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## **Migrants' Resources: multilingualism and transnational mobility. A Study on Learning Paths and School to Job Transition of Young Portuguese Migrants**

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**ABSTRACT** In this contribution, the results of an empirical study on young immigrants' learning paths and school to job transition are presented. The study focused on the strategies of successful students from the Portuguese immigrant minority in Hamburg. One aim was to find out whether the young people could profit by their migration experiences and multilingual skills. Increasing the multilingualism of individuals is an official goal of the European Union, and it is predicted that the labour market will give increasing importance to the ability to communicate and work in contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity. The question was, though, whether students from an immigrant minority, whose parents had come to Germany in the course of the labour recruitment, could benefit from this development. Interestingly, the young people of the sample turned out to be highly flexible during their future orientations, considering options in Germany as well as in their country of origin. Their strategies and orientations during school to work transition were analysed on the basis of Pierre Bourdieu's model of the linguistic market and from the perspective of the sociological concept of transnational migration.

### **Introduction**

In educational research, it is usual to focus on the disadvantages of students from immigrant families. After all, minority ethnic groups are more likely to live in deprived areas, to be poor and to have difficulty in finding work than members of the majority. Currently, research evidence shows that minority ethnic and migrant groups are not proportionately represented within systems of higher education and vocational training, which lead to more highly paid jobs. In Germany, for example, about two-thirds of young people with a German passport obtain entry into vocational training in the 'dual system' (part-time workplacement, part-time Berufsschule), in contrast to only about 40% of those from immigrant families. The results of the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) confirm that the linguistic and cultural background of a pupil is one of the major impact factors on the probability of good or low school success. Pupils with an immigrant background are likely to suffer disadvantages in all European educational systems. This fact indicates that, until today, these systems have not adapted very well to linguistic and cultural diversity among their populations. They have rather reproduced the myth of a nation-state's linguistic and cultural homogeneity and thus limited the chances of pupils from linguistic and ethnic minorities (Gogolin, 2002). Whereas the national orientation of educational systems has been a means of exclusion in the past, the question now arises, in which way social (in)equality in education is affected by processes of transnationalisation. In her keynote address at the European Conference on Educational Research in Crete in 2004, Agnes van Zanten pointed at the growing influence of cultural and educational globalisation. In her vision, globalisation in the future is likely to influence parents' educational strategies. Depending on the families' socio-economic backgrounds, globalisation of education may, according to van Zanten, turn out to be a new constraint or opportunity: new opportunities may arise for social elites who have long been

internationally orientated and for those who are able to participate in international developments by travelling and learning new languages; at the same time, the social disadvantages of the more nationally orientated lower classes may increase. Globalisation, in van Zanten's view, may thus widen the social gap between those who have and those who do not have access to international educational strategies. The question, whether the globalisation of education will be a constraint or an opportunity for socially disadvantaged immigrant groups, was put as a question for future research. Van Zanten asked, whether immigrant minorities would be able to develop successful educational strategies in global contexts. This was one of the questions followed in the study I present in this contribution.

My article is based on a research project which focused on the strategies of successful immigrant students (Fürstenau, 2004). It was a qualitative study among young people from Portuguese families in Hamburg. The underlying question was, whether students with an immigrant background could, during school to work transition, profit by specific competencies acquired in the course of migration. Special attention was paid to the students' linguistic skills: their multilingualism and their dominance of a minority language. One aim was to investigate the value of immigrant minority languages in the labour market. Parting from the assumption that multilingualism is a resource for the individual as well as for the immigration society, we asked whether this resource could be taken advantage of in vocational training and in the labour market. This idea is not supported by the fact that immigrant minority languages are usually not taught at German schools and that, consequently, their dominance is not officially evaluated and certified. In spite of this, in theoretical and political debates, it is increasingly being recognised that the multilingualism of children from minority ethnic groups and migrant families is a potentially rich resource for economic progress and for society as a whole, and a necessary prerequisite for the successful social cohesion of an enlarged European Union. It is predicted that the labour market will give increasing importance to the ability to communicate and work in contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity, with 'intercultural competency' becoming a recognised area of professional qualification, and with new forms of accreditation valuing prior experience and competencies gained outside the school. The question is, though, whether immigrants profit by these developments and whether there is a demand for their specific (linguistic) skills.

