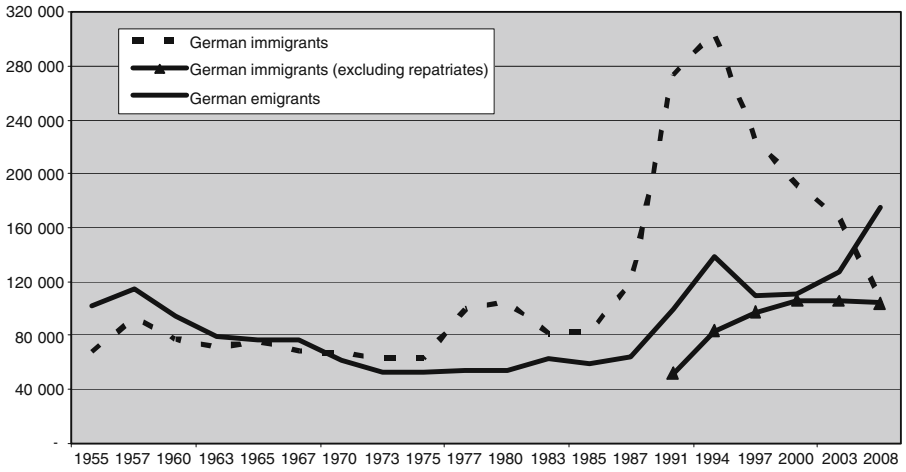

Fig. 1 Migration and emigration of Germans between 1955 and 2008*. Source: Federal Statistical Office (Federal Statistical 1987–2007, 2007, 2008, 2009); *single asterisk* denotes until 1990, comprising only the former Federal Republic (West Germany); the data do not include migration between the former West Germany and East Germany

immigration countries (USA, New Zealand, Canada, Australia). The number of emigrants during this period was higher than the number of immigrants. In the 1960s, the numbers of both emigrants and immigrants fell, but the latter considerably outnumbered the former.

A new trend then emerged: between 1970 and the mid-1980s fewer than 60,000 people emigrated per year, slightly more than half within Europe. At the same time, there was a marked increase in immigration, which by the end of the 1980s passed the mark of 250,000 per year, mostly German repatriates (*Spätaussiedler*) from Eastern Europe. In the mid-1990s, some 300,000 Germans were arriving annually, a rise due principally to a major increase in the number of repatriates from Eastern Europe. As Fig. 1 shows, if repatriates are excluded, the number of German immigrants lies between 50,000 and 120,000. In the 1990s, there was a clear increase in the number of emigrants. Cross-border migration climaxed in 2008, when 175,000 Germans departed, an increase of 40,000 over 2005.[3] The migration deficit increased from 17,000 in 2005 to 67,000 in 2008 (Federal Statistical Office 2007, 2009). Europe has now become the most important destination: the number of Germans migrating to other parts of Europe has almost trebled in recent years. Whereas in the early 1950s only 30% to 35% of all German migrants went to other European countries, in 2007—the last year for which detailed data is available—around 60% (105,400) remained within the European migration space. This adds force to a long-term trend towards the Europeanisation of migration patterns (see Table 1). In 2005, Switzerland replaced the USA as the main destination for German emigrants. Other important destinations within Europe include Austria, Poland,

[3] However, official statistics provide an incomplete picture of actual migration patterns, since some emigrants are very likely not to have officially notified their departure.

Table 1 German emigration according to country of destination

Destination	1985	1990	1995	2000	2007	Increase 1985–2007 (%)
Switzerland	3,773	4,876	5,304	7,998	23,459	522
Austria	3,276	3,602	4,337	5,225	11,201	242
Poland	1,263	4,381	6,310	10,968	10,451	727
Great Britain	2,928	3,492	5,024	5,760	9,996	241
France	3,913	5,532	7,580	6,603	7,346	88
Spain	2,838	3,621	5,071	6,750	8,991	217
Netherlands	3,214	4,538	5,006	3665	3,697	15
EC/EU countries*	18,068	25,878	37,443	38,508	71,103	294
Total Europe	32,423	78,560	58,052	64,393	105,396	225

Source: Federal Statistical Office (Federal Statistical Office 1987–2007, 2008)

Great Britain, and Spain.[4] Table 1 shows that the number of Germans migrating to other parts of Europe between 1985 and 2007 has risen significantly.

