

Migration to Germany: Is a middle class emerging among intra-European migrants?

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Abstract

This article analyses intra-European migration on the basis of primary data gathered in Berlin in 2002 and 2003. The theoretical foundation of the contribution is mainly based on newer migration research and research on Europeanisation. The empirical results of the study show that the individual patterns of migration within Europe vary quite strongly. It can be hypothesized that inner-European migrants increasingly come from diverse social classes and possess education and work experience in varying degrees. Recent European migration seems to be, above all, a middle-class phenomenon.

Keywords: intra-European migration; class; Germany.

Europeanisation and Migration

European migration research traditionally focuses on the analysis of labour migrants from lower social classes with regard to the causes as well as the economic and social consequences of migration (e.g. Krane 1979; Castles 1986; Bade 1987; Fielding 1993; King 1993; Fassmann/Münz 1994; Zimmermann 2005). Recent studies tend to focus on the occupational biography or on the cultural and social capital of highly-qualified migrants under the heading of elite migration (e.g. Salt/Ford 1993; Findlay et al. 1996; Cheng/Yang 1998; Peixoto 2001; Beaverstock 2002, 2005).² In

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² Research on highly skilled migration covers a broad spectrum of phenomena, for which Koser/Salt's (1997) article of the varying methodological and theoretical concepts in use provides a very helpful overview.

recent times, only a smaller number of researchers (e.g. Williams/Baláz 2005; Scott 2006, 2007; Weiß 2006; Braun/Recchi 2007; Mau et al. 2007) have addressed intra-European migration of women and men who do not fit into the categories of classical labour or elite migrants. This gap in the research is the starting point for the present contribution, which can be seen as an elaboration of a new and developing field. The main focus of the analysis will be the biographical patterns of migrants from the *middle classes*, which will be contrasted with those of lower class and elite migrants. The corresponding class scheme uses as a starting point classical authors like Weber (1980) or Bourdieu (1984), who draw a distinction between upper, middle and lower-class positions. For the empirical purposes of the present study, the suggestions of Weber and Bourdieu will be adapted in terms of a further differentiation of middle-class positions as well as in terms of the (limited) possibilities of the available data.

The empirical analysis of the article is framed by the assumption that the European Union represents a specific migration space shaped by its own institutional and legal regulations (Favell 2003; Recchi 2005; Scott 2007; Ette/Faist 2007). This migration space is characterised by the fact that the process of European integration has modified the conditions of inner-European migration and influenced the selection of migration populations over time. "Between 1945 and the early 1970s, all the fast-growing industrial economies of Western Europe had imported labour, especially for lower-skilled jobs" (Castles 2006: 742). The beginning of the 21st century has seen an increase in the mobility of - predominantly - service-industry workers (both women and men) with different (and also often high) qualifications and from different European regions (Verwiebe/Eder 2006: 143). Against that background, three research questions will be posed in the empirical part of this paper, in which *migration to Berlin* will be studied as a specific *case of intra-European migration*: 1. How differentiated are biographies of intra-European migrants? Which factors

distinguish middle-class migrant biographies from elite and lower-class migrant biographies? 2. How can the middle-ground of intra-European migration be defined? Specifically, to what extent do cultural, social, and economic capital influence the positioning of intra-Europeans into different classes? 3. What are the biographical consequences of migration within Europe, in terms of changes in social status?

Data and Method

The empirical findings are based on a project, which was carried out using a qualitative study and a quantitative survey in Berlin.³ Berlin was chosen because, more than other major German cities, it experienced a growing number of intra-European migrants in the 1990s. Moreover, it is a symbol of overcoming divided, post-war Europe and of the rapid societal changes in Germany and Europe since 1989. Or as Scott (2007: 8) states: "Berlin, Budapest, Prague and Warsaw ... are now well integrated into the global economic system ..., and whilst they may not stand out in terms of their position within the global urban hierarchy ..., their progress since 1989 has been extremely significant". In terms of economic structures, the service branches (media, research, government, education, consulting, advertising, commerce etc.), with more than 80 per cent of the jobs, are much more important than construction and manufacturing (SÖSTRA 2007: 117), in which approximately 250,000 jobs were lost between 1991 and 2005 (SÖSTRA 2007: 12). Berlin is host to fewer company headquarters than other major cities of its size. However, several companies (e.g. Deutsche Bahn, Sony Europe, Air Berlin, KPMG, Bayer Schering) have relocated their headquarters to Berlin, due to the modest economic recovery of recent years. It can be assumed that this local context has consequences for the social composition of migrant populations and the shaping of