In the second section of this contribution, I outline the qualitative interview study among young people from Portuguese families in Hamburg, and I present two exemplary cases from the study. According to the aims of the project, the value and relevance of the students' multilingual skills during school to work transition was the first focus of the interview analysis. This part of the study is summarised in the third section, starting with an outline of the theoretical framework, Pierre Bourdieu's model of the linguistic market, and its application to the research question. I will then give some insight into the evidence of the interview study and sum up the most important results. Another focus of the interview analysis had not been foreseen during the conceptualisation of the research project, but was developed following the priorities expressed in the interviews: transnational mobility during school to work transition turned out to be an important theme throughout the sample of the study. It is presented in the fourth section. To the end of gaining an understanding of the transnational learning paths and orientations described in the interviews, I rely on sociological theoretical approaches to transnational migration. I will then report on the significance of transnational mobility described by the students of the sample and comment on the outcomes of the interview analysis concerning transnational mobility. Finally, I will give a summary of the results concerning the question, in how far migrants' multilingualism and transnational mobility can be considered a resource during school to work transition.

## **Outline of the Research Project and Two Exemplary Cases**

### *Outline of the Research Project*

The presented study was conducted among students from Portuguese families in Hamburg. The largest Portuguese community in Germany is located in the city of Hamburg. Most immigrants from Portugal came to Germany as part of the labour recruitment. At the time of economic growth from 1955 onwards, the Federal Republic of Germany made bilateral recruitment agreements on so called guest workers with eight countries (Greece, Italy, former Yugoslavia, Morocco, Portugal,

Spain, Tunisia and Turkey). The originally planned labour recruitment for a limited period became permanent immigration, and the freedom of movement in the European Union, in the case of Portugal since 1992, allowed new immigration from Portugal to Germany. The selection of students for the sample of the qualitative study was theory driven. The aim was not the composition of a representative, but of a relevant sample. In order to gain understanding of successful strategies, only students who were achieving well enough to complete one of the three paths in the German segregated school system were included in the sample.[1] The inclusion of students from different school types guaranteed a variation in the sample, while at the same time, there were no students who failed in the German school system by not achieving a final certification. The sample consisted of 27 students aged 14 to 23 years. Most of their parents or grandparents had come to Germany in the course of the labour recruitment and had attended not more than four to six years of schooling in Portugal. The students were interviewed at least once near the end of schooling, while planning school to work transition and, in some cases, entering professional training in the labour market or at university. The interview guide was developed on the basis of a pre-survey among 190 Portuguese students and was composed of questions on language acquisition and use, experiences with migration, educational career and experiences in school, mother tongue education and professional and future perspectives. All the interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and, with the help of the computer programme MaxQda, theoretically coded and analysed in an inductive-deductive procedure.

### *Two Exemplary Cases*

*Sandra.* Sandra's parents had come to Hamburg in the course of the labour recruitment, and were still employed in Hamburg as workers when Sandra finished school. While living in Germany, they had constructed a house and a hotel in Portugal. Sandra and her younger brother were born and grew up in Hamburg. They spent their summer holidays in Portugal during their school years. When Sandra finished the German Gymnasium, she decided to study languages at university to become a teacher. She applied to the university in Hamburg as well as to the university in her family's small town in Portugal and was accepted in both places. The decision whether to enter university in Germany or in Portugal was not easy for Sandra. On the one hand, she wanted to stay near her parents in Hamburg, but on the other hand, some of her cousins had also grown up in Hamburg and were studying at universities in Portugal. They were a role model for her. Sandra had attended Portuguese afternoon classes in Hamburg for 11 years and was literate in Portuguese. She finally decided to enter university in Portugal and described this step as a challenge and learning opportunity. Studying in Portugal was, from her point of view, an opportunity to get to know her parents' country better, to widen her horizon and gain new experiences. At the same time, though, Sandra pointed out that she could rely on her social and parental network in Portugal which made her feel secure. Sandra believed that her studies in Portugal would increase the range of her professional perspectives, because she would be able to teach either in Germany or in Portugal. It was important for her to keep both options open, and she was worried about the recognition of her Portuguese diploma in Germany. At university in Portugal, Sandra studied English and German, both taught as foreign languages at schools in Portugal. Her bilingualism was a bonus, which would not have been the same in Germany, because Portuguese is usually not a foreign language in the German school system and therefore not a subject in teacher training. In Portugal, Sandra at first lived with an aunt and then moved into her family's house, which before had only been inhabited during the family's holidays in Portugal and had remained empty during the rest of the year. She enjoyed her social contacts with other re-migrants from Germany, who shared her experiences and with whom she continued to speak German at times. She still made regular visits to Hamburg. In an interview during the third year of her studies, Sandra was content with her decision. She felt confident about her transnational experiences and her professional career. One day, she said, she wanted to teach German culture to teachers at university in Portugal. In the case of Sandra and her cousins, the academic careers of the second generation in the parents' country of origin were one indicator of the social advancement inherent in the migration project.