Research has to date provided scant information on the social structure of German migration groups. We know that almost half of all migrants are aged between 20 and 40 and that retirement-related migration does not play a very prominent role (Sauer and Ette 2007). The literature does provide quite exact information on the gender composition of German migration groups. For example, Sauer and Ette (2007) argue that German migrants are overwhelmingly male. The most recent numbers of the Federal Statistical Office confirm this observation: About 39,000 of the 71,000 intra-EU-27 migrants are male (Federal Statistical Office 2008). Whether male or female, migrants are predominantly single. Characteristic is the difference between East and West Germany: while in 2007 some 151,000 people left the former West Germany, only 14,000 or so left the former East Germany[5] (Federal Statistical Office 2008). Given the lack of good data, it is hard to make reliable statements on the educational level of German migrants. Nevertheless, migration patterns within Europe clearly no longer involve only flexible, mobility-minded university graduates or the unskilled. More and more people with intermediate vocational qualifications are emigrating (Sauer and Ette 2007; Schupp et al. 2005; ZAV 2007), people commonly considered to be immobile. Schupp et al. (2005) even conclude that skilled workers, technicians and other workers with qualifications currently form the majority of migrants. This finding is all the more remarkable since the recent literature on migration has tended to focus increasingly on highly qualified German migrants. Research has chiefly addressed emigration to the USA, the main destination for highly qualified people (Diehl and Dixon 2008; Sauer and Ette 2007), or smaller migration groups such as

[4] The forms of German migration within Europe are likely to vary from destination to destination. While German migration to countries such as Switzerland, Austria or Great Britain can often be seen as work-related, migration to Spain is largely retirement-related, and migration to Poland probably often involves Germans of Polish origin or repatriates with a German passport (Sauer and Ette 2007).

[5] Almost 20 years after reunification, the main destination for migrants from East Germany is still West Germany. In 2007, 138,000 individuals moved from East to West (2005: 137,000), whereas 83,000 (2005: 88,000) chose the opposite direction (Federal Statistical Office 2008).

diplomats, aid workers and expatriates (Meier 2006; Niedner-Kalthoff 2006; Schondelmayer 2006). Almost all studies see an increasing tendency for university graduates to spend time abroad, but for the most part this does not lead to permanent emigration (Enders 2005, 2006).

Theoretical Framework of the Study: Approaching the Problem

Migration processes are the result of complex decision making. In economic theories of migration, intentions to migrate are quite often seen in the context of labour market opportunities (Feithen 1986; Straubhaar 1988; Zimmermann 2005). *Economic* factors in the regions of origin and destination, so-called push and pull factors, are at the centre of the explanatory model.[6] Given that our focus is on labour migration and that we accessed the field through the European Employment Services, we are assuming that economic factors are prominent motives for migration. Broadly speaking, the literature distinguishes two different approaches (Barro and Sala-i-Martin 2004; Berninghaus and Seifert-Vogt 2002; Lundholm 2007; Stark 1993; Stark and Bloom 1985). One focuses on the integration of individuals in the labour market in general, the other on their income situation, *i.e.* opportunities for income maximisation. In the first approach, the most important explanatory factors concern the labour market situation, which is deficient in the region of origin (e.g. high unemployment or under-employment) and more attractive in the destination region (e.g. many vacant positions). However, unemployment/employment is only one aspect. A more attractive position on offer in the labour market may be a reason to migrate (Berninghaus and Seifert-Vogt 2002). Migration thus offers economic gains conceptualised as: "differences in net economic advantages, chiefly differences in wages" (Hicks 1963: 76), which can induce an economically rational person to emigrate if the transaction costs are lower than the expected earnings abroad (Straubhaar 1988: 72). Although most theories focus on better income, differences in working conditions or fringe benefits might also motivate migration. In sum, imbalances in the labour market and differences in income are crucial in generating the intention to migrate, and most authors sees the two factors as complementary aspects of the same approach (Barro and Sala-i-Martin 2004; Castles 2006; European Commission 2001; Stark 1993)

Through the influence of the individualistic "school" of migration research (e.g. Esser 2004; Kalter and Granato 2002), it has become established practise to thematise the individual perception of the factors involved in migration. At a very early date, Lee (1966: 51) claimed: "that it is not so much the actual factors at origin and destination as the perception of these factors which results in migration." For this reason, more recent decision theory approaches downplay the role of objective conditions and highlight the role of the cognitive level. It is thus assumed that objective imbalances in the labour market will be perceived differently from one individual to another (Kalter 1997: 42). Ultimately, subjective evaluation of these

[6] Recently, some authors (e.g. Castles and Miller 2003; Findlay et al. 2006; Scott 2006; Verwiebe 2010) have pointed to the relevance of cultural motives for migration. But this applies mainly to highly qualified migrants.

imbalances in the labour market—that is, individual perceptions of opportunities and advantages—are seen as forming the basis for decisions on migration. Research has accordingly focused on *individual* expectations of increased income or labour market opportunities (e.g. Ghatak et al. 1996; Todaro 1986). This understanding accepts the concept of *homo economicus*, who is assumed to act rationally and to decide in favour of utility maximisation (Straubhaar 1988: 67). The threshold at which income differences become relevant differ from person to person and depend on a number of social and other factors (e.g. family situation, language skills, housing situation, loss of job seniority, loss of the accustomed environment), which, as transaction costs or risk factors, have also gained wider acceptance in more recent economic migration theory (e.g. Berninghaus and Seifert-Vogt 2002; Stark 1993; Straubhaar 1988).