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migrant biographies. In the 1960s and 1970s (West-)Berlin was a major destination for classical intra-European labour migrants, who were seeking employment in manufacturing. That changed to some degree throughout the 1980s when – deviating from other cities in Germany – cultural/lifestyle-based migration became more important. However, it seems mostly an empirical question what patterns of migration are typical for Berlin as a specific *case of intra-European migration* in the 1990s and at the beginning of the 21st century – a question to which, it is hoped, the empirical material of the present study can provide some interesting answers.

The sampling strategy of the empirical study was designed to produce a low selection bias of European migration biographies with respect to age, gender, and qualification. Thus, the foundation of the study was not the widely-applied snowball procedure, but rather a group of individuals from five European countries (Italy, France, Great Britain, Denmark, Poland),⁴ chosen through a random sample of the Berlin state census records (registration at the state census bureau is obligatory in Germany).⁵ Based on this sampling strategy, 30 interviews were conducted in two waves between February/April 2002 and December 2002/February 2003, respectively. With two exceptions, the migrants in question arrived in Berlin between 1985 and 2002, with 5/6 of the sample arriving between 1991 and 2002. Nine out of ten of those interviewed moved to Berlin directly from another European country, a smaller portion had spent some time in another German city before coming

⁴ The sample is also aiming to take into account varying traditions of migration and different welfare regimes that exist in Europe (Esping-Andersen 1990; Fassmann/Münz 1994).

⁵ Thus, neither returning migrants nor illegal migrants are contained in the sample. There are abundant studies on return migration (e.g. Williams/Baláz 2005; Razum et al. 2005; Christou 2006) and on illegal migrants (e.g. Engbersen 1999; Anderson 1999; Massey/Capoferro 2004; Marcelli/Lowell 2005; Grzymała-Kazłowska 2005; Zohry 2007). Neither topic was the focus of the present study.

to Berlin. All information about individuals, firms, etc. was treated anonymously for this contribution. The analyses of the empirical material can be understood as aiming at the creation of empirically-based *hypotheses*. The corresponding method of analysing the data is based on grounded theory as well as on the more recent concept of the construction of types (Glaser/Strauss 1967; Kluge 2000). This method involves inductive elements (based on the research questions) as well as deductive elements (based on the empirical material) and has generalising character on the basis of a certain number of cases studied.

Empirical Facets of European Biographies

The empirical facets of the European biographies studied are diverse. Five different biographical types emerge from a comparative case analysis of the interviews: There are individuals with a European elite biography; three different sorts of European middle class biographies exist, individuals with a biography in a European lower class are also present.

Four dimensions, which are based on the research questions of paragraph 1, form the basis of the typology (see table 1) in terms of a classification of migration patterns. These dimensions are partly based on Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural, social, and economic capital. However, due to the limited extent of this contribution, it was only possible to derive *some* of the crucial aspects of Bourdieu's truly rich concept from the available empirical material and it had to be adapted to the special case of the migration processes under study: The first dimension is based on the usability of cultural capital (a), which is measured in terms of the possession of educational and incorporated cultural capital. The usability of social capital (b) will be discussed based on integration into social networks. The function of economic capital (c) for placing intra-European migrants into different social classes is based on reflections of the degree of standardisation of occupational biographies and the types of occupational positions of the interviewees studied. A final dimension combines the individual reasons for migration

and social status changes in the context of intra-European migration (e.g. upward/downward mobility), in order to grasp the biographical consequences (d) for a categorization of varying forms of intra-European migration biographies.