*Luís.* Luís was the only son of his Portuguese labour migrant parents in Hamburg. From the age of one year, he grew up with his grandparents in a village in Portugal, later started schooling there and only saw his parents during summer holidays in Portugal or in Hamburg. At the age of 11, having finished the fourth year of primary school in Portugal, Luís decided to move to Hamburg to live with his parents. He was taught German as a second language in a reception class for recently arrived immigrants during the first year. After that he began a school career in the lowest path of the German school system (Hauptschule) where he got his final exam after the 9th year. He continued schooling in the next higher path (Realschule), took another final exam after the 10th year, moved on to still another school and achieved his last exam after the 12th year (Fachhochschulreife). In the afternoons, Luís attended voluntary Portuguese classes. After leaving school, he applied for vocational training in the area of trade and business and was accepted to be trained as a merchant in foreign trade on a two-year course in the German dual system (training in enterprise and in school). During vocational training, Luís participated in a binational training programme between Germany and Portugal, which included Portuguese lessons on Saturdays and a four-week work experience in an enterprise in Portugal. At the time, Luís was undecided where to work in the future and could imagine a professional career either in Germany or in Portugal. He was convinced that the professional training in the German dual system and the German language skills would be an advantage in the Portuguese labour market, if he ever decided to move there. Unexpectedly, Luís's employment in the training enterprise in Hamburg was not continued after the two-year course. Luís was unemployed and experienced the difficult situation in the German labour market. Not having found a new job-perspective after six months, he seriously considered the option to work in Portugal and was encouraged by announcements in Portuguese newspapers that Portuguese enterprises were looking for employees with German skills. Because of an agreement of the European Union, Luís had the possibility to look for work in Portugal during a three months' stay, receiving unemployment benefit. He went to the village where he grew up, stayed with a relative in the house owned by his parents and within a radius of 50 kilometres systematically applied for work at branches of German and Portuguese enterprises with trade connections to Germany. He was successful and returned to Germany with a working contract from a German enterprise in the North of Portugal. In his last interview before leaving for Portugal, Luís described his move as a strategy to follow his professional ambitions. He said his aim was to reach, in the long run, a responsible position in the area of import and export and to be able to always choose between Portugal and Germany.

### **Multilingual Skills**

#### *Theoretical Framework: Pierre Bourdieu's model of the linguistic market*

Bourdieu deals with the role of language in the construction of social reality (Bourdieu, 1991). His model of the linguistic market, which explains the social status of languages, is part of a theory about social differentiation. It exposes the invalidation of minority languages as part of the social discrimination and exclusion of those who speak these languages. Bourdieu thus identifies the hierarchies between languages and varieties of languages originating from social rather than from linguistic differences. His model analyses the distribution of linguistic power in the process of the foundation of European nation-states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this process, the standard varieties of the official national languages became the 'legitimate' languages. In the linguistic market, the dominant – or rather 'legitimate' – language is an instrument of power as the market's structures impose a system of sanctions and censorship of certain speakers. The 'legitimate language' has symbolic value and functions as cultural capital, convertible into material resources and positions of structural power. In the European context, the 'modern' state school systems helped to establish the national languages as 'legitimate' languages. The intention of linguistic homogenisation by promoting one national language and a monolingual national society, can be considered one of the main motives for the development of public education systems in European nation-states. According to Bourdieu, educational systems either validate or invalidate linguistic competencies. Their certificates give languages their social value and contribute to the definition of linguistic capital. The mechanism of capitalisation does not function for minority languages. In most cases, children from linguistic minorities are not guaranteed access to written

language and literacy in their home languages at school, and the elaboration of their bilingual or multilingual skills is not supported. In the German school system the inclusion of migrants' home languages into the curriculum is still an exception. However, the official foreign languages taught at school, such as English, French and Spanish, are institutionalised as linguistic capital. The linguistic and cultural resources of minority children and their parents and communities are, on the contrary, invalidated in so far as most education models make them appear as handicaps or deficiencies (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Fürstenau, 2002).

With regard to the question, whether successful linguistic minority students may nevertheless profit by their multilingual skills, it is important to keep in mind Bourdieu's emphasis on the dynamics of the social positioning processes. According to his model, the differences in social practices relevant for positioning are negotiated in social contexts, and structures are therefore apt to change. In the presented research project, we asked whether the growing diversification of linguistic and cultural practices in immigrant societies leads to changes in the social estimation of these practices. Taking into account, that cultural dynamics may develop in spite of the schools' monolingual and monocultural orientation, the question was whether the linguistic skills of young people from immigrant families function as cultural capital during school to work transition. In the case of the students from the Portuguese minority, some factors seemed to support this idea. Even though the Portuguese language is usually not taught at school, its social value benefits from Portugal's membership in the European Union and from the fact that Portuguese is spoken by approximately 160 million people worldwide.

