

IMISCOE Research Series

This series is the official book series of IMISCOE, the largest network of excellence on migration and diversity in the world. It comprises publications which present empirical and theoretical research on different aspects of international migration. The authors are all specialists, and the publications a rich source of information for researchers and others involved in international migration studies.

The series is published under the editorial supervision of the IMISCOE Editorial Committee which includes leading scholars from all over Europe. The series, which contains more than eighty titles already, is internationally peer reviewed which ensures that the book published in this series continue to present excellent academic standards and scholarly quality. Most of the books are available open access.

For information on how to submit a book proposal, please visit: <http://www.imiscoe.org/publications/how-to-submit-a-book-proposal>.

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/13502>

Laure Sandoz

Mobilities of the Highly Skilled towards Switzerland

The Role of Intermediaries in Defining
“Wanted Immigrants”

Laure Sandoz
Institute of Cultural Anthropology
and European Ethnology
University of Basel
Basel, Switzerland



ISSN 2364-4087

ISSN 2364-4095 (electronic)

IMISCOE Research Series

ISBN 978-3-030-21121-9

ISBN 978-3-030-21122-6 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21122-6>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2019. This book is an open access publication.

Open Access This book is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this book are included in the book's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the book's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Isn't it a characteristic of our time that all humans, in a way, have become migrants and minorities?

Maalouf, A. (1998). *Les Identités meurtrières*. Paris: Grasset.

Today, it is still human beings that are coming, not "asylum seekers", "refugees", "third-country nationals" or "highly skilled migrants".

Hruschka, C. (2016). Das individuelle Potenzial von Asylsuchenden wahrnehmen. In *Migrationsland Schweiz*, C. Abbt and J. Rochel (eds.), 119–133. Baden: Hier und Jetzt.

Acknowledgements

The present book was submitted in an earlier version as a doctoral dissertation defended in May 2018 at the University of Basel in the field of Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. I would especially like to thank my supervisors, Walter Leimgruber and Anne-Catherine Wagner, as well as my colleagues and friends, Metka Hercog and Katrin Sontag, for their support, ideas, motivation, and hard work over the past 4 years.

I am also grateful to the network office of the National Center of Competence in Research on Migration and Mobility (nccr - on the move) for building a wonderful research and learning environment for PhD fellows.

I would like to extend my thanks to all my colleagues from the nccr - on the move, the University of Basel, and the School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS) in Paris for their solidarity, feedback, and friendship.

This research would not have been possible without the cooperation of all my interviewees and research partners, who agreed to share their stories and to give me access to the field. Thank you to all.

Finally, I am very grateful to my partner, my family, and my friends for their encouragement, enthusiasm, and patience.

This research was supported by the nccr - on the move, which is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. I was assisted for the revision of the manuscript by Hilary Drummond. Very special thanks go to the IMISCOE network and to the Springer editorial and production team for the final realisation of this publication.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Reflections on Highly Skilled Migration	5
1.1.1	Who Are the Migrants?	6
1.1.2	Who Are the Highly Skilled?	10
1.1.3	How to Evaluate Skills?	14
1.1.4	Who Are the Migration Intermediaries?	16
1.1.5	Why Study Highly Skilled Migrants in Switzerland?	18
1.2	Methods for Grasping the Diversity of Mobility Pathways	21
1.2.1	Research Design	22
1.2.2	Para-Ethnographic Experiments	24
1.2.3	Research Locations	28
1.2.4	Data Collection and Analysis	33
	References	45
2	Selecting Foreigners for the Labour Market	53
2.1	Swiss Admission Rules	55
2.1.1	Historical Background	56
2.1.2	Legal Definitions	63
2.1.3	The Symbolic Value of the Swiss Quota System	66
2.2	The Admission Process in Practice	71
2.2.1	The Authorities' Discretionary Power	73
2.2.2	The Practical Meanings of "Economic Interests"	76
2.2.3	Strategies of Employers for Overcoming Administrative Barriers	77
2.2.4	Portrait: Administrative Obstacles for a Brazilian Engineer	84
2.3	Highly Skilled or Highly Wanted Migrants?	87
	References	90