An important complement to these economic approaches is provided by concepts that underscore the significance of *social factors*—above all, the function of social networks—in motive formation among migrants (Faist 2000; Hillmann 2005; Johnston et al. 2006; Palloni et al. 2001; Pries 2001, 2004). These authors concur that personal relationships and information channels between those who have already migrated and those who are contemplating migration can play a decisive role in decision making. The more immigrants are already present in the destination country, the more information is available to prospective migrants in the country of origin and the more likely they are to make the move. In other words, economic factors do not operate in the abstract: social channels and networks are needed to make migration a viable option. When migrants already living in a foreign country recount their experiences, supply concrete information about the country and also provide practical support, then this can induce further migration. Similar considerations on the significance of social networks can also be found in the literature on transnational migration. For Pries (2001), when people are thinking about emigrating and once the process is actually under way, it is not wage or salary differences that are decisive, but rather "the character of the networks linking the regions of origin and destination, as well as social relationships based on trust and longer-term calculability" (Pries 2001: 34). Faist (2000) is relevant in that regard as well. In his critically acclaimed book, he emphasises the high relevance of social networks for migration processes. Based on an elaborated action theory, he argues that "social relations, viz. ties in collectives and networks, constitute distinct sets of intermediate structures on the meso level. It is via these relations that actors relate their resources to opportunity structures" (Faist 2000: 100). And he concludes that, in the case of international migration, new (and also old) ties and corresponding capital often crystallise in migrant networks. The uneven distribution of resources mobilised through these social networks helps to account for different rates of migration out of various regions and differences within migration communities (Faist 2000: 123).

Against the background of the theoretical framework relating to the formation of migration motives in the context of labour migration presented so far, the "Empirical Findings" section will draw on qualitative empirical material scrutinising the migration motives of German men and women with intermediate qualifications. Specifically, how relevant are unemployment in the home country, job offers abroad and differences in income in motivating intra-European German migration? The relevance of social networks as a resource and motive for intra-European migration is also discussed. With the aid of these research questions—and against the

background of the theoretical discussion—we examine individual perceptions of migration and the weight given to the different factors. On the basis of our empirical data, we "map" and specify the various factors.

Data and Methods

Since little research has been done into the phenomenon of migration by skilled Germans, our method remains exploratory in nature (the only quantitative data available is population statistics). Our qualitative research follows general methodological proposals by authors such as Kluge (2000), Strauss/Corbin (1990) and Flick (2006), which recommend basing qualitative studies on such discovery principles as openness and understanding, on investigator flexibility and reflexivity and on discovery and theory building as a goal. With regard to data gathering, our study is based on problem-centred interviews (Kvale 2007; Witzel 2000) conducted among skilled German workers and technicians. The study was planned as a series of surveys with interviews taking place immediately before migration and being followed up 12 to 15 months later. This allows us to map the migration process from the outset to taking up residence in the country of destination or, as the case may be, the decision not to remain. This method is consistent with the observation that "processes of migration are developmental and longitudinal, and surveys taken at a single point in time cannot capture this inherent dynamism" (Durand and Massey 1992: 12f.).

For this article, we use findings from the first field phase, which lasted from October 2006 to April 2007. Our sample consists of 40 men and women with intermediate qualifications (skilled workers or technicians, with vocational training in a technical field) who were intending to migrate in the near future.[7] We are able to gain access to this group through the European Service of the Federal Employment Agency. Contact with interviewees was facilitated by agencies of the European Service in Hamburg, Bremen, Leer and Berlin, in the context of language courses and job opportunities arranged by the Service, and also by advisors from the EURES.[8] The composition of the sample is thus specific to our purpose owing to the sampling strategy applied. It comprises mainly individuals who were, at the time of interview, were actively seeking a new job via the European Employment Service (about half of those we interviewed were unemployed).

[7] Due to the underlying qualitative approach, the sample is not representative. We are interested in typical motives and reasons for migrating, not in overall distribution.

[8] EURES currently consists of a network of more than 700 advisors throughout Europe and involves cooperation between the European Commission and the public employment administrations of the E.E.A. (European Economic Area) member states (EU member states plus Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland) and other partner organisations. There is a brisk exchange of information between the European Employment Services in Germany and its EU counterparts. Responsibilities of EURES include providing employees who are willing to move as well as interested employers with information on the labour market situation in the different EU member states, supporting job applications, placing applicants in vacant positions in other EU countries, providing financial support for families moving to another EU state and financing language courses for employees who are intending to migrate. In addition, EURES provides information on the principles of social security as well as the benefits and requirements associated with working in another EU member state.