*Multilingual Skills and their Value during School to Work Transition – evidence from the interviews*

*Multilingual skills and school experiences.* The young people of the sample grew up as members of a linguistic minority. In the interviews they reflect their language acquisition when they were children. As to be expected, they describe different experiences: some of them were born in Germany, others in Portugal. Some attended the German kindergarten, others were taken care of by relatives who had recently arrived from Portugal and spoke only Portuguese. In spite of their different experiences, all of the young people were, from an early age on, familiar with a daily routine organised in at least two languages. The linguistic skills they acquired before and outside schooling consisted of different varieties and registers of the Portuguese and the German languages spoken in their families, by relatives in Portugal, in the Portuguese community in Hamburg and by members of the majority-society in Germany. Even in those cases, in which the parents had already attended school in Germany and were fluent in German, the Portuguese language remained vital in the families and the young people strongly identified with it. This attitude corresponds with the findings of a home language survey we carried out in all primary schools in Hamburg (Bühler-Otten & Fürstenau, 2004). Portuguese was among the most vital immigrant languages, and the results of the survey proved that children with a Portuguese background in Hamburg are to a high degree bilingual.

Almost all the young people of the sample attended regular classes at German schools, with the exception of three of them, who arrived in Germany at the ages of 10, 11 and 14 and who were taught German as a second language for about a year in reception classes for immigrants. Other than that, the linguistic backgrounds of the students of the sample were of no relevance during their school careers, and in the official school system they did not get the chance to elaborate on their bilingual skills. The development and improvement of their competencies in the Portuguese language was left to themselves and their families. Under such circumstances, it is remarkable that all the young people of the sample had attended Portuguese classes for at least four, in most cases nine years. They were voluntary, mother tongue classes that took place in the afternoon, after school, and were organised by the Portuguese catholic church or by the Portuguese consulate. These classes are highly frequented by children from Portuguese families in Hamburg, and through them and other activities the young people of the sample were involved with the Portuguese community. With regard to the value of their multilingual skills in the labour market, it is a favourable prerequisite that all the students of the sample had access to literacy in the Portuguese language. In the interviews, the young people gave three reasons for their continuous effort with the Portuguese classes in the afternoons twice a week. First of all, for them the classes were a social

event where they met friends. Secondly, they connected the Portuguese classes to life options in Portugal; I will come back to this argument in the next section about transnational orientations. The third reason for attending Portuguese classes was the final certification of the course after nine years. Initially, the students had been taken to the classes by their parents, and many of them reported they were tired of the course at the age of 13 or 14. Nevertheless, only a few quit before completing the 9th year in order to get the final diploma. Miguel explained in the interview:

I think that is important. Okay, it is a diploma, it is only a piece of paper, but during nine years you learn something, that helps. And this piece of paper, okay, it might help. It is a status, for employers or so.

Even though the diploma from the afternoon classes does not have official status in the German school system, the students considered it a useful certification of skills in their home language. The importance given to certification can be seen as a strategy to legitimise the linguistic skills of an immigrant minority – in the sense of Bourdieu – and to accumulate cultural capital. In some cases, this investment paid off, because employers appreciated the certification.

In school, the students of the sample were confronted with the well-known dilemma that biographical learning experiences of immigrant minorities are very often, by the majority in society, viewed from a deficit-perspective. The young peoples' perceptions of the social value of multilingual skills were strongly influenced by their experiences with teachers' judgements, which, in many cases, transmitted the misfit between the official knowledge relevant for school success and the experiences of students with an immigrant background. Manuel remembered:

The teachers never told me, 'yes, you will need the Portuguese language'. About the English language they always told me, 'yes, you will need it in life', and what else? I would also need Algebra in life (he laughed). But not the Portuguese language.'

Whereas some of the young people remembered their teachers blaming the Portuguese afternoon classes for bad results in official school subjects, those who were good pupils and were achieving well in the school subjects were most likely to receive positive recognition for their dominance of a minority language. Claudia, for example, who was good at foreign languages, was told by her teachers that bilingualism was a favourable prerequisite for language learning:

The teachers talk about my languages because I'm good at French and English. And then they say: 'Oh, it's great to know so many languages well.' ... In English, I'm one of the best. The teacher thinks that is because I grew up with Portuguese and German. And they think it's great.

During school to work transition, the rules the students had learnt in school were an orientation: Those who were good students were more optimistic about the question whether they could profit by their multilingual skills in the labour market than poor achievers.

*School to work transition.* The examples from the sample show that opportunities to profit by bilingual competencies vary in different fields of the labour market.

1. Some of the young people were looking for vocational and professional areas in which they could deal mainly with languages. Marisa was one of them:

I don't know yet exactly what I want to be. Something to do with languages, that is for sure. I might undertake some temporary work experience as an interpreter during school holidays. But I'm not good, at interpreting yes, but not good at school. I have to study hard to reach my aims, and I have to become a better student at school, that is for sure.