The typology (see table 1) proposes a rich picture of intra-European migration. Migrants no longer seem to come exclusively from lower social classes and no longer only provide cheap labour for the prosperous industries of affluent European nations. It can be hypothesized that inner-European migrants increasingly come from diverse social classes, that to varying degrees they are educated and have work experience. Most of all, European migration seems to be a middle-class phenomenon⁶ (compare MacEinri 1991; Borzeda et al. 2002; Williams/Baláz 2005; Weiß 2006; Scott 2006, 2007; Braun/Recchi 2007; Mau et al. 2007). All in all, the differentiation of migration biographies in the present study indicates that the dual explanatory models of the established migration research (elite vs. lower-class migration) need to be revised in order to understand contemporary inner-European migration.

Turning to the various migration patterns of table 1, the first empirical type consists of migrants who belong to an emerging *European elite migration* (two men from France/UK, aged 40 and 56). They arrived in Berlin in 1992 and 2001. For one of the interviewees, Berlin was the final stage of a European business career, which started in the 1980s and had included more than half a dozen jobs in France, Austria, and Germany. The analysis of the underlying empirical material indicates that this migration type differs from many forms of highly skilled migration, and is similar to the managerial elite migration in Beaverstock's studies (2002, 2005), "whose ultimate international mobility meets the challenges of international business in globalisation"

⁶ It is quite surprising, even if it is theoretically plausible, that altogether 25 migrants in a sample of 30 have a middle class background. This result should be further researched with other studies.

(Beaverstock 2005: 246). This type possesses (a) educational capital (EC) from elite schools at the top of the educational

Table 1: Typology of European Migrant Biographies

	Elite Migrants 2 interviews (IN)	Higher Middle Class Migrants (10 IN)	Middle Class Migrants (8 IN)	Lower Middle Class Migrants (7 IN)	Lower Class Migrants (3 IN)
a) Cultural Capital	elite educational capital (EC), highly incorporated capital (IC)	high EC, high IC	high EC, medium IC	medium EC, medium/high IC	low EC, low IC
b) Social Capital	high function of multi-cultural, global networks	relatively high function of multi-cultural networks in Germany (G)	relatively low function of mostly multi-cultural networks in G	relatively high function of national or multi-cultural networks in G	very low function of national networks in G
c) Economic Capital	highly standardised occupational biography (OB); jobs as corporate managers	OB (mostly) standardised; jobs e.g. as lawyer, engineer, PR-manager	OB (de-) standardised; jobs e.g. as freelance translator or journalist, shop assistant	OB mostly not standardised; jobs e.g. as artist, freelance author, blue-collar-jobs	OB not standardised at all; jobs as unqualified service personnel
d) Biographical Consequences of Migration	only career reasons for migration (RM); migration is career move	occupational, cultural and social RM; lateral and upward mobility	social, occupational, cultural RM; lateral and downward mobility	almost no occupational, often social RM; migration represents risk of downward mobility	no occupational RM; migration is a continuation of existing risks

system,⁷ high incorporated cultural capital (IC), and makes high use of global multi-cultural networks (b),⁸ which express themselves through a sense of distinction (Bourdieu 1984, Hartmann 2000). The economic capital of the European migration elite is based on standardised occupational biographies. These biographies are characterised by continuing upward mobility through job changes, highly paid jobs, positions in higher management, and occupational mobility within intra-European firm-networks, as confirmed by authors such as Hillmann and Rudolph (1997: 250) or Salt and Ford (1993: 303-308). "I have successfully reorganised ... corporations which were in trouble in France, Austria, and then in Germany" (I1: 18ff.), states one of the interviewees, not without a certain self-satisfaction. Furthermore, the reasons for migration are based purely on individual career interests – this confirms findings of other studies (e.g. Salt/Ford 1993; Hillmann/Rudolph 1997; Beaverstock 2005) – with which they distinguish themselves from all other groups under study. Correspondingly, mobility within Europe improves the status position of European elite migrants in terms of career moves (d). These interviewees think and act in global terms, there are no barriers to surmount: "I said ok [regarding a move to Germany], the project is important and it is important for the company and it would be part of a challenge for me. As I became more and more involved with the project, it was clear that the experience I was gaining ... was much more useful in the headquarters of a global organisation than back in a

⁷ The self description of one school is noteworthy: "The *school has continually attracted a special kind of individual, highly capable and talented, innovative, entrepreneurial, ambitious and open-minded. The *school's aim is to train the world leaders of tomorrow".