3	Creating Attractive Places	95
3.1	Attracting Companies Through Economic Promotion.....	96
3.1.1	Place-Branding in the “Greater Geneva Bern Area”	97
3.1.2	Targets of Economic Promotion.....	103
3.2	Retaining “Wanted Immigrants”	105
3.2.1	Integration Services in Basel and Vaud	109
3.2.2	Negotiating Migrant Status	118
3.2.3	Portrait: The Political Engagement of an American Woman	121
3.3	A Neoliberal State?	125
	References.....	130
4	Displacing Workers Between Companies	135
4.1	International Headhunters and Relocation Agents.....	139
4.1.1	Headhunters: Finding the Right Person	142
4.1.2	Relocation Agents: Motivating People to Move	150
4.1.3	Portrait: The Job Search Experiences of a Colombian Couple	155
4.2	Allocating Experts to Projects: The Case of Management Consultants.....	160
4.2.1	Constructing an Elite Status.....	163
4.2.2	Portrait: The Early Career of a Management Consultant	165
4.2.3	Recruiting Consultants.....	167
4.2.4	Providing Flexible Labour	170
4.2.5	Managing Mobility Infrastructures	171
4.2.6	The Mechanisms of Outsourcing	175
4.3	Mobility as the New Norm?.....	177
	References.....	182
5	Unequal Access to Support and Privileges	187
5.1	A Statistical Approach to Relocation Support	189
5.1.1	Important Variables	193
5.1.2	The Preferences of Employers.....	201
5.1.3	The Mechanisms of Inequality.....	203
5.2	A Migration Channel Approach to Privileges	206
5.2.1	Channelling Privileges	208
5.2.2	The Family-Oriented Channel	209
5.2.3	The Company-Oriented Channel	213
5.2.4	The Study-Oriented Channel	215
5.2.5	The Protection-Oriented Channel	218
5.2.6	Portrait: The Struggles of an Eritrean Man Towards Family Reunification	223
5.3	Brain Gain or Body Shopping?	227
	References.....	230
6	Conclusion	237
	References.....	244

List of Figures

Fig. 1.1	Occurrences of the term “highly skilled migration” in Google text corpora in English, 1980–2008	10
Fig. 1.2	Proportion of foreigners in the resident population of Switzerland, 1860–2010	19
Fig. 1.3	Education level upon immigration to Switzerland, 1991–2014.....	20
Fig. 1.4	Migrants’ arrivals in cantons and municipalities, 2015	31
Fig. 3.1	The business hubs of Switzerland Global Enterprise.....	99
Fig. 5.1	Support received by immigrants from relatives and employers by level of education and nationality, 2016	198
Fig. 5.2	Support received by immigrants from relatives and employers by professional sector and level of education, 2016	200

List of Tables

Table 1.1	Recorded interviews conducted by the author.....	34
Table 1.2	Recorded interview conducted by Dr. Katrin Sontag.....	35
Table 1.3	Recorded interviews conducted by Dr. Metka Hercog.....	36
Table 1.4	List of observations conducted by the author.....	40
Table 2.1	Cantonal quotas for non-EU and non-EFTA workers and population size by canton in 2015.....	68
Table 2.2	Admission processes for labour migration based on case studies in the cantons of Vaud and Basel-City.....	74
Table 5.1	General overview of the main sources of support received by immigrants to Switzerland, 2016.....	193
Table 5.2	Effect of employer support: comparison between immigrants who did and did not declare support from an employer, 2016.....	194
Table 5.3	Support received by immigrants from relatives and employers by level of education, 2016.....	195
Table 5.4	Support received by immigrants from employers according to gender and relationship status, 2016.....	196
Table 5.5	Support received by immigrants from employers by education level, gender, relationship status, nationality, and professional sector, 2016.....	202
Table 5.6	List of biographic interviews.....	207
Table 5.7	Summary of the main characteristics of migration channels.....	222
Table 5.8	Summary of the main characteristics of migration channels adapted to the specific case study.....	225