Like Marisa, many of those who wanted to work with languages did not have very precise ideas about vocational training. The professions they named were mainly academic professions, such as translator, interpreter or language teacher. These were options for the more successful students, like Sandra in the introductory example. Those who were good enough to study languages at university, got positive recognition of their multilingual background. However, not all of the young people fulfilled the requirements to enter university. As an alternative, two students of the sample entered a language school where they were trained to be secretaries in foreign languages.

2. Another strategy in the sample was to take advantage of the immigrant background by working in international contexts. Nelson, for example, thought that foreign trade was an ideal area to profit by his background:

Especially in foreign trade you have an advantage....You can have contacts with Portugal....If you are a painter and decorator, you cannot profit by being Portuguese....Actually, it does not have much to do with your home country, but you have a language and you can use it, and I would say that is an advantage.

Some students entered vocational training in foreign trade, for example in a shipping agency, or were explicitly looking for training in international companies. These are vocational careers, which, just like studying at university, depend on certain requirements. Young people with Abitur, who finished the German Gymnasium (12 or 13 years of school), are given preference, and English language skills are considered the most important qualification for international jobs. In the experience of the young people of the sample, in job interviews the immigrant and multilingual background would be given value as additional qualifications for vocational training in the area of international trade, if the students met the dominant requirements. As illustrated in the introductory example of Luís, the specific linguistic and cultural competencies of migrants were considered useful for the mediation between national contexts.

3. Finally, some of the young people could use their bilingual skills during school to work transition, simply because of the multicultural context in Hamburg as a city of immigration. Those who worked in small enterprises or shops in the Portuguese ethnic community pragmatically spoke Portuguese with their customers. In some cases, German employers recognised Portuguese as an additional qualification because immigrants are an important target group, for example of insurance companies or of physician's consultation rooms or lawyer's offices. A girl who was trained in an 'international kindergarten', reported that the use of other languages than German was also of interest to members of the linguistic majority, because the parents wanted their children to learn something about other languages.

The experiences of the young people of the sample do not question the power of dominant norms and the position of the legitimate language in the labour market. But they show that bilingual competencies and skills in minority languages may open opportunities, especially when there is a certificate. Some of the students did profit by their bilingual skills as an additional qualification. The emphasis is on *additional* qualification, because those who fulfilled the dominant norms – who had been good pupils at school and who were good at English as an official foreign language and international lingua franca, for example – were more likely to receive positive recognition of their bilingual background. This tendency corresponds to the rules of the linguistic market described by Bourdieu.

### **Transnational Mobility**

#### *Theoretical Framework: the conceptualisation of transnational migration*

Theoretical perspectives on processes of transnationalisation have been developed during the last 15 years in sociological research on migration. There are approaches which intend to describe and conceptualise qualitative and quantitative changes of worldwide migration movements and to comprehend the dimensions of transnational mobility in the context of globalisation (Kivisto, 2001). Perspectives of this recent research contribute to an understanding of the effects of processes of transnationalisation on young migrants' learning paths and careers. Primarily, research on transnational migration deals with the impact of continuous mobility on social realities and life courses. Whereas in traditional concepts, international migration was viewed mainly as a singular incident, interrupting settledness in the countries of origin and of destination, new perspectives on more mobile modes of life question the dominant conception of settled life being the normality. Without any doubt, the analysis of migration as a singular movement from one society into another was, historically, in many cases adequate and still can be so today. But in recent research, this perspective was overcome in order to comprehend the changing quality of a large part of the migration movements since the end of the twentieth century. Technological developments improving international communication, transport and media, have, during the last decades, facilitated close contacts between migrants' regions of origin and of destination, and have also led to an increase of international migration. Former sociological classifications are questioned as it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish, for example, between temporary and permanent

migration or between migration for economic reasons and for other reasons. A growing number of migrants are allowed, by cheap international transport and communication, to cultivate social contacts over distances and to keep options for life perspectives in the countries of origin as well as in the countries of destination. Approaches to conceptualise 'transnational migration' or 'transmigration' claim to analyse the social realities of migrants who constantly move between the regions of origin and destination. There is a controversial discussion about the question whether transmigration is actually a new phenomenon, or whether the description of transnational migration is rather a new perspective, which can also be applied to historical migration movements. Portes et al (1999) believe that transnational migration is, nowadays, an increasingly relevant phenomenon:

While back and forth movements by immigrants have always existed, they have not acquired until recently the critical mass and complexity necessary to speak of an emergent social field. This field is composed of a growing number of persons who live dual lives: speaking two languages, having homes in two countries, and making a living through continuous regular contact across national borders (p. 217). Transmigrants' modes of life have been dealt with mainly in the analysis of labour migration. The anthropologists Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1992) first developed the concept of transmigration analysing the construction of migrant workers' transnational existences between the United States and their countries of origin. Focusing on the situation of migrants who confront difficult economic conditions and racism, the process of transnationalisation has been investigated as a process from below. Migrant workers' transnational strategies, orientations and identifications were described as responses to the constraints and demands of two or more nation-states. According to Glick Schiller et al (1992), transnational connections, in many cases, function among the global workforce as a strategy of personal and cultural survival.