The age of interviewees varied between 21 and 63. Just over half were men. As a rule, they had completed one or more types of vocational training (dual training system). A small number had additional technical qualifications. Participants came from northern Germany (Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Bremen and Lower-Saxony) and from greater Berlin. The most important destination countries were Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Ireland and Sweden. All information on persons, companies or other institutions which could have led back to individual interviewees have been anonymised for the present article.

We first questioned interviewees generally about their motives for migrating; secondly, we had them weigh up the relative importance of their motives; thirdly, we asked about their expectations, hopes and aims. The data were analysed on the basis of problem-centred interview evaluation methods introduced by Witzel (2000). This involves both inductive and deductive elements. Answers about migration motives were then aligned with the research questions developed on the basis of the preceding theoretical discussion, mixed motives were identified and the material was interpreted and systematised in comparative case analysis. Categories derived from existing research results formed the background of our interpretation. The incorporation of prior research results in the evaluation of problem-centred interviews is emphasised in accordance with Witzel (2000) and is a consequence of the further development of a data-based procedure on the basis of which the problem-centred interview method was developed. The results are presenting with the aim of generating hypotheses, in which we attempt to support our assumptions with excerpts from the interviews. It is naturally not our intention to generalise our findings to the aggregate level, which would require a representative sample.

Empirical Findings

Based on our sample strategy, a high relevance of economic migration motives could be expected among the members of the group studied. The interesting point is whether the importance of economic motives varies between certain individuals, whether and how economic migration motives can be differentiated and whether and how economic migration motives are imbedded in institutional settings such as social networks, family structures and family ties or the European institutional framework (e.g. EURES).

Our interviews revealed evidence on the role of work and unemployment as key factor, confirming, for example, the findings of Janssen (1999: 155) on the relevance of individual unemployment for intra-European migration. Many interviewees were unemployed and were receiving unemployment benefit. A typical answer to the question on motives for migrating was: “Basically, I'm unemployed, that's the main thing” (I. 1, Z 98). Similar statements were made by other interviewees, indicating that unemployment is an important push factor. Indeed, in most European countries where our migrants intended to go the unemployment rate was appreciably lower than in Germany, where one in ten of the labour force was out of work. The rate was 4% in countries such as Norway, Ireland or Switzerland, 5% in Austria and Denmark and 7% in Sweden (European Communities 2007).

The occupational biographies of many of those in the studied group showed strong discontinuities. The interviewees reported changing jobs frequently, generally

as a result of being laid off or having a temporary job, and repeated phases of unemployment, including long-term unemployment. As a rule, they do not rate their chances in the domestic labour market very highly, referring to age-based selection in some branches of the market (construction, skilled trades)[9]: "I'm now 38. Once I'm 40, then no matter what, I have no chance of finding a job here in Germany" (I. 24, Z 58–60). Another interviewee—also from the construction industry—gave a similar reason for his decision to look for work abroad: "When I hear that they still accept people who are 55 [in Norway] because of their experience, and here in Germany, at 38, I'm already too old, then I say to myself: what am I supposed to do here?" (I. 35, Z 417f). In other sectors, too, the exclusion of older employees is mentioned: "In my field, working as a secretary, either it's all over at the age of 35, or you're just getting started at the age of 50" (I. 33, Z 34f). Obviously, many interviewees perceive their age as a crucial factor for the decision to migrate. A larger group states that they have no chance of finding work on the German labour market because of their age, providing them with a strong motive to emigrate. "For me it is better to emigrate when I hear that they still hire people with 55 over there only because of their working experience. Here in Germany I am already too old at 40. So I say to myself: why stay? I don't want to be unemployed until I retire" (I. 33, Z 151). Interestingly, some interviewees linked age with more personal matters in their biographical reflections. "In the age of 41 it is getting worse and worse with job offers and other things as well. … My companion has been in Ireland for two years now and I have decided to move there as well" (I. 13, Z 2). What we see here is a mixture of age and partnership-related factors. Another interviewee mentioned age, gender, and occupational factors: "A new beginning, especially in such a big country as … France, is difficult when one gets older, particularly in my line of work. I'm a woman, fairly small and dainty, in a hard men's job" (I. 12, Z 205).

