

Policy informing workshop
Transnational Migration in Transition:
Transformative Characteristics of Temporary Mobility of People (EURA-NET)

13 June, 2014 – Bielefeld University, Germany

The policy-informing workshop was organised as part of the EU-funded research project *Transnational Migration in Transition: Transformative Characteristics of Temporary Mobility of People (EURA-NET)* in preparation of the central conceptual work and empirical research. Accordingly, the EURA-NET policy-informing workshop had the following objectives:

1. To present and to promote the EURA-NET project to researchers, policy-makers, and members of the civil society with the particular aim of engaging with relevant potential partners for future cooperation on the subject of temporary transnational migration between Asia and Germany;
2. To enhance the dialogue between stakeholders and researchers who are engaged in the subject of migration between Asia and Germany;
3. To bring forward the debate on new immigration policies and resulting migration flows in Germany;
4. To gain insights into conceptual understandings of temporary transnational migration in the German context;
5. To identify gatekeepers and potential interview partners for empirical research with experts and migrants within the EURA-NET project.

To reach these objectives, the workshop started with a thematic introduction, based on the main ideas of EURA-NET's project proposal and on the German country report. This was accomplished by illustrating that there are temporary transnational movements between certain Asian countries and European member states, including Germany. It was shown that these different types of mobility entail various implications and challenges for the countries involved (emigration, immigration and transit). These recent migration trends involve a multiplicity of stakeholders. This might lead to current transformations regarding migration patterns and developmental outcomes in emigration and immigration contexts. After setting the general frame by addressing the main objectives, the research questions, and the work procedure of EURA-NET, the introduction focused on the German context. In line with that, relevant sending and transit countries of migrants, recent policy developments, and relevant categories of migrants were discussed.

Given their relevance in the context of Asian migration to Germany, the workshop particularly focused on the categories skilled and high-skilled labour migrants, as well as academic migrants, including international students. Experts and stakeholders were invited to present their work and their experiences in three roundtable discussions, which were structured along the following thematic realms: research, policy-making, and civil society.

In the *first* panel theoretical concepts and empirical research on new forms of mobility, which are to some extent connected with societal developments in Germany, were presented. The panel included presentations about transnationality, the self-organization of migrants, the link between academic mobility and social inequality, as well as the potential of the attraction of highly qualified migrants to compensate demographic change. The following participants contributed to panel I:

Thomas Faist: *The Three Ts: Transnationalization, Transnational Social Spaces, Transnationality*

This contribution distinguished between different types of the concept “transnational”, which represents an agent’s perspective for research on international migration. Transnationalization is understood as a social process, transnational social spaces as social structures and transnationality as a continuum, in which the frequency and durability of transnational ties are revealed.

Stefan Rother: *Migrant self-organisation in Asia – A model for Germany and Europe?*

Using the example of Hong Kong, this presentation distinguished between three different levels of migrant self-organisation: local-transnational, regional and global. On the other hand, there are certain agenda topics that are related to the scope of migrant self-organisations. These are addressed by 1) transnational forms of self-organisations, 2) trans-ethnic forms of self-organisation, and 3) sectorial types of migrant self-organisation. Depending on the thematic frame and the scope of migrant self-organisations, feedbacks to sending countries as well as linkages with regional and global campaigns can be achieved.

Andreas Vasilache: *Academic mobility and social inequality*

This contribution addressed the nexus between academic mobility and institutions in Asia. It is assumed that there is an unequal access to educational mobility given to ethnic stratification. This was illustrated in the case of Malaysia, where the Chinese and Indian minorities have better opportunities for studies abroad, while within the Malay majority these mobility opportunities are more limited. This is caused by different levels of wealth and uneven networking capacities of Chinese and Indian mobile people in contrast to the Malay migrants.

Uwe Hunger: *Securing skilled personnel in the context of demographic change: The role of immigration policies from the company perspective*

This contribution was based on first result of an ongoing research project in a rural area of western Germany, which is expected to lose a significant share of its population in the coming years. This is mainly due to the exodus of young population segments and causes depopulation and consequently a lack of economic active people with heavy consequences for the local and regional companies. High skilled international migrants are recruited to compensate these resulting gaps in several labour sectors (e.g. medical doctors), of the region in a long-term. This might, however, be contradictory to the intentions of international high-skilled mobile people regarding their stay.

In the *second* panel political debates and their institutional implementation in the context of temporary migration will be examined. These are discussed in the context of immigration policies on skilled migration from Asia and their societal relevance for Germany. The following participants contributed to panel II:

Ina Radtke: *Institutional challenges for a new labour migration paradigm*

This contribution started with the assumption that, in contrast to the classical frame of labour recruitment, the new context of labour immigration has gained complexity. This complexity, caused by the multitude of relevant institutional actors, is an obstacle to the efficient implementation of coherent immigration policies (e.g. distribution of tasks, knowledge generation). This entails a variety of challenges, such as the interlocking of coherent reforms and policies or, with respect to the German multi-level governance system, the implementation of policies and reforms as an autonomous political strategy. One solution might be an institutional change that potentially leads to a new labour migration paradigm.