Research on transmigration has so far been restricted to the living conditions and realities of adults. The situation of young people – of pupils and students – has rarely been analysed from a transnational perspective. At the same time, most scholars who deal with the conceptualisation of transnationalism insist upon the durability of new transnational social fields. If lasting transnational fields of social relations are established, the situation of those generations who are socialised within transnational spaces raises new questions for investigation. These questions concern, for example, the learning paths and educational careers of young people whose families have access to different places and who are used to keep their options open. The experiences and orientations expressed by the young people in the presented study give some information about the significance of transnational fields of action during schooling and school to work transition.

#### *Transnational Mobility during School to Work Transition – evidence from the interviews*

*Transnational socialisation.* From a theoretical perspective, Portugal has been given some attention in the course of the conceptualisation of transnationalism, because the Portuguese government has declared Portugal to be a global nation whose emigrants are part of the nation even as they live in other countries (Feldman-Bianco, 1992; Glick Schiller et al, 1997, p. 126). This was a reaction to the fact that open migration projects and seasonal migration were quite normal in Portugal, as a classical country of emigration since the time of colonisation. Various studies have provided evidence of the relevance of the global nation concept among Portuguese migrant communities, whose members were shown to draw upon and identify with multiple identities grounded both in their host societies and in the Portuguese nation. An ethnographic study of the Portuguese community in Hamburg has impressively shown that even decades after the beginning of the labour recruitment, the majority of the families organised their lives across the national borders in Germany and in Portugal (Klimt, 1989). With Portugal's full membership in the European Union (1992) came the legal basis for unbound mobility. As a consequence, the Portuguese community in Hamburg grew, back and forth migration movements increased and the community's institutions, such as Portuguese afternoon classes, were extended. The assumption that the children and grandchildren of immigrants are socialised exclusively in the immigrant society does, in most cases, not apply to the group of young people from Portuguese families in Hamburg. The young people in the presented study took part in the exchange of information between Hamburg, various regions



in Portugal and often other places of migrants' destination. As a consequence of chain migration, they were members of complex transnational parental and wider social networks. Even though the young people belonged to the so-called second or third generation of immigrants, 12 out of 27 had migrated in the past. They had either been born in Portugal and moved to Germany or they had gone back and forth. All of them had spent regular holidays in Portugal, and with one exception their families owned houses in Portugal.

The young people's daily lives and orientations were influenced by constant interconnections between the national contexts. The students of the sample were involved with different activities of the Portuguese community. Many participated in Portuguese soccer clubs, youth clubs, Portuguese classes, traditional dance clubs, or the Catholic Portuguese Mission in Hamburg. Carla, for example, went to church on Sundays to meet friends in the Portuguese Catholic mass even though her parents did not go there very often. She explained:

There are many friends of mine. We talk all the time....We often speak in German. But there are some friends who have recently arrived from Portugal, and their German is not good. Then we speak Portuguese.

The young people by no means think of their life and activities in the Portuguese Community as a seclusion from the German majority society, and in their descriptions the community does not appear to be a closed social space, but rather open to hybrid cultural influences.

Regarding their relationship to their country of origin, the young peoples' experiences correspond to observations in other Portuguese communities worldwide, for example in the United States: 'the familial transnational networks made identification with Portugal and Portuguese culture not a fading memory, but a continuing presence and orientation for the future' (Feldman-Bianco, 1992, p. 163f.). In the interviews, the young people drew a very positive picture of Portugal, where they spent their holidays and met their families. Carlos, for example, said he would never want to give up his yearly stay of four weeks in Portugal in the summer:

First of all, the whole family is there. ... Some of the family live in other countries, but Portugal is a meeting-place in the summer.