Even though they had a job, some people in the group under study were planning to migrate to other parts of Europe because of poor working conditions or a high level of job insecurity in Germany (I 16, Z 110; I 12; I 23). They assumed that they would find a more adequate job in their destination country. Unemployed interviewees reported claimed that prospects in Germany were poor. This perception was even more pronounced when a family was involved, indicating that family relationships are crucial in analysing an individual's migration behaviour (Janssen 1999: 158; Straubhaar 1988: 79). As the following quotes show, the role of family relations provides for some variation among the group studied. "Here in Germany things are getting worse and worse. I am unemployed. I have three children. I have trouble paying the rent. The electricity bill eats you up, then there are the gas and water bills... I can't offer my children any prospects here. I can't say to them: later on, you'll be able to go on studying, because I don't know whether I can finance it... In Norway, though, it looks as if I could promise my kids that" (I. 22, Z 25ff). However, some interviewees with families plan to emigrate alone. They were willing for

[9] Between 2000 and 2006, more than 30% of full-time jobs subject to social security (circa 700,000 positions) in the German construction industry were lost. During the same period, 9% of such jobs in manufacturing were eliminated and 8% in commerce, a loss of around one million jobs (Federal Employment Agency 2007). By contrast, skilled labour is lacking in a number of European countries such as Norway and Ireland in industry and in the construction and service sectors. These differences between labour supply and demand plausibly induce migration (Balch et al. 2004).

their families to follow at a later stage but only if they were able to position themselves well, thus very carefully considering their family situation: “When everything is ready and in good shape, I will bring my family and my wife” (I. 23, Z 17). Another interviewee was even more cautious. “It depends; I need to know the country better. I need to feel comfortable there and I can only assess that when I am over there. … I can’t decide yet whether to bring the family over” (I. 11, Z 231). Other interviewees intended to migrate alone because they had no familial obligations, which they saw as facilitating the step: “I don’t have a family. That is a fortunate situation. I do not have to consider other people” (I. 26, Z 169f). For another skilled labourer, the family and partnership are quite decisive as well. “The situation with my family is crucial, because I got divorced recently. Now I am free again … I am also free for such a big step [as moving to another country]” (I. 25, A 49f).

Job offers abroad or “the prospect of a secure job” (I. 26, Z 5) are also strong pull factors: “Just by chance I saw that they're looking for telecommunication technicians in Norway... and I got the idea of moving abroad. In Norway, there's work” (I. 22, Z 15–23). By emigrating, many interviewees thus appeared to be intent on taking advantage of new opportunities in the labour market one could hypothesise, choosing as their destinations countries where they learn there is a demand for labour. Imbalances in the labour market and how prospective emigrants perceive them presumably also apply to migration beyond the borders of Europe. What seems to be specific to intra-European migration, however, is that Europe is providing new opportunity structures (Sauer and Ette 2007). To the extent that this was perceived by interviewees, they formed a cognitive link between their own employment problems and work opportunities abroad. The possibility of improving their situation by taking up a job elsewhere in Europe, in other words by emigrating, was thus consciously contemplated by a number of interviewees. The following quote is typical of statements about these specific opportunity structures: “Because I just can't see why I should spend the whole day wandering around with a long face, cursing everything that's bad about Germany. Instead, I’ll just go to Denmark... I'm entitled to freedom in Europe, so that's what I'll do” (I. 4, Z 513–522). There are also interesting regional differences with respect to these opportunity structures. People living in border regions seem to be more exposed to works opportunities in neighbouring countries. However, they emigrate not only for economic reasons; cultural and linguistic similarities and shorter distances seem to play an important role, as well. “Whether I work here or over there doesn’t make a difference. I think the mentality is similar in Austria … there’s no big difference” (I. 17, Z 240). Here again, our findings confirm earlier studies (Gijsel and Janssen 2000: 66; Janssen 1999: 149), which point to the relevance of regional identities, mentalities and mutual prejudices and the great importance of the removal of barriers in the given area. Another interviewee regards intra-European migration as an opportunity for further mutually beneficial growth within Europe: “Germans are going to Denmark, and the Danes are going to Sweden. That's fine. I've got no problem with that. I think that Europe should be trying for a lot more mutual growth, but without all the bureaucracy. All that stuff should go, because it creates obstacles, for me as well” (I. 6, Z 849–855).

Many interviewees are not only concerned about finding a job abroad: they also hope to find a better working atmosphere. This appears to be particularly true of

people who have already worked abroad.[10] They stress the importance of greater cooperativeness in the workplace and a generally better atmosphere at work: "The general situation just feels significantly more civilised, significantly kinder" (I. 11, Z 330f). The better work atmosphere is also mentioned in other interviews: "The environment was definitely better. In Holland, for example, the radio is on all day long, work procedures are shorter, coffee and such is supplied by the company. None of that exists in Germany any more. And another thing: here, when they want you to work longer, then someone comes up to you well ahead of time and asks: Can you work longer today? And no one says: You *have* to work longer! Psychologically, that makes a huge difference. These are things in Germany that are incredibly annoying" (I. 11, Z 420ff).