Marianne Haase: *The implementation of sustainable projects for professionals' acquisition from Asia: Models, challenges and perspectives*

As one institutional effort related to the successful recruitment of professionals, the presentation illustrated the *triple win* recruitment project. Triple win refers to the assumed benefits for migrants (skills, income, perspectives for the future), for sending countries (remittances, knowledge transfer, avoidance of brain drain), for receiving countries (supply with qualified workers). The resulting challenge in this context is the coherence of institutions involved in the implementation of the programme and of immigration policies. The triple win project is implemented by the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and focuses on four countries: Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Philippines, Serbia and Tunisia. Advances of the project were presented and discussed.

Tao Liu: *Temporary migration and social security systems in Germany*

Transnational migration challenges the classic model of the European welfare state, which is based on mechanisms of inclusion into and exclusion from the nation state. Using the example of temporary Chinese migrants in Germany, the presentation showed that migrants – particularly in the low-wage sector – are disproportionately excluded from social security systems, leading to increased societal risks including accidents, illness, and invalidity. This discrepancy between old welfare state models of nation states and more recent transnational migration realities raises issues about the dualism of well- and poorly insured participants of the labour market and the social exclusion of certain groups, such as international students, from the state-based social security system, which is based on citizenship rights and not on human rights. The concept of welfare transnationalism was presented as a potential solution.

The *third* panel was based on the biographical perspective of the migrants themselves, addressing how migration decisions are made, and how they translate into migration patterns. In these decision-making processes migrant organizations fulfil a variety of functions, which were highlighted for the case of Germany. The following participants contributed to panel III:

Eleonor Koch: *Migration and experiences between two worlds: the old and the new home*

The presenter narrated her own migration biography, stressing the challenges of being confronted with a different and exotic culture and circumstances of living during her first years in Germany. This experience was used as an example to illustrate the status quo of migrant life in Germany some decades ago, but also to demonstrate why and in what context migration organisations developed during times when the term *integration* was not an established concept, yet.

Noella König: *Going back Home? An Insight into the Reality of Philippine Migrants in Germany*

The profile of migrants from the Philippines in Germany is diverse. According to this diversity, the presenter – based on her research work – divided international migration from the Philippines to Germany into the following categories: temporary (students, seafarers), semi-permanent (IT workers, nurses), and permanent (spouses, undocumented migrants). Yet, decisions to stay or to return depend on many factors, and, as a consequence, these decisions might change during their stays. Economic disparities between the Philippines and Germany as well as family and cultural aspects are potential reasons to stay. On the other hand, legal and emotional aspects might be triggers to return.

Cemalettin Özer: *Degrees of professionalisation and the role of migrant organisations for (educational) integration in Germany*

The presentation started with quantitative empirical information regarding the situation of people with migratory background in Germany, an overview of migrant organisations, and the circumstances regarding the educational integration of migrants. Then the speaker focused on the weight of professionalisation of migrant organisations in Germany for successful educational integration. Thereafter, he addressed characteristics for evaluating diverse degrees of professionalisation in existing migrant organisations. The presentation concluded with a critical review of recent policy reforms in the context of education and migration, and the positioning of migrant organisations in education.

The workshop inputs led to the following interfaces between panel discussions and the EURA-NET project:

- Transnational migration studies often refer to already established migration and existing migrant communities. EURA-NET aims to investigate how the concept of transnationality can be applied to more recent categories of migration and to further understand to which degree these new forms of migration show transnational characteristics.
- Migrants' self-organizations can fulfil certain functions, such as the promotion of integration in the destination country or the promotion of certain local development processes in sending countries. The EURA-NET project will investigate if the functions of migrant organisations remain the same or if they are transformed according to the new immigration contexts.
- Academic mobility is becoming ever more relevant in the international context; however, this migration has no classical patterns but is a relatively new phenomenon. EURA-NET is concerned with temporary migration and thus internationally mobile academics and students are an important target group for the research. The importance of social inequality in the context of academic mobility is also an important issue for EURA-NET, as it is related to development.
- Migration triggered by the need for skilled labour is an important migration category for the EURA-NET project. In this context, particularly professionals recruited by German companies are of interest due to two reasons: In general, professionals are considered as temporary migrants, representing one of the relevant categories of mobility. Furthermore, professionals are perceived as central actors to compensate demographic change and therewith linked to legal reforms and public discourses.
- Institutional barriers or, in contrast, support by formal organisations provide very important conditions for recent immigration. Thus, they are also of concern for the research project EURA-NET as these bureaucratic practices favour or discourage temporary and transnational migration through institutional settings. In order to address these barriers several formal labour recruitment projects were initiated, which also represent an important strand of research within the EURA-NET project.

This discussion of interfaces between the workshop presentations and EURA-NET was helpful to adjust the research focus by contrasting the objectives of EURA-NET with ongoing related research projects and policy analyses.