Those who had never lived in Portugal were, of course, not familiar with Portuguese day-to-day life. Still, in many Portuguese villages emigration and the situation of the emigrants shape social reality and are part of normality. During the summer, emigrants participate in the village communities, and during the rest of the year their houses, 'occupied or empty, ... stand as visible reminders of the rewards of emigration and of the migrants' continuing commitment to return "home"' (Klimt, 1989, p. 47). The young people identified highly with Portugal, and even those who planned their future lives in Germany did not want to give up their Portuguese passports. Since double citizenship is only a transitional regulation in Germany, keeping the Portuguese passport meant to remain without certain rights of German citizens. Because of their legal status as citizens of the European Union this was not a problem from the students' point of view. They clearly distinguished between legal membership of the European Union and their Portuguese identity. Their example corresponds to the assumption that national identity constructions remain relevant in transnational contexts, even though they are often transformed (Glick Schiller et al, 1992). The students of the sample insisted on being Portuguese, but they did not identify with the young people who had always lived in Portuguese villages and whom they met in the summer. They expressed rather a closer connection with other young migrants, with whom they spent their holidays in Portugal. Aline, for example, explained:

In our village, there are many foreigners, and those people are the way I know. They are also city people, and they live more or less the way we live....And when I go to my mother's village [...], then I think, 'Oh my god, with whom am I speaking here?'. I'm not talking about the pronunciation, or so. But the people who have always lived in Portugal are not on the same wavelength.

Most of the young people expressed a self-categorisation as Portuguese migrants with a transnational horizon who know much about different ways of life, for example in the Portuguese village and in a big German city.

In many cases, the young people's identification with Portugal was reinforced by their parents' idea of returning to their country of origin one day. At the same time, though, the complexity of most of the familial migration projects would be reduced if they were called re-migration projects. In the interviews it became clear that a 'return' to Portugal was an option that was kept open to the family members over generations by close transnational networks and that the same was true for the way (back) from Portugal to Germany. 'Return' to Portugal did not have to be definite, but it was, at the same time, a realistic option and not an illusion. In the young people's visions, familial re-migration projects became transnational orientations, which allowed them to compare their future perspectives in different places.

Parental networks gave security to those who wanted to try options in Portugal. Claudia, for example, decided to continue school in Portugal after the final examination after the 10th year of school in Germany (Realschulabschluss). She was going to live with her sister in Portugal and explained:

It all depends on my sister ... I could really not imagine to be there all alone.

For Claudia, it was also important that the way back from Portugal to Germany would always be open to her and that she did not have to take a final decision. And indeed, after attending school in Portugal for some weeks, she came back to Hamburg and entered vocational training in a school for foreign language secretaries. Again, she kept transnational mobility as an option for the future:

Then I was back in Germany, and I thought, do you want to go back to Portugal? ... I told myself, no, stay here now and finish this school. And later, when I will be 18 or 19 years old, I will see.

*Transnational mobility during school to work transition.* Among the students of the sample, career options between Germany and Portugal and (potential) mobility between both countries during school to work transition were not only relevant for individuals, but had also a social dimension. Transnational careers were a subject in most interviews, independent of individual plans. The young people talked about friends or relatives who continued their careers in Portugal and were familiar with their strategies. They were informed about options in both countries and were able to compare advantages and disadvantages planning their own careers. It can be said that the students, in their social networks, were confronted with transnational careers that were socially institutionalised. This became obvious, because all the young people seemed to agree upon three profitable options to continue school to work transition in Portugal. The first option was the one Claudia tried: it was said that students who did not follow the highest path in the German school system, who were not at a Gymnasium and thus were not fulfilling the prerequisites to enter university, could continue schooling in Portugal and reach the Portuguese matriculation standard. The second option was to finish Gymnasium in Germany and after that begin university studies in Portugal, as Sandra, in the introductory example did. From Nelson's point of view, this was a popular option among the young people in the Portuguese community in Hamburg:

Many Portuguese are here, but one day they will go to Portugal, especially the young people, many. Most Portuguese I know are at the Gymnasium. After they get their Abitur, they all want to study in Portugal.

The third option was to finish vocational training in Germany and to enter the labour market in Portugal as a professional, as illustrated in the case of Luís. The young people were convinced of the advantages in the Portuguese labour market of those who came from the German dual system of vocational training in enterprises and in school. They also pointed out, that vocational training in Germany embraced professions which in Portugal were learned on the job. The students of the sample were informed about and even prepared for transnational careers by various institutions. On the one hand, they were institutions of the Portuguese community, such as a Portuguese course for those who planned university studies in Portugal. Another institution was the binational training project which guaranteed that the final diploma was valid in Germany as well as in Portugal.[2]

Results from the presented study show that successful students may profit by multiple social integration in transnational social spaces. Under favourable circumstances, they can rely on learning and career opportunities provided in the immigration society, the ethnic community and

in the country of origin. The students of the sample who considered continuing their school to work transition in Portugal basically refer to two reasons for their transnational orientations. For some of them, alternative opportunities in Portugal provide security in case they cannot follow their choice of school career or vocational training in Germany. Their orientations are to be understood in the context of the difficult situation in the German labour market. Their examples show that young people who grew up with transnational parental and social networks have, potentially, a wider horizon during their professional and future orientations. If they reach a deadlock during school to work transition, they may look for options in other places spanned by their social network. The second important context of transnational careers, from the students' point of view, is social mobility. In spite of their structural integration and school success in Germany, the students of the sample estimate their social position in Portugal higher than in Germany. Whereas in Germany they feel they cannot escape the dominant ascription, remaining 'foreigners' in spite of their structural integration, some of them hope to gain more social recognition as successful re-migrants in Portugal. In this respect, transnational orientations can be looked upon as strategies to optimise social conditions during school to work transition.