Unpaid overtime, increasing workloads and low job prestige are increasingly criticised by workers in the health care system. But construction workers and tradesmen also repeatedly refer to increased working hours, as in the following quote: "I want to get to the stage where I have some leisure time again—not just having to work all the time, but to be able to say 'I'm going on holiday', or 'I'm going on a bicycle tour'... You used to have the weekend free, 4 o'clock Friday was knock-off time. Now it's 6.00, and sometimes we work through the night, and I get home at 3.00 in the morning" (I. 34, Z 368ff). In the construction industry, deteriorating working conditions are often associated with declining health and safety standards: "I have to work for another 30 years, so I don't want to feel wrung out like a rag in five years' time" (I. 24, Z 52f). Deteriorating working conditions in the German labour market may thus plausibly have strengthened the resolve of those we interviewed to look for work abroad.

For most interviewees, wage differentials within Europe were also a very important factor when deciding to migrate. Since our sample consisted largely of people out of work at the time of the interview, the question also arises whether they had any prospect of work again at all. However, there is clear evidence that interviewees made direct comparisons between their own income or what they would earn if in employment and their possible income in the destination country—which is in line with arguments of economic authors like Straubhaar (1988) or Stark (1993). The following statement is typical: "There are a few more motives, but I would say that the financial incentive made the whole decision a whole lot easier" (I. 3, Z 407ff). In past years, almost all those interviewed had had to accept major reductions in income, which in most instances meant a fall in their standard of living: "The real loss of income is enormous. For me, when I have a job, I at least want to be able to buy, say, a new car sometime... And at the moment, in other countries in Europe, you get paid more, it's that simple" (I. 34, Z 230–233). Particularly in the construction industry and various skilled trades, there are repeated

[10] The question of whether German migration is predominantly permanent, temporary or transnational has been given relatively little attention by researchers. The available population statistics are not helpful in this regard either (Federal Statistical Office 2007). However, current studies suggest that Germans have more experience with migration than is often assumed. Just over an eighth of all Germans have spent more than 3 months abroad, roughly 15% of them in the USA, 8% in France and 8% in Great Britain (Mau and Büttner 2010). With 70% of these people, their stay abroad was limited to a single country. At least indirectly, this suggests that only some migration is permanent and that a large number of those registered as having emigrated will return to Germany.

complaints about agreed pay rates being circumvented and increased wage dumping: "There's a lot of trickery: 12.50 euros is the minimum wage, that's the law... Then they work it so that the workers get ten euros unofficially, but twelve euros fifty officially—it's written down, on paper. But then the number of hours is simply multiplied by ten, divided by 12.5, and *then* they're written down. That's how it works" (I. 34, Z 174–179). Many of the skilled workers and technicians we interviewed described the reductions in their real income—reductions substantiated by statistics (Eurostat 2008)[11]—as a devaluation of their qualifications and their investment in education: "As a trained and qualified cabinet maker, I can't work for seven euros" (I. 35, Z 13). The losses in real income are attributed to direct wage cuts and to being forced to compete with cheaper workers: "And it really is true that in my line of work, the meat industry, the market is totally overrun... by Romanians, Russians, Poles—in other words, cheap workers, so there's heavy pressure on wages" (I. 11, Z 5–10). In addition to the general argument on the role of income differentials, it seems that industries in Germany that rely heavily on manual labour put heavy pressure on their employees by the recruiting cheaper labour from abroad, giving German skilled workers an incentive to emigrate. Examples in our study would be the construction and meat industries. "They started bringing in Portuguese and then English workers when I worked for the construction firm X*. I used to have a great hourly wage of 20 euros. After they brought in the Portuguese and English, the entire work brigade was fired … it's no wonder nobody stays here under such conditions" (I. 33, Z 11).

While low incomes at home are identified as push factors, interviewees had very concrete ideas about what incomes they expected to earn in the destination countries, especially in Scandinavia and the Alpine countries. One could even hypothesise that there is a link between destination country and (perceived) differences in income. A participant in the study intending to move to Denmark included living commuting costs in his calculation (I 1, Z 220–216): "Here I'm getting around 1,300 or 1,400... [and there I get] a thousand more. Out of that I have to pay, let's say, 200 euros per month for petrol, and then accommodation... also roughly another 200 euros. The bottom line is that I make 600 euros more."[12] The reasoning of this interviewee seems to correspond quite well with the model of a *homo economicus*, who is assumed to act rationally and to decide in favour of income maximisation (Straubhaar 1988: 67).