⁸ The strong relation to an institutionalised career-network of his former elite school can be mobilised for the acquisition of managerial jobs throughout the career of one respondent: "I got my first job ... from the S*-network " (I1: 272). "When I moved to X3* later on, a headhunter from the S*-network cut the deal" (I1: 274, 291).

subsidiary. ... Now I am responsible for 230 people" (I2: 123ff.).

Elite migrant biographies will serve here as a blueprint for the discussion of the following middle-class migrant biographies (type 2, 3, 4). The first middle-class type consists of six women and four men from *all* national groups (aged 30-45). Eight out of ten interviewees in this group migrated to Berlin between 1991 and 2002. These individuals belong to an emerging European *higher middle class of migrants*. They can mobilise (a) high EC (usually university degrees) and high IC (especially language skills) for their biographies. "I thought in the beginning that ... it is not going to be easy for me here because my German is not good enough. ... But I realised after a while that I have a kind of capital, which others in the business born in Germany do not have, namely my language skills and my intercultural communication skills" (I7: 223ff). Frequently, migrants of type 2 gain parts of their education outside their home countries, in other EU-member states. This demonstrates the general importance of institutions for individual biographies (Beck 1989; Brose 1989). Additionally, one finds a high correspondence with the programmatic aims of European integration (EU-Commission 2006) with respect to the mutual recognition of educational degrees. The multi-cultural social networks of the interviewees of type 2 in Germany (b) have a high economic functionality: "The *club invites us ... to all important events of the embassy, where you can meet quite important people, who have interesting ... networks as well. Thus, one receives various invitations" (I3: 549ff.). In terms of the economic capital (c) of this group, the occupational biographies are, not surprisingly, (mostly) standardised. The spectrum of jobs covers, for example, a lawyer, an engineer, a public relations manager, or a mathematician (usually including supervisory power/authority) in the German and other European job markets. Against that background, one could argue that this type of European higher middle-class migrant resembles to some degree what Koser and Salt refer to as two subtypes of highly-skilled migrants, namely

"professionals" and "private career development" migrants (Koser/Salt 1997: 288). Furthermore, the migration reasons of the higher middle-class Europeans vary and they differ from the other types under study. This statement of a lawyer is a typical example: "I was raised German-Danish. ... and I've been thinking as a European for a long period" (I3: 27ff.). As part of his university education, he studied in France and Germany (I2: 30f.). Having had that experience, it was reasonable to move to Germany. "They asked me whether the post of a chief executive of their Berlin office would interest me" (I3: 122ff.). There is a group of people with predominantly occupational reasons (Scott 2006: 1113), in part based on European firm networks. Others migrate mainly for cultural reasons or on the grounds of institutional programmes of the EU (e.g. Socrates). Integration in social networks, partnerships or marriages are also an important engine for the migration of type 2, as the results of other studies confirm (e.g. Beetz/Darieva 1997; Kofman 2004; Weiß 2005; Johnston et al. 2006). In terms of biographical consequences, it is typical for women and men of this group to maintain or improve their social and economic status through migration (Braun/Recchi 2007: 10). Lateral and upward mobility dominate.

The next group of interviewees with a *European middle-class* biography are assembled in type 3 (eight people of *all* nationalities, mostly women, aged 30-45). With one exception, they moved to Berlin in the mid and late 1990s. The interviewees of this type usually possess (a) high EC (university degrees). Partly, these degrees are obtained in more than one European nation, which, according to King/Ruiz-Gelices (2003: 232-237), is increasingly common among Europeans with a middle-class background. But, in comparison to migrants of higher social classes, migrants of type 3 are less able to successfully mobilise their EC and IC in the job market, which could be due to the predominantly social-scientific character of their cultural capital. Their social capital (b) is based mostly on multi-cultural networks. A typical example is the following: "Almost half of our friends