### **Migrants' Resources: multilingualism and transnational mobility**

The social value and the hierarchy of languages and cultural practices is explained by Bourdieu's model of the linguistic market, referring to the norms of nation-states. According to Bourdieu, the maintenance of hierarchies depends on the continuity of the political and social circumstances for producer-consumer relations. The question is, then, whether the existence of social communities that span national borders leads to dynamic developments in the market and to changes in the relevance of national norms. In the presented study we asked whether, as a consequence of processes of transnationalisation, migrants' linguistic and cultural competencies were upgraded. The results of the study show clearly, though, that the norms of nation-states and their school systems are highly relevant for school to job transition in the context of transmigration. The young people of the sample experienced the rules of the national societies, having to meet the requirements of the national educational systems, the monolingual norms in the national languages accompanied by the priority of officially legitimised foreign school languages over minority languages. From their point of view and in their experience, the most important advantage of their immigrant background and of their multilingual skills, was the opportunity to compare educational and vocational options in the immigrant society and in the society of origin, and to be able to keep open and try out options in both places. Only in the cases of the most successful students, who fulfilled the dominant requirements, were the specific linguistic skills and intercultural competencies of migrants recognised as additional qualifications, adding value to those skills and qualifications achieved in formal education and training. The results of the study thus provide evidence to suggest that the capitalisation of migrants' resources depends, during school to work transition, substantially on success in school and formal vocational training. Whereas, on the other hand, specific competencies acquired in the course of migration are not necessarily a favourable prerequisite for school success.

With regard to the theoretical conceptualisation of transnational migration, the presented study gives insight into processes of social positioning within transnational contexts. The young people of the sample, whose parents or grandparents were migrant workers and in most cases had not had schooling for more than four years, did not belong to a privileged social group. Students with an immigrant background are statistically disadvantaged in the German school system, and even though the educational participation of pupils with a Portuguese background is better than the participation of other immigrant groups, students from Portuguese families are not as likely to succeed in the German school system as students from German families. Focusing on comparatively successful students from Portuguese families, the study thus provided evidence for successful strategies and social advancement under unfavourable circumstances. Whereas their parents can be seen as part of the underprivileged global workforce, which has been a focus in most research on transnational migration, the students of the sample struggled to profit by professional advantages of transnational mobility. Their efforts were much facilitated by their legal membership of the European Union. As citizens of the European Union, the young people's social status in

Germany was better than the status of other immigrants, and continuous mobility between the societies of immigration and origin was legally secure.

Even though increasing population mobility is an official goal in the European Union and its labour market, in the experience of the young people in the presented study, transnational careers were rarely supported by the institutions of the national education systems. Because of their inherent national norms, the public school systems did not support transnational transfer of institutionalised or incorporated cultural capital. Successful transnational careers were most likely in the cases of students who fulfilled the dominant norms in both systems, and in order to minimise the loss of cultural capital, transnationally oriented students relied on the shared knowledge of the immigrant community. According to this knowledge, successful students had good chances of social advancement if they re-migrated to Portugal. This estimation can be understood in the context of social differences, considering, for example, the precarious social status of immigrants in Germany, the economic gap in the European Union, the assumedly superior status of vocational training in Germany and the value of the German language in the linguistic market in Portugal. All the young people of the sample were informed about opportune transitions from the German to the Portuguese education system or labour market. I suggest to speak of socially institutionalised transnational careers. These careers function as an orientation for students with an immigrant minority background. The young people of the sample belonged to an immigrant minority group which did not have access to transnational education systems of the cosmopolitan elite, where internationally recognised diplomas have long been normality. Their specific multilingual and intercultural competencies are usually not certified within official education systems. But the presented research project provided evidence of existing strategies among migrant minority students to invest in the extension of their specific competencies and to rely on social capital within transnational immigrant networks in order to profit by transnational mobility.

### Notes

- [1] The German school system comprises, basically, of three school types: Hauptschule (nine years of schooling), Realschule (10 years of schooling) and Gymnasium (12 or 13 years of schooling).
- [2] Binational training projects exist in Germany for young people with an immigrant background. The projects are financed by the German state and the states from which the immigrants originate and include classes in the immigrant languages and working experiences in the countries of origin. The projects were institutionalised as a special offer for a limited time and are not part of the official education system.

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