As far as social networks are concerned, we found that few of those we interviewed had personal contacts in the destination regions. This suggests that few of the interviewees made use of family contacts or contacts with friends when planning to migrate. The following sequence is typical: "Well, we were on holidays

[11] In the German construction industry in 2002 the average yearly income of 28,448 euros was, in terms of comparative purchasing power, below possible earnings in Great Britain (33,641 euros), Austria (29,649 euros) or Norway (28,464 euros). By 2006, wages and salaries in the Germany construction industry had shrunk by an additional 30% or so, while those in Austria, Great Britain or Norway rose by between 10% and 35% (Eurostat 2008), increasing the likelihood of migration by German construction workers.

[12] All in all, wage differentials appear to play a role in the migration motives of the people in our study. Our findings tally with those of Fassmann and Münz (1994), who, like the European Commission (2001), found that earnings prospects in West European labour markets can trigger migration. Since our sample consists largely of people unemployed at the time of interview, the question of their employment prospects as a whole arises. But even for those in employment, income expectations play a role.

there before... and all the Greeks we met said that we should simply move down there. We would definitely find work, as well as a house. And there were a couple of other Germans there, and we chatted with them as well. And they made the thing sound fairly attractive to us. And it sounded quite good, and somehow I didn't feel like staying in Germany anymore, and then I started thinking seriously about emigrating. And, in the end, that's what we did" (I 14: 734–744).

In our view, the surprisingly low importance of social networks for the formation of migration motives in our study could be due to do to the fact that not very many Germans have yet emigrated to the countries relevant to our study (Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Ireland and Sweden). On a general theoretical level, Faist (2000), for example, suggests that social networks, which facilitate migration, do not exist *per se*. It is rather conceivable that resources mobilised through networks are distributed unevenly within (potential) migration communities and thus lead to different migration patterns (Faist 2000: 123). Basically, this corresponds with another argument: the composition of the sample might have had an impact in regard to our findings on social networks. The people we interviewed were being helped by the employment authorities and might therefore be precisely the prospective emigrants who lacked other social networks linking into the destination country. However, if for the moment we accept the assumption that social networks do not play an important role for Germans contemplating emigration, this kind of "national" network can be expected to grow in importance in the medium term as the number of German emigrants to these countries rises, thus increasing the role of pull factors.[13] However, if not only existing networks in the destination countries but also the networks geared to the destination country (for instance, information available in Germany), then both prove relevant factors in some of the cases under study. These networks or information channels at home are, however, not actual migration motives—they merely support interviewees contemplating emigration. This is also true of people with friends or family members who have already worked abroad.[14]

It could be hypothesised that some of the skilled workers and technicians interviewed regarded the support offered by the European Service of the Federal Employment Agency in obtaining information on migration as a functional equivalent of integration in social networks. This is due above all to our particular access to the field under study. But there is also evidence that this importance of this institution is growing more generally, as reflected in increasing job placements. In 2000, 1,936 persons were placed by EURES, but by 2006 the number had climbed to 15,000 (ZAV 2007). One interviewee had the following to say about the agency: "What's really good is that they have their little files, 'Mobile Europe', a country here, a country there: what are the people like, what is the mentality like, how do job

[13] The largest contingent of Germans (145,967) lives in Switzerland, then Spain (120,449), Great Britain (98,176), Austria (86,657) and France (78,381; Eurostat 2008). The greatest increase in immigration rates is found in Spain, where the number of Germans increased more than threefold between 1995 (38,229) and 2005 (120,449). The growth rate is also high in Switzerland, where over the same period the number of Germans rose from 90,129 to 145,967. It is an empirical question whether, as the number of Germans living abroad grows, migration "chains" emerge, attracting further migrants.

[14] This is especially the case in border regions, where transnational commuting is common (I. 4, Z 746–750; I. 20, Z 104–133). A number of interviewees had already worked abroad (I. 7; I. 19), and a third group had experience with migration within Germany (working as assemblers), which is seen as a preliminary step to cross-border migration (Lozano-Ascencio et al. 1997).

interviews work, how do you structure your CV" (I. 32, Z 127–130). The European Service offers easy access to information on living and working conditions in Europe and thereby steers migration processes. Administrative issues that come to bear when moving to another European country can be clarified in advance, as shown by the following statement: "The European Service is helpful because it's part of a network with the European Service in Norway. Since the authorities in Norway have been restructured... it's important to prepare things with the European Service – ID card, registering with the police, and so forth" (I. 10, Z 91–96).[15] We conducted with experts confirmed that the majority of the European Service's clientele are skilled workers and technicians, putting the figure at between 50% and 75% (Exp. 1). This indicates that specific mechanisms guide migration by people with intermediate qualifications. The dominant institutional agents involved are not multinational corporations, which play a role in the migration of highly qualified people, but rather institutions specific to Europe.