are British ... the other half are German" (I13: 572f.). The economic capital (c) of this group is based largely on non-standardised occupational biographies. Especially in the German labour market, they are characterised by temporary or freelance jobs in service industries (e.g. journalist, translator). Frequently, these jobs are interrupted by unemployment or phases of bringing up children, which confirms, for example, Helling's study (1996: 80-84), which also shows that normal middle-class biographies are not without their erratic ups and downs. To sum up, one can state that placing migrants into type 3 of this study is based on high educational capital, medium incorporated capital, relatively low use of multi-cultural networks, and medium economic capital. Moreover, the reasons for migration of interviewees with a European middle-class biography are mostly of a social, sometimes occupational, and quite often of a cultural/lifestyle nature. The latter seems to be, among other things, a specific feature of recent intra-European middle-class migration (Scott 2006: 1114). For example, a British person came to Berlin in the early 1990s, because "everything was very exciting and unusual. ... I only had a backpack full of clothes" (I13: 32ff.). A culturally-motivated lifestyle (Beck 1989) is more crucial than labour market integration: "... a job or making money was not important for me" (I12: 56). As a result, mobility across borders quite often turns out to be a risk for occupational careers (d). This can also be confirmed by other findings for similar migration groups (Weiß 2005).

The fourth migration type is composed of people who have a *European* biography in the *lower middle-class* (seven British, Italian, Danish women and men, aged 24 to 45). Mostly, those migrants moved to Berlin in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Migrants of type 4 possess medium educational capital and medium incorporated capital (a). Their relatively high social capital (b) – mostly based on multi-cultural networks in Germany – is quite functional for individual labour market strategies (Pries 2001; Palloni et al. 2001). It is used to compensate for the lower level of cultural capital. In

terms of economic capital (c), the individual risks of the mostly de-standardised occupational biographies are higher than in the European middle class (type 3) –mainly due to regular phases of unemployment. The vocational spectrum of type 4 spans jobs as freelance author, artist, post-office employee, administration secretary, or blue-collar worker in Germany as well as in other European nations. Thus, they can be classified as part of a lower middle-class of an emerging European social space. For those with a blue-collar-job (removal worker, construction worker, night-watchman), their working conditions resemble to some extent typical occupations of the classical intra-European labour migrants, who were "... carrying out work that Germans would typically no longer do" (Blotevogel et al. 1993: 85).⁹ In accordance with the capital configuration, the habitual patterns in this group are characterised by cultural openness and flexibility, as well as by a certain sense of need (Bourdieu 1984): "Yes, my situation annoys me. ... I would really like to live a healthier life and I would really like to buy organic food. ... But I cannot afford it" (I21: 331). In terms of the reasons for intra-European migration, social motivation (partnerships, marriages) and institutionalised migration are widespread. Similar to the patterns of migration of type 3, Europeans with a lower middle-class background experience, regardless of their national origin, quite risky transitions within Europe (d). They have to accept downward mobility or unemployment in the course of their migration, as described in the following account: "I came to Berlin in 1990. After two months [of unemployment] ... I found work in a job-creation program" (I21: 48ff.). The case of a British migrant is characteristic as well. He worked

⁹ Germany is not the only European nation with such a history of migration. For example, for France in that period, there is no doubt according to Ogden (1993: 111) "that the need of the economy for [industrial] labour was at the centre of recruitment of immigrants". This dominating pattern changed in the mid/late 1970's when "immigration of men to traditional unskilled jobs was less in demand" (Ogden 1993: 113).

as a freelance author for several theatres in L* before he moved to Berlin in 1989. His first job was as a removal worker, with which he had to make do for almost ten years. In the 1990s he received for the first time well-paid assignments to write scripts for TV series: "60,000 DM, we were able to live on that money for six months" (I18: 114).