Our discussion of the importance of networks for the migration of skilled Germans generally suggests that networks in the destination countries have so far played less of a role than suggested by the literature (e.g. Faist 2000; Johnston et al. 2006; Palloni et al. 2001; Pries 2004). Keeping in mind that the group under study represent a relatively recent migrational development, the significance of social networks in the destination countries may be seen to increase in the medium term. On the basis of the available empirical data, it can be further surmised that German migrants in Europe use information from a variety of sources, such as institutional networks for facilitating mobility (the European Service) or the mass media. However, our results invite research into the many ways in which social networks influence migration within Europe.

Conclusion

In the context of the discussion on European integration, an important role is assigned to cross-border mobility (Heinz and Ward-Warmedinger 2006; Pries 2004). In spite of the high expectations placed on migration there is so far no general increase in intra-European migration. On closer inspection, however, migration figures for specific countries (e.g. recent Polish migration to Great Britain), particular groups of migrants or destinations reveal a pattern emerges that suggests Europeanisation has been playing a role (Sauer and Ette 2007). Our findings deal with just such a new type of migration—new with regard to the actual group migrating, but also new with respect to the conditions and contextual factors of migration. German skilled workers and technicians are emigrating to other European countries in increasing numbers, a phenomenon (cf. Schupp et al. 2005, Sauer and Ette 2007) influenced by the policy of European integration that has hardly been researched.

[15] The advisory and information services of the European Service Offices were, however, used in very different ways by the people we interviewed. Only a small number of them explicitly mentioned that the European Service was helpful as a source of general information (I. 15; I. 19). The fact that the interviewees were generally not particularly aware of the relevance of these institutions may because they took their services for granted.

We have relied mainly on the results of a qualitative study dealing with the process of planning migration. This is a new approach: most studies on migration investigate migration motives in retrospect, where interpretations may shift, with, for example, reasons for staying being superimposed on reasons for migrating. For this reason, we conducted the interviews shortly before migration was scheduled. The study group was accessed in the context of preparation and language courses and information sessions offered by the European Service of the Federal Employment Agency. Our sample largely comprised people just about to take up a job in another country in Europe. The theoretical point of departure for our analysis was the general idea that migration processes are the result of complex decision-making procedures in which the individual perception of "objective" factors lead to a specific formation of motives for migration. Discussion of key economic factors (e.g. unemployment, income situation, working conditions) and social factors (e.g. social networks) sought to provide a basis for clarifying individual perceptions of migration and the weight given these factors in the empirical part of our paper. All in all, the theoretical concept proved fruitful. Reflecting the discussion in the theoretical section, the empirical evidence suggests that unemployment in Germany and the search for work abroad are the main motives for emigrating; one interviewee put it in a nutshell: "Work is the main thing" (I. 2, Z 820). However, the desire to improve one's income situation also played a role. Our results tally with migration research findings that assign great importance to economic factors. Interviewees also mention better working and living conditions as motives for migrating.

Our findings suggest that social networks in the destination countries are less important for German migrants than the literature has led to expect. Since there has been little German emigration to many countries in the past, German social networks there could not become an effective facilitating factor. However, if interviewees' social networks in Germany institutional networks are also taken into account, they can prove decisive in motivating migration. The relevance of institutions (e.g. EURES) seems to be due to the increasing number of job placements, but also to the various, specific support services provided for Germans contemplating migration.

What are the larger policy implications of our findings? At the political level, migration and mobility are still seen as ambivalent. While they are considered a sign of "successful" market integration, large waves of emigration might cause difficulties for both the country of origin and the country of destination. Germany might enjoy positive short term effects on the labour market with an easing of unemployment. In the long run, however, a stable or even increasing level of emigration by people of working age will cause serious problems for the German social insurance system, which is financed primarily by contributions paid by employees and employers. A sustainable strategy would require the labour market situation for skilled workers and technicians to be improved. They are the backbone of German manufacturing. It is hard to imagine that Germany and German industry can afford to lose any considerable portion of its skilled labour force. This means it is as important to maintain attractive employment conditions as to facilitate mobility is also as important. On the level of more specific policy goals, our findings suggest that policy needs to combat the discrimination of older employees. A large number of interviewees complained about worsening job opportunities for older people. A political discussion on minimum wages and wage dumping is equally important. It

seems from the findings of our study that decreasing wages in some parts of the German economy are encouraging emigration.

In answer to the overriding question of the European dimension of this migration movement, our modest study shows that it is facilitated and influenced by the European integration process. A number of factors combined to induce members of the group we interviewed to actually emigrate: push and pull factors at home and in the destination country, factors on the meso level such as specific support networks, information transfer, the freedom of movement and mutual recognition of educational certificates and the institutional facilitation of mobility. These meso factors, in particular, can be classified as "European." Where their impact is strong, even relatively immobile groups are more likely to envisage migration as a serious proposition.

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