Finally, there is an empirical type of intra-European migration, which consists of three men and women with a *European lower-class biography* from the UK and Poland (aged 25-45), who came to Berlin in 1987, 1988 and 1999 respectively. Not unlike type 1, this type is also an important blueprint for the discussion of particular migrant middle-class biographies. The migrants belonging to this type possess (a) low IC (e.g., very few foreign language skills) and very low EC – usually no formal occupational training –, which, in the eyes of the interviewees, has a negative impact on their labour market chances. "Maybe the English certificate, which I'll [soon] receive, will help me. Because my German is bad and I don't have a proper education or job training" (I26: 177f.). The use made of (b) of national networks in Germany is low as well. Correspondingly, the occupational biographies (b) of this group of people are totally de-standardised: Predominant are sequences of low-paid, usually temporary jobs in service industries, with precarious working conditions: "I have to work under really bad conditions as a barkeeper. ... It is a really hard job. After 12 hours in some club with loud music my whole body hurts" (I26: 152 ff.). It remains doubtful whether, on the basis of these jobs, which are typical for this group, it is possible to live a life above subsistence level. The reasons for migration are of a social/personal nature, combined with a strong individualistic logic. In accordance with the capital configuration of this group, migration within Europe is a continuation of an already risk-filled life path (d), which started in the home country. The case of a British woman is typical: she starts her first job in a bank in L* at the age of 16: "I think I was freaking out a little, I had no sense of responsibility. I gave up after six months. I had different jobs

then ... it didn't matter what it was" (I25: 29ff.). This de-standardised occupational biography continues after the move to Germany: "I had all sorts of different jobs, ranging from photo-assistant to concert roadie. I had my own business as well. I tailored clothing together with another British person. After that, I ended up as a waitress" (I25: 99ff.). This was followed by a period of unemployment lasting several years, because the interviewee had to quit her job due to growing alcohol addiction (I25: 110f.). At the time of the interview, she was still unemployed, after dropping out of a state-financed training programme for bilingual secretaries.

Discussion

Three research questions were chosen as a starting point for the empirical analysis of this contribution, in which migration to Germany (Berlin) was studied as a case for intra-European migration. Although the groups under study are specific due to the influence of the local (Berlin) context in the new host society (Germany), one can hope that the present study is able to demonstrate and classify some of the many important facets of recent intra-European migration.

With respect to the first question (differentiation of biographies), one can argue that the biographies of intra-European migrants of this study are more varied and probably also more de-standardised than biographies of individuals who do not migrate. However, European migrants are not necessarily excluded from standard labour contracts or attractive positions in the German or other European labour markets. Correspondingly, one could conclude from the results that most interviewees profit from the freedom of movement within the EU, and particularly from the mutual recognition of educational degrees. In addition, they do not just occupy elite or lower-class positions, as is suggested by the classical and more recent migration research. Migration within the EU seems to be a quite diverse, mostly middle-class phenomenon at the turn

of the 21st century (Borzeda et al. 2002; Weiß 2006; Scott 2006; Braun/Recchi 2007; Mau et al. 2007).

One can interpret these findings as indicating a changing composition of migration populations as outlined in the first paragraph (above). Differences in intra-European migration biographies are mainly attributable to factors such as the utilization of qualifications, access to social networks, or job experience. Nationality proved to be less important than expected and as it was reflected in the sample strategy. It seems that discrimination on the grounds of nationality scarcely exists. This is an important characteristic of intra-European migration in the 21st century and a critical difference to European labour migration of the 1960s and 1970s. The relevance of a broad spectrum of capital configurations for placing intra-European biographies into different classes of migration (research question 2) could be another argument for the existence of a specific European migration space. The different reasons for migration, especially reasons that, in the middle classes, are culturally motivated/lifestyle-based and institutionally-promoted (e.g. Socrates), could be a further argument for the existence of a specific European migration space. A further indication in favour of this thesis is the relevance of European firm networks for the migration of individuals in this study with an elite or an upper-middle-class background, which can be viewed as an expression of politically-sponsored economic integration within the EU (EU-Commission 2006). For the biographical consequences of migration within Europe (research question 3), it can be assumed from the underlying empirical material that migration within Europe produces, on the one hand, career opportunities in the case of the European elite and migrants with an upper middle-class background; on the other hand, these transitions involve risks and uncertainties for migrants from lower social classes.

In terms of future research, it would be useful to consider the relevance of the results of this contribution to the migration of other national groups to other European countries as

well, which would allow one to take into account more facets of European migration than was possible in this modest study. However, the results of the present study have, it is hoped, given an empirical indication of the dynamics at work in an emerging European social space.

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